Eco-Alterity: Writing the Environment in the Literature of North Africa and the Middle East

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Eco-Alterity:
Writing the Environment in the Literature of North Africa and the Middle East

A dissertation presented
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Abstract

The subject of this dissertation is the representation of the environment in the modern and contemporary literature of North Africa and the Middle East. I focus on texts that consciously engage with their landscapes, most commonly through descriptions of the natural world, personal and communal readings of space, and evaluations of ecological crises, which often take the form of what Rob Nixon has called "slow violence." Critique of environmental disasters and challenges is formulated through the lens of eco-alterity, enabling a vision of the ecological indigenous "self" that is articulated against an occupying, imperialist, or colonial "other" that exploits or degrades the shared landscape. That "other" is variously identified as American, European, or, in the case of Palestinian literature, Jewish Israeli. Through this framing, a right to the land is asserted that encompasses an effort to undermine counterclaims, which may also be based on narratives of stewardship. The environments discussed in the texts in this dissertation are primarily local. However, the invocation of the rhetoric of alterity creates spaces that contain both the self and the other, offering new imaginative possibilities for translocal, transnational, and even universal ecological responsibility.

The slow violence of environmental crisis often defies effective representation in literature. The literary works analyzed in this dissertation propose solutions to this challenge through their employment of one or a combination of three motifs: 1) ecological *ḥanīn* (feelings of nostalgia and yearning) accessed at the *aṭlāl* (ruins); 2) the figure of the ecological native and

the "ecoambiguity," to use Karen Thornber's term, that complicates it; and 3) the creation of *al-makān–al-matāh* (the wandering place), Adūnīs's coinage that I adopt here to refer to a literary space created through the movement of texts and their authors. This space provides access to otherwise inaccessible geographies by framing them as translocal or universal.

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For my parents, Susie and Ira Blecker.
And for Maryam.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply thankful to the three people who oversaw the writing of this dissertation. Foremost among them is William Granara, who has provided guidance and support in untold official and unofficial capacities from the earliest years of my graduate studies. His careful, perceptive reading of my work is evident on every page, from whatever poetry there is to be found in my translations to the soundness of the logic holding my arguments together. Karen Thornber's scholarship on the environmental humanities has served as a touchstone for me throughout this project. Her advice, feedback, and encouragement showed me the way forward, often before I even realized I was lost. Margaret Litvin gave generously of her time and attention. Her sharp insights reframed my thinking and pointed me to new resources and avenues for exploration.

I am grateful to the late Wolfhart Heinrichs, whose training opened the door to the premodern literature and classical Arabic philology that informed much of the framework of this dissertation. On a personal level, his love of animals encouraged me in my belief that the nonhuman world is a subject worthy of seriously attention by students of Arabic literature.

Special thanks to Eva Misho and the rest of the NELC staff, past and present, for their help and assistance. I am particularly appreciative of their unfailing attention to details and deadlines.

My deepest gratitude to everyone who watched over Maryam with love and patience so I could write in long, uninterrupted stretches. The efforts of my mom and Maryam's teachers, Jeanne, Joe, Teanna, Courtney, and Debbie, were especially heroic.

I would like to acknowledge the remarkable friends who stood beside me during this (at times, seemingly endless) process: Alison Morse, Benjamin Smith, Gina Guddemi, Kate

A note on conventions

I use the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) system for translating and transliterating Arabic, with the following exceptions:

- I use ' for *hamza* and ' for *'ayn*.
- I keep diacritics when transliterating Arabic proper nouns, including author names, and titles of books and articles, with the following exceptions:
- For authors writing in English, I use their preferred English spelling for their own names as well as character names.

I use the Library of Congress system for transliterating Hebrew.

The first time an article, poem, short story, book, or creative work published in a language other than English is mentioned, I give the title in the original language (in transliteration in the case of Arabic and Hebrew). I then provide the original date of publication, followed by a translation of the title, and the date the translation was first published under this title, when applicable, between parentheses. If there is no published translation, the translated title will not appear between double quotes and will be in plain text. For example, when first mentioned, an Arabic novel without a published English translation will be written as: *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* (2004; I Will Be Among the Almond Trees). An Arabic novel with a published English translation will be written as: *Nazīf al-ḥajar* (1990; *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2001).

All block quotes from Arabic and Hebrew texts are provided in both the original language and in English translation in the body of the text. For shorter quotes from Arabic and Hebrew, the English translation is provided in the body of the text and the original text is provided after in parentheses or in a footnote. All quotations from French are provided in English translation.

Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

"وتلد بداخلها عشرات الأنواع من المعادن، رآها ايسا بعينيه وأمسكها بيده فوجد لكل معدن منها لونه الخاص وشخصيتّه.
...
فما من مرة يمر فيها على منجم أو يرى فيها خواجا أو تعبر به قافلة جمال محملة بالخامات في طريقها إلى البحر حتى تثمر هذه البذور وتفرخ في نفسه غضبا كظيما، غضبا غريزيا، يجعله يتساءل وهو محنق محير, عن هذه الكنوز التي يجهد هؤلاء الرجال لاستخراجها من جبّاله الخاصة..من عالمه ودنياه..من حق من؟..من هو صاحبها الحقيقي فعلا؟"
 - *Fasād al-amkina*, Ṣabrī Mūsā, Egypt's Eastern Desert, 1973

(*"Among the awesome masses of rock had grown a multitude of ores, each of which Issa [Īsā] saw and touched and respected for its own characteristic color and life.*
...
No sooner did he encounter a foreigner or see a caravan loaded with ore on its way to the sea, than a great anger would well in his heart. It made him wonder about the treasures the men toiled so hard to extract from his own mountains, from his world and universe. Whose right was it? Who was the real and true owner?"
 - *Seeds of Corruption*, Ṣabrī Mūsā, Trans. Mona N. Mikhail, Egypt's Eastern Desert, 1973)

"'Did you know that this land you're on has been declared a nature reserve? We are protecting this spot. Except for us it would have been ruined. As a walker you should appreciate this.'
I couldn't believe it. I said: 'You're protecting our land? After all the damage your bulldozers have done digging highways in these hills, pouring concrete to build settlements, you claim to be preserving this land?'
'No one is allowed to build here any more. Or destroy the paths or pick wild flowers. Without these regulations this beautiful spot would be ruined.'
'Let me tell you how things looked when this was truly a nature park. Before you came and spoiled it all. You could not see any new buildings, you did not hear any traffic. All you saw were deer leaping up the terraced hills, wild rabbits, foxes, jackals and carpets of flowers. Then it was a park. Preserved in more or less the same state it had been in for hundreds of years'"
 - *Palestinian Walks*, Raja Shehadeh, The West Bank, 2007

These two epigraphs articulate what I call *eco-alterity*, an expression of ecological

responsibility or stewardship based in belonging to a space and formulated against an outsider

group whose relationship to the shared environment is framed as exploitative or destructive. The

first passage, from Ṣabrī Mūsā's *Fasād al-amkina* (1973; *Seeds of Corruption*, 1979), is narrated

from the perspective of Īsā, an indigenous Bedouin. He juxtaposes his respect for the mountains

of the Eastern Desert in Egypt and their natural resources with the exploitation of the mountains'

mines by foreigners and urban Egyptians. The second passage, from Raja Shehadeh's

autobiographical *Palestinian Walks* (2007), records a conversation between the Palestinian narrator and a Jewish Israeli settler in the Naḥal Dolev Nature Reserve. While the transformation of this area into a nature reserve by the Israeli government protects it, the narrator and other West Bank Palestinians like him are barred from legal entry. Simultaneous Israeli appropriation and overdevelopment of the surrounding hills are used to bolster the narrator's charges of poor ecological stewardship, further highlighting the history of the politicization of environmentalist narratives on both sides.

The two distinct local geographies described by Mūsā and Shehadeh in their works are representative of broader literary categories of place where relationships to the environment are often expressed through the framework of eco-alterity in literature of North Africa and the Middle East: 1) the deserts of North Africa or the Arabian Peninsula; and 2) the rural spaces or wilderness of Palestine. All of the texts that are the focus of this dissertation unfold in or deal centrally with one of these two geographies. It should be noted that these undefined spaces of the desert and Palestine, generalized here for the purposes of categorization, are repeatedly displaced in practice by the particular and the local. A common feature of the novels and literary works gathered here is their attention to the specificity of place. I argue that these texts communicate eco-alterity by approaching their specific geographies through the employment of one, two, or all three of the following literary motifs: 1) ecological *ḥanīn* (feelings of nostalgia and yearning) accessed at the *aṭlāl* (ruins); 2) the figure of the ecological native; and 3) the creation of *al-makān—al-matāh* (the wandering place).

Fasād al-amkina by Ṣabrī Mūsā (1973; *Seeds of Corruption*, 1979), *al-Nihāyyāt* (1978; *Endings*, 1987) by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, *Nazīf al-ḥajar* (1990; *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2001) by Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, and *al-Khibā'* (1996; The Tent, 1998) by Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī are desert

novels set in or by authors from Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, or Libya. *Buḥayra warā'a al-rīḥ* by Yaḥyā Yakhlif (1991; *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, 1999), *al-Mīrāth* by Saḥar Khalīfa (1997; *The Inheritance*, 2005), *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* (2004; I Will Be Among the Almond Trees) by Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, and *Palestinian Walks* (2007) by Raja Shehadeh are novels or literary autobiographies by Palestinian authors set at least largely in the West Bank and Israel. I also include *Laḥaẓāt gharaq jazīrat al-ḥūt* (1997; *Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl*, 2006) by Muḥammad al-Makhzangī in this grouping. While al-Makhzangī is Egyptian and *Memories of a Meltdown* takes place in and is centrally concerned with different sites within the former Soviet Union, the focus of my analysis is the text's imagining of Palestine.

Because eco-alterity is intimately connected to environments, both real and imagined, and their stewardship, geography forms the organizing principle of this dissertation. It is for this reason that I include *Palestinian Walks*, written in English, and also look at two texts written in Hebrew by Jewish Israeli authors, A.B. Yehoshua's short story "Mul ha-ye'arot" (1968; "Facing the Forests," 1970) and David Grossman's novel *Ishah boraḥat mi-besorah* (2008; *To the End of the Land*, 2010), alongside some of the Palestinian texts.

All 11 of these literary works were written or are set during the colonial or postcolonial periods. The eco-alterity they express is rooted in historical contexts of ongoing occupation, colonial legacy, and/or neocolonial exploitation and oppression. Although these forces act directly on human bodies and urban sites, they also shape and re-shape spaces dominated by "nature," a term explored at greater length below.

The focus on nature and the physical environment in literature in this dissertation locates it within the field of ecocriticism and under the multidisciplinary umbrella of the environmental

humanities. Initially, the relationship between ecocriticism and literature like that explored in this

dissertation was uneasy. This was due in part to Anglo-centrism, but a bigger problem was

conceptual. As Rob Nixon lays out in "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism," early American

parochialism often led to a privileging of narratives of purity and rootedness that required the

suppression of past acts of oppression and exclusion and the creation of a myth of uninhabited

land.[1] Such an approach did not leave space for the recuperation of histories of displacement and

the forging of hybrid and transnational identities that is the focus of much of colonial and

postcolonial literature. Postcolonial ecocriticism is now a burgeoning field, although Palestinian

literature and desert literature of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula remain relatively

understudied within it, with the exception of a few articles of note.[2]

This dissertation foregrounds the study of the portrayal of the environment and the crises

reshaping it in texts from North Africa and the Middle East centrally concerned with both. By

organizing my analyses around these geographies, I further the work of decentering the United

States and Europe in ecocritical scholarship and the environmental humanities. Although I do

include works of Anglophone literature written by authors from or in the West Bank and Israel, I

read them alongside Arabic and Hebrew texts to provide a full picture of the utilization and

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[1] Rob Nixon, "Environmentalism and Postcolonialism" in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, eds. Ania Loomba, Suvir Kaul, Matti Bunzl, Antoinette Burton, and Jed Esty (Durham: Duke U P, 2005), 233-251.

[2] For an introduction, see Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Laura Wright, *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2010); and Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Harvard U P, 2011). For works of ecocriticism on desert literature of the Middle East and North Africa and Arabic literature more broadly, see Susan McHugh, "Hybrid Species and Literatures: Ibrahim Al-Koni's 'Composite Apparition'" in *Comparative Critical Studies* 9.3 (2012): 285-302; Sharif S. Elmusa, "The Ecological Bedouin: Toward Environmental Principles for the Arab Region" in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 33 (2013): 9-35; Nadine Sinno, "The Greening of Modern Arabic Literature: An Ecological Interpretation of Two Contemporary Arabic Novels" in *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 20.1 (2013): 125-143; and Ferial J. Ghazoul, "Greening in Contemporary Arabic Literature: The Transformation of Mythic Motifs in Postcolonial Discourse" in *The Future of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Chantal Zabus (New York: Routledge, 2015): 117-129.

development of motifs rooted in regional literary, cultural, and historical contexts. In turn, the adoption of an ecocritical perspective leads to the excavation of unstudied or understudied texts and the uncovering of new layers of meaning in works that have already been the subject of scholarly analysis within the field of Middle East area studies. By bringing desert literature into conversation with Palestinian literature, I also suggest the formulation of a category for analysis that reveals thematic connections and parallels that transcend differences of geography. In the following pages, I develop the idea of eco-alterity as a lens for understanding the marshalling of narratives of environmental responsibility and ecological stewardship to record and challenge foreign or outside exploitation, oppression, and occupation. As a means of raising consciousness and articulating resistance in the face of seemingly insurmountable, often colonial, power imbalances, eco-alterity is a framework with applications beyond the contexts addressed here. It is the employment of eco-alterity in concert with regionally rooted literary motifs adopted to address specific local environmental crises that distinguishes the texts I study in this dissertation and my analysis of them.

European colonialism re-landscaped the environments of North Africa and the Middle East, just as the Zionist movement changed and continues to change the geographies of what is today Palestine and Israel. The partition of the former Ottoman Empire in 1918 led to the drawing of borders with little regard for existing human and ecological connections. Prior to that, and at the most basic level, European, especially British and French, imperialism required a re-imagining of the self in relationship to the Middle East and North Africa—the subject of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). As a part of this project, colonial powers re-wrote the environmental histories of North Africa and the Middle East and reinterpreted their ecologies in ways that helped justify imperialism. For example, Diana K. Davis has argued that France created a

narrative centered on the idea of the environmental degradation of North Africa by its native, and especially its nomad, populations that provided the rationale for the seizure and management of lands and the people that inhabited them in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco beginning in the 19th century.[3] A similar narrative imagining the Levant as a fallen Eden, spoiled by the population that would come to be known as the Palestinians, provided the groundwork for the establishment of Israel and, later, occupation of the West Bank by the Israeli State.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has unfolded across multiple arenas, but my focus in this dissertation is on the competing environmentalist discourses and assertions of rightful and responsible stewardship that frame claims to the land.[4] These claims attempt to establish their legitimacy not just by arguing their own merit, but rather by actively working to undermine competing claims as well. Trees, tree-planting, and forestation play a major role in the tension between the perceived "preservation" or "restoration" of the environment. Olive trees vie with pine trees for space, even as the chopping down of the former and the burning of the latter emphasize the sometimes-contingent quasi-environmentalism that underlies discourses such as Israel's "making the desert bloom" and Palestinian "rootedness." This politicized environmentalism is embodied in charges of Israeli "greenwashing," a term used to describe the

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[3] See Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens: Ohio U P, 2007); "Restoring Roman Nature: French Identity and North African Environmental History" in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio U P, 2011), 60-86; "Enclosing Nature in North Africa: National Parks and the Politics of Environmental History" in *Water on Sand: Environmental Histories of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. Alan Mikhail (Oxford: Oxford U P, 2013), 159-174; and Caroline Ford, "Reforestation, Landscape Conservation, and the Anxieties of Empire in French Colonial Algeria" in *The American Historical Review* 113.2 (2008): 341-362.

[4] See Shaul E. Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Jewish-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) and "Environmentalism Deferred: Nationalisms and Israeli/Palestinian Imaginaries" in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio U P, 2011), 246-264.

cultivation of an image of environmental responsibility to conceal behavior that is in fact destructive to the environment and/or may oppress or violate the rights of other human groups.

When considering North Africa and the Middle East on a regional level, the environmental crises that come most readily to mind are related to water and oil. The scarcity of the former and the abundance of the latter have been the source of repeated conflict. Management of the Jordan River Basin impacts Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Syria, and Lebanon. Land reclamation and hydraulic projects in Egypt, the most visible of which in recent memory is the Aswan High Dam, have been discursively mobilized by foreign and domestic actors motivated by economic or political gain. Oil wealth has re-landscaped the sites of its discovery as well as the cities and countries that depend on its extraction for their growth and survival. The excavation of other natural resources, like minerals and gas, have similarly impacted the physical environment.

The periods of direct European colonization of North Africa and the Middle East and the establishment of Israel and occupation of the West Bank are turning points in the representation of the natural world in Arabic and other literatures set in this region as authors and their characters utilize descriptions of the physical environment to craft narratives of belonging against an outside force perceived as a threat to that belonging. Authors and characters positioning themselves as indigenous peoples assert ownership over the deserts, farmlands, and stretches of wilderness that they have been forced to share and sometimes inhabit alongside others whom they view as outsiders. Political critique is embedded in the juxtaposition of protection and care of the environment with its exploitation and destruction. The former is expressed through assertions of groundedness and stewardship, often hereditary, while the latter is portrayed as the manifestation of an invasive and corrupting presence. All of these texts

emphasize the importance of nonhuman flora, fauna, and mineralia through detailed description and attention to the specificity of the contested environment, which is most often a place of "nature," but the majority are not self-consciously activist in their ecological awareness and offer no concrete solutions to the problems and challenges they identify.

In this dissertation, I use the terms "natural world," "nature," and "environment" to refer to the nonhuman physical world, including flora, fauna, and landscapes with limited human presence. The Arabic word for "nature" in this sense is *ṭabīʿa* (طبيعة), a term with Aristotelian roots like its English equivalent.[5] Efforts to nail down a firm definition of the term "nature," in English or in Arabic, are complicated by the interconnection of ecosystems that extend the environmental impact of human habitation beyond its most obvious boundaries. There are, arguably, no places on land or water that have not been touched by human beings in some way.

The Arabic word for "environment" is *bīʾa* (بيئة). Lexicographer Edward William Lane traces its etymology to the phrase *bawwaʾahu manzilān*, meaning "*He lodged him in an abode,*" which in turn is connected to the phrase *tabawwaʾa manzilān*, meaning "*he looked for the best place that could be seen, and the most level,* or *even, and the best adapted by its firmness, for his passing the night there, and took it as a place of abode*" (Lane, Book I, 271). In this sense, then, the idea of *bīʾa* already assumes the presence of human beings within it. Afterall, it is a human being who transforms a place into *bīʾa* by selecting it as a home or temporary abode. In contemporary usage, *bīʾa* can also mean a "home" or a "habitat" or even just a "place where [someone] feels at home" (Wehr, 98).

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[5] S. Nomanul and D.E. Pingree, "Ṭabīʿa" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs. Published online 2012. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.swarthmore.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1135>.

Timothy Mitchell argues in his afterword to *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa* that "[t]he environment appears to define the Arab-Islamic world more than it does any other major region in world history" (Mitchell, 265).[6] North Africa and the Middle East are repeatedly subjected to analyses focused on the region's deserts and arid spaces, highlighting the "unnatural nature" that shapes its peoples and histories (Mitchell, 266). Thinking of North Africa and the Middle East as a single region can lead to the erasure of its diverse ecologies and understandings of the idea of "nature" across Africa and Eurasia as it relates to landscapes deemed worthy of protection. These "environmental imaginaries," which Diana K. Davis defines as "the constellation of ideas that groups of humans develop about a given landscape, usually local or regional, that commonly includes assessments about that environment as well as how it came to be in its current state," have the potential to impact political, agricultural, and even military policy (Davis, 3).[7] The spaces of Palestine and Israel have been subject to a multitude of similar imaginings over the centuries and into the present. In *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank*, a collection of diary entries made in 1980 chronicling the experiences of living in the West Bank as a Palestinian, Raja Shehadeh describes a kind of land pornography in relationship to the spaces of Palestine and Israel. Explaining that the concept was brought to his attention by Jewish-American author Robert Stone, he writes, paraphrasing their conversation: "When you are exiled from your land, he said, you begin, like a pornographer, to think about it in symbols. You articulate your love for your land, in its absence,

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[6] Timothy Mitchell, "Afterword: Are Environmental Histories Culturally Constructed?" in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio U P, 2011), 265-273.

[7] Diana K. Davis, "Introduction: Imperialism, Orientalism, and the Environment in the Middle East: History, Policy, Power, and Practice" in in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke III (Athens: Ohio U P, 2011), 1-22.

and in the process you transform it into something else" (Shehadeh 1982, 86).[8] Competing

nationalisms, alongside competing histories of exile and diaspora, shape the imagining of the

land and, critically for my purposes here, the question of who has the right, the responsibility,

and the ability to care for it. These discourses have led to the mutual appropriation of some of the

same symbols, such as the Jaffa orange and the olive tree, to advance one claim while

discrediting the other.[9]

       This dissertation accommodates two, sometimes competing understandings of "nature"

that influence the kinds of places deemed by authors, characters, and texts to be deserving of

preservation, protection, and stewardship. All of the desert novels I read view their

environments-in-crisis as spaces of wilderness that are uncultivated and only sparsely populated

by human beings, who are often nomadic, though a closer examination does reveal some nuance.

In *Endings*, for example, it is a village dependent on the adjacent desert for its survival that is

under threat as a result of overhunting and drought, and it is this possible loss that is privileged

and preemptively mourned. Furthermore, one of the sources of hope at the close of the novel is a

delegation bound for the capital to petition for the building of a dam. This would aid in the

survival of the human beings it would serve but would have the potential to damage the desert

ecosystem. The Palestinian texts I analyze are divided in their focus. Some, like *Sa'akūnu bayna*

al-lawz and *Palestinian Walks*, dwell on the loss or preservation of uncultivated wilderness, even

while evoking the history of cultivation that such spaces often conceal by identifying the signs,

like ruined structures, of this history. Other texts, like *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, are solely

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[8] Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* (London: Quartet Books, 1982).

[9] See Carol Bardenstein, "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine" in *Edebiyat* 8 (1998): 1-36.

concerned with cultivated farmland and its connection to the communities of human beings and domesticated nonhuman animals they support. The pastoral, here, is viewed as a part of nature. The tension between the preservation of uncultivated land and the protection of cultivated land is particularly evident in the Palestinian texts due to the politicization of both by the Israeli legal system. Wild land is easier for the state to seize while a demonstrable history of cultivation is often used as proof of Palestinian land ownership, which may prevent or at least complicate its appropriation. This point is explored at greater length throughout this dissertation.

Because eco-alterity as articulated in the texts studied in this dissertation is based in specific environments, I have approached commonalities and differences primarily from the perspective of geography rather than from that of language. Although many of these works could be comfortably classified as works of world literature, with their authors reflecting in their writings a range of personal literary encounters and influences, the majority were written in Arabic for an Arabic-speaking audience and as such fall within the broad category of Arabic literature. Within this geographically, temporally, linguistically, and generically diverse body of texts, distinct traditions with clear conventions for writing about nature and the environment emerge.

The natural world has found detailed and thoughtful representation in Arabic literary traditions since the pre-Islamic period. Representations of the environment changed and developed over the centuries, as new styles and approaches developed alongside different motivations for writing about nature and, of course, transformations, human and natural, in the physical environments themselves. What follows is a brief and by no means comprehensive sketch map of this history.

In the classical tripartite *qaṣīda* (pl. *qaṣāʾid*), descriptions of the nonhuman world of the desert were a generic convention. The 6th-century poetry of Imru' al-Qays, which portrays the flora, fauna, and natural phenomena of the speaker's environment in vivid detail, is illustrative. As the Bedouins left the Arabian Peninsula and began to settle in cities, nostalgia for the distant desert landscapes also found expression in poetry. One of the most well-known of these works is attributed to Maysūn bint Baḥdal, the wife of the first Ummayad caliph, Muʿāwiya Ibn Abī Sufyān, in the 7th century.[10] She expresses *ḥanīn* for what she views as her lost homeland and the way of life it represents in these lines: "Truly, a tent cooled by rustling breezes / is dearer to me than a high palace."[11]

Works of *jughrāfiyā*, geographical literature, written beginning in the 9th century, also describe the physical world, often as part of broader histories. In the 10th century, for example, Abu al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī authored *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādin al-jawāhir* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems), a work of history and geography that draws in part from his extensive travels. Over the course of its many volumes, al-Masʿūdī creates a cartography of the landscapes he passed through that maps out flora, fauna, and natural resources in addition to cities and other landmarks. During the ʿAbbasid period, nature poetry written in the urban centers of the caliphate, especially Al-Andalus, was descriptive and mostly focused on the

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[10] For a discussion of the poem's authorship, see J.W. Redhouse, "Observations on the Various Texts and Translations of the so-called 'Song of Meysūn'; An Inquiry into Meysūn's Claim to Its Authorship; and an Appendix on Arabic Transliteration and Pronunciation" in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 18.2 (1886): 268-322.

[11] Translation from Raymond Farrin, *Abundance from the Desert: Classical Arabic Poetry* (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 2011), 112.

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لبيت تخفق الأرواح فيه   أحب إليّ من قصر منيف

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Ḥannā ʿAbbūd, *al-Naẓarīya al-adabīya al-ḥadītha wa-al-naqd al-usṭūrī: dirāsa* (Damascus: Ittiḥād al-Kuttāb al-ʿArab, 1999), 120.

cultivated nature of gardens and orchards. Salma Khadra Jayyusi writes: "The art of description in Arabic did not solely aim at describing the beautiful, but at describing its object beautifully" (Jayyusi, 376). The poetry of Ibn Khafāja, known as *al-jannān* (the gardener), reflects this trend, but also moves beyond it to imbue nature with a spiritual significance, as in his famous mountain *bā'iyya* (a poem rhyming in the letter *bā'*).[12]

In the modern period, Egyptian nationalist literature of the 1920s and 1930s often contained detailed descriptions of the countryside, as in Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *'Awdat al-rūḥ* (1927; *Return of the Spirit*, 1990) and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1933; *Zainab* 1989). In the 1950s, Iraqi poet Badr Shākir Al-Sayyāb published his landmark "Anshūdat al-maṭar" (1954; "Hymn to Rain," 1972; "Rain Song," 1986), a revolutionary, anti-colonial work of free verse that draws on mythology and the cycles of nature for its imagery. Post-1948 Palestinian literature often emphasizes the close relationships between the Palestinian people and the land of Palestine and Israel, frequently through a focus on the pastoral. Ghassān Kanafānī's 1962 novella *Rijāl fī al-shams* (1962; *Men in the Sun*, 1978) embeds these descriptions within a transnational narrative that traces the path of refugees from Palestine to the oil fields of the Arabian Peninsula. Literary responses in Arabic to the oil boom have been plentiful across a range of genres, from a *munāẓara*, or "debate poem," authored by 'Aṭīya Ibn 'Alī of Bahrain in 1935 that adopts the perspectives of pearl-diving and oil wells to determine which is superior to novels like 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's quintet *Mudun al-milḥ* (1984-1989; *Cities of Salt*, 1987-1993).[13]

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[12] See Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Nature Poetry in Al-Andalus and the Rise of Ibn Khafāja" in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 367-397.

[13] Clive Holes, "The Debate of Pearl-diving and Oil-wells: a poetic commentary on socio-economic change in the Gulf of the 1930s" in *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures* 1.1 (1998): 87-112. For a discussion of oil in *Men in the Sun* and *Cities of Salt* see Ellen McLarney, "'Empire of the Machine': Oil in the Arabic Novel" in *boundary 2* 36.2 (2009): 177-198. Some recent examples of literature on pearl diving and the ocean environment surrounding the Arabian Peninsula include *Fī famī lu'lu'a* (2016; In My Mouth is a Pearl) by Maysūn Ṣaqr from the United Arab Emirates and *al-Najdī* (2017; al-Najdi) by Ṭālib Rifā'ī from Kuwait.

In the realm of poetry, it has been argued that contemporary vernacular *nabaṭī* poems are part of a centuries-old genre linked to the physical environment and the Bedouin who inhabited and continue to inhabit it across the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant, with roots in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* described above. Returning once more to a geographic, rather than a linguistic, focus provides additional insight into current trends in writing the environment in North Africa and the Middle East. For example, war diaries by Arab women writing in English, such as *Baghdad Burning: Girl Blog from Iraq* (2005) by the pseudonymous blogger Riverbend, catalogue "green carnage" among the other atrocities of war and conflict that more directly impact human bodies.[14]

Texts like *Baghdad Burning* that give attention to the nonhuman costs of conflict alongside their concern for human suffering reveal some of the challenges of representation posed by environmental crises. Although damage to the environment impacts human beings as well as flora, fauna, and the land itself, it often does so gradually, raising the question of how to effectively and compellingly communicate its urgency. Rob Nixon utilizes the term "slow violence" to refer to "a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon, *Violence* 2).[15] He cites climate change and deforestation as examples. Colonization and occupation entail acts of violence that are explosive and instantaneous as well as slow, especially in their re-shaping of the environment. In the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the excavation of oil, mining, and overhunting are written into the landscape,

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[14] Nadine Sinno, "Five Troops for Every Tree: Lamenting Green Carnage in Contemporary Arab Women's War Diaries" in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 36.2 (2014): 107-127.

[15] Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2011).

altering the environment. These practices also impact human populations in the present, encouraging or forcing their redistribution and disrupting traditional ways of life. In the long term, activities like the talc mining portrayed in *Seeds of Corruption* reveal their lasting impact through a legacy of increased respiratory illness and cardiovascular mortality.[16] Within the context of Palestine and Israel, the destruction of both cultivated and uncultivated land in the West Bank through its appropriation, often for the construction of settlements, can be shocking in its immediacy, as when olive trees are uprooted, or incremental and cumulative, as in the gradual movement of land seizure cases through the legal system. The texts explored in this dissertation overcome these challenges of representation by adopting a perspective of eco-alterity and employing one or a combination of three literary motifs: 1) ecological *ḥanīn* (feelings of nostalgia and yearning) accessed at the *aṭlāl* (ruins); 2) the figure of the ecological native; and 3) the creation of *al-makān—al-matāh* (the wandering place).

In Chapter 1, I examine the multiple meanings of *ḥanīn* and its connection in pre-Islamic poetry to the act of standing over the *aṭlāl*, or ruins. I make the argument that some authors have self-consciously adopted these motifs post-1967 as a way of writing Palestine that accommodates nostalgia for its past, critique of its contested present, and an imagining of a different future that disrupts the violence of the present. The joint presence of uncultivated nature and a history of human cultivation, represented by the *aṭlāl*, creates the literary space for a narrative containing multiple timeframes. I analyze Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī's *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* and Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks* alongside two Hebrew texts by Jewish Israeli authors, A.B. Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests" and David Grossman's *To the End of the Land*. Although

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[16] Jeffrey H. Mandel, Bruce H. Alexander, and Gurumurthy Ramachandran, "A review of mortality associated with elongate mineral particle (EMP) exposure in occupational epidemiology studies of gold, talc, and taconite mining" in *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 59.12 (2016): 1047-1060.

neither Yehoshua nor Grossman intentionally references the pre-Islamic trope of the *aṭlāl*, they treat Palestinian (or possibly Palestinian) ruins encountered in the wilderness as sites with an equivalent potential for the rewriting of history, the reinterpretation of the present, and the envisioning of an alternate future.

In Chapter 2, I move to a discussion of the ways in which the figure of the ecological native is framed in the spaces of the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, highlighting narratives of stewardship as well as instances of what Karen Thornber calls ecoambiguity in *The Bleeding of the Stone* by Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī and *Endings* by ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf. I open with an introduction of some of the terms mobilized in Islamic environmentalist discourse: *amāna* (trust), *khalīfa* (viceregent), and *tawāzun* (balance). The definition of ecological behavior in these two novels as well as in the Palestinian texts analyzed in the next chapter is based on these ideas, as well as, largely, on the respectful treatment of animals. I conclude this chapter with a reading of *The Tent* by Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī, which shows that women may serve as representations of the environment but not as stewards or guardians of it in the texts studied in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, I continue my analysis of the figure of the ecological native by looking at its manifestation in Palestinian texts centrally concerned with the physical environment. In Palestinian pastoralism, the *fallāḥ/a* (peasant) figure becomes a manifestation of the ecological native, demonstrating his or her entitlement to the land through productive cultivation of it, positive relationships with its domesticated nonhuman inhabitants, and *ṣumūd* (steadfastness). I rely on *A Lake Beyond the Wind* by Yaḥyā Yakhlif as a case study. Next, I introduce *The Inheritance* by Saḥar Khalīfa to show how the figure of the Palestinian ecological native is defined by ecoambiguity, rather than irreproachable ecological stewardship, upon closer

inspection. Finally, I return to *Palestinian Walks*. I argue that the narrator, Raja, invokes the narrative of *fallāḥ/a*-as-ecological-native as he walks through the hillside. However, he moves beyond this interpretation to embody a more modern and practical manifestation of the figure through his explicitly environmentalist message, his work as a lawyer fighting land seizure in the court room, and his activism outside of it. I end this chapter by proposing the notion of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism to describe the shift from a productive ecological *ḥanīn* discussed in Chapter 1 to a pure, unproductive nostalgia brought on through physical distance from the land imposed by exile or restricted access to it.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I adopt Adūnīs's concept of *al-makān—al-matāh* (the wandering place) to describe the creation of literary spaces in texts written by authors in motion about places that have also been set to wander in some sense. These places, once again, are located in either the deserts of North Africa or the Arabian Peninsula or Palestine. I argue that these literary wandering places, located "elsewhere" from the reader as well as from the author, are rendered accessible through their characterization as translocal or universal. A translocal desert space is produced in *Seeds of Corruption* by Ṣabrī Mūsā and a translocal Palestine is created in *Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl* by Muḥammad al-Makhzangī. The desert is universalized in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, as Palestine is in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*. *The Tent* moves toward the creation of a universal space in *al-makān—al-matāh*, but then actively resists the accessibility that this framing would offer.

As an area specialist with training in comparative literature, I had several goals in mind as I wrote this dissertation. By approaching the literature of North Africa and the Middle East with a focus on its depictions of and attitudes toward the physical environment, I bring it into conversation with the existing geographies and theoretical frameworks of ecocriticism. The

reliance on eco-alterity for the formulation of a land ethic and the representation of the slow violence of environmental crisis is not exclusive to this literature. However, the utilization of motifs grounded in Arabic literary traditions for its expression, such as the invocation of ecological *ḥanīn* at the *aṭlāl* and the specific manifestations of the ecological native grounded in the spaces of the desert and Palestine, is particular to texts connected to these regions. Similarly, literatures based in other geographies have made landscapes located "elsewhere" accessible through their transformation into translocal or universal spaces. However, the adoption of the notion of a*l-makān—al-matāh* provides a new lens for viewing the external conditions that make the creation of such spaces possible. The environmental, historical, and political contexts that produced the texts treated in this dissertation are local and specific, but not, when approached individually, without parallels. They can be read, for example, as works of desert, oil, and/or postcolonial literature—corpuses not framed by region or language. Perhaps, then, the imaginative possibilities that they suggest for care of and engagement with the physical environment and the nonhuman world will experience afterlives through their engagement with other linguistic, geographic, and theoretic spaces.

Chapter 1
Ecological *Ḥanīn* at the *Aṭlāl*

The ongoing conflict in Palestine and Israel has sparked crises on a variety of scales. Some produce violence that is easily repackaged for quick consumption. For example, suicide bombings and bloody clashes in the streets between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian youths lend themselves to portrayal in the media, film, and literature. Images of the struggle over the Israeli uprooting of olive trees are similarly widespread. Such representations, often simplified, form more or less coherent episodes within a broader, more complex narrative. However, the conflict has also created crises that do not fit neatly into a clear narrative arc. Some are taking decades to unfold. These examples of slow violence create challenges to representation. In addition to extended time frames, which are the hallmark of many environmental crises, both local and global, the Palestinian-Israeli context produces violence that is neither explosive nor slow. Colonial systemic and environmental violence is difficult to frame and represent because it is frequently indirect. Violence that impacts the land and the nonhuman world is often eclipsed by violence that causes direct damage to human beings, resulting in immediate physical harm or even death, even though the indirect violence of oppression and occupation eventually writes itself on human bodies as well. These individual acts of indirect violence can be fast or slow, but because their immediate target is nonhuman, they sometimes lack the inherent narrative urgency that drives the depiction of other forms of direct violence.

One such crisis is the post-1948 land reclamation projects that have sought to erase any historical trace of Palestinian presence from the landscape. Within Israel, afforestation campaigns have worked to obscure the evidence of Palestinian inhabitation in conjunction with efforts to "Hebraize" the geography following the establishment of the Jewish state. As Ilan

Pappe writes in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, this project has been "in essence none other

than a systematic, scholarly, political and military attempt to de-Arabise the terrain—its names

and geography, but above all its history (Pappe, 226).[17] In the West Bank, the gradual

appropriation, destruction, and degradation of Palestinian land through the construction of Israeli

settlements represents another crisis of indirect violence. These settlements, in combination with

the infrastructure built to support them, have fragmented the West Bank into a patchwork that

contains the Palestinian community in isolated enclaves. The West Bank, bordered by Israel on

the North, West, and South, and Jordan on the East, was occupied by Israel in 1967 during the

Six-Day War. In 1995, as part of the peace process, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on

the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, commonly known as Oslo II, divided the West Bank into

three administrative areas. Area A (18% of the West Bank) is under the jurisdiction of the

Palestinian Authority; Area B (22% of the West Bank) is jointly administered, although only

Israel has authority over security; and Area C (60% of the West Bank) is under full Israeli

control. All Israeli settlements are in Area C.[18]

Raja Shehadeh describes the process of environmental transformation in the West Bank

in *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*.[19] When he comes upon construction for

a new road that would connect four separate settlements, he writes:

> There was so much upheaval, it was as though the entire earth was being re-
> shuffled. Developers were levelling hills, destroying the terracing and excavating
> large boulders from the ground for service in retaining walls. Israeli settlements
> no longer consisted of modern enclaves planted in our midst that could be
> reversed. Enormous changes were taking place that it was hard not to see as

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[17] Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

[18] For a detailed history of the West Bank, see James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge U P, 2007); Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 2009); and Ilan Pappe, *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2017).

[19] Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* (London: Profile Books, 2008).

permanent. It was as though the tectonic movements that had occurred over thousands of years were now happening in a matter of months, entirely re-drawing the map. The Palestine I knew, the land I had thought of as mine, was quickly being transformed before my eyes (Shehadeh, *Walks* 175-176).

Although the Israeli reshaping and restructuring of the West Bank has taken decades, there is nothing slow about the processes observed by Shehadeh. He juxtaposes the Israeli development of the land with the natural changes of the earth. Both drastically altered the geography of this place, but the Israelis have accomplished "in a matter of months" what took "the tectonic movements…thousands of years." The violence of the transformation is communicated through Shehadeh's word choices, as he employs terms like "upheaval" and "destroying." And Shehadeh leaves no doubt that this violence will impact Palestinians when he mourns the loss of "the Palestine I knew, the land I had thought of as mine."

Some of this territory has been taken by force. However, land is often confiscated through an ostensibly legal process that manipulates the 1858 Ottoman Land Law to designate uncultivated and unoccupied land as "public land," which is authorized for state seizure. Land historically cultivated by Palestinians is also at risk if no title exists.[20] The settlement project has its roots in the 1967 Allon Plan and was further elaborated in the 1978 Drobless Plan, which framed settlement as a Jewish right as well as a necessity for security. In practice, the settlement plan foreclosed the possibility of a coherent Palestine. Sara Roy writes: "Fundamentally, Drobless aimed to normalize and institutionalize land expropriations by eroding 1967 borders, thus making territorial retreat problematic, if not impossible. The idea, if not to make annexation easier, was to make separation harder" (Roy, 73).[21] According to human rights organization

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[20] Gary Fields, "Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42.1 (2010): 63-82.

[21] Sara Roy, "Reconceptualizing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Key Paradigm Shifts," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41.3 (2012): 71-91.

B'Tselem, there were 125 government-sanctioned Israeli settlements and 100 "settlement outposts" in the West Bank as of 2013.[22] As of 2010, settlements controlled 42% of the West Bank.[23]

Given the motivations for settlement, it is perhaps not surprising that environmental concerns are often ignored. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman write in *A Civilian Occupation*: "In an environment where architecture and planning are systematically instrumentalized as the executive arms of the Israeli state, planning decisions do not often follow criteria of economic sustainability, ecology or efficiency of services" (Segal and Weizman, Intro, 19).[24] One of the ways in which Israel and its Jewish settlements in the West Bank explain their presence is through greenwashing. A clear example of greenwashing can be found in the 2014 American advertising campaign for SodaStream International Ltd., a company primarily known for its manufacture of home carbonated water and soda makers. Spokesperson Scarlett Johansson opens a 2014 Super Bowl spot with the following words: "Like most actors, my real job is saving the world." Demonstrating how the carbonated water maker works, she continues: "Look, soda that's better for you and all of us. Less sugar, less bottles."[25] Here, an environmentalist message distracts from questions about who benefits from the manufacture and sale of SodaStream products, and who may be harmed by them. At the time, SodaStream's manufacturing facility for

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[22] "Statistics on Settlements and Settler Population," *B'Tselem*, 1 January 2011 (updated 11 May 2015). <http://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics>.

[23] *By Hook and By Crook: Israeli Settlement Policy in the West Bank*, *B'Tselem*, July 2010. < http://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files2/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf >.

[24] Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, "Introduction" in *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, eds. Rafi Segal, David Tartakover, and Eyal Weizman (New York: Verso, 2003), 19-26.

[25] Super Bowl TV Commercials, "SodaStream Scarlett Johansson 2014 Super Bowl Ad – Sorry Coke & Pepsi," YouTube Video, 0:32, 28 January 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCbcGzcgqY0>. Note that the ad has been removed from the official SodaStream YouTube channel.

the soda fountain was in the Mishor Adumim industrial park, part of the industrial zone of

Ma'ale Adumim settlement, the second largest of about 20 Israeli-administered industrial zones

in the West Bank.[26] Critics accused SodaStream of profiting from the Israeli occupation of the

West Bank. Businesses like SodaStream are attracted to West Bank industrial zones by tax

breaks and other incentives, including decreased oversight of environmental regulations, and in

turn play a role in consolidating Israeli control of the West Bank.[27] All of these industrial zones

are located in Area C. As a result of the outcry that followed, Scarlett Johansson resigned her

position as a Global Ambassador of Oxfam International[28] and, eventually, SodaStream relocated

its manufacturing plant to Lehavim inside of Israel in the Negev Desert.[29]

Even while the State of Israel and the settlements degrade the environment through their

actions and policies, they justify their control of the land in part by arguing that the Palestinians

have proved themselves to be poor stewards of the land. This image of Jewish Israeli ecological

responsibility is supported through massive tree planting campaigns, the creation of nature

reserves, and a range of other efforts. Intervention in the environment is in fact a fundamental

element of the Israeli ideal of earth care. Stuart Schoenfeld highlights the "ambivalence" of the

Zionist slogan "making the desert bloom," noting that "[i]t is about…being in connection with

the earth, but it does not value the letting the desert be as it is found, rather making it become

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[26] Geneviève Coudrais, "Sodastream" in *Corporate Complicity in Israel's Occupation: Evidence from the London Session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine*, eds. Asa Winstanley and Frank Barat (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 113-115.

[27] *Occupation, Inc.: How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israel's Violations of Palestinian Rights*, *Human Rights Watch*, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/israel0116_web2.pdf>.

[28] Ben Child, "Scarlett Johansson steps down from Oxfam ambassador role," *The Guardian*, 30 January 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/30/scarlett-johansson-oxfam-quits-sodastream>.

[29] Ian Black, "SodaStream to move factory out of West Bank Israeli settlement," *The Guardian*, 29 October 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/oct/29/sodastream-move-factory-west-bank-israel-slash-forecast>.

something else" (Schoenfeld, 98).[30] This is mostly beside the point, anyway, since Palestine and Israel are not all, or even mostly, desert. Alan George notes in "'Making the Desert Bloom': A Myth Examined" that much of the country has a "Mediterranean" climate and has been successfully cultivated for centuries.[31] The idea of "making the desert bloom" is a fabrication that goes hand-in-hand with the Zionist myth of "a land without a people for a people without a land." The thinking is that if Palestine was a desert, then surely it was mostly uninhabited before the Jewish immigrants arrived to redeem it. And, if it was not uninhabited, then the ability to more productively cultivate the earth provided the framework for the Zionist claim of rightful stewardship, leading Alan George to write: "[I]t is an astonishing assertion that sovereignty over a territory should belong to the people best able to develop its resources" (George, 89). This same reasoning, however, was later embraced by Palestinian authors like Ghassān Kanafānī and Yaḥyā Yakhlif following the establishment of Israel in 1948. These writers appropriated and subverted the Zionist concept of "making the desert bloom," utilizing the depiction of generations of productive Palestinian cultivation of the land in literature as a means of asserting entitlement to it and delegitimizing Jewish Israeli counterclaims, a point explored at length in Chapter 3.

In reality, Jewish settlements in the West Bank often pollute the surrounding land and exploit water and other resources, as touched on briefly in my discussion of the Mishor Adumim industrial park. The Israeli-owned Dead Sea Cosmetics concern, which produces Ahava products and operates in the northern Dead Sea area is another example. The factory and its visitors'

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[30] Stuart Schoenfeld, "Types of Environmental Narratives and Their Utility for Understanding Israeli and Palestinian Environmentalism" in *Palestinian and Israeli Environmental Narratives*, ed. Stuart Schoenfeld (York: York U P, 2005), 93-113.

[31] Alan George, "'Making the Desert Bloom': A Myth Examined," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8.2 (1979): 88-100.

center are located in the Mizpe Shalem settlement, which also co-owns the company. The Dead Sea Cosmetics concern is the only company licensed by Israel to excavate the mineral rich mud from the West Bank areas of the Dead Sea.[32]

Israel also controls the majority of the water resources in the West Bank. In 2008, the almost 10,000 settlers in the agriculturally rich Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea area received nearly one-third as much water as was allocated to all of the 2.44 million West Bank Palestinians.[33] Drilling by Mekorot, the Israeli national water company, significantly impacts water flow in springs accessed by Palestinians in the West Bank. Only 21% of Palestinian water resources in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under Palestinian control.[34] Ben Ehrenreich, writing in *Harper's Magazine* in December 2011, elaborates: "West Bank Palestinians consume an average of fifty liters of water per day….That's precisely half the amount the World Health Organization has determined as necessary to guarantee basic health and sanitation, and a quarter the quantity used by the average Israeli. In the poorest and driest parts of the West Bank, the figure drops to ten liters per day" (Ehrenreich).[35] Untreated wastewater and agricultural runoff, as well as improper disposal of sewage and solid waste, including hazardous industrial waste, pollutes water resources.[36] This pollution is caused by settlers, Palestinians, and Israel itself,

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[32] *Dispossession and Exploitation: Israel's Policy in the Jordan Valley and Northern Dead Sea*, B'Tselem, May 2011, < http://www.btselem.org/sites/default/files2/201105_dispossession_and_exploitation_eng.pdf >. *Ahava: Tracking the Trade Trail of Settlement Products*, *Who Profits*, April 2012, <http://www.whoprofits.org/sites/default/files/ahava_report_final.pdf >.

[33] *Dispossession and Exploitation*, May 2011.

[34] *Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief: occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)*, *Sida*, 3 November 2013, <http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Environment-and-Climate-Change-Policy-Brief-oPt.pdf>.

[35] Ben Ehrenreich, "Drip, Jordan: Israel's water war with Palestine," *Harper's Magazine*, 2011, <http://harpers.org/archive/2011/12/drip-jordan/ >.

[36] *Troubled Waters—Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water*, *Amnesty International*, 2009, < https://www.amnestyusa.org/pdf/mde150272009en.pdf >.

which utilizes a number of dump sites within the West Bank. In Gaza, it is estimated that 90 to 95% of the water is contaminated and unfit for human consumption.

All of these examples of environmental degradation and land appropriation are forms of violence. This kind of violence is often indirect and sometimes slow, even when the statistics themselves are attention-grabbing. Because it reshapes the land itself rather than targeting human bodies directly, its representation and critique relies on thoughtful and nuanced attention to the nonhuman world—its flora, fauna, and geographies—even when emphasis remains on the impact of these processes on human beings. One of the methods by which Palestinian poets and authors have dealt with these challenges of representation is through the adoption and adaptation of classical tropes and themes, such as the motif of the *aṭlāl* (ruins) and the ecological *ḥanīn* (feelings of nostalgia and yearning) that they inspire. Together, they create a space for remembrance of the past, critique of the present, and envisioning and framing of the future. The physical environment, and especially the natural world, create the conditions for this temporal co-presence, which also encompasses the Israeli other in its imagination.

Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī's *Sa'akūnu bayna al-Lawz*[37] and Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* express a *ḥanīn* articulated through engagement with nature at the site of the *aṭlāl* in the world of the text. Both texts are semi-autobiographical. The former was written in Arabic and the latter in English. This chapter also includes a discussion of the representation of ruins of Palestinian-built structures reclaimed by nature, and the *ḥanīn* that they inspire, in two Hebrew texts: A.B. Yehoshua's short story "Mul ha-ye'arot"[38] (1968; "Facing the Forests," 1970) and David Grossman's novel *Ishah boraḥat mi-besorah*[39] (2008; *To*

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[37] Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 2004).

[38] A.B. Yehoshua, "Mul ha-ye'arot" in *Mul ha-ye'arot: sipurim* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-Me'uḥad, 1968).

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the End of the Land, 2010). It could be argued that these four texts are drawn from three distinct literary traditions (Arabic, English, and Hebrew). However, all four texts are connected geographically by the shared physical space of Palestine and Israel that they describe, a landscape that is the subject of multiple narrations. Furthermore, there is overlap between the three literary traditions, even though translations between Arabic and Hebrew are limited. David Grossman reads Arabic and many Palestinians, especially those residing within Israel, read Hebrew.[40] Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh (1941-2008) has discussed the influence of Hebrew poet Hayyim Bialik (1873-1934) on his work.[41] Authors like Grossman and Shehadeh know each other—Grossman documented their conversations in *Ha-Zeman ha-tsahov* (1987; *The Yellow Wind*, 1988). Although some authors signal a reluctance for literary exchange,[42] others, like Anton Shammas, a Palestinian who writes in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, seem to embody it.[43]

In the first section of this chapter, I will trace the history of the relationship between *ḥanīn*, the *aṭlāl*, and nature in Arabic literature more broadly and identify some of the differences between *ḥanīn* and nostalgia. In the remaining sections, I will compare the usage of the motifs of

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[39] David Grossman, *Ishah boraḥat mi-besorah* (Tel Aviv: ha-Ḳibuts ha-Me'uḥad, 2008).

[40] Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2014).

[41] See Khaled Mattawa, *Mahmoud Darwish: The Poet's Art and His Nation* (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 2014).

[42] See, for example, Jewish Israeli author Meir Shalev who, when asked in an interview about the importance of reading Palestinian literature, said, "If you only have two hours of literature per week, then *Moby Dick* and Dostoevsky are more important than Mahmoud Darwish. Literature must not just become a little donkey that has to carry all these political issues on its back" (Shalev, 84-85).

In Runo Isaksen, *Literature and War: Conversations with Israeli and Palestinian Writers*, Trans. Kari Dickson (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2009).

[43] See Levy, *Poetic Trespass*; and Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2007).

ḥanīn and the *aṭlāl* in the two Palestinian and two Jewish-Israeli texts. All four offer the possibility of co-presence of a Palestinian and Israeli past, present, and future at the *aṭlāl*. The imbrication of the manmade ruins with nature creates a space for a potentially productive ecological *ḥanīn* that enables the overlap of linear and circular time.

I. The Cry of Ḥanīn

Modern Palestinian writing about the environment is often infused with a sense of *ḥanīn*, a mood or attitude that is commonly translated into English as "nostalgia." However, assuming a direct correspondence between these two terms and using them interchangeably is unnecessarily limiting. *Ḥanīn*, the infinitive noun of the verb *ḥanna*, is defined by Edward William Lane[44] as "*[a] yearning, longing,* or *desire; a yearning,* or *a longing, of the soul*: or *the expression of pain arising from yearning* or *longing* or *desire*: *violence of weeping:* and *a lively emotion:* or the *sound produced by such emotion, proceeding from grief,* or *from joy:* or *a sound proceeding from the bosom on the occasion of weeping*" (Lane, Book I, 653).[45] In the classical Arabic *qaṣīda*, where the earliest recorded expressions of *ḥanīn* are found, this yearning is often for a lost beloved and "the temporal aspects of longing clearly precede or at least dominate the spatial ones," Susan Enderwitz explains (Enderwitz, 60).[46] It is not until later that the idea of physical distance from a yearned-for site finds expression. Although the *aṭlāl* (أطلال) (ruins) of an

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[44] British Orientalist Edward William Lane (1801-1876) compiled his Arabic-English lexicon while in Egypt. The complete title of the work is *An Arabic-English Lexicon: Derived from the Best and Most Copious Eastern Sources*. Lane drew from a number of medieval Arabic lexicographic works, as well as, primarily, the 18th century *Tāj al-'Arūs* by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā to create his masterpiece (d. 1791).

Peter Stocks, "Edward William Lane and His Arabic-English 'Thesaurus,' *The British Library Journal* 15.1 (1989): 23-34.

[45] Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863).

[46] Susan Enderwitz, "Homesickness and Love in Arabic Poetry" in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New Hermeneutic Approach*, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló, Sebstian Günther, and Maher Jarrar (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 59-70.

abandoned campsite or *dār* (دار) (abode) that traditionally serve as the opening marker for the classical Arabic *qaṣīda* exist in space, their primary function is to provide a link to another time. Jaroslav Stetkevych writes that they represent an "absolute past," an "archetypal point of regression" through which the poet is able to access the less distant past (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 24).[47] Time in the classical Arabic *qaṣīda*, according to J. Stetkevych, moves toward the present from the *aṭlāl*, "along the lines of what resembles perspectival foreshortening," but flowing "from the distant vanishing point rather than streaming toward it" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 24). In other words, the past moves toward the poet as he stands over the *aṭlāl*, until both his memories and his present reality coexist in the same, shared space.

Despite this early focus on the temporal, the *ḥanīn* caused by physical displacement would later be described in Arabic literature as well. Enderwitz traces the roots of this form of *ḥanīn* to the *hijra*, the migration of the Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina in 622, after which "a new type of longing for one's home developed, the spatial longing of the sedentary or, in other terms, homesickness instead of nostalgia" (Enderwitz, 62). Albert Arazi observes in "al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān: Entre la Ğāhiliyya et l'Islam" that *ḥanīn* was presented as "instinctive" in the *adab* anthologies of the ninth and tenth centuries focused specifically on longing for the homeland (Arazi, 293). [48] The author of the ninth century *Al-Ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān* (variously

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[47] Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasīb* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993).

[48] Albert Arazi, "al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān: Entre la Ğāhiliyya et l'Islam: Le Bédouin et le citadin reconciliés," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 143.2 (1993), 287- 327.

In "Dislocation and *nostalgia: al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*: Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature," Wadad Al-Qadi cautions that *al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān* literature did not become part of a recognized genre until the appearance of the "*rithā' al-mudun*" ("elegies of cities"), which were written "when Muslim cities [began] to fall into non-Muslim hands, often permanently" (al-Qadi, 19).

Wadad al-Qadi, "Dislocation and *nostalgia: al-ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*: Expressions of Alienation in Early Arabic Literature" in *Myths, Historical Archetypes, and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature: Towards a New*

identified as al-Jāḥiẓ or al-Kisrawī) writes of a king who had left the country of his birth and, despite his many successes, continued to yearn for his homeland in the same way that camels were known to yearn for their watering holes: "If he recalled his soil and his homeland, he yearned for them like camels yearn for their watering holes" (al-Jāḥiẓ, 364).[49] This was part of a broader trend in contemporary texts of describing the yearning of a variety of animals for their homelands that led to "a development of the link between nostalgia and the animal world" (Arazi, 293). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Lane's definition of *ḥanīn* verges on the primordial. He describes a "*yearning, longing,* or *desire*" that can be "*violent*" in its intensity. It is the animalistic part of a human being that suffers from *ḥanīn* when s/he is separated from her/his homeland or the beloved. *Ḥanīn* is both the feeling itself and the sound caused by that feeling, granting it a physicality expressed through its effect on the body and its embodiment in sound. It is both internal and external.

This aural quality of *ḥanīn* is evident in a *ḥadīth* (a prophetic tradition) collected by ninth-century Persian scholar Imām al-Tirmidhī in his *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*. It reports that the Prophet Muḥammad would deliver the *khuṭba* (Friday sermon) while leaning against the trunk of a date palm. When it was replaced by a *minbar* (pulpit), "The trunk [of the date palm] cried/yearned [*ḥanna*] like a she-camel [*ḥanīn al-nāqa*]" (فحن الجذع حنين الناقة).[50] The verb *ḥanna* here describes both the feeling of loss and yearning experienced by the trunk of the date palm as

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Hermeneutic Approach, eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló, Sebstian Günther, and Maher Jarrar (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1999), 3-31.

[49] فكان إذا ذكر التربة والوطن حنّ إليه حنين الإبل إلى أعطانها.

al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, Part II, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, n.d.).

[50] Imām al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ wa huwwa sunun al-tirmidhī*, Part I, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Egypt: Sharikat maktabat wa maṭbaʿat muṣṭafā al-bābī al-ḥalabī wa awladihi, 1978). Ḥadīth #3627. Translation mine.

well as the sound that those emotions produce. It is as intense and instinctive as a she-camel's cry for her young.

At the same time, *al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān* is considered a mark of refinement. Wadad Al-Qadi explains that "longing to one's homeland is elevated in the corpus to the level of a moral virtue: it has the same sanctity as that of parents, and it is a sign of maturity, nobility, wisdom, gentility of the spirit, consideration, compassion, nobility of character, purity of integrity and nobility of descent" (Al-Qadi, 8). See, for example, the following in *Al-Ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*: "The sanctity of your country to you is like the sanctity of your parents, because your nourishment comes from them, and their nourishment comes from it" (al-Jāḥiẓ, 395).[51] Arazi explains this idea as follows: "Loyalty to the homeland is matched only by our loyalty to our parents. This analogy plays out on other levels: just as our parents provide our sustenance, the homeland ensures life to our bodies" (Arazi, 294). An explicit notion of "mother earth" is not widely found in Arabic literature.[52] However, the idea of the earth nurturing the body and, in that way, creating a link between it and its inhabitants is not uncommon.

Ḥanīn, especially when felt for the distant homeland, indicated emotional and intellectual maturity and nobility, even at the same time that it revealed something primitive about human nature. The connotations of *ḥanīn* are largely positive,[53] in contrast to nostalgia, which scholars and activists have long argued is not productive and have often condemned as overly ideological

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[51] حرمة بلدك عليك مثل حرمة أبويك؛ لأنّ غذاءك منهما، وغذاءهما منه.

[52] Enderwitz points to the following exception, collected in one of al-Jāḥiẓ's compendia and attributed to a Bedouin: "A sandy place, its dunes were my womb and its clouds my nurse. Its valleys gave me birth and its wells nursed me" (Enderwitz, 70). I have not been able to locate the original Arabic.

[53] There also exists a corpus of what Al-Qadi identifies as "Pro-Alienation Literature," which challenges the positive valuation of *al-ḥanīn ilā al-awṭān*. These texts question "the assumption that there is a 'natural' link between an individual and a place" and some go so far as to "[redefine] 'homeland' [*waṭan*] as 'the place where you land,' meaning that homeland is the place to which your travels take you and which you pick out to be your domicile" (Al-Qadi, 13). From this point of view, *ḥanīn* obscures the benefits of departure and travel.

and ahistorical. In the modern period, nostalgia has the potential to repress colonial and imperialist histories as it creates idealized official narratives that legitimate present realities, often in service of the nation. As early as 1973, Raymond Williams criticized its presence in the pastoral tradition, describing it as an "escalator" in which each successive generation looks fruitlessly to the former for what it perceives it has lost.

In *The Future of Nostalgia* Svetlana Boym argues that nostalgia in fact does have the potential to be a productive force. She divides the term into its component parts— "*algia*— longing" and "*nostos*—the return home" (Boym, xv).[54] She distinguishes between "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia," arguing that while the former "stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home," the latter "thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming" (Boym, xviii). Restorative nostalgia "does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition" (Boym, xviii). In contrast, reflective nostalgia "dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity" (Boym, xviii). It "can present an ethical and creative challenge" (Boym, xviii). Boym emphasizes the potential of "reflective nostalgia" to function as a powerful counterpoint to the possibly regressive force of "restorative nostalgia."

Using Boym as a starting point, Jennifer Ladino argues in *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* that nostalgia, even when centered on *nostos*, "the return home," can be a useful tool when employed critically. "Counter-nostalgia," as she calls it, "revisits a dynamic past in a way that challenges dominant histories and reflects critically on the present" (Ladino, 16).[55] It can be a "productive force," whether it functions as "an individual

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[54] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

[55] Jennifer K. Ladino, *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2012).

emotional experience, a source of collective consciousness, or a narrative catalyst that imagines ways to facilitate social and environmental justice" (Ladino, xiii). Ladino is concerned with "the ways in which specific literary homes are imagined as sites from which the politics of the present may be renegotiated" (Ladino, 15). Wen-Chin Ouyang echoes this sentiment when speaking of the Arabic novel in *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel*, writing that "interrogation of the past is synonymous with the search for future" (Ouyang, vi).[56] Speaking specifically of the representation of Al-Andalus in modern Arabic literature, William Granara similarly argues that the Andalusian chronotope goes beyond the restorative nostalgia of yearning for "a paradise lost" to "[signify] the heightened focus of the 'now' as well as the hopes and aspirations of what is to come. It is less a dialectic of 'what was' vs. 'what is' than a dialectic of 'what is' and 'what should or shall be' that compels Al-Andalus to be remembered and re-created over and over again" (Granara, 72).[57] Whether restorative or reflective, or both, nostalgia can play an important role as long as its focus on the past is used as a lens through which to view and reshape the present and the future.

The Future of Nostalgia and Boym's framework have become the touchstones to which later studies on nostalgia return, regardless of context, utilizing her understanding of nostalgia as either a guide or a foil for critique. Although Boym's work is wide-ranging, her primary focus is Europe and the United States. Her discussion of the history of nostalgia, tied as it is to the term itself, begins with the Greek root and its coinage by a Swiss doctor at the end of the 17th century and ends with a description of its development into "an incurable condition" with a "Jekyll and

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[56] Wen-Chin Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P, 2013).

[57] William Granara, "Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism, and the Andalusian Chronotope in the Evolution of the Modern Arabic Novel," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 36.1 (2005): 57-73.

Hyde" relationship to modernity (in the European sense, of course) (Boym, xviii, xvi). She

provides explorations of the cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin, as well as readings of

20th century Russian-American artists and writers in exile, including novelist Vladimir Nabokov,

poet Joseph Brodsky, and artist Ilya Kabakov. In the former section, Boym is concerned

primarily with these cities' changing position toward the "European romance" and the idea of

"Europe" (Boym, 230). In the latter, she compares these exiles' constructions of imagined

homelands and juxtaposes both their critique and their longing with the imaginative efforts of

ordinary Russian immigrants, interpreted through analyses of their homes.

It is tempting to rely on Boym's history of nostalgia in Europe and utilize her framework

while disregarding her own application of that framework to carefully curated contexts. In this

way, it can be argued that nostalgia is a human condition, even more so because of its European

roots, rather than a culturally and historically specific phenomenon. And it is true that works of

Arabic literature—classical, modern, and contemporary—often do express restorative or

reflective nostalgia as understood by Boym. However, the authors, texts, and places under study

in this chapter are located outside of Europe, within histories and literary traditions that possess

connections and parallels to those of Eastern Europe, but are nonetheless distinct. While I

acknowledge the importance of Boym's conception of nostalgia then, and utilize it, I also

approach the texts in this chapter from the perspective of *ḥanīn*—and what I have termed

ecological *ḥanīn* in particular.

Ḥanīn also has a variety of meanings and nuances, as discussed above. The key elements

that both distinguish *ḥanīn* from Boym's nostalgia and render it ecological in my framing are: 1)

It is accessed through presence at a specific physical site where nature interpenetrates with the

manmade ruins (*aṭlāl*). 2) Because of the author's physical presence at the site, yearning for a

specific time replaces yearning for place. This yearning for a different time by necessity accompanies a critique of the present, which in turn encompasses a vision of an alternate future.

3) There is a physicality to *ḥanīn* that can render it a material as well as an emotional experience.

The earliest manifestations of *ḥanīn* are in the classical Arabic *qaṣīda*, which traditionally opens with the poet standing over the *aṭlāl* and delivering an elegy, often recalling the departure of his beloved. This portion of the *qaṣīda* is known as the *nasīb*. Perhaps the most famous example of this archetype can be found in the *Muʿallaqa* (pl. *muʿallaqāt*) of Imruʾ al-Qays, which Jaroslav Stetkevych describes in *The Zephyrs of Najd* as "the *locus classicus* of pre-Islamic *nasīb* toponymy" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 110):

<div dir="rtl">

بسقط اللوى بين الدخول فحومل   قفا نبك من ذكرى حبيب ومنزل

لما نسجتها من جنوب وشمال   فتوضح فالمقراة لم يعف رسمها

</div>

> Halt, two friends, and we will weep
>> for the memory of one beloved
> And an abode at Siqṭ al-Liwā
>> between al-Dakhūl and Ḥawmal
>
> Then Ṭudiḥ, al-Miqrāt, whose trace
>> was not effaced
> By the two winds weaving over it
>> from south and north[58]

There is a call to stop at the ruins in order to pause to remember the past. Time is linear in the *qaṣīda*, as the past shared with the beloved is gone, never to return. The abodes become for the poet "a resting place of his memories," as J. Stetkevych writes (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 180). However, these memories housed by the abodes bleed into the present, made manifest and preserved by the odes themselves. In *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition*, Huda Fakhreddine notes that "all opening elegiac motifs," including the standing upon the *aṭlāl*, "are windows

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[58] Translated by Suzanne Stetkevych in *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1993), 249.

through which the past is allowed to creep into the present, enabling the poet to enter into a moment on the interface between past and present" (Fakhreddine, 98).[59] The co-presence of the past and the present in the present therefore also renders time circular. John Seybold, writing in "The Earliest Demon Lover," sees in this circularity (or perhaps cyclicality), a kind of rebirth: "in addressing the ruins and their former inhabitants, [the poet] confronts his own death and is inspired to a vision of rebirth, the *nasīb* proper, the paradise of his past, now lost" (Seybold, 182).[60] The departure of the beloved and her tribe is a kind of death through which the wilderness is reborn. The poet, through his presence at this laden site, serves as a conductor through which the past is also reborn in the present, without eclipsing it. Fakhreddine describes the *nasīb* as an "almost voluntary revisiting of the past that develops into an involuntary resurging of memories that take on a form and shape of their own. In that sense the initial stance of the *nasīb* serves to ignite memory, thus allowing the past to take over the present moment and transform it completely" (Fakhreddine, 99). Both past and present are re-rendered, changed into something new through their recontextualization in a space that they jointly inhabit.

The list of place names that fill the first two lines of the *qaṣīda* identifies it as a marked site in the landscape. Erik Swyngedouw refers to "place" as "transformed nature," highlighting the role of "social relations" in the "production" of place out of space (Swyngedouw, 131).[61] These were populated sites, inhabited and communally "placed" by human beings. At the same time, S. Stetkevych, noting their symbolic importance, writes that their names "suggest the

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[59] Huda J. Fakhreddine, *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition: From Modernists to Muḥdathūn* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[60] John Seybold, "The Earliest Demon Lover: The *Ṭayf al-Khayāl in al-Mufaḍḍalīyāt*" in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Stetkevych (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1994), 180-189.

[61] Erik Swyngedouw, "Scaled Geographies: Nature, Place, and the Politics of Scale" in *Scale and Geographic Inquiry: Nature, Society, and Method*, eds. Robert B. McMaster and Eric Sheppard (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 129-153.

fecundity of nature: Tūḍiḥ, from the root *w-d-ḥ* (clarity), and al-Miqrāt, a pool where water gathers" (S. Stetkevych, *Immortals* 260). The fertility of the natural world is manifested through its rebirth. The reassertion of this circularity, or cyclicality, in places produced by human beings, creates the space and conditions in which the time of human experience can also break free of its absolute linearity.

Another example of the *nasīb* is Labīd's "paradigmatic" *Mu'allaqa*, which opens as follows (S. Stetkevych, *Immortals* 9):

عفت الديار محلها فمقامها بمنى تأبد غولها فرجامها

...

من كل سارية وغاد مدجن وعشية متجاوب إزامها

فعلا فروع الأيهقان وأطفلت بالجلهتين ظباؤها ونعامها

والعين ساكنة على أطلائها عوذا تأجل بالفضاء بهامها.

...

عريت وكان بها الجميع فأبكروا منها وغودر نؤيها وثمامها

1. Effaced are the abodes,
    brief encampments and long-settled ones;
At Minā the wilderness has claimed
    Mount Ghawl and Mount Rijām.
…
5. From each night-faring rain cloud
    and early morning horizon-darkener
6. The *ayhuqān*[62] thrusts up its shoots, and
    on the two sides of the valley
Gazelles and ostriches
    have borne their young.
7. Wide-eyed oryx cows, newly-calved,
    stand above their newborns, motionless,
While on the plain the yearlings
    in clusters caper.
…
11. Stripped bare where once a folk had dwelled,
    then one morn departed;
Abandoned lay the trench that ran around the tents,
    the *thumām*[63] grass that plugged their holes.[64]

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[62] A tall desert plant with wide leaves and small purple flowers.

[63] *Panicum turgidum*, a kind of bunch grass.

I quote at length here to show the importance of natural imagery in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, and the role it plays in expressing *ḥanīn*. Terri DeYoung notes that from the pre-Islamic period, the *aṭlāl* and "the natural world" have "interpenetrated" in the *qaṣīda* (DeYoung, 138).[65] The ruined abodes provide the point of entry into the past as well as the path for its reintegration into, though not its restoration in, the present. The *dār*, as J. Stetkevych reminds us, etymologically conveys "an intimation of the prevailing shape of roundness" through its three-letter root (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 181). The verb دار (*dāra*) means "*he*, or *it, moved, or turned, round; circled; revolved; returned to the place from which he,* or *it, began to move*" (Lane, Book I, 930). The expression دارت الأيام (*dārat al-ayyām*), "the days came round in their turns," appears in several classical Arabic lexicons (Lane, Book I, 930). The cyclicality of nature therefore already inheres in the manmade structures of the *aṭlāl*.

The "wilderness" has "effaced" the abodes. The traces that remain of human presence in the area are nearly obscured by the new animal and plant life that is thriving. The *ayhuqān* grows and the gazelles, ostriches, and oryxes have all recently given birth. There are "clusters" of oryx yearlings, indicating that this abundance follows on the heels of another fertile year. S. Stetkevych reads "a subtle personification" into the scene, arguing that "[g]azelle does and oryx cows are, in Arabic poetry, the conventional simile for the poet's beloved and the women of her tribe. It is thus almost inevitable that we read into these two verses a sublimation of the poet's yearning for lost love, for a love that failed, and see in the parturition and nurturing of the gazelle does and oryx cows a metaphor for what might have been" (S. Stetkevych, 20). The poet stands as a contrast to the cyclicality of nature, embodying the linearity of time.

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[64] Translated by Suzanne Stetkevych in *The Mute Immortals Speak*, 9-10.

[65] Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq* (Albany: SUNY U P, 1998).

S. Stetkevych writes: "The 'separation' of the poet from his past as lived in these dwellings is obvious. What we have here, however, is not the individual's separation from a continuous 'social structure' but the departure of society itself; it has disappeared" (S. Stetkevych, *Immortals* 18). The *aṭlāl* of the ruined abodes represent a past that will never return. At the same time, though, the deterioration of the manmade remains is accompanied by and even facilitated by nature. S. Stetkevych continues: "The poet's desolation, thus projected on the ruins, is expressed in terms of a nature/culture dialectic—the encroachment of nature and the concomitant departure of culture" (S. Stetkevych, *Immortals* 18). In other words, "what was once settled, cultivated, is now grown wild" (S. Stetkevych, *Immortals* 18). Adding the word "again" to S. Stetkevych's statement ("what was once settled, cultivated, is now grown wild" again) highlights the alternate temporal timeframe offered by nature. The cyclicality of rebirth is emphasized by the animals and their generations of young that now inhabit the former campsite. It is here once again that the evoked past stands not as a counterpoint to the present, but as an expanding force within it.

The *ḥanīn* of these two *muʿallaqāt* is an intensely personal experience and the natural world's overtaking of the *aṭlāl* is viewed with a certain inevitability. The singular of "أطلال" (*aṭlāl*), *ṭalal*, refers to "a portion still standing of the remains of a dwelling or house." Referencing the 18th century Arabic dictionary *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, Edward William Lane explains in his lexicon: "the people of the towns or villages apply the term أطلال [*aṭlāl*] to the *remains of walls* and *of places of worship*; and the people of the tents to [the *remains of*] *places of eating and of drinking* and *of sleeping*" (Lane Book I, Part IV, 1863). Given the realities of nomadic life, it was only a matter of time before the campsite would be reduced to *aṭlāl* and reclaimed by the wild. This is in contrast to later expressions of *ḥanīn*, such as the *rithāʾ al-mudun* (elegies or

laments for cities), which mourned the loss or destruction of cities in the Arab East during the 'Abbasid period (8ᵗʰ-13ᵗʰ centuries) and in al-Andalus between the 11ᵗʰ and the 15ᵗʰ centuries. The *ḥanīn* of these poems was for a lost place, an urban site built to be permanent, at a particular time in its history. Arazi writes: "it is a new form of *ḥanīn* that was born. One no longer yearns for a region that has been left and which one burns to see again; one cries here nostalgic for a hometown that has left us forever….Separation is therefore final" (Arazi, 318-319). The definitiveness of loss in these cases was accompanied by a sense of tragedy, rather than inevitability.

The poetic practice of pausing over the *aṭlāl* that was forged by the pre-Islamic poets and exemplified by Imru' al-Qays and Labīd continues to be invoked by poets and authors of Arabic literature in the modern period.[66] In *Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon*, Ken Seigneurie makes the argument that the "ruins topos" and the yearning it inspires in the literature of North Africa and the Middle East reflects "the articulation of a 'structure of feeling' widely distributed throughout the Arab world and its dialogically inflected sister cultures such as the Persian, Jewish, and Eastern Christian" (Seigneurie, 15).[67] Hilary Kilpatrick asserts in "Literary Creativity and the Cultural Heritage: The *Aṭlāl* in Modern Arabic Fiction" that "the *aṭlāl* motif has acquired the status of an archetype in Arabic literature"

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[66] The continued prevalence of the trope of the *aṭlāl* in modern Arab culture is also evident in the popular song "Al-Aṭlāl." "Al-Aṭlāl," a poem by Egyptian poet Ibrāhīm Nāgī, was set to music by Egyptian composer Rīād Al-Sonbāṭī and sung by famous Egyptian singer Umm Kulthūm in 1966. "Al-Aṭlāl" has been called "the most memorable song of her discography" (Ezzat).

Dina Ezzat, "Umm Kalthoum 40 Years Later: 'She was never gone,'" *ahramonline*, 5 February 2015, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/5/33/122284/Arts--Culture/Music/Umm-Kalthoum--years-later-She-was-never-gone.aspx>.

[67] Ken Seigneurie, *Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon* (New York: Fordham U P, 2011).

(Kilpatrick, 30).[68] She frames the pre-Islamic *qaṣā'id* as foundational texts with literary and cultural influence comparable to that of epics like the *Odyssey* and the *Mahabharata*, tracing the development of the motif of the *aṭlāl* across genre and language in the modern period from Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's episodic narrative *Ḥadīth 'Īsā ibn Hishām* (1909; *What 'Īsā Ibn Hishām Told Us*, 2015) and Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī's novel *Bayn al-Aṭlāl* (1952; Among the Ruins) to Palestinian novels like Isaak Diqs's *A Bedouin Boyhood* (1967), written in English, and Ghassān Kanafānī's *'Ā'id ilā Ḥayfā* (1970; *Returning to Haifa*, 2000) and Imīl Ḥabībī's *Ikhṭīyya* (1985; Ikhtiyya), both written in Arabic. Seigneurie, echoing Kilpatrick, notes that the *mu'allaqāt*, like those discussed above, "are as fundamental to Arab culture as the epic is to the West, reflecting and constantly reestablishing aesthetic and social structures of feeling that transcend social class, religious affiliation, and gender categories" (Seigneurie, 17). Seigneurie insists that "[i]t would, in fact, probably take an effort to depict memory and longing in Arabic without some intersection with the classical topos," even though modern contexts and experiences are distinct from those that inspired the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* (Seigneurie, 19).

The *ḥanīn* of the modern and contemporary texts discussed in this dissertation is certainly less positive, with similarities in tone to the *rithā' al-mudun*. This is due largely to the circumstances of its creation, which are not perceived as natural. Colonialism, occupation, and forced displacement create a rupture with the past, and that rupture is laid at the feet of a demonized other. The *aṭlāl* represent a painful and permanent departure and their replacement at some sites with new manmade structures enforces the onward march of a linear time that no longer includes the poet or author—or, sometimes, nature.

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[68] Hilary Kilpatrick, "Literary Creativity and the Cultural Heritage: The *Aṭlāl* in Modern Arabic Fiction" in *Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Arabic Literature: Essays in Honor of Professor Issa J. Boullata*, eds. Kamal Abdel-Malek and Wael Hallaq (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 28-44.

In "Ṭalaliyyat al-birwah" (2009; "Standing before the Ruins of Al-Birweh," 2011),

Maḥmūd Darwīsh writes:

لصاحبي: قفا.. لكي أزن المكان
وقفره بمعلقات الجاهليين الغنيّة بالخيول
وبالرحيل. لكُلِّ قافية سننصبُ خيمةً.
ولكل بيتٍ في مهبِّ الريح قافية... [69]

        I say to my two companions:
        Stop so that I may weigh the place
        and its emptiness with *Jahili* odes
        full of horses and departure
        For every rhyme we will pitch a tent
        For every home to be stormed by the wind,
        there is a rhyme[70]

In this case, the *aṭlāl* that Darwīsh stands before are those of his former village of al-Birweh, a

Palestinian village that was razed following the establishment of the State of Israel. An Israeli

settlement now stands in its place. Although the physical site was destroyed, al-Birweh has

experienced an afterlife in Palestinian literature and collective memory, in part due to its

association with Darwīsh. In the poem, memories of the lost home replace those of the beloved.

Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the lost home has become the beloved for

which the poet pines. The line "I say to my two companions: Stop" (لصاحبي: قفا) echoes Imru' al-

Qays's "Halt, two friends" (قفا). The imperative used (stop/halt), though translated differently in

each poem, is the same in Arabic. While Imru' al-Qays urges his friend to weep with him from

the start, Darwīsh first pauses to weigh his own *ḥanīn* against that of the pre-Islamic poets,

ultimately marshalling their sense of loss to buttress his own.

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[69] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Ṭalaliyyat al-birwah," *Lā urīdu li-hādhihi al-qaṣīda an tantahī: al-dīwān al-akhīr* (Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 2009), 109-111.

[70] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Standing Before the Ruins of Al-Birweh," Trans. Sinan Antoon, *Jadaliyya* (2011), < http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23789/Mahmoud-Darwish-Standing-Before-the-Ruins-of-Al-Birweh>.

Darwīsh's prose poetry collection, *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿadī* (1973; *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, 2010), also invokes al-Birweh. It opens with a conversation between the poet and his childhood in which he explains that nothing remained of the village of al-Birweh when he later returned to visit but ruins and some familiar trees and flora. Nature here provides communal evidence of a history of cultivation and personal markers of memory, rather than signaling a cyclical return of "culture" to "nature." He writes: "A place is not only a geographical area; it's also a state of mind. And trees are not just trees; they are the ribs of childhood (Darwīsh, *Journal* 15).[71] Al-Birweh is the home for which Darwīsh always yearned and to which he could never return. The natural world, although superficially neutral, continues to provide signposts to the past, even when all built evidence of former habitation is gone. For Darwīsh, these trees are the "ribs" (أضلاع) of his childhood from which the mature poet grew, just as Ḥawwā' (Eve) is said in Islamic tradition to have been created from the rib of Ādam (Adam).

In the Palestinian context, it is the indirect environmental violence of Israeli settlement, occupation, and oppression—which is both fast and slow—that poses a challenge for representation. One way in which Palestinian literature has answered this challenge is through the utilization of a kind of ecological *ḥanīn* that highlights the human disaster of colonization and occupation through its focus on the destruction and despoliation of the environment. In the following sections, I will discuss the link between *ḥanīn*, the *aṭlāl*, and nature in contemporary literature on the Palestinian-Israeli environment. I will discuss two Palestinian texts: *Saʾakūnu*

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[71] ليس المكان مساحة فحسب، إنه حالة نفسية أيضا. ولا الشجر شجر ، إنه أضلاع الطفولة.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Yawmīyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādī* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1973), 12. Translation from Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *Journal of an Ordinary Grief*, Trans. Ibrahim Muhawi (Brooklyn: Archipelago Books, 2010).

bayna al-lawz by Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī and *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* by Raja Shehadeh. I will also touch briefly on the Hebrew Texts "Facing the Forests" by A.B. Yehoshua and *To the End of the Land* by David Grossman. Both authors are Jewish Israelis who, along with Amos Oz before his death in 2018, made up "the three tenors" of Israeli literature, known for their criticism of Israel, despite its limited nature.[72]

II. The Aṭlāl *as a Meeting Point for Past, Present, and Future*

Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī (1954-2002) was born in Kobar, near Ramallah. After studying in Budapest, he returned to Palestine to pursue a B.A. in English Literature at Birzeit University. He then earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Washington. Al-Barghūthī authored numerous works of scholarship, poetry, fiction, and autobiography, including *al-Ḍaw' al-azraq* (2001; The Blue Light) about his experiences living in Seattle. *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* treats the final years of the author's life in Palestine after he is diagnosed with cancer. Al-Barghūthī passed away in 2002 and this text was published posthumously in 2004. The frequent detours of the narrator, Ḥusayn, into his childhood are framed by a threefold ecological *ḥanīn*.[73] First, his encounters with the contemporary natural world provide the point for his uncritical entry into the past. Then, they create a space of temporal co-presence that incorporates that past, a critique of the shared present, and a vision for the future. Ultimately, the narrator's ecological *ḥanīn* leads to the relocation of Palestine within a

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[72] Jonathan Freedland, "AB Yehoshua: Instead of dealing with Palestine, the new generation do a play or write a story," 22 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/22/ab-yehoshua-books-interview-the-extra-israel-palestine>.

[73] The protagonist of *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, whose name is Ḥusayn, is never directly identified as the author. I will therefore refer to him as Ḥusayn to maintain a distinction between him and the author. I will do the same in my discussion of *Palestinian Walks*, referring to the narrator as Raja. Even though the narrator is clearly identified as the author, Raja Shehadeh, he is in the end a representation of Shehadeh, which is a distinction worth maintaining when approaching the text as a work of literature.

transnational environmental consciousness in which the return home is figured as a universalism that includes, rather than replaces, the local. This final point will be explored in Chapter 4.

Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz is of course concerned, like many Palestinian texts, with the literal "return home." The text initially appears to long in a relatively straightforward manner for the restoration of an idealized past that is gone. However, it also positions the home and the past it evokes as a site from which to critique the present and serve as a counterpoint to other, in this case Israeli, histories written on the landscape. Although Ḥusayn's own exile was self-imposed and he is able to return to the West Bank when he chooses to do so, he writes within a literary tradition centrally concerned with inserting the Palestinian narrative of expulsion into dominant Israeli narratives of the nation and its origins that gloss over or suppress this history.

Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz opens with the narrator, Ḥusayn, standing atop the ruins of his childhood home near al-Deir al-Juwwānī, a former monastery, during the period of the Second Intifada (2000-2005). He writes: "I had planned to return for some time. So, I visited the mountains of my childhood one night. The moon was full, the silence complete among the ruins of the old, demolished monastery, on the peak of a mountain far from the village (al-Barghūthī, 34-35).[74] The narrator refers to al-Deir al-Juwwānī as the "mountains of his childhood." But their significance stretches back in time well beyond his own youth. Ḥusayn utilizes the ruins as a site through which to access his family's memories and history, as well as his own. A few paragraphs later, he more explicitly vocalizes the link between the *ḥanīn* that leads to the past and the *aṭlāl*: "This memory of the place came to my mind while I was standing atop the ruins" (al-Barghūthī, 36).[75] It is here that Ḥusayn remembers his uncle, Qadūra, who was killed by a bite from a

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[74] كنت أخطط للعودة من زمن. فزرت جبال طفولتي، ليلاً. كان القمر كاملاً، والصمت شاملاً، بين خرائب ((الدير)) قديم ومهدم، في قمة جبل بعيد عن القرية .

[75] خطرت ببالي ((ذاكرة المكان)) هذه، وأنا واقف فوق الخرائب.

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tailless snake, and his mother, who planted the seed of an almond tree taken from al-Deir al-Juwwānī in the garden of her new home after she married his father. The word "*deir*," which means monastery, also summons the site's more distant history, before it was repurposed as a home for his relatives. *Ṭalal*, the singular of *aṭlāl*, can mean the "*body*, or *bodily* or *corporeal form* or *figure* or *substance, such as one sees from a distance,*…of a thing, whatever it be" (Lane Book I, Part IV, 1863). In this sense, the *aṭlāl* of al-Deir al-Juwwānī refer to the ruins themselves as well as to the misty figures of Ḥusayn's ancestors that populate his stories, and their predecessors.

It is also from al-Deir al-Juwwānī that Ḥusayn can see Deir Ghassāna, where his grandfather grew up and lived until he quarreled with his family's elders. According to the stories that Ḥusayn has heard, he slaughtered 12 of his relatives, stole their livestock, and escaped to al-Deir al-Juwwānī, where Ḥusayn was born. Standing atop the ruins, Ḥusayn is able to visually trace his roots back a century and a half. The act of looking down from the height of the mountain is significant, as it challenges the panoptic power of the settlements. The term *aṭlāl* can refer to "elevated places" and Ḥusayn begins to use the name al-Deir al-Juwwānī and the topographic signifier "the mountains" interchangeably as the text progresses, emphasizing the perspective it offers.

Even though Ḥusayn doesn't use the word *aṭlāl* to describe the ruins of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, his descriptions, as well as his positioning of this scene at the opening of the text, invokes the motif. The word he chooses is "*kharā'ib*" (خرائب), which conveys a greater level of destruction. Whereas the *aṭlāl* of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* in particular are evidence of a deserted site that was never meant to be anything but transient, given the nature of the campsite and the seasonal movements of the tribes, the word *kharā'ib* in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* describes the

remnants of a built structure that was intended to be permanent. Al-Deir al-Juwwānī was

constructed to endure in a way the abodes of the pre-Islamic poets never were. In using the word

kharā'ib, Ḥusayn summons the imagery and connotations of the *aṭlāl* through context while

communicating the ways in which his own experience differs from that of the pre-Islamic poets.

As in the classical Arabic *qaṣā'id* described at the beginning of this chapter, nature has

overtaken what remains of the *aṭlāl* atop the mountain. Here among the plants and animals,

Ḥusayn is led to recall his own childhood as well as the family history that helps shape his sense

of self. Tales of his mother and father as well as fantastic stories about his aunts and uncles that

have a mythic quality flow through his mind and flood the space around him. Ḥusayn's

experience of *ḥanīn* emanates from the circular earth-time of the wilderness in which he stands

and makes round linear human time. The past and the present blur and the surrounding

environment becomes a series of timeless images or "moments" like the following:

وفي لحظة أسرع من حلم رأيت قطيع غزلان يعبر الطريق، ويتقافز ويعطس، وكلُّ غزلان يبدو معلَّقاً في
الفضاء لوهلة ثم يقع، كنت كأنني أرى قطيع ظلال غامض، والشجر كان داكناً، ولكنَّه أوشك أن يغنِّي. ثَم
حلَّ صمت مخيف، وكأنَّ شيئاً لم يكن، صمت أشبه ما يكون بمرور زمن سحيق على جمال ساد ثم باد.

وقفت كمن وقعت على رأسه الطير...

In a moment quicker than a dream, I saw a herd of deer crossing the road,
jumping and snorting. It seemed as if each deer was suspended in the air for a
moment and then fell. It was as if I were seeing a herd of dark shadows. The trees
were dark, but they were about to sing. Then a frightening silence fell, as if
nothing had happened, a silence like the passing of ancient times over a beauty
that had once prevailed and had now vanished.

I stood like someone upon whose head birds had landed (al-Barghūthī, 44).

Ḥusayn stands in the moonlight as the herd of deer passes. The scene is eerie and dreamlike.

Time is both accelerated ("quicker than a dream") and slowed ("It seemed as if each deer was

suspended in the air for a moment and then fell"). The trees seem ready to burst into song,

pointing to the surrealism of the encounter and hinting at its celebratory nature. The silence that

falls in the deer's wake is frightening and Ḥusayn admits that it is as if a more ancient time has eclipsed the present. At that moment, it is no longer clear if the herd, made up of little more than shadows, exists in this moment, in the past, or only in Ḥusayn's imagination. There is no question, though, that the deer belong to this wilderness in a way that persists even when they themselves are gone. The shadows cast by Palestinians, Ḥusayn later muses, may not have the same everlasting connection to place: "When someone completely loses his past, you are able to create the future for him that you wish, because he has lost his shadow that stretches across history" (al-Barghūthī, 115).[76]

Atop the mountain in the moonlight, time collapses into itself, as in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. The text itself is an effort by Ḥusayn to cast his shadow across history by narrating al-Deir al-Juwwānī, but he knows that he is already at the end of his life. His certainty is communicated in the final line of the scene, when Ḥusayn says: "I stood like someone upon whose head birds had landed (وقفت كمن وقعت على رأسه الطير)". This image emphasizes the stillness of the encounter and hints at the fragility of Ḥusayn's own connection to the natural world of the mountain. At the same time, when combined with the mention of the dream, this line evokes the sura of Joseph in the Qur'an.

In the scene in question, Joseph is imprisoned with two other men, both of whom ask him to interpret their dreams. The second man says: "I see myself [in a dream] carrying bread on my head, and birds are eating, thereof" (إني أراني أحمل فوق رأسي خبزا تأكل الطير منه) (Qur'an, Yūsuf [Joseph] 12:36).[77] Joseph tells the man that the dream means that he will be hanged and "birds will eat from off his head" (فتأكل الطير من رأسه) (Qur'an, Yūsuf [Joseph] 12:41). Ḥusayn, too,

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[76] عندما يفقد أحد ماضيه تماماً، تستطيع أن تصنع بمستقبله ما تشاء، لانه قد فقد ((ظله)) الممتد في التاريخ.

[77] All translations from the Qur'an are from *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 11th ed., Trans. 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 2004).

knows that his death is inevitable and that he will also nourish the earth and its creatures after he is dead. All he can do is hope that, like the man in the sura, he will first find a path to the eternal, and al-Deir al-Juwwānī is the gateway. He says: "I became addicted to returning to al-Deir al-Juwwānī. It was as if I was captivated by the wind of my ancestors there and was trying to construct my 'beginnings' from their 'endings'" (al-Barghūthī, 38).[78] The *aṭlāl* provide the link between past, present, and a hoped-for future. Ḥusayn elegizes a past that is gone and a future that he will not live to see. The ruins serve as a point of entry into personal and communal memory, but they also ultimately offer a site from which to interpret the present and negotiate the reality that is yet to come. The narrator of *Palestinian Walks* similarly utilizes the ruins he encounters in the Palestinian countryside as a conduit to connect his present to his family history, which is in this case a distant relative's experience of the same shared space.

III. Palestinian and Israeli Co-Presence in Palestinian Literature

Raja Shehadeh (b. 1951) was born in Jaffa and currently lives in Ramallah. He founded the human rights organization Law in the Service of Man/al-Haq, the West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, and has authored numerous books in English on the Israeli Occupation, relying on his experiences as a lawyer in and resident of the West Bank. These include *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* (1982), *When the Birds Stopped Singing: Life in Ramallah Under Siege* (2013), and *Where the Line is Drawn: A Tale of Crossings, Friendships, and Fifty Years of Occupation in Israel-Palestine* (2017). *Palestinian Walks*, first published in 2007, maps the landscape of the West Bank through a series of walks that Shehadeh records over the course of twenty-seven years (1978-2007). It won the Orwell Prize in 2008.

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[78] أدمنت العودة نحو الدير الجواني، وكأنني مأخوذ بالوقوف في مهب ذكريات أهلي القدماء هناك، وأحاول تركيب ((بداياتي))، من ((نهاياتهم)).

Shehadeh's genealogical connection to a specific site in the West Bank landscape is more complex than is al-Barghūthī's in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*. After living in Ramallah for hundreds of years, Shehadeh's ancestors immigrated to Jaffa. There, his grandfather worked as a judge and his father as a lawyer until they were forced to leave in 1948. The former went to Beirut and the latter "returned" to Ramallah, though Shehadeh and his family no longer owned land in the countryside surrounding the city. He first encountered the landscape in the courtroom with his father, a specialist in land law like him.

In *Palestinian Walks*, the narrator, Raja, views the hills around Ramallah as "remote and foreign" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 3). He, his father, and his grandfather are contrasted with his grandfather's cousin, Abu Ameen, who never left Ramallah. After working for many years, Abu Ameen purchased a piece of land in the surrounding hill country. Here, he and his wife spent their honeymoon building a *qaṣr* (pl. *quṣūr*), which Raja explains "literally means 'a castle'" but in this context "refers to the mainly round stone structures dotting the land where farmers kept their produce and slept on the open roof" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 8). This place, named Ḥarrāsha, is where Abu Ameen would spend six months of each year while he tended to his land, which he planted with olive trees and grape vines. He later carved a throne for himself out of stone to sit upon as he looked out over the fruits of his labor and the surrounding countryside.

Raja acknowledges that the story of Abu Ameen and his wife building the *qaṣr* is unusual, since "ordinarily the building of a *qasr* was a communal affair" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 21). However, Abu Ameen's family did not feel a connection to the land and most of his relatives ended up leaving Ramallah. The link Abu Ameen forged with the land was local, personal, and consciously cultivated, rather than inherited. The site's name, Ḥarrāsha, which means

"roughness" or "coarseness," underlines the constant effort required to make the land inhabitable and productive.

In his youth, Raja viewed Abu Ameen as a romantic figure, labeling his stories about his life as "just family myth, folklore" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 24). However, sometime after Raja begins hill walking, he stumbles upon what he believes to be the legendary Ḥarrāsha. Like the other *quṣūr* scattered throughout the countryside, many of which are in disrepair, it is clearly abandoned. The agricultural activities that necessitated their presence are no longer practiced and they are merely reminders of an old way of life that was already disappearing when Ḥarrāsha was built.

Even before realizing that the *qaṣr* is the very one built by Abu Ameen, Raja feels a connection to the human life of the past that it marks and it leads him to recall his relative. He writes: "It was as though in this *qasr* time was petrified into an eternal present, making it possible for me to reconnect with my dead ancestor through this architectural wonder" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 15). There is a co-presence of past and present like that experienced by Ḥusayn at the ruins of al-Deir al-Juwwānī. However, Raja's sense of *ḥanīn* is for a past that only loosely belongs to him. His family has roots in Ramallah going back several centuries, but this is not Ramallah. Raja's inheritance of the site is further complicated by his tenuous connection to its late owner, whose own connection to the land depended on personal commitment and conscious effort, and relied above all on sustained presence.

Raja reaffirms his link to Abu Ameen by digging up and then sitting upon the throne that he carved. He notes that its creator "must have had similar proportions," positioning himself as Abu Ameen's natural successor (Shehadeh, *Walks* 17). As Raja sits upon the throne before the abandoned *qaṣr*, the past infiltrates the present. Once again, this shift in time from the linear to

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the round is mediated through the natural world, this time the sound of the pine trees blowing in the wind: "As I sat there on the *a'rsh* [throne] the whispers of the pine trees sounded like the conversation of a family gathered in a circle in their garden. As I listened the memories of Abu Ameen and the kind of life he lived began to come back" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 17). The *aṭlāl* once again become the site through which communal (an unidentified "family"), as well as personal (Abu Ameen), memory and history are accessed. Raja's connection to Ḥarrāsha, though less direct than Ḥusayn's claim to al-Deir al-Juwwānī, is strong. His *ḥanīn* actively works to challenge the competing nostalgia of Zionism, which originates in ancient texts, by stressing its dynamic vitality. Furthermore, by linking his *ḥanīn* to the natural world, he ensures that the "conversation of a family" that he hears in "the whispers of the pine trees" will continue after he is gone.

Whereas the abandoned campsites of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* were reclaimed only by nature, uninhabited spaces like the *qaṣr* and al-Deir al-Juwwānī are under constant threat of being claimed by the Israeli state as well. The legal move is justified as a "reclamation," as the property "'reverts' back to those whom the Israeli system considers the original, rightful owners of 'Judea and Samaria,' the Jewish people, wherever they might be" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 13). Nature itself is used as a tool in the Israeli expropriation of Palestinian land, with legal advisors pointing to the presence of the weed *naṭsh* (النطش), crotalaria or rattlepods, as evidence that "the land was uncultivated and therefore public land that the Israeli settlers could use as their own" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 53). This is the feared-for future that joins the past and the present as Raja sits atop the throne, and it is particularly noteworthy once one pauses to consider the original motivation for building the *quṣūr*. As Raja notes, "these structures served a purpose only in places far away from built-up areas" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 18). In other words, the *qaṣr* has always

been a sign of human absence. It is only the changed historical and political circumstances that cause a shift in signification that re-designates the *quṣūr* as markers of presence.

In a final effort to lay claim to the site of Ḥarrāsha, or at least the memories and history that it holds, Raja returns years later in 2003, during the Second Intifada, with his 10-year-old nephew, Aziz. Raja's goal is "to show him his ancestor's *qaṣr* and have him sit upon the *aʻrsh*" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 36). However, when they arrive, they discover that the *qaṣr* remains but the throne "had been desecrated and displaced, becoming just another of the many rocks dispersed over the side of the hill" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 37). The structure of the *qaṣr*, built from individual rocks, is somehow a less powerful reminder of human habitation for Raja and Aziz than was the throne carved from a single stone. Perhaps this is because the throne represented both an understanding of the ultimate indomitability of nature, shaped as it was from a boulder too large for Abu Ameen to move, and the domination of nature, represented by the successful carving of the stone into a form that served a human being. As such, the throne functioned as a site for the joint presence of the cyclical time of nature and human linear time, through *ḥanīn*.

The *qaṣr* holds no interest for Aziz, so they search the countryside for something else to capture his imagination. At the edge of Ramallah stands a different kind of *aṭlāl*, the ruins of the bombed-out former headquarters of the Palestinian Police. Here, Aziz discovers a piece of an unexploded missile, evidence not of an idealized past but rather of a period of ecological and human annihilation. The construction of the station was part of a broader project of expansion that irrevocably altered "the wild and beautiful hills" around Ramallah, flattening and reshaping the countryside (Shehadeh, *Walks* 37). It was then destroyed by an Israeli fighter jet during the Second Intifada, creating a constant reminder of that period of violence and conflict. The past that is accessed here is purely communal and political. It is the present that is personalized when

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Aziz picks up the piece of unexploded missile. The *aṭlāl* of the bombed-out station replace Abu Ameen's ruined throne as Aziz's inheritance, and also threaten to serve as his grave. In the moments that pass between the young boy's discovery of the lethal, unnatural object and Raja's careful return of it to the ground, past, present, and a dreadful possible future expand to fill the physical space of the *aṭlāl*.

These *aṭlāl* represent a liminal space between Ramallah and the path that leads to Ḥarrāsha. It is in fact Raja's distracted search for that path, that old connection, that causes him to leave his nephew unsupervised until the piece of unexploded missile is already in his hands. By the end of the chapter, Raja has failed in his effort to pass his intimate connection to the land of Abu Ameen onto his nephew. The ruins of the police station become a barrier, rather than merely a site of transition, interrupting the flow of *ḥanīn* that previously led directly from Raja's house in Ramallah to the abandoned *qaṣr* and throne in Ḥarrāsha.

Something similar happens in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*. From Ḥusayn's vantage point atop the ruins, one tale bleeds into another until his eyes fall on an Israeli settlement and the chain is broken, displacing his memories and jerking him into the present reality that surrounds him. He says:

> غرباً، في قمة جبل مغطَّى بغابات صنوبر وسرو وبلوط، تشع أضواء النيون من مستعمرة إسرائيلية تدعى ((حلميش))، عندهم، و((مستعمرة النبي صالح))، عندنا. أضواء باردة، وكاشفة، ومحاطة بأسلاك شائكة. وبدت المستعمرة معلقة في الفضاء، ربما بسبب الضوء، أيضاً، ولم تلمس الأرض، ولا التاريخ بعد.

> ماذا يرى مستعمر جاء من روسيا أو أستونيا، ربما، قبل سنة فقط، حين يفتح الآن شباكه، ويحدق في هذه الجبال نفسها التي أنا فيها؟...لن يرى، حتماً، الأفعى الملونة التي تطير وتزغرد فوق الخرائب، ولن يسمع هذا الصوت الذي يبكي، ولا هذا السرَّ الذي يجعل حتى مصاباً بالسرطان يمشي فيها في الواحدة ليلاً! لن يلمس التاريخ، ولو كان عرَّافاً، ليس تاريخي أنا، على الأقل، ولو كان إلهاً.

> To the west, atop a mountain blanketed with forests of pine, cyprus, and oak, neon lights shone from an Israeli settlement, which they called Ḥalamīsh and we called the Prophet Ṣāliḥ's Settlement. It had cold searchlights and was surrounded by barbed wire. The settlement appeared to be suspended in the air, perhaps because of the light. It didn't touch the land, nor history.

What will a settler who came from Russia or Estonia, maybe no more than a year ago, see when he opens the window now and gazes at the same mountain where I stand?...He will certainly not see the colored snake that flies, ululating above the ruins, nor hear this voice that cries, nor this secret that drives even someone sick with cancer to walk at 1:00 am among the ruins at night! He will not touch history, even if he is a soothsayer. At least not my history, even if he is a god (al-Barghūthī, 36).

The settlement, portrayed as invasive, artificial, and completely self-contained with its "cold searchlights" (أضواء باردة، وكاشفة) and "barbed wire" (أسلاك شائكة), contrasts sharply with the dark and peaceful forests of the surrounding environment. It is so disconnected from the land that it appears to float above it, a disconnection emphasized by the conflict between its two names. The Prophet Ṣāliḥ's Settlement (مستعمرة النبي صالح) is named for a prophet mentioned in the Qur'an.[79] As he does not appear in the Jewish or Christian traditions, the name underlines the Muslim Palestinian presence here. The story of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ, who was chosen by God to lead the people of Thamud away from idolatry, centers on a she-camel that was a gift from Allah intended as a sign. The people of Thamud are commanded: "Let her feed upon Allah's earth and do not touch her with harm" (فذروها تاكل في أرض الله ولا تمسوها بسوء) (Hūd [The Prophet Hūd] 11:64). However, they slaughter the camel, creating a narrative of victimization that echoes or foreshadows that of the Palestinians. Linear human time disrupts the cyclicality of nature, represented by the she-camel as she grazes upon God's earth, as well as by Ḥusayn as he stands among the ruins in the text. Ḥalamīsh (حلميش) on the other hand communicates a foreignness in Arabic since it is not an Arabic word. In Hebrew, it means "flint" (חלמיש). This reference to the mineral seems to contest claims of the settlement's unnaturalness in the landscape. Flint is hard, hinting at stability, but splinters easily, revealing its relative fragility. When struck, flint produces sparks capable of starting a fire. The name Ḥalamīsh thus emphasizes the fracture

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[79] See Al-A'rāf [The Heights] 7:73-79 and Hūd [The Prophet Hūd] 11:61-68.

points that weaken the settlements, but also indicates the dangers they pose to the surrounding environment.

The settlement's inhabitants, imagined by Ḥusayn as recent immigrants from distant countries, peer out at the natural world as if from a great distance. The narrator, in contrast, is completely imbricated in his environment. He stands upon a mountain among the "forests of pine, cyprus, and oak," as much a part of this land as the trees themselves. Despite his long absence, he positions himself as belonging to this place, comfortable enough to walk through it at night alone. His stories lay claim to the land, while at the same time tethering him more tightly to it. They weave a history that will remember the shape of its geographies, no matter if it is replaced by new histories.

Even the natural process of birth, and the extension of self it represents, is disrupted by the Israeli presence. From the moment Ḥusayn's son, Āthar, comes into the world, the sky above him is full of Israeli helicopters and aircraft. As a result, his first word is "ṭā'ira" (plane). Ḥusayn compares him to a sunflower that rather than tracing the movement of the sun with his face, follows the sound of the helicopters. This comparison is particularly poignant in Arabic, given that sunflowers are called *'abbād al-shams* (عباد الشمس), servants or worshippers of the sun.[80] Āthar, too young to understand the historical and political reasons for the presence of the helicopters, treats the military aircraft with an awe that contrasts sharply with his father's own reverence for the natural world, and al-Deir al-Juwwānī in particular. The object of Ḥusayn's worship stresses his connection to a place of the past, just as his son's devotion to the helicopters and planes in the sky reflects his belonging to this new reality.

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[80] The notion of childhood development being impacted by an Israeli military presence perceived as unnatural is not unique to *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*. In the documentary *5 Broken Cameras* (2011), the first words of Palestinian cameraman Emad Burnat's son, Gibreel, are "wall" (جدار), "bullet" (رصاص), and "army" (جيش).

In *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, the Israeli settlers are condemned for their despoliation of the environment and the memories that it contains, underlining Ḥusayn's more favorable, econostalgic depiction of his connection to al-Deir al-Juwwānī and its past inhabitants. Raja Shehadeh adopts the same attitude in *Palestinian Walks*. Jewish Israelis are largely nameless, faceless, and isolated from both narrators and their understandings of the areas of Palestine they claim. However, neither text is self-consciously nationalistic and, as such, they are "origin stories" that do not seek as much to disrupt as to complicate the Israeli narratives that both surround and abut them. Even though Ḥusayn and Raja are highly critical of the Israeli settlements, they cannot help but recognize them and their history. Looking at the landscape, Ḥusayn says: "It seemed to me as if I were seeing two memories at the same time" (al-Barghūthī, 37).[81] Raja also acknowledges the Israeli claim to the land when he encounters a settler during one of his walks. As they sit together by a stream in the forest, Raja thinks in the moment that the hills "belong to whoever can appreciate them" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 202). These texts are focused on the particularity of the local and the complex collectivity of the shared space. The experience of *ḥanīn* at the *aṭlāl* expands beyond the personal to encompass a shared present and future that specifically seeks to incorporate the Palestinian past, but harbors no illusions of erasing the Israeli presence.

IV. Palestinian and Israeli Co-Presence in Israeli Hebrew Literature

This effort to reincorporate the Palestinian past into the landscape is not confined to Palestinian literature. In A.B. Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests," which predates *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* and *Palestinian Walks* by almost four decades, nature actually hinders rather than facilitates this effort. Avraham B. Yehoshua (b. 1936) has authored many short stories, essays,

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[81] وبدا لي بأنني أرى ((ذاكرتين)) معاً.

plays, and novels, including *Ha-Me'ahev* (1977; *The Lover*, 1978), *Mar Mani* (1989; *Mr. Mani*, 1992), and *Ha-Kalah ha-meshaḥreret* (2001; *The Liberated Bride*, 2003). He is celebrated both within Israel, where he has won the Israel Prize and the Bialik Prize among other awards, and internationally. In 2005, he was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize. Yehoshua has been called "one of his country's most vital chroniclers and critics."[82] Although the transgressive story of "Facing the Forests" should not be minimized, Yehoshua, like Grossman, will only go so far in his dissent. Both authors remain "undeniably part of the political and cultural establishment of Israel, serving as official or unofficial representatives of the state, especially when abroad."[83]

"Facing the Forests" centers on a graduate student who takes a job as a forest scout. Apart from tourists and visitors, his only company is an old Palestinian man and his daughter. The forest scout's initial impression of the forest is of "silence, a silence of trees" (Yehoshua, "Forests" 30).[84] This muteness is mirrored by the Palestinian man, whose tongue was cut out during one of the wars. The affiliation between the forest and the Palestinian man is strengthened by the scout's inability to make sense of either. Time passes and the scout's "senses grow keen" (חושיו מתעמקים) (Yehoshua, "Forests" 33).[85] The first voices he hears belong to the donors who paid for these trees to be planted through the Jewish National Fund (JNF) as part of its

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[82] Ethan Bronner, "A.B. Yehoshua's 'Friendly Fire,'" *The New York Times*, 13 November 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/15/arts/15iht-IDSIDE15.1.17800057.html >.

[83] David N. Myers, "Victory and Sorrow," *The New Republic*, 22 October 2008, <https://newrepublic.com/article/62073/victory-and-sorrow>.

[84] שתיקה, דממת העצים (Yehoshua, "ha-ye'arot" 16).

All translations are from A.B. Yehoshua, "Facing the Forests," Trans. Miriam Arad, *Jewish Quarterly* 18 (1970): 28-43.

[85] Yehoshua, "ha-ye'arot" 24.

afforestation campaign. Their names appear on plaques throughout the forest. He does not fully

understand the place, however, and continues to insist that "Everything is still artificial here.

There is nothing here, not even some archaeology-for-amateurs" (Yehoshua, "Forests" 34).[86] The

belief that the forest is not "natural," and is in some sense "artificial" (מלאכותי) stems from the

history of its intentional planting. It is a group of hikers, outsiders, who later inform the forest

scout of the Palestinian village that once stood there. Only then does he realize that the

Palestinian man is a former inhabitant—"a local," literally "a son of the place" (בן המקום)

(Yehoshua, "Forests" 36).[87] The Palestinian man's forced silence is no longer aligned with the

silence of the trees, which are in reality enforcers of the silence. They are like the knife that cut

out the Palestinian man's tongue, concealing the truth through the story they do not permit to be

told.

The forest scout becomes fully focused on the "village buried beneath the trees" (הכפר

הטמון מתחת לעצים), observing that "it hasn't always been as silent here" (לא תמיד היתה כאן דממה

שכזאת) (Yehoshua, "Forests" 37).[88] In her article "Threads of Memory and Discourses of

Rootedness," Carol Bardenstein explains the JNF's advancement of "'collective,' if selective,

forgetting" through tree planting (Bardenstein, 9). The most apparent history of these altered

landscapes are the forests that convey permanence through their magnitude, furthering the

Zionist myth that the land of Israel was "without a people" before the arrival of Jewish

immigrants. However, when Bardenstein revisits the site of a demolished village with former

residents, they are able to help her "reread" the landscape, drawing attention to the rubble and,

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[86] הכל עדיין מלאכותי. אפילו ארכיאולוגיה-למתחילים אין כאן (Yehoshua, "ha-ye'arot" 29).

[87] Yehoshua, "ha-ye'arot" 36.

[88] Yehoshua, "ha-ye'arot" 37-38.

most notably, the flora itself. Just as the trees described by Darwīsh in the selection discussed at the opening of this chapter serve as signposts to his childhood, the still-thriving fruit trees, prickly pear cactuses, and palm trees planted by the village's former inhabitant form a map to the past between the JNF-planted pines.

In "Facing the Forests," the language of the forest replaces words for the scout as well. He creates a map, tree by tree, and this record becomes a stand-in for the forest itself. The scout plays with the idea of burning down the forest to reveal its secret. However, it is ultimately the Palestinian man who takes action, lighting the fire, though the scout does nothing to stop the conflagration. It is through the scout's own silence that the Palestinian man is able to "speak" the truth. All that remains in the aftermath of the fire are the commemorative plaques and the ruins of the Palestinian village, "born anew in its basic outlines as an abstract drawing, as all things past and buried" (Yehoshua, "Forests" 41).[89] Together, the plaques and the ruins form *aṭlāl* that induce a dual *ḥanīn*, encompassing both the former Palestinian presence and the Israeli Zionist claim to the land. The Palestinian man is arrested and the firewatcher attempts to return to his old life, but he discovers that he no longer belongs. He exists uncomfortably between dreams of the forest and memories of his burnt notes, carrying the contradictions of the two competing histories within himself.

"Facing the Forests" was met with controversy in Israel upon its publication. Due in part to this reception, Bernard Horn notes in *Facing the Fires: Conversations with A.B Yehoshua* (the title itself a reference the story and the storm it set off) that it "has become the most well known story in modern Israeli literature" (Horn, 47).[90] Citing critic Mordechai Shalev as an example,

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[89] נולד מחדש בשירטוטי-יסוד כבציור מופשט, כדרך כל ששקע (51 "ha-yeʿarot" ,Yehoshua).

[90] Bernard Horn, *Facing the Fires: Conversations with A.B Yehoshua* (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 1997).

Hannan Hever argues in "Minority Discourse of a National Majority: Israeli Fiction of the Early

Sixties" that the story was understood as "a collective expression of the rebellion of a native-

born generation against its Jewish heritage" (Hever, 130).[91] Today, "Facing the Forests" is part

of the Israeli national school curriculum, but it is taught as a "moral [tale]" with little or no

attention paid to its historical context or import.[92]

      In contrast to the reclamation of the past that occurs in "Facing the Forests," a reverse

process of suppression of Palestinian claims to the land's history occurs in David Grossman's *To

the End of the Land*. David Grossman (b. 1954) was born in Jerusalem. He is the author of

several children's books and numerous novels, such as '*Ayen 'erekh-ahavah* (1986; *See Under:

Love*, 1989) and *Sefer ha-diḳduḳ ha-penimi* (1991; *The Book of Intimate Grammar*, 1994). He

has received many awards and accolades, including the Man Booker International Prize for *Sus

eḥad nikhnas le-bar* (2014; *A Horse Walks into a Bar*, 2017). Grossman is known for his

sympathetic portrayal of Palestinians in his fiction and nonfiction writing, as in *The Yellow Wind*

and *Nokheḥim nifḳadim* (1992; *Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel*,

1993). Philip Metres writes in "Vexing Resistance, Complicating Occupation: A Contrapuntal

Reading of Sahar Khalifeh's 'Wild Thorns' and David Grossman's 'The Smile of the Lamb'"

that "Grossman demonstrates an unsparingly honest and self-critical examination of the

psychological and moral damage of occupation on Israelis and Palestinians" (Metres, 93).[93]

Critics, however, argue that Grossman's advocacy and activism do not go far enough. In *The

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[91] Hannan Hever, "Minority Discourse of a National Majority: Israeli Fiction of the Early Sixties," *Prooftexts* 10.1 (1990): 129-147.

[92] Jacqueline Rose, "Chroniclers of pain," *The Guardian*, 9 May 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/may/10/3>.

[93] Philip Metres, "Vexing Resistance, Complicating Occupation: A Contrapuntal Reading of Sahar Khalifeh's 'Wild Thorns' and David Grossman's 'The Smile of the Lamb,'" *College Literature* 37.1 (2010): 81-109.

Last Resistance, Jacqueline Rose articulates this frustration, wondering: "Can you be a non-Zionist Zionist?" She believes Grossman "comes close" (Rose, 121).[94]

To the End of the Land* follows Ora's journey through the Galilee. After her son, Ofer, volunteers to take part in a major offensive in the West Bank during the Second Intifada, Ora convinces herself that she can keep him safe by ensuring that news of his death cannot reach her. So, she sets off hiking, travelling with Avram, who is Ofer's biological father but has never met him. The landscape provides the backdrop against which Ora and Avram's shared history, and the story of Ofer's life, unfolds. *To the End of the Land* received particular attention upon its publication because of the text's parallels to Grossman's own life. In 2004, Grossman himself hiked the Israel Trail, in part as research for Ora's wandering in *To the End of the Land*. At the time, his son, Uri, was also serving in the military, primarily in the West Bank. Both Grossman and Uri made it home safe. But then, in 2006, Uri was killed during the conflict with Lebanon, known in Israel as the Second Lebanon War. After his death, Grossman returned to writing *To the End of the Land*, publishing it in 2008.[95]

While the protagonist of "Facing the Forests" stands by while the JNF forest burns, desiring to see what lies beneath, Ora yearns for a landscape empty of history—a true land without a people. In the course of their hike, she and Avram stop to rest beside the ruins of what may have once been a Palestinian village. The *aṭlāl* here trigger a conscious process of forgetting and re-narrating. The section opens with the invocation of the place's Hebrew Israeli name: The Summit of Keren Naphtali (פסגת קרן נפתלי). Its Arabic name, Jabal Al-Harāwa (جبل الهراوة), is not mentioned. The JNF website identifies the mountain as part of the Naftali Mountains Forest,

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[94] Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2017).

[95] George Packer, "The Unconsoled," *The New Yorker*, 27 September 2010, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/09/27/the-unconsoled>.

which it locates in the Golan Heights, although in reality it seems to lie right outside the border of the contested region.[96] In a way, then, this scene does unfold at "the end of the land."

The initial focus of the narrator's description of the site is the natural environment, evoked through its flora. A meditation on the hikers' dwindling food supplies follows. It is only afterward that the narrative turns to the manmade ruins that lie by their resting spot atop the mountain:

> מאחוריהם, גלי חורבות של אבן מסותתת, שרידים של כפר ערבי, אולי של מקדש עתיק; אברם -
> שהציץ לא-מזמן באיזה מאמר - סבור שהסיתות הוא מהתקופה הרומית, ואורה מקבלת בברכה את
> הסברה שלו. אין לי כוח עכשיו, היא אומרת, לשרידים של כפר ערבי. אבל בתעתוע של רגע, כאילו
> קם והורכב כהרף-עין מאבני החורבות, מוקרן בתוך ראשה טנק דוהר בסמטה צרה, ולפני שירמוס
> איזו מכונית חונה, או ינגח בקיר בית, היא מניעה את ידיה מול פניה ונוהמת, די, די, ההארד-דיסק
> שלי כבר מלא מזה.
>
> אלות אטלנטיות רחבות נפרשות, נעות מהורהרות ברוח העדינה. לא הרחק מהם מתקן צבאי קטן
> ומגודר זוקר זוקר אנטנות, וחייל אתיופי יפהפה, שחמטי, ניצב בלי נוע בראש מגדל תצפית ומשקיף על
> עמק החולה שלרגליהם, אולי גם גונב מבטים לעברם, לתבל את משמרתו. אורה מתמתחת מלוא
> אורכה, נותנת לרוח לצנן את עורה, ואברם פושט את רגליו ומשתרע מולה, נשען על זרועו, מסנן
> עפר באצבעותיו (Grossman, *Ishah* 304).

Chiseled stone ruins sprawl behind them, remnants of an Arab village or perhaps an ancient temple. Avram—who happened to flip through an article not long ago—believes the stone is from the Roman era, and Ora welcomes his theory. "I can't deal with Arab village ruins now," she says. But a momentary illusion in her mind, composed instantaneously from the ruins, projects a tank roaring down a narrow alleyway, and before it can trample a parked car or ram the wall of a house, she moves her hands in front of her face and moans, "Enough, enough, my hard drive is overloaded with this stuff."

Broad Atlantic terebinths spread their branches and sway meditatively in the breeze. Not far away, antennas protrude from a small fenced-in military post, and a handsomely chiseled Ethiopian-born soldier stands motionless at the top of an observation tower, surveying the Hula Valley below, perhaps stealing a glance at them to spice up his guard duty. Ora stretches her whole body out and lets the breeze cool her skin. Avram sprawls in front of her, leans on one arm, and sifts dirt through his fingers (Grossman, *Land* 300-301).[97]

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[96] "Naftali Mountains Forest in the Golan Heights," *Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael - Jewish National Fund*, Accessed 20 June 2016, <http://www.kkl.org.il/eng/tourism-and-recreation/forests-and-parks/naftal-mountains-forest.aspx>.

[97] All translations are from David Grossman, *To the End of the Land*, Trans. Jessica Cohen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

The JNF website reveals that Avram was more or less correct. The ruins belong to a Hellenistic temple dedicated to Athena. However, Ora's quick attempt to repress any thought of the former Palestinian inhabitants of the area is a meaningful psychological maneuver. Her impulse is driven at least in part by her personal circumstances. The entire hike is an effort to avoid receiving any bad news about her son, Ofer, who is serving in the Israeli Army. A direct translation of the Hebrew title would be "a woman escapes from a message" (אשה בורחת מבשורה).

At the same time, though, Ora's imaginative self-censorship is part of a broader effort of what Anne Golomb Hoffman calls "anti-information" (Hoffman, 50).[98] The text, Hoffman argues, "explores ways of resisting the linear narrative of the political record and the determinism of personal histories" (Hoffman, 50). Ora and Avram's hike, she writes, works "to acknowledge these histories without being absorbed into continuing them" (Hoffman, 50). This is accomplished as "they come upon and take note of graves, historical markers, boundary lines, but in no apparent order. They ignore the signifying value that these markers possess in the present, designating ownership, property lines, political divides" (Hoffman, 50). The problem with this new method of communication and understanding, though, is that it has the potential to sacrifice the contemplation of the history of a specific place for a more universal meditation. "Linear narratives" may be resisted, but they are disrupted here by a "round" enclosed personal time that contains both Ora's past and present but forecloses the possibility of Palestinian co-presence.

Ora's mind skirts over the painful histories suggested by the possibly-Palestinian *aṭlāl* to rest on the military post and the Ethiopian soldier policing her right to narrate the land. The

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[98] Anne Golomb Hoffman, "The Body of the Child, the Body of the Land: Trauma and *Nachträglichkeit* in David Grossman's *To the End of the Land*," *Narrative* 20.1 (2012): 43-63.

naturalness of the military post is indicated by the description of its antennas, which seem to mirror the spread branches of the Atlantic terebinths. Ora pauses to enjoy the cool breeze and Avram picks up a handful of dirt. In the original Hebrew, this reconnection to nature comes in the middle of a story about Ofer's childhood, whereas in the English translation, it provides the transition into that story. The natural world creates a space for the exploration of personal histories with no connection to this particular site. Ora's refusal to engage with the ruins and open herself to their possible histories disrupts the narratives hinted at in her "momentary illusion" ("בתעתוע של רגע"). The ruins, and the Palestinian presence they (albeit falsely) suggest can do no more than haunt Ora's tales. She escapes from their message as well.

V. Crowded Aṭlāl

In contrast to Ora's disconnection from the reality of the surrounding environment in *To the End of the Land*, Āthar reveals a certain harmony with the landscape in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* through his first word, "plane," even while this word points to a disruption of the natural order. When Ḥusayn asks a Druze[99] man about the significance of Āthar's first word, he tells him:

> عندما يلفظ الطفل أول كلمة له، نقول، نحن الدروز، عنه: ((لقد نطق)). فعبر دورة تناسخ الأرواح، تحل في المولود الجديد روح قديمة ما، وتنطق عبره أول كلماتها، ربما أول ماضيها، أو أول مستقبلها.

> When a child speaks his first word, we, the Druze, say of him: "He has uttered."
> Through the cycle of reincarnation, an ancient soul inhabits the newborn baby,
> which utters its first word through him, perhaps the first word of its past, or the
> first of its future (al-Barghūthī, 60).

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[99] The Druze are a religious minority with communities primarily in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. They represent a sect that separated from Ismā'ilism, a branch of Shi'a Islam, in the 11th century. Although they continue to identify as Muslims, this affiliation is contested by much of the broader Muslim community. Many of the Druze within Israeli allied themselves with the Zionist movement before the establishment of the state.

The Druze man goes on to explain that Āthar is the reincarnation of "the mountains' soul" (" روح هذه الجبال"). The rebirth of the mountains in Āthar, Ḥusayn's son, creates a bridge between past and future. As when Aziz, Raja's nephew in *Palestinian Walks*, picks up the piece of the unexploded missile, there is a recognition in Āthar's first word that the idyllic, isolated wild places that formed the basis of both Ḥusayn and Raja's identities as Palestinians do not represent the reality of the human and ecological present.

Rob Nixon makes a distinction between two kinds of "environmental storytelling." The first is the "evacuated scene in which a creature is center stage and other humans are offstage," like the nature show (Nixon, Keynote).[100] These are the type of narratives that often come to mind when one thinks of nature stories. The second kind of "story" is the "crowded scene, and like most environmental encounters, it happens not where people don't live, but where people live" (Nixon, Keynote). These are the spaces where "environmental justice and the environmentalism of the poor" most often find expression (Nixon, Keynote). Both *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* and *Palestinian Walks* are full of "evacuated scenes" of the past, but in the present and future, there is no question that these spaces are becoming or are already "crowded," with competing meanings, if not physical bodies. This is in contrast to a text like "Facing the Forests" or *To the End of the Land*, where much of the action does unfold in spaces of exclusion that allow for solitary, or relatively solitary, encounters with the landscape. In Ora's case in particular, her presence in landscapes largely empty of other human beings is a manifestation of her privilege as a Jewish citizen of Israel.

Although the aircraft and the settlement are portrayed as unnatural in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, they exist in the present, like the home Ḥusayn builds for his family, his mother's house,

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[100] Robert Nixon, "Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor," Keynote Lecture, Edward Said Memorial Conference, Utrecht University, 16 April 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gymvxtpNlvw>.

and the hospital in Ramallah. These spaces are all actively inhabited. Ḥusayn's hypothetical "settler who came from Russia or Estonia" also represents a human presence that asserts dominion over the space surrounded by barbed wire. The sweep of bright lights and the settlers' imagined gaze further expand the settlement's claim. This is in contrast to al-Deir al-Juwwānī, which Ḥusayn describes as follows:

حينما أمشي، ليلاً، ويكون القمر كاملاً، في خرائب ((الدير الجواني))، أشعر إلى أي مدى كان الدير مكاناً
قصياً، في البراري، ولم يكن ليسكنه ((إلا وحش أو إله)) بتعبير أرسطو، وله جلالة الخراب والقدم.

> When I walk at night in the ruins of al-Deir al-Juwwānī and the moon is full, I feel to a point as if it is a remote place in the wilderness, inhabited by no one but "beast or god," as Aristotle said, and it possesses the sublimity of ruin and old age (al-Barghūthī, 71).

Al-Deir al-Juwwānī is in many ways an isolated wilderness. Especially at night, Ḥusayn is able to be alone in this place. Returning to Nixon, his experience is that of "a solitary encounter in which the human is an intruder" (Nixon, Keynote). The narrator calls al-Deir al-Juwwānī a "remote place." The same phrase is used in the Qur'an to describe the location in which Maryam gives birth to 'Īsā (Jesus): "So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place" (فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا) (Qur'an, Maryam [Mary] 19:22). In his gloss on the verse, 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī writes:

> The annunciation and the conception, we may suppose, took place in Nazareth (of Galilee), say 65 miles north of Jerusalem. The delivery took place in Bethlehem about 6 miles south of Jerusalem. It was a remote place, not only with reference to the distance of 71 miles, but because in Bethlehem itself the birth was in an obscure corner under a palm tree, from which perhaps the babe was afterwards removed to a manger in a stable ('Alī, n.2475 748).

Al-Deir al-Juwwānī is similarly an "obscure corner" of the world. But despite its isolation, it is a holy place for the author, like Bethlehem. Ḥusayn invokes Aristotle, writing that no one "but beast or god" inhabits al-Deir al-Juwwānī today. The phrase is drawn from Aristotle's *Politics*: "But he who is unable to live in society, or has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must

be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state" (Aristotle, 29).[101] The quote in its entirety is worth examining. Of course, on one level, Ḥusayn's use of the phrase serves to emphasize the remoteness of al-Deir al-Juwwānī's ruins from the inhabited spaces of villages and settlements that surround it. But the separation from society and the state that al-Deir al-Juwwānī represents is particularly significant in the Palestinian context, given Palestinian exclusion from full citizenship and participation in civil society. It may also represent a shift to the universalism of the landscape, removing it from nationalist narratives. I explore this point at greater length in Chapter 4.

The Palestinian "worked" areas of the land have already been laid claim to in a way, at least for the moment. Their transformation under the hands of generations of Palestinians make them Palestinian, just as the sites marked by Israeli settlements are Israeli. Al-Deir al-Juwwānī is viewed as a wild place that, while not wholly Palestinian, is an island independent from Israeli control. Ḥusayn's ghosts can continue to roam with impunity among the beasts and gods. But the wild, overgrown spots that nature has reclaimed are in danger, precisely because they are not inhabited. This is especially true of an elevated site like al-Deir al-Juwwānī. In addition to the security advantages of erecting a settlement on a mountain top, Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman point out in *A Civilian Occupation* that, historically, "The mountain peaks of the West Bank easily lent themselves to state seizure….Since Palestinian cultivated lands are found mainly on the slopes and in the valleys, where the agriculturally suitable alluvial soils erode down from the limestone slopes of the West Bank peaks, the barren hilltops…could be seized by the state"

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[101] Aristotle, *Politics*, Trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Cosimo, 2008).

(Segal and Weizman, Mountain, 82).[102] There is a very real risk that al-Deir al-Juwwānī and sites like it will be stripped of their pasts as they are incorporated into the Israeli landscape through settlement and development.

As has been noted, the narrator is not actually at home in these spaces either. No matter where Ḥusayn is physically, he suffers from feelings of *ghurba* (غربة), "*the state,* or *condition, of a stranger* or *foreigner*" (Lane, Book I, 2242). In *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Hans Wehr defines *ghurba* as "absence from the homeland; separation from one's native country, banishment, exile; life, or place, away from home" (Wehr, 783).[103] Even when Ḥusayn stands atop al-Deir al-Juwwānī, he feels out of place, never quite at home. Part of this is due to pure nostalgia. Arazi observes that there is often a direct linkage of the homeland with youth in classical Arabic poetry: "*Waṭan* ['homeland'] is frequently described as *dār al-ṣibā* (the country of my youth) by poets" (Arazi, 315-316). Ḥusayn's feelings of *ghurba* are also linked to the surrounding countryside's transformation under Israeli settlement, which renders al-Deir al-Juwwānī even more unfamiliar and strange. Above all, though, it is the site's wildness that makes Ḥusayn feel perpetually out of place, though these feelings do not inhibit al-Deir al-Juwwānī's status as a holy place, worthy of protection.

Al-Deir al-Juwwānī's importance is emphasized by Ḥusayn's continued description:

مكان ((براني)) تماماً، ومع ذلك سماه أهلي القدماء: ((الجواني))، وكأنه كان أقرب إليهم من ((حبل الوريد)). فاسمه نفسه ساحر، لمن يتأمله، ويشبه معبداً يضيء على رأس جبل في أغوار روحهم هم. برانية الموقع، وجوانية الدير، في اسم واحد. سحر!

It is a completely "external" place. However, my ancestors called it "*al-Juwwānī*" ["the inner/interior"], as if it were closer to them than the "jugular vein." The name itself is bewitching to whomever contemplates it; it resembles a temple

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[102] Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, "The Mountain: Principles of Building in Heights" in *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, eds. Rafi Segal, David Tartakover, and Eyal Weizman (New York: Verso, 2003), 79-96.

[103] Hans Wehr, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).

shining on a mountaintop in the depths of their own souls. The externality of the site, and the interiority of the monastery, in one name. Enchanting! (al-Barghūthī, 71-72).

Ḥusayn's narrative and longing focus on the collapsed monastery of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, which he explains means the "inner" or "interior" monastery, as if, Ḥusayn says, to the people of the past "it were closer to them than the jugular vein." This is another Qur'anic reference, to the following verse: "It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein" (ولقد خلقنا الإنسان ونعلم ما توسوس به نفسه، ونحن أقرب إليه من حبل الوريد) (Qur'an, Qāf 50:16). Al-Deir al-Juwwānī is a part of Ḥusayn, as holy to him as God himself. In the present, it is a fully external wild, distant place, imbued with an otherworldliness that leads Ḥusayn to wonder if it might not be populated by ghosts and monsters. Although it is uninhabitable, the monastery is the home to which Ḥusayn longs to return. It is the site through which his richest memories are accessed, its overgrown walls and wild creatures providing a path into the past. Its holiness lies in it being both an inner and an outer place at the same time. It is remote and yet always present.

According to J. Stetkevych, the poet's "ruinous abode," the crumbled *dār* of the *qaṣīda*, is "both empty and replete. It is a paradise that has come closer to archetypal memory by being a 'lost paradise,' or a paradise of poetic imagination" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 31). Al-Deir al-Juwwānī, as both an interior and exterior space, is also eternally deserted and inhabited. Although the physical space of al-Deir al-Juwwānī is suited to house only "beasts and gods," the spiritual space that it represents is as human as it is intangible. *Ḥanīn* is the catalyst that transforms the "empty" ruins into the "replete" *dār*, which is once again made whole.

Atop al-Deir al-Juwwānī, Ḥusayn experiences the intense yearning of *ḥanīn* as he is carried back in time through his personal and family histories. As he stands there following the trail of memories that he picks out in the ruins, he hears "a sound exactly like the crying of a small child" (al-Barghūthī, 35).[104] Ḥusayn is drawn to the sound, and chases it through the trees and across the fields. It occurs to him that it might be a hyena, but the possible threat that the animal represents is brushed aside, displaced by the hyenas from the tales that make up his personal mythology. It is only later that his uncle, whom he describes as "older than me in age and memory" (أكبر سناً مني، وذاكرة), tells him that the sound may have been made by a badger (غريريا) (al-Barghūthī, 37). Ḥusayn's uncle says: "This is the sound of a small animal called a badger. A long time ago, they hunted it with dogs and rifles. Its meat is delicious. And now, it is completely extinct. Perhaps you heard the sound of the last badger in these mountains!" (al-Barghūthī, 37).[105] The badger is an indigenous species that has been over-hunted to the point of extinction. Its cry, then, is a voice from a past that is gone. It is a sound of mourning for its lost habitat, an expression of a *ḥanīn* that is not unlike Ḥusayn's own. Ḥusayn hears that cry as he stands in the moonlight atop the ruins of al-Deir al-Juwwānī and, though he mistakes it for a hyena, it serves as the first link in a chain of memories and tales that carry Ḥusayn and the reader away from the present. At the same time, Ḥusayn's misidentification of the animal is an early hint that he is no longer fully at home in this landscape.

In the moment, the cry can be read as a manifestation of the yearning, or *ḥanīn*, that Ḥusayn is already experiencing on top of the ruins, the *ḥanīn* that drove him to visit the site in the first place. The cry, then, is also *ḥanīn*, as in "the sound produced" by his yearning. At the

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[104] صوتاً يشبه بالضبط بكاء طفل صغير.

[105] هذا صوت حيوان صغير يدعى الـ((غريريا)). كانوا قديماً يطاردونه بكلاب الصيد والبنادق، ولحمه لذيذ، والآن انقرض تماماً. ربما أنك سمعت صوت آخر ((غريريا)) في هذه الجبال!

same time, the entire text, as a whole, can be viewed as *ḥanīn*, an embodiment of yearning. It is a wail, emanating from a yearning to return to a place that does not exist in space, nor truly in time. The only return is in the text itself.[106]

VI. Ḥanīn, Interrupted

In *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, the flow of *ḥanīn* is broken several times throughout the text. The dreamlike scene atop the mountain in which Ḥusayn sees the herd of deer is interrupted when he recognizes the possible threat their presence may indicate. He reasons that there may be traps set by hunters that could easily catch him in their jaws. It is an external threat that forces Ḥusayn into the present.

The other, more significant, interruption in the flow of *ḥanīn* occurs as a result of Ḥusayn's illness. Up to this point, the manifestations of *ḥanīn* in the text that I have discussed have been linked to changes in the natural environment initiated by the "Israeli other." However, at the same time, Ḥusayn's own guilt over his self-imposed absence from his homeland informs his critique, which is further complicated by the illness that motivated his return. Ḥusayn is direct that it is cancer, the expectation and fear of his "end," that compelled him to seek out his beginning. His body is crumbling as surely as the walls of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, but it is all that will remain with him in the end. He says: "My body, of all of this inheritance, is what was left to me. The remains of my body, to be more precise" (al-Barghūthī, 115).[107] By the end of the text, Ḥusayn's body is made up of no more than *aṭlāl*. The "enemy" against which he writes himself is

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[106] Maḥmūd Darwīsh expresses the same sentiment in "Riḥlat al-mutanabbī ilā miṣr" (1984; "Al-Mutanabbi's Trip to Egypt") when he writes: "وطني قصيدتي الجديدة" ("My homeland is my newest poem") (Darwīsh, "Riḥla" 32). The idea of the text as home is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Riḥlat al-mutanabbī ilā miṣr," *Ḥiṣār li-madā'iḥ al-baḥr* (Beirut: Dār al-'Awda, 1993), 29-41.

[107] بقي لي جسدي، من كل هذه الإرث، بقايا جسدي، بالأحرى.

just as much his illness as it is the Israeli settlers, whose presence, perceived as invasive, repeatedly triggers his *ḥanīn*. A shift occurs in the episode I will discuss next, located about midway through the text.

The sequence begins while Ḥusayn is in Ramallah Hospital receiving treatment. He encounters the son of a man who used to own some of the orchards around al-Deir al-Juwwānī. Ḥusayn does not ask the man about his life or his health, however. His first impulse is to ask him what became of the orchards. Without hesitation, the man tells him: "The settlers[108] started to come down from the mountaintop to fire their guns at us…We fled, and we didn't return. The orchards became feasts for ruin" (al-Barghūthī, 52-53).[109] This condemnation of Jewish Israeli settlers' attitudes towards the natural world and their displacement of what Ḥusayn perceives as the rightful stewards of the land lead him to remember the groves of almond trees his father planted in 1948, the year Israel was established. This was also the year that he married Ḥusayn's mother. It is the last year for which Ḥusayn seems able to access collective, rather than personal, memories. The memories from his boyhood that he relates are nostalgic in tone, but they lack the mythic quality and magic possessed by the tales of Qadūra and his mother and father. Ḥusayn's mention of the year of the establishment of the State of Israel combined with the privileging of the Palestinian relationship to the natural world that precedes it prepare the reader for an econostalgic escape into the environment of Ḥusayn's childhood. This expectation is buttressed further by the mention of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, the site of the *aṭlāl*.

However, Ḥusayn's reference to the almond trees planted by his father is directly followed by a reflection on his illness: "My back was twisting from pain like a snake between

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[108] The man uses the word "al-mustaʿmirūn," which also means "colonizers," to refer to the settlers, rather than the more common "al-mustauṭinūn." See the following note for the full Arabic.

[109] أصبح المستعمرون ينزلون إليها من رأس الجبل ويطلقون النار علينا....هربنا، ولم نعد. والبساتين صارت ولائم للخراب.

the shadows of the moonlit almond trees. I began to forget. Oh God, how forgetful I have become because of the chemotherapy" (al-Barghūthī, 53).[110] I have largely shied away from a reading of Ḥusayn's illness that interprets it as a metaphor, his body mirroring the sick landscape. However, the cancer ravishing Ḥusayn's body could be said to reflect the Israeli settlements that he perceives to be devastating the natural environment of his homeland. They are expanding, uncontrolled, like the tumor in his lung. Structurally, however, his physical pain intrudes upon the flow of the text here, interrupting the detour of *ḥanīn* set up in the previous line and forcing Ḥusayn to remain in the present.

As his cancer progresses, the pain of the present increasingly prevents Ḥusayn from escaping his contemporary reality. Although Ḥusayn is able to frequently and easily indulge these impulses to flee into the past at the beginning of the text, the intensification of his suffering, and the visits to the mountain that it impedes, force him to confront both his own mortality and the political crisis of the present day. It is when he first begins to seriously decline that his relationship to nature grows ambiguous. This is no doubt due at least in part to his realization that his true return home to the earth is both imminent and unavoidable.

So trapped, unable to access al-Deir al-Juwwānī even through memory, Ḥusayn's ecological *ḥanīn* for the landscapes of the past is temporarily replaced by a hostility toward the surrounding environment. As his body weakens, he says: "I returned and I did not return to this mountain. It was as if I returned but I did not return. There is no peace here and I want to build a fence between me and the mountain" (al-Barghūthī, 103).[111] Ḥusayn's desire to erect a barrier between him and al-Deir al-Juwwānī, the longed-for home, represents his final recognition that

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[110] كان ظهري يتلوى من الوجع كأفعى، بين ظلال اللوز المقمرة، وصرت أنسى، يا إلهي كم صرت أنسى، بسبب العلاج الكيماوي.

[111] عدت ولم أعد إلى هذا الجبل. كأني عدت، ولكن لم أعد. لا سلام هنا، وأرغب في بناء سياج فاصل بيني وبينه.

perhaps there will be no "perfect return" for him. It is impossible for him to re-inhabit the remembered places of his childhood. At the same time, his desire to build a fence between himself and the mountain can be read as an expression of Ḥusayn's fear of his own death. It is a desperate effort to resist his mortality.

Time passes, and the cancer moves into Ḥusayn's lungs. He can no longer walk more than a few steps, which closes off the possibility of physically visiting the monastery and reconnecting with its geography. However, as his body deteriorates, it becomes integrated into the natural world. His body becomes like the *aṭlāl* of al-Deir al-Juwwānī. Perhaps sensing his imminent return, the wilderness increasingly intrudes upon his small farm, until it begins to absorb Ḥusayn. The foxes and wild boar do not recognize Ḥusayn's dominion, his claim to the land, any more than they do the Israeli claim. The former drag his mattress from under the olive tree beside his house out into the wilderness, unintimidated by his presence. In this way, the foxes also intimate that his final resting place is elsewhere, outside the manmade space he has created. They invite him to return to al-Deir al-Juwwānī. Describing his labored breathing, Ḥusayn says:

<div dir="rtl">

وتتداخل الأصوات كأن غابة في حنجرتي....ولم أعد أعرف الفرق بين وحوش الجبل، و أوتار صوتي. هل بدأت أتوحش، أم أستألف الوحوش؟ وكأن الجبل في بطني، هو ووساوسه.

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The sounds blend together as if there were a forest in my throat….I no longer know the difference between the sounds of the beasts of the mountain and those of my own vocal cords. Have I begun to grow beastlike, or have I begun to domesticate the beasts? It is as if the mountain is inside of me, whispering (al-Barghūthī, 104).

It is when he is so reduced, so close to becoming a part of the earth through his passing, that the ruined monastery, uninhabitable by all but the wild animals, plants, gods, and ghosts (or, one might say, habitable by all but the human), becomes a space to which he can return home. His ruined body becomes a site of co-presence for the past of the mountain and the present away

from it. His impending reunion with the natural world finally makes him, or at least what remains of him, at home in the overgrown wilderness of al-Deir al-Juwwānī. It is in death that he "will be among the almond trees" there in the ruins.

VII. Conclusion

Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz, *Palestinian Walks*, "Facing the Forests," and *To the End of the Land* spend a significant portion of their narratives describing nature reserves and sparsely populated countryside. However, none of them portrays Palestine or Israel as completely empty wilderness. The *aṭlāl* that dot the landscapes of the texts serve as a constant assertion of the human *in* nature, acting as markers of human habitation, and specifically Palestinian habitation. The recognition and description of these sites enable readers, including Palestinians in diaspora and in the Occupied Territories where they are increasingly confined by walls and other manmade boundaries, to expand their understanding of Palestine through them. The protagonist of Yehoshua's "Facing the Forests" actually works to erase the claim of the Israeli forest, the result of human intervention as well, by destroying it and exposing the *aṭlāl* of the Palestinian village, reclaiming the place as Palestinian. The Palestinian works discussed in this chapter also resist dominant narratives of the land that assert Israel belonging and stewardship and function in part through the exclusion of Palestinians. Ora, in contrast, attempts to suppress the challenge that inheres in the *aṭlāl* by asserting a counterclaim to the land in the section of *To the End of the Land* discussed in this chapter.

Arazi writes that "*ḥanīn* means above all a rejection" (*ḥanīn* signifie avant tout un refus) (Arazi, 314). He is specifically referencing the Bedouin refusal of the "domestication" of city life in classical Arabic poetry, but the idea of *ḥanīn* creating a space for critique is applicable in the modern context as well. The ecological *ḥanīn* discussed in this chapter, accessed at the *aṭlāl*, has

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the potential to foster an improvised understanding of a shared place, a space of Palestinian-Israeli and temporal co-presence that renarrates the landscape in a way that highlights the indirect environmental violence reshaping it.

In the next chapter, I read the figure of the ecological native in three works of literature from North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula as another expression of ecological *ḥanīn*, here in the context of the desert. Positive relationships between human beings and nonhuman animals are utilized to articulate an ethics of earth care that asserts the groundedness of the ecological native in place while challenging the claims of perceived outsiders to the same space. As in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, *Palestinian Walks*, and "Facing the Forests," eco-alterity creates a space for the critique of oppression, exploitation, and occupation.

Chapter 2
The Figure of the "Ecological Native" in the Desert Literature of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula

The roles played by nonhuman animals in the literature of North Africa and the Middle East have changed over time and across space, based on literary, historical, and cultural contexts and developing attitudes toward the nonhuman world. However, what has remained consistent is that nonhuman animals have featured prominently in Arabic literature since the pre-Islamic period, when descriptions of local fauna were utilized in poetry to evoke the desert environment and detailed celebrations of the poet's horse or camel were employed to reflect the rider's own best qualities.[112] Since then, human-animal encounters, and even transformations, have been explored in poetry, fables, tales such as *Alf layla wa-layla*, and, more recently, short stories and novels. In this chapter, I will look at three novels that explore human-animal relationships in the space of the desert: Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *Nazīf al-Ḥajar*[113] (1990; *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2001), 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's *al-Nihāyyāt*[114] (1978; *Endings*, 1987), and Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *al-Khibā'*[115] (1996; *The Tent*, 1998).

Al-Kūnī (b. 1948) was born in Ghadames in southern Libya, where he received his schooling. He is a Tuareg, a member of the historically nomadic Berber people found throughout the Sahara Desert. Although he and did not learn to read or write Arabic until the age of 12, he

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[112] See, for example, Raymond Farrin's discussion of Imru' al-Qays's *Mu'allaqa* in *Abundance from the Desert*. He writes: "The horse passage…may be classified as implicit *fakhr*, self-praise, besides being *wasf* (descriptive poetry). Furthermore, owing to the fact that the poet owns the horse, any glory emanating from it reflects on him. And by extolling his animal for its attractiveness, initiative, and courage, he also indirectly extols himself as possessor of those same qualities" (Farrin, 18).

[113] Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis, 1990).

[114] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1978).

[115] Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* (Cairo: Dār Sharqīyāt, 1996).

eventually left Libya to study comparative literature and literary criticism at the Gorky Institute in Moscow. He now lives in Switzerland. Al-Kūnī has written numerous short stories and novels, all about the Libyan desert, including *al-Tibr* (1990; *Gold Dust*, 2008), *Anūbīs* (2002; *Anubis: A Desert Novel*, 2005), and *al-Baḥth 'an al-makān al-ḍā'ī'* (2003; *The Seven Veils of Seth*, 2008). He has been widely recognized, both within the Arab world and beyond, for his writing. In 2008, al-Kūnī won the Sheikh Zayed Award for Literature for *Nida' mā kāna ba'īdan* (2006; A Call for the Distant) and, in 2009, he was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction for *al-Waram* (2008; The Tumor).

The Bleeding of the Stone is set in the Libyan Desert during the period of Italian occupation and colonization (1911-1947). The protagonist is Asouf, a Tuareg goatherd, who lives isolated from other human beings except when they seek him out or stumble upon him. In *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, Roger Allen understands the conflict between him and his antagonist, Qābīl Ādam, who wants to hunt the nonhuman animals that Asouf strives to protect, as "a powerful allegory of the clash between tradition and modernity" (Allen, *Arabic Novel* 249).[116] Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi highlights the colonial context of the text in *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*, writing: "[al-Kūnī] relates endangered life and species to foreign occupation" (al-Musawi 120).[117] In these readings, relationships with the indigenous fauna, and the physical environments they inhabit, are interpreted as speaking directly to ways of being human, seeking to communicate a lesson about human nature and action. At times, nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized and imbued with consciousness, either full or partial. Talking about anthropomorphized animals more broadly,

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[116] Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995).

[117] Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* (Boston: Brill, 2003).

Marian Scholtmeijer observes that "as soon as language begins to articulate the vital inner experience of animals, the suspicion arises that culture is learning more about itself than about animals *per se*" (Scholtmeijer 89).[118] Tales with a similar purpose have existed within Arabic literature for centuries, as in the Arabic translation of the Sanskrit *Kalīla wa-dimna*. However, such readings of *The Bleeding of the Stone* sometimes obscure or silence its clear environmentalist message.

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf (1933-2004) was of Saudi and Iraqi descent and was born in Jordan. He spent his life moving around the Arab world and Europe: he studied in Amman, Baghdad, Cairo, and Paris. After earning a Ph.D. in oil economics from the University of Belgrade, he worked for the Syrian Oil Corporation and the Iraqi Ministry of Oil. Munīf authored over a dozen novels during his life, including *Sharq al-mutawassiṭ* (1975; East of the Mediterranean), *ʿĀlim bilā kharāʾiṭ* (1982; A World Without Maps), cowritten with Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, and his epic quintet, *Cities of Salt*. Munīf's own lack of emplacement fostered a Pan-Arab identity and well-positioned him to formulate critiques in his fiction that transcend national borders. He was an outspoken critic of authoritarianism, corruption, and imperialism. Upon Munīf's death in 2004, Tariq Ali called him one of the two "patriarchs of Arab literature," along with Najīb Maḥfūẓ ("the two M's").[119] Despite his fame in the Arabic-speaking world, Munīf's work was misunderstood upon its translation into English, most famously in a scathing review by John Updike in *The New Yorker* that has itself become the subject of some scholarly

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[118] Marian Scholtmeijer, *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction: From Sanctity to Sacrifice* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993).

[119] Tariq Ali, "The Patriarch of Arab Literature," *Counterpunch*, 1 February 2004, Accessed 15 January 2019 < https://www.counterpunch.org/2004/02/01/a-patriarch-of-arab-literature/ >.

attention in more recent conversations about reception, genre, and the literary representation of environmental crisis.[120]

 Endings is focused on the life and death of 'Assāf, a solitary figure who lives at the margins of his community, preferring to spend his time hunting in the desert with only his dog for companionship. The novel takes place in and around the drought-stricken village of al-Ṭayyiba, located in an unnamed country somewhere in the Arab world. Roger Allen writes in his introduction to his translation of the text that al-Ṭayyiba is "a paradigm for communities facing the wrath of nature unaided by modern technology" (Allen, "Introduction" vii).[121] The village serves as a meeting point between the desert that lies just beyond its edges and the distant capital city that is the seat of government as well as the only hope for employment for the village's young people. As the village men keep an all-night vigil over 'Assāf's body after his death in a sandstorm, they tell stories about relationships between human beings and nonhuman animals. These stories form the bulk of the narrative and create a space for critique of al-Ṭayyiba's unsustainable relationship with the desert, with 'Assāf serving as a model for an alternative, more ecological approach to resource management.

 Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī (b. 1968) was born into a Bedouin family in the Egyptian Delta and is now a professor of Arabic literature at Arizona State University. In addition to her scholarly writings, al-Ṭaḥāwī has published four novels: *The Tent*, *al-Badhinjānā al-zarqā'* (2000; *Blue Aubergine*, 2006), *Naqarāt al-ẓibā'* (2002; *Gazelle Tracks*, 2008), and *Brūklīn hāyts* (2010; *Brooklyn Heights*, 2011), which reflects on her own experiences as an immigrant. *Brooklyn*

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[120] John Updike, "Satan's Work and Silted Cisterns," *The New Yorker*, 17 October 1988: 117-119.
For a discussion of Updike's review, see Nixon, *Violence*; and Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: Chicago U P, 2016).

[121] Roger Allen, "Introduction," in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, *Endings*, Trans. Roger Allen (London: Quartet Books, 1988), v-x.

Heights won the Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature in 2010 and was short listed for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2011. Al-Ṭaḥāwī is considered to be the first novelist to depict the intimate lives of Egyptian Bedouin women.[122]

The Tent centers on the character of Fāṭima. Confined to her father's house and its courtyard, Fāṭima yearns to explore the desert world beyond its walls. Starting in her childhood, she enters it through a private subterranean world that she creates, though the desert she envisions is of another time as well, reflecting a traditional Bedouin life of nomadism. This world of her imagination provides an escape for Fāṭima from her oppressive grandmother and mentally ill mother. As Fāṭima grows, the real and the imaginary begin to blur in her mind and in the text. *The Tent* encompasses the worlds of Egypt's Eastern Delta and Eastern Desert. The latter is accessed primarily through the narrator's imagination. While al-Kūnī and Munīf are men and the overwhelming majority of their characters are male, al-Ṭaḥāwī is a woman and both her narrator and most of her characters are female. The text thus provides an important corrective to readings of the desert as a purely masculine space.

In the first section of this chapter, I will locate the human-animal relationships in these three novels within a framework of ecological responsibility that draws a connection between the treatment of nonhuman animals and the treatment of human beings and the physical environment. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''s 10th-century treatise "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān ḍidda al-insān ʿinda malik al-jān"[123] (*The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, 2009) provides an entry point into a discussion of the Islamic idea of the *amāna* (trust) that God gave to

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[122] Abdalla F. Hassan, "Making the Life of a Modern Nomad into Literature," *The New York Times*, 4 January 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/world/middleeast/making-the-life-of-a-modern-nomad-into-literature.html>.

[123] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān ḍidda al-insān ʿinda malik al-jān," in *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, Trans. and ed. by Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 3-280 (Arabic pagination).

humankind, part of which makes human beings responsible for the ecological *tawāzun* (balance) of the earth. The figure of the early nomad in *The Case of the Animals* is an imagined representation of harmonious co-existence between the human and nonhuman worlds. This figure can be read as an early precursor to that of the "ecological native" as expressed in all three novels discussed here. In *The Case of the Animals*, the environmental responsibility of the early nomad living in a distant, nonspecific past is formulated from a 10th century urban space, creating an eco-alterity that is echoed in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Endings*, and *The Tent*.

In al-Kūnī's *The Bleeding of the Stone* and Munīf's *Endings*, the figure of the ecological native takes on the role of noble steward of the environment and the supposedly traditional way of life he represents. I argue that this positioning is then used to critique the relationship between outsiders and the environment and emphasize the native population's link to the land. The other is portrayed as invasive, interventionist, urban, and artificial, while the self is presented as possessing a land ethic that is harmonious with the environment, non-urban, and natural, although actions, behaviors, and attitudes do not always bear out such a clear divide. One of the primary ways in which these values are communicated is through the human protagonists' positive relationships with nonhuman animals.

In al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent*, the character of Musallam is a parallel to the ecological native figures in *Endings* and *The Bleeding of the Stone*, but his representation of a traditional way of life that is disappearing in the face of a settled existence is not accompanied by a clear sense of guardianship over his environment. Furthermore, it is the female characters in the text, not Musallam, who form strong relationships with the indigenous fauna around them. I will show that these affinities reveal a shared powerlessness rather than an assumption of stewardship.

I. The Covenant of the Amāna

The position of animals vis-à-vis human beings has been interrogated repeatedly in Arabic literature. Some texts elevate animals above human beings, declaring their superiority. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, animals are credited with understanding and intelligence exceeding that of human beings. When the novel's protagonist, Asouf, teases his father for treating his camel very well, he responds: "Don't think animals can't understand…just because they can't speak the way you do. They're cleverer than either of us!" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 43).[124] [125] The same sentiment is expressed in *Endings* during 'Assāf's memorial. After an evening of storytelling, the Mukhtār, the head of the village, says, addressing 'Assāf: "You were the one who knew all about animals and birds.…How can man be so barbaric and animals better than he?" (Munīf, *Endings* 129).[126] [127] He speaks these words "defiantly" (بتحدّ), recognizing that they challenge a normative hierarchy that privileges human beings above all other creatures. In this case, the superiority of nonhuman animals is based on their lack of cruelty and specifically the (false) assertion that they never hunt and kill for sport. The Mukhtār aligns 'Assāf with animals, elevating him too above other human beings.

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[124] هل تظن أن الحيوان لا يفهم لمجرد أنه لا يقدر أن يتكلم مثلك؟ إنه أذكى منك ومني! (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar*, 55).

[125] Also see al-Kūnī's *al-Tibr* (1990; *Gold Dust*, 2008). Here, a sheikh advises the protagonist that "animals are superior to humans and make the best friends" (al-Kūnī, *Gold* 19).

الحيوان خير صديق. الحيوان أفضل من الإنسان (al-Kūnī, *al-Tibr*, 20).

Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *al-Tibr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, 1990).
Translation from Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *Gold Dust*, Trans. Elliott Colla (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008).

[126] أنت الذي عرفت الحيوانات والطيور .... هل يمكن أن يكون الإنسان بهذه الوحشية، ويكون الطير أو الحيوان أحسن منه؟ (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 197).

[127] All translations are from 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, *Endings*, Trans. Roger Allen (London: Quartet Books, 1988).

Exploration of the question of animal superiority has earlier precedents in Arabic literature, such as the 10th-century treatise "Da'wā al-ḥayawān ḍidda al-insān 'inda malik al-jān" (*The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, 2009), the 22nd of 52 *rasā'il* (epistles) written by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa Khullān al-Wafā' (The Brethren of Purity and Friends of Loyalty). Although the true identities and sectarian affiliations of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' are unknown, it is generally accepted that they lived in Basra sometime during the 10th and 11th centuries. It has even been suggested that "Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'" might have been the penname of a single author, who composed all of the rasā'il.[128] In their writings, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' explored a wide range of topics, drawing from a variety of religious traditions, including Judaism and Christianity in addition to Islam, and philosophies, especially Greek philosophy. Persian and Indian influences are also evident, as in the appearance of Kalīla the jackal as representative of the beasts of prey in *The Case of the Animals*.[129]

In *The Case of the Animals*, nonhuman animals and human beings hold a debate to decide which group is superior. The purpose of the text, according to the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', is

أن نَذكُرَ في هذه الرسالةِ طَرفاً من فَضائلِ الحَيَواناتِ وخِصالِها المَحمودةِ وطِبائعِها المَرضِيَّةِ وشَمائلِها السَّليمةِ. ونُبَيِّن أيضاً طَرفاً من طُغيانِ الإنسانِ وبَغيِه وتَعدِّيهِ على من سِواه ممَّا سُخِّر له من الأنعامِ والحَيَواناتِ أجمَعَ وكُفرانِه النِّعَمَ وغَفلتِه عَمَّا يَجِب عليه من أداءِ الشُّكرِ

(Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Da'wā al-ḥayawān" 4).

to consider the merits and distinctions of the animals, their admirable traits, pleasing natures, and wholesome qualities, and to touch on man's overreaching, oppression, and injustice against the creatures that serve him—the beasts and cattle—and his heedless, impious thanklessness for the blessings for which he should be grateful (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/Goodman and McGregor, 64-65).[130]

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[128] See Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 3.

[129] See Robert Irwin, "The Arabic Beast Fable," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 36-50.

[130] All translations from Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Epistle 22: The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn," in *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, Trans. and ed. by Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 61-316.

The former aim—enumerating the distinguishing anatomical and behavioral qualities of different creatures—is not unique to this text. Al-Jāḥiẓ's ninth-century *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* is a notable example from the previous century. In discussing this literary practice, Sarra Tlili notes in "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They?: The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''s Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End" that "[t]he underlying assumption is that one can learn about the Creator through the signs He has placed in the created world (Tlili, 56).[131] The Qur'an itself invites believers to undertake this activity, as in the following sura: "Do they not look at the camels, how they are made?" (أَفَلَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ) (Qur'an, al-Ghāshiya [The Overwhelming Event] 88:17). The second stated aim of the epistle by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' is to highlight humankind's abuse of the power they hold over nonhuman animals. The debate before the King of the Jinn is arranged to determine whether human beings have a right to this dominion. Tlili argues that the text never truly allows for the possibility of animal triumph in the trial since "[t]he superiority of humans to other sublunar beings is firmly established in the animal epistle's prologue" (Tlili, 50). However, in his introduction to the English translation, Lenn E. Goodman asserts that the talking animals in the fable enable the authors to "find a way of getting outside oneself, beyond the constructs and constrictions of the familiar culture and even the shared biases of humanity," even if the resolution ultimately does little to challenge human oppression and abuse of the nonhuman world (Goodman, 7).[132] The notion of animal superiority is given space for expression, though its ultimate refutation is never truly in doubt.

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[131] Sarra Tlili, "All Animals Are Equal, or Are They?: The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''s Animal Epistle and its Unhappy End," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010): 167–187.

[132] Lenn E. Goodman, "Introduction," *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, Trans. and ed. by Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 1-55.

The action of *The Case of the Animals* is set in motion when a storm brings a ship of men to the shores of the island of Ṣā‘ūn, ruled over by the King of the Jinn. The island is rich with resources: "The air and soil were good. There were sweet rivers, burbling springs, broad fields, and sheltered dells, a wealth of trees and fruit, lush meadows, streams, herbs, and spices" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’/Goodman and McGregor, 101).[133] Upon their arrival, the human beings discover that the animals that inhabit the island—"beasts, cattle, birds, and carnivores" (البَهائم والأنعام والطيور والسباع)—are "all living in peace and harmony with one another, secure and unafraid" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’/ Goodman and McGregor, 101).[134] It is an Edenic paradise of plenty. The human beings decide to make their home on the island but before long "[begin] to meddle with the beasts and cattle, forcing them into service, riding them and loading them down with burdens, as in their former lands" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’/ Goodman and McGregor, 102).[135] When the animals attempt to escape, the men hunt them down, "convinced that the animals were their runaway and rebellious slaves" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’/ Goodman and McGregor, 102).[136]

This series of events echoes the story of human history that is recited at the opening of the epistle, which briefly traces the evolution of man from a life of nomadism that harmonizes with nature to a settled life in cities that is based on distinction from and oppression of nonhuman animals. Early man was one animal among many, always at the mercy of nature. These nomads survived by "hiding from the many wild animals and beasts of prey, taking refuge in the mountain-tops and hills, sheltering in caves, and eating fruit from trees, vegetables from

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[133] وهي طَيِّبةُ الهَواءِ، فيها أنهارٌ عذبةٌ وعُيونٌ خَرَّارةٌ، وهي كثيرةُ الريف والمرافق وفنون الأشجار وألوان الثمار والرِّياض والرَّياحين والأبزار (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, "Da‘wā al-ḥayawān" 39-40).

[134] وهي كلُّها متآلفةٌ بعضُها في بعضٍ، مستأنِسةٌ غيرُ متنافِرةٍ (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, "Da‘wā al-ḥayawān" 40).

[135] أخذوا يتعرَّضون لتلك البهائم والأنعام التي هناك فيُسَخِّرونها لِيَركبوا ويَحمِلوا عليها أثقالَها على الرَّسمِ الذي كانوا يَفعَلون في بُلْداننِهم (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, "Da‘wā al-ḥayawān" 40)

[136] واعتَقَدوا فيها أنَّها عبيدٌ لهم، وهَرَبَت وخَلَعَت الطَّاعةَ وعَصَت (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, "Da‘wā al-ḥayawān" 40).

the ground, and the seeds of plants…wintering where it was warm and summering where it was cool" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 99).[137] According to this account, human beings were nomads surviving on a mostly vegetarian diet before they built and settled in villages and cities. During this stage, human beings had to possess a deep knowledge of the environment in which they lived in order to survive. Life depended on understanding the behavior of predators and knowing where to find shelter and food. In contrast, civilization is linked to independence from, and ultimately mastery of, nature. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' write in their brief history: "It is said that when the race of Adam began to reproduce and multiply, humans spread across the earth, land and sea, mountain and plain, everywhere freely and securely seeking their own ends" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 99).[138] They

> سَخَّروا من الأنعامِ البقرَ والغنمَ والجِمالَ، ومن البَهائِمِ الخَيلَ والبِغالَ والحَميرَ، وقَيَّدوها وألجَموها وصَرَّفوها في مآرِبهم من الرُّكوبِ والحَمْلِ والحَرْثِ والدِّياسِ وأتعَبوها في استِخدامِها، وكلَّفوها أكثرَ من طاقتِها، ومَنَعوها من التصَرُّفِ في مآربها، بعدما كانت مُخلَّاةً في البَراريِّ والآجامِ والغِياضِ تذهب وتجيء حيث أرادَت في طلبِ مَرْعاها ومَشارِبِها ومَصالِحِها (38- Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 39).

> enslaved such cattle as cows, sheep, and camels, and beasts like horses, asses, and mules. They hobbled and bridled them and put them to work—riding, hauling, ploughing, and threshing. They wore these creatures out in service, with toil beyond their strength. Beasts that had roamed the woodlands and wilds unhindered, in search of pasture, water, and all their needs, were checked and trammeled (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 99-100).

The ability of human beings to build their own shelter and cultivate their own food secured their dominion over other species and enabled them to spread beyond the habitats that provided for their needs without intervention, encroaching on the spaces of other, nonhuman animals. As a

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[137] مُسْتَوجشين من كثرة السِّباعِ والوُحوش في الأرض، وكانوا يَأْوُون في رُؤوس الجِبالِ والتِلالِ متحَصِّنين فيها وفي المغاراتِ والكُهوفِ، وكانوا يَأكلون من ثمر الأشجارِ وبُقُول الأرضِ وحَبِّ النباتِ...ويَشْتون قي البُلدانِ الدَّفيئةِ، ويَصِيفون في البُلدانِ الباردةِ (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 38).

[138] يُقال إنَّه لمَّا تَوالَدت أولادُ آدمَ وكُثرَت وانتَشَرَت في الأرض برّاً وبحراً، وسهلاً وجبلاً، مُتصرّفين فيها في مآربهم (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 38).

result, even the animals that are not domesticated are forced to leave "their ancestral lands" (أوطانها وأماكنها) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 100; Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 39).[139]

The human beings who come to the island in the epistle seek to assert their authority here as well. When the nonhuman animals on the island are unable to escape from the men by running away, they go to the King of the Jinn, upset that humankind has disrupted their harmonious co-existence, oppressed, and abused them, "to complain of the injustice and wrongs of mankind against them and to protest the human notions about them" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 102).[140] The historical relationship between human and nonhuman animals is to be litigated. A trial follows in which human beings attempt to argue that the nonhuman animals are their "runaway slaves" (عبيدنا الآبِقين) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 103).[141] The nonhuman animal representatives, in turn, present examples of the multiple forms of abuse, oppression, and exploitation they have suffered at the hands of human beings. In the end, human beings are declared the winners and the nonhuman animals acknowledge their superiority. As promised in the prologue, the nonhuman animal plaintiffs clearly show that man is at "his worst, an accursed devil, the bane of creation" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 65).[142]

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[139] I would offer "their homes" or "their homelands" as a translation of "أوطانها وأماكنها" (*awṭānuhā wa amākinuhā*) that is closer to the original text and its intent. Goodman and McGregor's rendering of it as "their ancestral lands" reflect their apparent eagerness to frame "The Animals Versus Man" as a text with a strong ecological message that challenges anthropocentric views of the nonhuman world. Goodman's first translation of the text appeared in 1978 under the title *The Case of the Animals versus Man before the King of the Jinn: A Tenth-Century Ecological Fable of the Pure Brethren of Basra*, revealing this impulse. And it is an impulse that is not unique to Goodman. An illustrated adaptation of the Hebrew translation of the risāla by Rabbi Anson Laytner and Rabbi Dan Bridge appears under the title *The Animals' Lawsuit Against Humanity: A Modern Adaptation of an Ancient Animal Rights Tale* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005).

[140] وشَكَت إليه ما لقيت من جَوْر بني آدم وتعدّيهم عليها واعتقادهم فيها (41 "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" ,'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā).

[141] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 42.

[142] وإذا كان شِرّيراً فهو شيطانٌ رجيمٌ شَرُّ البَريةِ (4 "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" ,'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā).

However, it is because man, at his best, "is a noble angel, the finest of creatures" that human beings are declared victorious (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 65).[143] It is concluded that only human beings have the potential to be "persons of fair and praiseworthy parts, pious deeds, myriad sciences, godly awareness, regal character, just and holy lives, and awesome ways" (Goodman and McGregor, 314-315).[144]

It is because of this potential for good that Allah, according to the Qur'an, selected Ādam (Adam) as his *khalīfa* (viceregent) on earth, with power over creation: "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a viceregent on earth'" (وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّى جَاعِلٌ فِى الأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً) (Qur'an, Al-Baqara [The Heifer] 2:30). As his *khalīfa*, Allah also gave mankind the *amāna* (Trust), making him responsible for the earth and its care: "We did indeed offer the Trust (*al-amāna*) to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it—he was indeed unjust and foolish" (Qur'an, al-Aḥzāb [The Confederates] 33:72).[145] The *amāna*, as it appears in this verse, has been understood a number of different ways. According to Lane, the noun *amāna* can mean both "*trustworthiness*" and "*[a] thing committed to the trust and care of a person; a trust*" (Lane, Book I, 102). It can be an attribute that one possesses or an object for which one is responsible. The root of *amāna*, *a-m-n*, is associated with security and safety and it is the same root of the words *īmān* ("faith" or "belief"), *amīn* ("faithful" or "loyal"), and *mu'min* ("believer"). *Amān* means "safe-conduct" or "safe-passage," and is subdivided into either *amān mu'abbad* (perpetual safe-conduct) or *amān*

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[143] فهو مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ خَيرُ البَريةِ (4 "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" ,Ikhwān al-Ṣafā').

[144] وخِيَرته [الله] من بَرِيّته أوصافاً حميدةً، وصِفاتاً جميلةً/ وأعمالاً زَكيةً، وعلماً متقَنِنةً، ومَعارف رَبّانيةً، وأخلاقاً مَلَكيةً، وسيرةً عادلةً قُدسيةً وأحوالاً عَجيبةً (278-279 "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" ,Ikhwān al-Ṣafā').

[145] إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُوماً جَهُولاً.

mu'aqqat (short-term safe-conduct).[146] The granting of the trust by Allah and, critically, its acceptance by mankind, represents a covenant. Human beings hold the *amāna* and are responsible for safeguarding and caring for it. Discharging this duty well is a component of faith.

The obligation to uphold covenants, be they human or divine, like that formed by the bestowing and acceptance of the *amāna*, is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur'an. Sura 70 promises an honored place in the "Gardens (of Bliss)" (جَنَّٰت) for "those who respect their trusts [*amānāt*] and covenants" (وَالَّذِينَ هُم لِأَمَٰنَٰتِهِم وَعَهدِهِم رَٰعونَ) (Qur'an, al-Ma'ārij [The Ways of Ascent] 70:32). "Trusts" are one of the "obligations" (*'uqūd*) that believers are commanded to fulfill in the following sura: "O ye who believe! Fulfill [all obligations (*'uqūd*)]" (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ) (Qur'an, al-Mā'ida [The Repast] 5:1). These "*'uqūd*" include a whole host of human social, commercial, political, and civil obligations. But, as noted above, they also comprise agreements between God and man. The latter encompass "the divine obligations that arise from our spiritual nature and our relation to Allah," in that "He created us and implanted in us the faculty of knowledge and foresight", as well as "intuition and reason" ('Alī, n.682 243).

It is within this context that the concept of "*al-amāna*" is understood. Lane enumerates multiple possible interpretations of "the trust," including reason, intellect, will, and/or conscience themselves, "these being trusts committed to us by God, to be faithfully employed" (Lane Book I, 102). M. Ali Lakhani adopts this reading of the verse when he writes in his article "The Metaphysics of Human Governance: Imam 'Ali, Truth and Justice" that humanity is "privileged by the grace of revelation and intellection to know the transcendent and to recognize creation as a manifestation of transcendence," and as a result of this knowledge of creation, "also bears the

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[146] Gianluca P. Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-State* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U P, 2009).

responsibility of stewardship towards [it]" (Lakhani, 7).[147] So the *amāna* is not the earth itself,

but rather the "God-like attributes"—reason, intellect, will, or even the traits of "forbearance,

love, and mercy" similarly highlighted by 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī—that distinguish human beings

from the rest of creation and carry with them the duty of care that extends beyond the self ('Alī,

n.3782 1081).

Islamic ecological thought often focuses on human beings' stewardship of creation in

terms of the duty of maintaining the *tawāzun* (balance or equilibrium) of the earth created by

God. Goodman explains in his introduction to the translation of *The Case of the Animals*:

"Nature's balance, as [the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'] see it, is God's work. It is not the product of

fortuitous circumstances, an invisible hand operating simply *among* natural species, blocking any

from overrunning all the rest" (Goodman, 34). In the Qur'an, the prophet Shu'ayb issues the

injunction to "do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order" (وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ

إِصْلَاحِهَا كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ) (Qur'an, al-A'rāf [The Heights] 7:85). The use of resources is one way in

which human beings can either do mischief, by causing undue harm to the earth and its creatures

through exploitation, or preserve order, by nourishing and nurturing human beings through the

careful management of resources in a way that does not upset the *tawāzun* of the environment.

Sheikh Ali Gomaa, who served as Grand Mufti of Egypt from 2003 to 2013, emphasizes this

idea in a 2010 op-ed for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, writing: "We must find a

balance between benefiting from the blessings that the world has to offer us, and preserving the

order that God has established."[148] Mawil Y. Izzi Deen similarly explains in "Islamic

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[147] M. Ali Lakhani, "The Metaphysics of Human Governance: Imam 'Ali, Truth and Justice" in *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam: The Teachings of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib*, ed. M. Ali Lakhani (North Vancouver: World Wisdom, 2006), 3-58.

[148] Sheikh Ali Gomaa, "Opinion: The role of religion in preserving the environment," *ABC (The Australian Broadcasting Corporation)*, 28 September 2010, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-12-10/27648>.

Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society": "In Islam, the conservation of the environment is based on the principle that all the individual components of the environment were created by God, and that all living things were created with different functions, functions carefully measured and meticulously balanced by the Almighty Creator."[149] Man's role as God's *khalīfa* responsible for the *amāna* is to maintain the *tawāzun* of the earth. He is the only created being with this ability. *The Case of the Animals* proves, Goodman argues, that "dominion imparts responsibility—for stewardship of nature" (Goodman, 53). Lakhani concurs, touching on the ecological implications of the *amāna*, which he interprets as knowledge of transcendence, when he writes: "To know God is also to know all things in God, and God in all things, and to treat all God's creatures as sacred" (Lakhani, 7). However, although human beings possess the faculties that make them most suited among God's creatures for overseeing the care of the earth, the fact that the bestowing and accepting of the *amāna* represents a covenant indicates that the proper use of those faculties to fulfill that covenant is not a given.

In Qur'an 33:72, quoted above, the Heavens, the Earth, and the Mountains—all of creation, except for man—reject the Trust. "Reject" is perhaps the wrong word, since the rest of creation is never offered the burden of choice. They unquestioningly "submit their will entirely to Allah's Will, which is All-Wise and Perfect" and leave the *amāna* to mankind ('Alī, n. 3779 1080). However, as Lakhani notes, "humanity in general is content to accept the privilege of its creaturely superiority without accepting the responsibility that such superiority confers" (Lakhani, 7). Though human beings may be God-like, they are not divine. Because they are flawed, it is not within their ability to care for creation, and keep it in balance, as well as God. Since God is all-knowing, he gives the *amāna* to man aware that it is in his nature to betray it.

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[149] Mawil Y. Izzi Deen, "Islamic Environmental Ethics, Law, and Society" in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd ed., Ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 2004), 158-167.

The verse itself acknowledges mankind's "unjustness" (ظَلُوم) and "foolishness" (جَهُول),

emphasizing that God is aware of the shortcomings of human beings, even if they themselves are

not. The constant tension between the potential of human beings to do good and the baser

instincts that prevent them from achieving this potential is an integral part of the covenant

between God and man represented by the *amāna*. This perpetual striving, as long as it is not

abandoned, safeguards against complacency and works to counteract the flaws of human beings.

It could be argued that the reason that the divine *tawāzun* of the natural world is not self-

sustaining is because of the presence of man—specifically modern man. So, it is the very

existence of man that necessitates the designation of him as *khalīfa* to oversee stewardship of the

earth. Nonhuman animals occupy their positions in the ecosystem without consciously working

to overreach them. Human beings, on the other hand, as portrayed in *The Case of the Animals*,

use their intellect to secure not just their own self-preservation, but to work toward complete

dominion over the nonhuman world as well. The figure of the early nomad romanticized by the

Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ in their epistle lived in harmony with the natural world because he was unable to

do otherwise. However, this harmony is imagined and articulated from a place (most likely the

city of Basra) and a time (the 10th century) in which the challenges of urban civilization were

being lived, while the realities of early human history were unknown. The summoning of the

figure of the early nomad in tune with his environment thus becomes a form of ecological *ḥanīn*,

through which contemporary human behavior, and human treatment of nonhuman animals in

particular, is critiqued.

The Case of the Animals complicates the structure of ecological *ḥanīn* explored in the

previous chapter. In Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī's *Saʾakūnu bayna al-Lawz* and Raja Shehadeh's

Palestinian Walks, both protagonists envision an alternate future through a critique of the present

accessed via the interpenetration of nature with the (ruins of) civilization at the *aṭlāl*, invoking the *nasīb* of the classical Arabic *qaṣīda*. Physical presence at the *aṭlāl* enables yearning for an earlier time to eclipse a yearning for place. In *The Case of the Animals*, the shipwrecked human beings actually find themselves in an ecologically balanced environmental paradise reminiscent of the world before "humans spread across the earth" (أَوْلادُ آدَمَ ...انتَشَرَت في الأرض) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 99).[150] There are no *aṭlāl* to stand over because they are the first human beings to settle the land. They are in the desired place, at the desired time in history. Here, it is the nonhuman animals on the island who experience ecological *ḥanīn*, yearning for the peace, harmony, and plenty that characterized their home before humankind's arrival. The recalling of the figure of the early nomad is a manifestation of that ecological *ḥanīn*: man's presence is only tolerable when he is stripped of his superiority over the nonhuman animals and forced to function as just one animal among many.

When it comes down to the debate being held before the King of the Jinn, the experiences of nonhuman creatures who have a history of living alongside civilized human beings, presumably in the world off of the island, are invoked. When the birds of prey gather to choose a representative to argue on their behalf at the trial, they nominate the owl first for this reason. The argument is made that the owl will be able to make a persuasive case because he knows human beings better than the other birds of prey. This is because "[h]e lives in their desolate dwellings, decayed buildings, and deserted castles" and, "[h]aving studied mankind's ancient ruins, he has learned the lessons of ages past" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 176).[151] Although the owl may not have the kind of daily working relationship with human beings that a bird like

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[150] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 38.

[151] [هو] قريبُ المُجاورة لهم في ديارهم العافيةِ ومنازلِهم الدارسة وقصورهم الخَربةِ، وينظُر إلى آثارهم القديمةِ، ويَعتَبِر بالقرونِ الماضيةِ
(Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 116).

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the falcon does, his knowledge of their deserted abodes gives him insight into the patterns of

their history. The owl then gives voice to a series of laments "for bygone kings and vanished

nations" (على ملوكِهم الماضيةِ والأُمَمِ السالِفةِ), in which, drawing on this knowledge, "he cautions

mankind and calls them to reflect" (وَعَظَ بني آدم يُذكِّرُهم) (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and

McGregor, 176).[152] In one such elegy, the owl addresses the ruins directly, presumably adopting

the perspective of a human being:

<div dir="rtl">

سألتُ الدار تُخبِرني

عن الأحبابِ ما فَعَلوا (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Da'wā al-ḥayawān" 117).

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> "Answer, ruin," I said, "and tell me
> What my loved ones once did here." (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor,
> 177).

The departure of the beloved is recalled. Nature is made present through the owl, which stands

over the manmade *aṭlāl* on behalf of the absent human beings. In response to the owl's

interrogation, the ruins explain that the "loved ones" spent a few nights here before passing on.

They are now gone and dead, and have faced the judgement of God. Goodman and McGregor

write:

> For the Ikhwān, the owl, as an archaeological bird, fuses the elegiac mood of pre-
> Islamic poetry, musing on the vagaries of fate and death, with monitory Islamic
> meditations on the vicissitudes wrought by time, read as signs of life's
> evanescence and the urgency of resort to God. These themes link with the
> Qur'anic archaeology, where the ruins of vanished civilizations warn of the
> judgements meted out as history unfolds (Goodman and McGregor, n.207 179).

Thus, according to the owl, men see him as an "ominous" omen (يتطيَّرون برؤيتي), a reminder of

human mortality and divine judgement (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 179).[153]

Although the human beings on the island have not been settled long enough for time to erode

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[152] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Da'wā al-ḥayawān" 116.

[153] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Da'wā al-ḥayawān" 119.

their abodes into sites of ecological *ḥanīn*, the very presence of the owl would serve to evoke their *aṭlāl* in other lands.

While the abodes of men on the island stand tall, those of the nonhuman animals are ruined, becoming *aṭlāl* that facilitate the expression of ecological *ḥanīn* from within the natural world itself. This is a theme directly touched on several times during the trial in the course of discussing men's treatment of bees. The appropriateness of comparing the abodes of bees to those of men is established by the parrot, who is selected by the birds of prey to serve as their envoy.[154] He objects to the argument that human beings are superior to nonhuman animals because there are "artisans and masters of diverse crafts" (صُنَّاع وأصحاب حِرَفٍ) among them (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 275).[155] The bees, the parrot explains, "make their cells and build dwellings more aptly and skillfully than your [human] artisans, better and more ingeniously than your [human] builders and architects" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 275).[156] However, while the bees attempt to coexist peacefully with human beings, they destroy the abodes of bees, as well as the homes of other nonhuman creatures. The leader of the bees himself, Yaʿsūb, testifies against human beings at the trial, explaining that "the Adamites" (بنو آدم) kill and exploit the bees and destroy their hives: "they wreck our dwellings and burn our homes" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 236).[157] Although it could be argued that stewardship of the *amāna* gives human beings the right to utilize the bees' honey for their own benefit, the unnecessary razing of their homes exceeds the bounds of responsible use.

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[154] The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' classify the parrot as a "bird of prey" in their taxonomy.

[155] Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 229.

[156] في اتِّخاذ البيوتِ وبناءِ المنازل أعلَمُ وأحذَقُ من صُنَّاعِكم والمُهندِسين، ومن الَبنّائين منكم (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 229-230).

[157] خرَّبوا مَنازِلَنا وحرَّقوا بُيوتَنا (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 177).

The abodes of bees, as well as the homes of other animals, become *aṭlāl*, created through the actions of human beings, an inversion of the standard trope of the erosion of the abodes of human beings by nature. Whereas the deserted *aṭlāl* in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, for example, indicate the departure of civilization and the cyclical return of nature, the destruction of the abodes of animals is an indication of the presence of civilization and the absence of nature.

In *The Case of the Animals*, the only human beings represented as capable of living harmoniously alongside nonhuman animals are the early nomads, who no longer exist, and the pious few who manage to live up to the highest potential of human beings. These "noble angels," (الملائكة الكرماء) who ultimately tilt the trial in favor of human beings and presumably fulfill the covenant of the *amāna* responsibly, begin their lives in civilization but often remove themselves to nature. They, in the words of the delegate of the beasts of prey, "shelter in the hills and mountains, or the bosoms of valleys, by the seashore, or in the forest—the haunts of wild beasts" (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'/ Goodman and McGregor, 266).[158] Here, the pious figure coexists with the nonhuman animals, neither seeking to harm them nor fearing for his life. Positioned against urban-dwelling human beings, an embodiment of the corruptions of civilization, the pious figure surpasses even the early nomad, whose harmony with the nonhuman world was the result of his relative weakness rather than conscious choice.

In the late-20th-century novels *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Endings*, and *The Tent*, this pious figure finds expression in the representation of the "ecological native," or what Sharif S. Elmusa calls the "Ecological Bedouin." This is a region-specific iteration of the figure of the "Ecological Indian," a term coined by Shepard Krech III in *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999) to describe a common trope in American literature. Krech summarizes the

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[158] ذَهَبَ يأْوَى إلى رُؤوس الجِبالِ والتِّلالِ، وبُطونِ الأودِيةِ والسَّواحِلِ والآجامِ والآكامِ مأوى السِّباع (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', "Daʿwā al-ḥayawān" 219).

"Ecological Indian" as "the Indian in nature who understands the systematic consequences of his actions, feels deep sympathy with all living forms, and takes steps to conserve so that earth's harmonies are never imbalanced and resources never in doubt" (Krech, 21).[159] Krech notes that the figure of the Ecological Indian became a useful tool for American conservationists and environmentalist movements. It was also adopted by Native peoples to support land claims by asserting their superior stewardship, though the ecological reality was more "mixed" in practice (Krech, 212). Native knowledge of the environment did not always produce what we would today think of as environmentalist and conservationist behaviors and attitudes. They rather reveal an "ecoambiguity," to use Karen Thornber's term, which she defines as "the complex, contradictory interactions between people and environments with a significant nonhuman presence" (Thornber, 1).[160]

In "Rethinking the 'Ecological Indian,'" Annette Kolodny looks at *The Life and Traditions of the Red Man*, a text published by Joseph Nicolar, an American Indian of the Penobscot Nation in Maine, in 1893, as an example of "the ways in which Native peoples themselves had originally fashioned and deployed their own construction of the Ecological Indian for their own ends" (Kolodny, 3).[161] Kolodny argues that this process of self-framing began much earlier than the late-20th-century period on which Krech focuses. Even before Nicolar penned his text, a series of petitions by the Penobscots starting in 1823 "reinforced their public self-representation as worthy stewards and conservators, in contrast to the wasteful 'white people'" (Kolodny, 6). The Penobscots were not in actuality "ecological saints," though their

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[159] Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

[160] Karen Thornber, *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2012).

[161] Annette Kolodny, "Rethinking the 'Ecological Indian': A Penobscot Precursor," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 14.1 (2007): 1-23.

views on resource management in particular were generally more environmentally friendly than contemporary Euro-american attitudes and approaches (Kolodny, 16). However, their self-positioning as "Ecological Indians" provided the framework for the defense of their homeland, even if their efforts met with little success.

Elmusa calls the figure of the Ecological Bedouin "a twin brother of the Ecological Indian in the North American environmental imagination" (Elmusa, 19). Elmusa analyzes three Arabic "desert novels," two of which, *Endings* and *The Bleeding of the Stone*, are also discussed in this chapter. The third, Ṣabrī Mūsā's *Fasād al-amkina* (1973; *Seeds of Corruption*, 1979), is analyzed in Chapter 4. Elmusa proposes that "it is possible to 'translate' the words and deeds of the Ecological Bedouin in the novels into the language of environmental ethics" (Elmusa, 29). According to Elmusa, the figure of the Ecological Bedouin in these three literary works:

> believes in the unity and equality of creation, without assuming human superiority over other species; values the animate and inanimate to the greatest possible extent for their intrinsic value, rather than for utility to humans; understands, even if only intuitively, the interdependence of the various parts of the ecosystem; exhibits humility toward nature; is willing to take responsibility for conservation; and advocates environmental justice (Elmusa, 29).

He also "considers the desert, or the part he lives in, his trust, and himself its guardian and the rightful heir to its natural and historical gifts" (Elmusa, 20). Here, Elmusa clearly links the sense of stewardship expressed by the Ecological Bedouin to the notion of *amāna* discussed above.

While Elmusa makes a strong case for the use of the term "Ecological Bedouin," I prefer "ecological native" here. First, the term "Ecological Bedouin" excludes narratives of non-Bedouin ecological native figures in the literature of North Africa and the Middle East, discouraging productive comparisons between desert-dwelling characters and, for example, Palestinian characters who espouse an ethics of ecological stewardship, which is the subject of

the next chapter.[162] Furthermore, Elmusa's description of the "Ecological Bedouin" as a "twin brother" of the Ecological Indian is imprecise. This positioning minimizes the importance of the very different historical, political, and literary contexts that led to the creation of each figure, which I believe the more general term "ecological native" better accommodates. The primary distinction Elmusa makes between his "twin" figures is linked to the differences in their environments. He writes: "On one hand, Native Americans lived, for the most part, amid bountiful nature, with extensive forests and savannah, and tens of millions of bison and other animals. The Bedouin, on the other hand, persisted under conditions of desert scarcity" (Elmusa, 19). Although Elmusa only touches on the point briefly, he makes the generalization that "whereas the necessity born out of scarcity can be expected to engender virtuous environmental behavior, plenty would be expected to encourage wastefulness, as occurred apparently among some American Indian communities," thus eliding the geographic diversity of the Americas as well as the ecoambiguity of the Bedouin figure, both in these novels and in reality (Elmusa, 19).

I will use the term "ecological native" in the contexts highlighted in this chapter to refer to figures that view the maintenance of ecological *tawāzun* as a responsibility uniquely imparted to humankind as a willing recipient of the *amāna*. As should be clear from the above discussion, the figure of the ecological native emerges within a context in which notions of the *amāna* and the nomad or pious figure who survives through his knowledge of the environment and affiliation or harmony with the nonhuman animal world are already embedded.[163] In *The Case of the Animals*, this man is figured against civilized human beings whose villages and cities

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[162] In fact, Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh's "Khuṭbat 'al-hindī al-aḥmar' mā qabl al-akhīra amān al-rajul al-abyaḍ" (1992; Speech of the American Indian; "Speech of the Red Indian," 2000) is the only Arabic-language text that self-consciously draws on the trope of the Ecological Indian in the American context, resituating it within the Palestinian context.

[163] See Elmusa for a discussion of the figure of the Bedouin nomad in the work of Ibn Khaldūn.

encroach upon the habitats and lives of nonhuman animals. A parallel eco-alterity informs contemporary manifestations.

Although the framing of *The Case of the Animals* is Islamic and the notion of *amāna* as used here comes from the Qur'an, the desert settings of the three novels discussed in this chapter lessen the concept's religious overtones.[164] Furthermore, the affiliations between human beings and nonhuman animals in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Endings*, and *The Tent* challenge the strict division between human beings and the rest of creation set up in Qur'an 33:72. In *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*, the sole responsibility of humankind for ecological *tawāzun*, and the culpability of human beings for its absence, is never in doubt. However, I argue that strong connections between human beings and nonhuman animals in these two novels enforce responsible stewardship, functioning as a reminder of human embeddedness or groundedness in the environment as well a check against self-serving exploitation, as embodied by the urban/settled and/or colonial other. The utility of such narratives is undermined in *The Tent*, where, I make the point, it becomes clear that guardianship must be male in these contexts to be effective. Otherwise, linkages between (female) human beings and nonhuman animals merely enforce the status of both as victims of male violence.

II. The Figure of the Ecological Native in the Wilderness of the Desert

In both *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*, human beings' disconnection from nature, specifically the desert, and the animals that inhabit it, are signs of their affiliation with an urban modernity that is ignorant of or rejects traditional ways of life, often seeking to exploit

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[164] In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the influence of the remote space of the desert on religious practice is made evident early in the text when Asouf unwittingly directs his prayer toward a rock painting of a pre-Islamic religious figure rather than toward the *qibla*. See al-Kūnī, *Stone* 7; al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 13.

natural resources and threatening indigenous human and animal populations. In contrast, the male protagonists' strong relationships with nonhuman animals signal ecological responsibility.

Born and raised in the desert, the only human connections that Asouf forms in *The Bleeding of the Stone* are with his mother and father. Isolated from the population centers of the oases and cities, Asouf develops a deep fear of other human beings. His father nurtures this wariness, while encouraging his son's connection to the desert. Asouf's fear of other people is characterized as an incompleteness—first of his masculinity, and then of his humanity. When Asouf is unsuccessful in his efforts to barter with a caravan after his father's death, his mother tells him he is "like a girl" (وصفته بأنه بنت). She then continues: "Your father, God rest his soul, turned you into a camel frightened by men's shadows" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 28).[165] Asouf later tries again, but flees when one of the men from the caravan approaches him: "he [jumps] up and [vanishes] behind the rocks, leaping among the stones like a [mouflon]" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 29).[166] Asouf's early exhibition of animal-like behavior foreshadows his own becoming-animal, which occurs later in the text. However, it also emphasizes his lack of belonging to a human community.

The Bleeding of the Stone opens with the following verse from the Qur'an: "There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you" (Qur'an, al-An'ām [The Cattle] 6:38).[167] Animals, like human beings, make their lives in communities. In his commentary on this verse, 'Abdullāh Yūsuf 'Alī writes:

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[165] المرحوم هو الذي خلق منك بعيراً يفزعه ظل الأنس (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 37).

All translations are from Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, Trans. May Jayyusi and Christopher Tingley (New York: Interlink, 2002).

[166] وجد نفسه يقفز ويتوارى خلف الصخور، يتقافز كالودّان، بين الأحجار، قاصداً الوادي (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 38).

[167] وَمَا مِن دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُم ۚ مَّا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِن شَيْءٍ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ.

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"In our pride we may exclude animals from our purview, but they all live a life, social and individual, like ourselves, and all life is subject to the Plan and Will of Allah" ('Alī, n.859 303). In *Animal Welfare in Islam*, Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri adds that this verse demonstrates that animals "are communities in their own right and not in relation to human species or its values" (Masri, 8).[168] Asouf is not part of a human community, and in fact has no human connections at all once his mother and father are gone. However, I would argue that it is actually this lack of community that enables him to connect so deeply with his environment through his relationships with its animals and ultimately integrate into a nonhuman community. This enables Asouf to position himself against the human communities of the settled oases as well as, critically, the colonial forces encroaching upon the desert.

After the death of his parents, Asouf develops the strongest link to the *waddan* [mouflon], a kind of wild sheep. Asouf's acceptance into this community reflects his embeddedness and groundedness in his environment and, later, highlights the contrast between him and other human beings who behave in a way that is ecologically destructive. Part of the mouflon's sacredness stems from its own groundedness in its environment. This is emphasized in the text through the counsel a Sufi shaykh gives an American officer. He tells him that the best olive oil comes from Gharyān in northwest Libya, the best dates from Fizzān in southwest Libya, and the best meat is that of the mouflon. The first two products the shaykh mentions, the oil and the dates, are valued because of their places of origin (Gharyān and Fizzān, respectively). The mouflon, on the other hand, embodies both itself and the place from which it comes, requiring no geographic qualifier to identify it. When Asouf becomes a member of the mouflon community, then, he further solidifies his groundedness in place.

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[168] Al-Hafiz Basheer Ahmad Masri, *Animal Welfare in Islam* (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2007).

The mouflon is viewed by Asouf and his father as a sacred animal. Facing death in two separate, but closely parallel, incidents, both men vow not to hunt it. While Asouf keeps his promise, his father does not, and dies as a result. Asouf's father makes his vow when he is rescued from what seems like certain death from the very mouflon he was hunting. He falls and finds himself suspended from a ledge, "hanging between earth and sky, holding on to a rock with his legs dangling into a chasm," caught in the liminal space between life and death known as *barzakh* (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 40).[169] Al-Kūnī treats this space of *barzakh* in *The Bleeding of the Stone* as a site of destabilization of the human/nonhuman animal divide and radical affiliation; it is a space that opens the possibility for human beings to identify deeply with and even transform into nonhuman animals.

The word *barzakh* is often translated as limit, barrier, or, as in the context above, purgatory. The term appears in the Qur'ān, as in: "It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier (*barzakh*) between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed" (Qur'an, al-Furqān [The Criterion] 25:53).[170] A *barzakh* is a barrier, but it is also a site of unification and mixing. Salman H. Bashier writes: "Barzakh is a term that represents an activity or an active entity that differentiates between two things and (paradoxically) through that very act of differentiation provides for their unity" (Bashier, 7).[171] A *barzakh* is a border dividing, for example, salt water and fresh water or life and death. However, it is also a space of union that is both salt water and fresh water, a state of both life and death, but is also neither salt water nor fresh water, neither

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[169] ووجد نفسه معلقاً بين السماء والأرض، يمسك بصخرة ورجلاه تتدليان في الهاوية (48-49 *al-Ḥajar* ,al-Kūnī).

[170] وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هَٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَهَٰذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَحِجْرًا مَحْجُورًا.

[171] Salman H. Bashier, *Ibn al-'Arabī's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World* (Albany: SUNY U P, 2004).

life nor death. Here, each side is its other, and not, as well as a third thing formed by the blurring between formerly distinct entities. In his commentary, 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī gives the Mississippi and Yangstse-Kiang Rivers as concrete examples of *barzakh* in the natural world: "In the case of rivers carrying large quantities of water to the sea…the river water with its silt remains distinct from sea water for a long distance out to sea" ('Alī, n.3111 901). This observed phenomenon, much like the many qualities of animals enumerated in texts like *The Case of the Animals*, is described as a "wonderful Sign" of the perfect order created by God on earth: "the two bodies of water, though they pass through each other, remain distinct bodies, with their distinct functions" ('Alī, n. 3111 901). The world, as God made it, is in balance, and *barzakh* is one of the ways in which that balance is maintained.

The notion of *barzakh* holds special importance in Sufi thought, and especially in the work of the 12th- to 13th-century Andalusian thinker Ibn 'Arabī. In his writings, Ibn 'Arabī connects the notion of *barzakh* to the idea of what William Chittick calls an "imaginal reality." A mirror image is an example, in that it "acts as a bridge or 'isthmus' [*barzakh*] between the reflected object and the mirror." The mirror image, as an imaginal reality or *barzakh*, "is both the same as the mirror and different from it" and "is identical neither with the object nor with the mirror" (Chittick, 25).[172] *Barzakh* can also be understood as an "intermediate state," which exists "between the known and the unknown worlds" (بين المعلوم والمجهول) as well as "between existence and nothingness" (بين الوجود والعدم) or "between truth (God) and creation" (بين الحق والخلق). In the last example, according to Adūnīs, "perfect man" (الإنسان الكامل) represents the *barzakh* between the two poles: "When he appears with divine attributes, he is truth and when he

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[172] William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: SUNY P, 1994).

appears with a likeness, he is a creation" (Adūnīs, *Sufism* 61).[173] The "noble angel" (المَلَكُ الكَريمُ)
lauded by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' is an example of *barzakh*, creating a bridge between the Divine
and imperfect man through the combination of his God-like qualities with his humanity.

Asouf and his father experience transformations in the space of *barzakh*. However, I
would suggest that they themselves are also examples of *barzakh*, forming a link as they do
between the human and nonhuman. Asouf is aware of his father's vow and also refrains from
hunting the mouflon, inheriting the prohibition, until one of the animals wanders into his goat
herd. A long chase ends in an encounter nearly identical to the one that transformed his own,
now deceased, father. Asouf hangs from a precipice, "between earth and heaven" (بين السماء
والأرض), trapped between life and death, in a state of *barzakh* (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 51).[174] Then, the
mouflon he had been hunting rescues him. He calls the mouflon "his victim and executioner"
(ضحيته. جلاده.) before asking: "But which of them was the victim, which the executioner? Which
of them was human, which animal?" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 60).[175] This act of affiliation and
transformation is an experience of *barzakh*, in which Asouf sees himself in the mouflon and the
mouflon in himself—he is both victim and executioner, human and animal, and neither victim
nor executioner, neither fully human nor fully animal. The imaginal reality is a bridge between
Asouf and the mouflon, across which he affiliates with the mouflon without fully abandoning his
humanity. The process is complete when Asouf recognizes his father in the mouflon's eyes:

لقد حلَّ الأب في الودّان، والودّان حلَّ فيه. هو والمرحوم والودّان العظيم الآن شيء واحد. لن يفصل بينهم
شيء.

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[173] يظهر بالأسماء الإلهية فيكون حقّاً، ويظهر بالإمكان فيكون خَلْقا (75 Adūnīs, *al-Ṣufiyya*).

Adūnīs, *al-Ṣufiyya wa al-Surrīyaliyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 1995).
All translations are from Adūnīs, *Sufism and Surrealism*, Trans. Judith Cumberbatch (London: Saqi Books, 2005).

[174] al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 62.

[175] من منهما الضحية؟ ومن منهما الجلاد؟ من منهما الإنسان؟ ومن منهما الحيوان؟ (70 al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar*).

…لم يخبرها [الأم] بالسرّ.
بالتحوّل (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajr* 75).

> Had his father come to dwell in the [mouflon], and the [mouflon] in his father? He, his father, and the mighty [mouflon] were one now. Nothing could separate them.

> …But he didn't tell her [his mother] the secret—the secret of his transformation (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 65-66).

Asouf becomes a mouflon, the same mouflon that his father became, thus transforming into both a mouflon and his father at the same time. Through the mouflon, Asouf gains acceptance into the nonhuman community of the desert, further anchoring himself to place. However, it is through his father that Asouf inherits the *amāna*, accepting responsibility as a human being for stewardship of that environment. Asouf's imagining of himself as both a mouflon and his father functions as a bridge, connecting Asouf to them through affiliation and creating a new self that is both human and animal, father and son, and yet neither fully human nor animal, neither father nor son. Asouf gives up all meat, becoming a vegetarian, emphasizing his alliance with not just the mouflon, but with all of the nonhuman animals that surround him.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe becoming-animal as an "absolute deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 13).[176] Both the self and the perspectives that govern the understanding of the self are displaced as the human subject inhabits the nonhuman other through an act of affiliation or alliance that may, but need not, involve physical transformation. Deleuze and Guattari compare becoming-animal to the contagion that occurs through a vampire's bite, through which identity is destabilized and multiplied.[177] The move from human to nonhuman animal involves a recognition of the

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[176] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986).

[177] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

multiplicity within the self as well as affiliation with an external other. It is the animal within the human that allies itself with the animal outside of him or herself.

Asouf's becoming-animal unfolds on multiple levels. In addition to the transformation that occurs in the space of *barzakh*, Asouf also physically changes into a mouflon as a means of escaping his forced conscription into the Italian army. This more straightforward becoming represents a clear rejection of the human and especially of membership in the human community forcibly assembled by the outside forces of colonialism through compulsory military service. In "Dying to Be Free: Wilderness Writing from Lebanon, Arabia, and Libya," Miriam Cooke does not distinguish between Asouf's two separate transformations when she asserts that his becoming-mouflon cannot be separated from his struggle "against the depredations of modernity" (Cooke 31).[178] By becoming "the predator, the legendary animal," Asouf embraces his own indigenous history and "contest[s] the violence of the present" (Cooke, 15, 30). From this perspective, Asouf's transformation is linked solely to his escape from and objection to the threat of other human beings, rather than the active affiliation with the nonhuman described above.

The narrative shifts to an omniscient third person to describe Asouf's physical transformation into a mouflon: "something happened—something the people of the oasis constantly recounted, around which they wove legends. The young men told them how they'd witnessed a miracle for the first time in their lives" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 73).[179] The change in perspective stands out from the other sections that deal with Asouf, which are related from his

[178] Miriam Cooke, "Dying to Be Free: Wilderness Writing from Lebanon, Arabia, and Libya" in *On Evelyne Accad: Essays in Literature, Feminism, and Cultural Studies*, ed. Cheryl Toman (Birmingham: Summa Publications, Inc., 2007), 13-32.

[179] حدث ما تناقله الأهالي ونسجوا حوله الأساطير. روى لهم الشباب، فقالوا إنهم رأوا المعجزة لأول مرة في حياتهم (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 83).

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point of view. The only other episode that is narrated in this style is Asouf's sacrifice at the end of the novel. The effect is that both Asouf's physical transformation and his death are removed from the realm of personal experience and pass into legend and myth, imbuing both events with a significance that transcends the individual encounters between Asouf and the mouflon. Furthermore, this transformation cannot be hidden, as Asouf does with his earlier experience. It becomes an extreme model for other human beings of radical resistance to colonial control and violence. I would argue that, in this sense, the event speaks more to an inward-looking shift in attitude rather than an outward-looking acceptance of stewardship and ecological responsibility.[180] Asouf's physical transformation into a mouflon signals an alliance with the animal, but it is a becoming of the self rather than a union with the other like that experienced in the space of *barzakh*. It is the latter that positions Asouf, as a member of both the human and animal communities while not fully present in either, to function as a guardian.

In 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's novel *Endings*, the character of 'Assāf adopts a similar role as guardian of the environment and its animals. His strong relationship to the nonhuman world is signaled through the close bond he forms with his hunting dog, Ḥiṣān. The connection forged between them is so intense that "the image of the two of them became as one" (Munīf, 24).[181] Members of the community remark on their physical resemblance, and everyone calls the dog "'Assāf," complicating efforts to distinguish between it and the human 'Assāf in conversation.

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[180] Something similar happens in al-Kūnī's novel *Gold Dust*. The protagonist, Ukhayyad, does not transform into an animal like Asouf does in the oasis. Instead, he bonds with his camel so intensely that they become one, just as Asouf's father becomes a part of the mouflon after his death, and as Asouf becomes the mouflon in the space of *barzakh*. However, what distinguishes Ukhayyad's union with the camel from that of Asouf and his father with the mouflon is its physicality.

[181] بدت صورتا الاثنين واحدة (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 37).

Some of the people of al-Ṭayyiba even come to refer to the nonhuman animal as "the real

'Assāf" (عساف الحقيقي) (Munīf, *Endings* 24).[182]

Although 'Assāf the human man does not undergo the same kind of transformation of

becoming-animal as does Asouf in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, he forges a connection with the

dog that enables an affiliation recognizable even by observers. Because the hunting dog is a

domestic animal, the relationship between him and 'Assāf is less radical, at least on the surface,

than is that between Asouf and the mouflon. However, I maintain that the status of dogs in al-

Ṭayyiba renders the connection uniquely transgressive. Dogs are, if not maligned, then valued by

the community of al-Ṭayyiba solely for their utility. This is made apparent in two incidents that

occur—one before 'Assāf's death and the other after it. In the first, 'Assāf is called to a gathering

to discuss a hunting expedition with four visitors from the city and their friends, the latter former

residents of al-Ṭayyiba. 'Assāf has long attended such meetings based on a compromise that

allows him to bring Ḥiṣān with him as long as the dog remains by the door. The inhabitants of al-

Ṭayyiba view his desire to have Ḥiṣān with him as further proof of "his crazy behavior" (جنونه),

and "vehemently [oppose]" (رفضوا بكثير من الإصرار) the dog's attendance (Munīf, *Endings* 43).[183]

At the gathering in question, 'Assāf finds himself at the center of a storm of questions about

hunting, directed at him because of his expertise in the subject. Before voicing his opposition to

the proposed expedition, he calls Ḥiṣān over to where he sits at the center of the gathering. It is

only then that he launches into a long tirade condemning overhunting, especially the hunting for

sport practiced by outsiders, and its devastating impact on indigenous animal populations as well

as on al-Ṭayyiba and the future of its human community.

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[182] Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 38.

[183] Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 67.

'Assāf signals his rebellion against community norms and customs and his status as an outsider by summoning the dog and bringing it into a space that is forbidden to it. Thus positioned, 'Assāf is able to act as an ecological guardian, using direct language to criticize accepted attitudes toward the local environment that have led to damaging behaviors, like overhunting. Such talk violates unspoken codes of generosity and hospitality that insist on the indulgence of all guests. Even though 'Assāf eventually bends to social pressure and takes the visitors on the hunting expedition that ultimately leads to his death, his words becoming significant after his passing. 'Assāf can clearly see al-Ṭayyiba's future but his warnings are unheeded. He is like Zarqā' al-Yamāma, a Cassandra-like figure from the pre-Islamic period who saw through the camouflage of approaching enemies with her exceptional eyesight, but whose tribe did not believe her and were massacred as a result.[184] Even in the moment, though, the men of the community seem to be aware that 'Assāf is speaking the truth, uncomfortable as it might be: "There was an unusual amount of movement, both rapid and subtle; it managed to express that gentle element of protest which would normally accompany a grudging and implicit acknowledgment that what this madman had been saying was absolutely true" (Munīf, *Endings* 48).[185] I contend that by choosing his dog over the human community during the gathering, 'Assāf models alternative values that extend codes of generosity and hospitality to include nonhuman animals and challenge irresponsible stewardship of the environment.

The second event that highlights the human community's low regard for dogs and 'Assāf's transgressive relationship with Ḥiṣān occurs in the aftermath of the desert sandstorm

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[184] Irfan Shahīd, "Zarḳā' al-Yamāma," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 2012, <http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8127>.

[185] فإنَّ حركة غير عادية سرت في الجميع. كانت حركة سريعة غامضة، وفيها ذلك الاحتجاج اللذيذ الذي يشيع الاعتراف الضمني أنَّ ما قاله ذلك المجنون هو الحقيقة ذاتها (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 72).

that kills both of them. The position in which they are found emphasizes their connection. 'Assāf's body is covered in sand, except for his head, which the dog protected with its own body. 'Assāf died first and the dog died shielding him from the vultures that came to feed on him after the storm passed.

When the Mukhtār finds the bodies, he admires Ḥiṣān's loyalty and acknowledges the bond that he and 'Assāf shared. However, he finds himself unable to voice his desire to bring the dog's body back with them to al-Ṭayyiba. He later expresses his regret at leaving the dog behind, saying: "I would have liked to bring the dog back with us….The poor creature certainly deserved it. But I didn't dare broach the subject. Somehow it didn't seem appropriate in the circumstances, and no one would have understood" (Munīf, *Endings* 74).[186] A village elder later confirms the Mukhtār's feeling that the community would have looked askance at any special consideration given to the dog, telling him that he should have covered the body but "[y]ou can't bring back dead animals" (Munīf, 75).[187] The Mukhtār's strong feelings of guilt related to his failure to honor the dog and his relationship with 'Assāf after their deaths reflect the role he played in pressuring 'Assāf to take the guests hunting. At the time, the Mukhtār had framed the hunting expedition as a way to secure the visitors as powerful allies who, remembering their adventure in the desert, would be motivated to advocate for the building of a dam that would benefit al-Ṭayyiba. He therefore feels a certain responsibility for 'Assāf's death. But this guilt also foreshadows his own role as 'Assāf's successor as an advocate for the physical environment and its creatures. 'Assāf's care for his dog is one of the ways in which he distinguishes himself from

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[186] كان بودّي لو حملنا الكلب معنا، كان يستحق ذلك، لكن لم أجرؤ على طرح الفكرة، بدت لي لا تناسب الموقف ولا يمكن أن يفهمها أحد (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 111).

[187] لا يمكن أن تحمل الحيوانات حين تموت (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 112).

the other members of the community and the Mukhtār's recognition and understanding of that differentiates him from the rest of the human community of Al-Ṭayyiba.

As noted above, 'Assāf does not undergo the same kind of transformations as does Asouf in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. However, I would argue that his relationship with Ḥiṣān and their physical similarities do hint at a deeper process of what Tarek El-Ariss calls "*tawaḥḥush*" (becoming wild, beastly) in "Return of the Beast: From Pre-Islamic Ode to Contemporary Novel." El-Ariss takes the term from literary critic 'Abd Allāh al-Ghadhdhāmī's study of *tawaḥḥush* in 6ᵗʰ century poet al-Shanfarā's "Lāmiyyat al-'arab" as "a process that seeks to unsettle the tribe that has betrayed and expelled him" (El-Ariss, 63).[188] El-Ariss identifies the figure of Qays Ibn al-Mulawwaḥ, known as Majnūn Laylā (Layla's Madman), as "the iconic example of *tawaḥḥush*" in the Arabic literary tradition (El-Ariss, 65). In the popular story, which it is believed has its roots in the 7ᵗʰ century, Qays and Laylā fall in love but their relationship is thwarted by Laylā's father. As a result, Qays goes mad and sets out into the wilderness, acquiring his sobriquet and living among the nonhuman animals until his death.[189] His *tawaḥḥush*, El-Ariss argues, "accentuates the word's meaning in Arabic as that which threatens and confronts the social and the human" (El-Ariss, 65). The process of *tawaḥḥush* involves a "collapse of the border between animal and human" as well as, critically, a return that "[contaminates] the tribe" with beastliness, thus challenging the order of the human community (El-Ariss, 65, 78).

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[188] Tarek El-Ariss, "Return of the Beast: From Pre-Islamic Ode to Contemporary Novel," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47 (2016): 62-90.

[189] Ch. Pellat, J.T.P. de Bruijn, B. Flemming, and J.A. Haywood, "Mad̲j̲nūn Laylā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2ⁿᵈ ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 2012, <http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0608>.

In *Endings*, 'Assāf acquires the *kunya* (cognomen) Abū Laylā following his failed

courtship of his cousin. These events, in combination with the human community's view of his

behavior as "crazy" (جنونه), emphasize the connection between him and the figure of Majnūn

Laylā (Munīf, 43).[190] As noted above, one of the manifestations of 'Assāf's madness, according

to the inhabitants of al-Ṭayyiba, is his relationship with Ḥiṣān. By bringing the dog into the

gathering, then, 'Assāf infects the human community with his *tawaḥḥush*. This *tawaḥḥush* takes

hold following 'Assāf's death, manifesting not as violence or revenge, but rather as an

undermining of prevalent behaviors and attitudes toward the nonhuman world. The villagers'

"contagion" leads to the eventual recognition of their irresponsible stewardship of the

environment and their failure to maintain ecological *tawāzun*, most clearly demonstrated through

unsustainable hunting practices. Thus, 'Assāf's becoming-animal is more accurately described as

a becoming-beastly that mitigates the violence of the human community toward the nonhuman

community, thus inverting the process identified by El-Ariss.

The transformation of al-Ṭayyiba's human community that began with Ḥiṣān's

summoning continues over the course of an impromptu memorial that is organized following

'Assāf's death. It takes the form of an entire night of storytelling. These tales, which all revolve

around animals, make up the bulk of the novel. The storytellers describe animal behavior and

interactions between animals and human beings. Many anthropomorphize their nonhuman

subjects. Several of these stories center on a relationship between a dog and a human being,

seeming to affirm the importance of the bond between 'Assāf and Ḥiṣān.

It is through these stories that the meaning of 'Assāf's life and death are derived and the

human community works to formulate a new relationship of ecological responsibility toward

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[190] Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 67.

their environment and its animals modeled on 'Assāf's behavior and the land ethic he espoused. The Mukhtār insists that 'Assāf 's corpse bears witness to the storytelling that takes place at his memorial. He explains: "That's the only way he can be sure that the people of al-Ṭayyiba have either turned into human beings and deserve to stay alive, or else that they are still as stupid as they were before!" (Munīf, *Endings* 130).[191] Here, the Mukhtār acknowledges the covenant of the *amāna* through his lament that the community's failure to uphold their responsibilities as stewards of the earth takes away from their humanity. Although the people of al-Ṭayyiba have no difficulty exhibiting the base behavior that separates them from the divine, they have failed to properly utilize the God-like attributes that distinguish them from other animals. Up until now, only 'Assāf has embraced his role as guardian.

The Mukhtār recognizes the lifegiving power of storytelling. The memorial evokes a cycle of *Alf layla wa-layla*, in which Shahrahzād uses storytelling to save her own life, as well as the lives of the women remaining in King Shahryār's kingdom. The tales told in al-Ṭayyiba will not bring 'Assāf back to life, though. Rather, his death, which is the catalyst for the memorial and the self-reflection it forces, will lead to a renegotiation of the human community of al-Ṭayyiba's relationship to the environment that will make them worthy of the *amāna* while enabling them to continue to survive here at the edge of the desert. This renegotiation will also make them deserving of the village's name, al-Ṭayyiba. In his 1988 translation, Roger Allen reads the Arabic (الطيبة) as al-Tība, which translates as "goodness" and is also the Arabic name for the city of Thebes. Munīf seems to have intended al-Ṭayyiba, a feminine adjective meaning "good."[192] It's unclear what the adjective modifies—it could be the village, *al-qarya* (القرية),

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[191] لأنه بهذه الطريقة وحدها يتأكد إذا كان أهل الطيبة قد أصبحوا بشراً ويستحقون الحياة، أم أنهم لا يزالون حمقى كما كانوا من قبل! (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 199).

[192] See Elmusa, n.3 p. 33.

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making it "the good village." I read it as a reference to the land itself, *al-arḍ* (الأرض)—"the good land."[193] With responsible use, the land around al-Ṭayyiba will sustain both the human and animal communities. However, if ʿAssāf had not died, al-Ṭayyiba would have continued on its self-destructive path despite his best efforts to change its inhabitants' behaviors and attitudes, leading to further suffering and the ultimate abandonment of the village. ʿAssāf serves as a sacrifice for the sake of the good land and its people.

The novel closes with ʿAssāf's burial. He is buried in his own clothes because he is deemed a martyr. According to Islamic tradition dating back to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, soldiers killed in battle become martyrs. Their bodies are not washed or shrouded because the circumstances of their deaths render the garments they are wearing holy. It is believed that the cause of death should remain evident to ensure that they gain immediate entry into *Janna* (heaven).[194] ʿAssāf is mourned in a similar fashion. He was engaged in a vital struggle when he died, working to protect the environment and its resources. His death, which occurred while fighting for his homeland, is therefore not viewed as "natural" (طبيعي) (Munīf, 134).[195] The people of al-Ṭayyiba mourn ʿAssāf bitterly because they fear that his death is a harbinger of their own. Without him to prevent ecological disaster, it seems inevitable that the village and its human community will be swallowed by the desert.

But then the Mukhtār suggests that a number of men from al-Ṭayyiba and the surrounding villages go to the city to lobby the government to build a dam. The men give their weapons to children and relatives to take home, indicating their willingness to abandon the

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[193] "al-Arḍ al-ṭayyiba" is also the title of the Arabic translation of Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* (1931).

[194] David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2007).

[195] Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 205.

stopgap measures of unskilled hunting condemned by 'Assāf and instead address the broader problem of water shortage. 'Assāf is a physical manifestation of *ḥanīn*. In the modern world, a nomadic hunter eking out an existence in the desert has little practical utility. However, it is through his celebration and idealization that the inhabitants of al-Ṭayyiba are able to arrive at their determination to rethink their relationship to the environment and accept responsibility for its management through the building of a dam.[196] Critically, earth care and the task of maintaining the *tawāzun* of creation do not necessarily translate into nonintervention.

In the same way, hunting is not condemned in a wholesale manner in *Endings*, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, or, as will be discussed in the next section, *The Tent*. The strong bonds that the ecological native figure forms with the nonhuman communities of his environment do not preclude him from killing and eating animals. In this regard, the character of Asouf is an outlier. As Elmusa writes of the Ecological Bedouin: "Ironically, empathy with the animals is often manifested during the hunt, in the very act of killing them" (Elmusa, 22). In *Endings*, 'Assāf is portrayed as having been a hunter since his youth and often cares for the human community of al-Ṭayyiba by sharing his kills with the needy. However, he follows a thoughtfully constructed personal hunting code. For example, he does not shoot female partridges, reminding his companions: "They're the ones which give us all the rest!" (Munīf, *Endings* 31).[197] 'Assāf only truly supports subsistence hunting, but he has no way of requiring that visitors and villagers

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[196] In modern and contemporary literature set in or adjacent to the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the building of dams is sometimes seen as necessary for the maintenance of ecological *tawāzun*. Tunisian author Maḥmūd al-Masʿadī's 1955 play *al-Sudd* (The Dam) centers on a conflict over whether or not to build a dam that will allow for irrigation and agricultural development but will disrupt traditional ways of life. In Egyptian literature, the ecological impact of the Aswan High Dam is explored in, for example, Ṣunʿ Allāh Ibrāhīm's *Insān al-sadd al-ʿālī* (1967; The Man of the High Dam) and *Najmat aghusṭus* (1974; Star of August) and Leila Ahmed's memoir, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (1999).

[197] إنَّها رزقنا الباقي (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 49).

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comply with the rules he himself follows. So, he exploits their ignorance of the desert to hide certain hunting grounds, thus protecting their nonhuman communities.

Ultimately, 'Assāf holds the view that the people of al-Ṭayyiba are stewards of the land who have the right to utilize its resources but must do so responsibly. He tells them: "These birds belong to us….Either for today or tomorrow. If we're careful about conserving them, they'll be here for us to hunt. But if we kill them all or hunt them too much, they'll make an end of it and look for somewhere else to live" (Munīf, *Endings* 31).[198] 'Assāf's hunting code, designed to prevent overhunting, is not just for the benefit of the nonhuman animals. Rather, it is a form of resource management conceived to maintain ecological *tawāzun* and protect the human community's future as well. 'Assāf will grudgingly modify, or even violate, his own ethical code if doing so will ensure the survival of the human community. However, he conflates killing animals for sport with killing human beings for the same reason. He asks: "How can any decent person kill human beings or birds just for fun?" (Munīf, 32).[199] Game does not exist for the pleasure of the rich, but rather for the sustenance of the poor. In his mind, those who kill purely for sport possess "a temperament of truly evil proportions, something not even wolves or other similar species possess" (Munīf, 47-48).[200] 'Assāf believes that is in part because of the "unnatural" hunting behaviors of al-Ṭayyiba's inhabitants and visitors that the village is facing its current food shortage.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, hunting provides a framework for understanding characters' stewardship of the *amāna*. Asouf and Qābīl Ādam represent opposite extremes on the spectrum

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[198] هذه الطيور لنا، اليوم أو غداً، وستبقى لنا إذا حافظنا عليها، أما إذا قتلناها كلها، إذا طاردناها كثيراً، فسوف تنتهي أو تبحث عن مكان آخر (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 49).

[199] فهل يستطيع ابن حرَّة أن يقتل البشر والطيور؟ (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 50).

[200] روحاً شريرة لا تمتلكها الذئاب أو أية حيوانات أخرى (Munīf, *al-Nihāyyāt* 72).

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of earth care, and the treatment of animals in particular, highlighting the stark contrast between

them. Whereas Asouf goes beyond even his father's vow not to hunt the mouflon by giving up

meat altogether, Qābīl Ādam is a deadly hunter with an insatiable appetite for meat who perfects

his ability to kill through the use of modern technology. The four-wheel-drive vehicles and

helicopters that Qābīl Ādam uses to wipe out or drive away the indigenous fauna are as

intimately connected to colonialism as is the forced conscription of the local human population

that temporarily traps Asouf in the oasis and leads to his becoming-animal. The novel highlights

the connection between the equipment used for hunting, especially the vehicles and machine

guns, and colonialism: "The merciless vehicles arrived with the companies searching for oil and

underground wealth. Then, a few years later, came the invention of the devilish weapon [rapid-

fire guns] specifically designed to violate the Hamada and destroy the peaceful herds" (al-Kūnī,

Stone 86-87).[201] [202] In *Endings*, four-wheel-drive vehicles are similarly depicted as a foreign

intrusion that threatens the environment as well as the traditional ways of life of its human

inhabitants.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the threat to Libya's environment is not just external, but

internal as well. While the hunting equipment used by Qābīl Ādam is directly linked to

colonialism and external occupation, Qābīl Ādam himself is not European or American. He

becomes an agent of colonialism, transporting its violence and destruction into the desert lands

that are virtually unreachable by formal military forces. Asouf's environment is as foreign to

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[201] السيارات الوحشية جاءت مع دخول الشركات الباحثة عن النفط والثروات الجوفية. مضت سنوات قليلة ثُمَّ تمَّ اختراع ذلك السلاح الشيطاني [بنادق
الخرطوش] خصيصاً لانتهاك الحمادة وإبادة القطعان الآمنة (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 96).

[202] The direct role played by new technology in the extermination of the gazelle population in the Red Ḥamāda in
The Bleeding of the Stone calls to mind the connection between the American Transcontinental Railroad and the
near extinction of the bison in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. See Richard White,
Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America (New York: Norton, 2011).

Qābīl Ādam, he is just as much an interloper in this region, as are the colonizers elsewhere in the country.

By the time Qābīl Ādam encounters Asouf, he has spearheaded overhunting so extreme that it has led to the complete extermination of the gazelle population in al-Ḥamāda al-Ḥamra' (The Red Ḥamāda) in northwest Libya. Elmusa writes: "The other native characters in *Endings* and *Bleeding* kill animals, but the difference between them and the Cains of this world lies in the why, what, when, and how of hunting, and how much game is considered sufficient. It is an allegory against modern consumption which is increasingly held as the culprit of environmental degradation" (Elmusa, 32). The pre-colonial period, the period before Qābīl Ādam's acquisition of advanced hunting technology, is described as a time of abundance. This is the result of both natural environmental conditions, such as plentiful rainfall, as well as responsible hunting practices. Although Asouf and his father adhere to a strict ethical code to help preserve the local animal populations, the existence of only traditional hunting methods also serves as a natural check against overhunting.

Even before Asouf gives up meat, he follows a hunting code, like 'Assāf in *Endings*. Asouf inherits this code from his father and it encompasses an ethics of stewardship. For example, when Asouf's father makes "a strict rule never to hunt more than one gazelle each trip," he frames it in spiritual terms that are also conservationist (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 37).[203] He explains that, when hunted responsibly, "the soul of the gazelle [becomes] stronger and firmer" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 37).[204] Asouf's father communicates to his son an ethical and practical approach to resource management designed to prevent both overpopulation and overhunting, and to

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[203] تقليداً ألا يصطاد أكثر من شاة واحدة في الرحلة "سنَّ لنفسه (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 46).

[204] روح الغزال تقوى وتشتد (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 46).

especially discourage recreational hunting. The reciprocal relationship between the indigenous human hunters and the nonhuman animal populations is emphasized by the behavior of the animals themselves, which act as if they are aware of the code governing their interactions. For example, the gazelles initially attempt to evade the four-wheel-drive vehicles as they would a hunter on foot, fleeing in a straight line and relying on sheer speed for their survival. They do not adapt their behavior, not understanding that "this devilish machine is a betrayal of nature, breaching the rules of noble conflict and seeking to win the day through the ugliest trickery" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 88).[205] It is only later that all but one of the surviving gazelles flee to the Algerian desert.

Asouf's role as steward is formalized by a government official who makes him "guardian of the Wadi Matkhandoush" (حارس وادي متخندوش) in southwestern Libya, charging him with protecting the ancient rock paintings found in the area (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 8).[206] Asouf accepts the responsibility, but expands his purview to include "all the wadis of Massak Satfat" (كل وديان مساك صتفت), just one of which is Wadi Matkhandoush [Wādī Matkhandūsh], as well as the animals in these lands (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 9).[207] Asouf refuses to take a salary, seeing the guardianship as his duty and right, rather than as a job to be performed under the auspices of the government.

Despite Asouf's dedication to fulfilling the covenant of the *amāna*, his lack of experience with other human beings ultimately renders him ineffective as a guardian. When Qābīl Ādam expresses an interest in hunting the mouflon, Asouf finds it difficult to argue with him. He discovers that "he couldn't find the right words to protest"[208] and thinks: "Who was he, who'd

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[205] استخدام هذه الآلة الشيطانية خيانة للطبيعة وإخلال بقواعد الصراع النبيل واحتكام إلى أبشع أنواع الخديعة (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 98).

[206] al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 14.

[207] al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 14.

[208] لم يجد لغة مناسبة للاحتجاج (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 42).

never mixed with people, to make his case to others?"[209] (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 32). Asouf is not well-positioned to guard against human beings like Qābīl Ādam because he is missing the weapon of language. The animality which uniquely positions Asouf to serve as a bridge between the human and nonhuman animal communities also denies him the tools to fulfill his human responsibilities. Although Asouf ultimately does succeed in protecting the mouflon from Qābīl Ādam, he can only do so by sacrificing his own animal/mouflon body, allowing Qābīl Ādam to kill him.

Throughout his life, Qābīl Ādam has craved meat—raw or cooked—with a frightening intensity, seeking to satiate a constant hunger that is a kind of addiction. If he goes too long without eating meat, he awakens in terror, filled with the need to hunt for his next meal. At the same time, Qābīl Ādam's obsessive hunting is driven by an urge to possess the animals he pursues. For example, he admires the beauty and grace of the gazelle and expresses a desire to hold it in his hands. As a child, he dreamed that he was "stroking his graceful neck, touching his golden hair, looking into his sad, intelligent eyes, kissing him on the forehead and clutching him to [his] heart" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 88).[210] Qābīl Ādam's drive to kill the animals he hunts is linked to their exaltation, illustrating a desire to possess, as well as annihilate.

The second epigraph that opens *The Bleeding of the Stone* is a passage from Genesis describing Cain's murder of Abel. It concludes with God condemning Cain to a life of wandering: "a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (تائها وهاربا تكون في الأرض) (Genesis 4:12).[211] In the novel, Qābīl Ādam is a clear representation of the biblical or Qur'anic Qābīl. In contrast, Asouf, a goatherd who is eventually murdered by Qābīl Ādam, can be read as

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[209] كيف يحتج على ادعاءات البشر من لم يعاشر في حياته البشر (42 *al-Ḥajar*, al-Kūnī).

[210] تربت على رقبته الرشيقة، تلامس شعره الذهبي، تتأمل عينيه الذكيتين الشقيتين، وتقبله في جبينه، وتضمه إلى صدرك (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 97).

[211] *The Bible*, King James Version, Cambridge Edition, 2018, <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>.

Hābīl [Abel]. While Asouf is grounded in his environment, Qābīl Ādam's status as a vagabond and a wanderer strips him of any connection to place. It is this lack of groundedness that helps him to disassociate from the ecological impact of his actions.

When Qābīl Ādam's efforts to kill and eat the mouflon are frustrated by Asouf, he is driven mad. In his eyes, Asouf becomes the mouflon, and he crucifies and beheads him. Asouf's becoming-mouflon, which occurs both through his own transformations and Qābīl Ādam's association of him with the animal, others him as not quite human, thus facilitating Qābīl Ādam's exploitation and abuse. Qābīl Ādam calls Asouf "my own sacrificial animal" (ضحيتي) (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 133).[212] In this scene, Asouf becomes a mouflon again, as he did when he escaped from the Italian forces. But rather than helping him escape, his final transformation enables him to step in as a sacrifice that will save the other mouflon and condemn Qābīl Ādam. Unable to serve as an effective guardian through words or strength, he sacrifices himself. He repays the debt he incurred when the mouflon saved his life.

It is noteworthy that Asouf's final becoming-animal occurs in a position of *barzakh*. He hangs, spread-eagle, on a large rock face, "leaving life and yet not entering death" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 132).[213] An ancient painting of a religious figure standing beside a mouflon covers the rock. Asouf's body obscures the image of the mouflon: "His body was thrust into the hollow of the rock, merging with the body of the [mouflon] painted there. The [mouflon]'s horns were coiled around his own neck like a snake. The masked priest's hand still touched his shoulders, as if blessing him with secret rites" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 134).[214] Reading this act of startling violence as

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[212] al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 145.

[213] يبتعد عن الحياة، ولكنه لا يدخل إلى الموت (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 143).

[214] جسده محشو في جوف الصخرة، يتحد بجسد الودّان. قرنا الودّان يلتويان حول رقبته كالأفعى. ما زالت يد الكاهن المقنّع تلامس منكبه كأنها تبارك الطقوس الخفيّة (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 146).

ritual sacrifice grants it a sacredness. But as the ravenous Qābīl Ādam stands before Asouf's suspended body, so closely affiliated with that of the mouflon, the scene also evokes the mundane labor of a butcher slaughtering a lamb and hanging it from a hook as he prepares its meat for consumption.

The painted horns that surround Asouf's head make it seem as if he is caught in a space of *barzakh*, trapped in mid-transformation. However, his becoming-animal is enough to fulfill the divine prophecy delivered by the figure depicted in the painting: "redemption will be at hand when the sacred [mouflon] bleeds and the blood issues from the stone. It is then that the miracle will be born; that the earth will be cleansed and the deluge cover the desert" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 135).[215] After Asouf's death, the rain begins to fall. His blood, the blood of the mouflon, sets the prophecy inscribed on the rock in motion. The coming flood will take Qābīl Ādam. However, the desert will endure, as the flood water brings forth the life hidden in its barrenness. Asouf, like 'Assāf, serves as a necessary sacrifice. They both give their bodies for the ecological wellbeing of their environments. The difference is that Asouf leaves behind no human community to continue his struggle, while 'Assāf's people step up to confront the issues facing them and their environment.

In Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent*, which I will discuss in the next section, the figure of the ecological native is represented by Musallam. He is deeply embedded in his environment, like Asouf and 'Assāf, but he does not adopt the role of guardian, nor does he sacrifice himself in any meaningful way. In fact, it is unclear if he is alive or dead at the end of the text following his disappearance during a sandstorm. It is the female characters in *The Tent* who seem to demonstrate the greatest potential for fulfilling the covenant of the *amāna* through the strong

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[215] أن الخلاص سيجيء عندما ينزف الودّان المقدّس ويسيل الدم من الحجر. تولد المعجزة التي ستغسل اللعنة، تتطهر الأرض ويغمر الصحراء الطوفان (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 147).

connections they form with nonhuman animals in the text. However, I argue that their lack of agency means that these affiliations merely underline their powerlessness and do not translate into a message of functional stewardship of the environment.

III. Women and Gazelles

In *The Tent*, the father of the narrator, Fāṭima, leads a semi-settled life, straddling the space between the desert nomadism of the past and the increasingly stationary life of the modern Egyptian Delta. He acts as lord over the lands surrounding the house where his wife and daughters reside, but spends little time there during Fāṭima's childhood. Instead, he disappears into the desert for long stretches of time to oversee his flocks. When he does return, he sleeps and entertains his guests in a goat hair tent in the courtyard rather than in the house. He only enters the house in the course of his efforts to produce a male child with his wife. Fāṭima's father maintains a connection to the land. His fortune is tied to the crops and animals that depend on rain for survival. But he no longer embodies the traditional Bedouin figure romanticized by Fāṭima through her creation of Musallam, her father's double in the subterranean desert world of her imagination and literary kin to the characters of Asouf and 'Assāf discussed above.

In "Ethnographic and Literary Reflections on Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent*," Caroline Seymour-Jorn describes Musallam as "the prototypical Bedouin man" (Seymour-Jorn, 118). His familiarity with the desert is unparalleled: "He knew its night sky and its changing moods, where to set up his tent, and when the clouds would be heavy with rain. He had roamed far to the east and west, and spent days and nights alone there. He knew all the wells" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 85).[216]

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[216] يعرف سماءها ولياليها وأحولها، يعرف أين ينصب خيمته، ومتى تنوء السحب بأثقالها، جاس الصحراء شرقاً وغرباً، خبر لياليها وأيامها وآبارها (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 93).

All translations are from Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī, *The Tent*, Trans. Anthony Calderbank (Cairo: American U in Cairo P, 1998).

Some wonder if Musallam was truly born into this life, or if he instead adopted it later as an adult, becoming even more of a Bedouin through his outlook and behaviors than the Bedouins-by-birth he encounters. He establishes his authenticity through engagement with the land and its (domesticated) animals:

> لكن هذا الشك في أصوله تبدد حين رأوا كيف يقلم نخيله ويلقحه، وكيف تنفلق نواياتها عن غرسات جديدة حين تشتد خواصرها، كما كان يعرف في الخيل أكثر منهم، يخبر عن أصولها فوق ما يعرفون ... هذا إلى جانب خبرته بكل أعشاب الوهدة، يقطف ويصحن، ويمزج ويداوي (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 93).

> Any doubts about his origins…disappeared when they saw how he pruned and grafted his palm trees, and how strong young trees sprouted up from the shoots. He always knew much more about horses than they did, and was more familiar with the different pedigrees than they were….Then there was his deep knowledge of desert plants, which he would gather and pound and blend us to cure ailments (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 86).

By demonstrating, or performing, his knowledge of the desert, Musallam confirms his Bedouin identity. The breadth and depth of his environmental knowledge prevents his questionable pedigree from undermining his authority. In fact, his apparent lack of human affiliation enables him to belong almost entirely to the desert, although the connection he forges is with the space itself rather than its nonhuman creatures. Like Asouf and 'Assāf, Musallam lives the premodern life of a nomad in harmony with his environment. Diya Abdo notes in her article "Go Underground, Young Women: Writing Selves in Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent*" that "Zahwa's subterranean world represents both an imagined world and a real, earlier stage in Bedouin life" (Abdo, 270). Tribeless and timeless, nearly a part of the landscape, Musallam, like the figures of the ecological native explored above, is a manifestation of *ḥanīn*.

Despite his integration in the desert environment, Musallam is portrayed as an ineffectual hunter. Although he succeeds in killing a small bird to feed a captive falcon, Fāṭima witnesses him miss the shot when he attempts to fell a rabbit with his slingshot. Musallam's halfhearted

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attempt does reflect a certain ecological consciousness when contrasted with the way in which Fāṭima's father hunts. Although hunting played an important role in traditional Bedouin life, it has become for men like Fāṭima's father the kind of sport condemned in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*. He doesn't bother with the subsistence hunting represented by rabbits. Instead, he hunts gazelles, running them down in an armored car like Qābīl Ādam. When Fāṭima is a child, her father captures a young gazelle as a gift for her in this manner. Exhausted from the chase, the gazelle collapses and never fully recovers from the stress of pursuit and capture. The animal comes to Fāṭima with its eyes full of tears and they never empty.

Fāṭima names the gazelle Zahwa, the same name she gives her double, Musallam's daughter, in the subterranean world she creates. Looking at the gazelle before she dies, Fāṭima says: "Her face looked like Musallam's Zahwa, or it was as if the same spirit inhabited them both" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 51).[217] Zahwa the gazelle becomes Zahwa, Fāṭima's double. The subterranean world of Fāṭima's mind is a space of *barzakh*, forming a mirror that reveals Zahwa the girl to be Fāṭima's reflection. An imaginal reality, or bridge, connects them. Zahwa the girl is both Fāṭima, for how could she be anyone else since she is a creation of Fāṭima's imagination, and not Fāṭima, representing as she does a parallel existence through which Fāṭima's desires for her own life are manifested. When Fāṭima sees Zahwa the girl in the gazelle, then, she also sees herself.

Fāṭima's becoming-animal parallels Asouf's, but also diverges in important ways. Just as Asouf sees his father in the mouflon he becomes, Fāṭima sees Zahwa the girl, and thus herself, in the gazelle that she names Zahwa. Fāṭima becomes both human and animal, alive in both the real and the subterranean worlds, and yet neither human nor animal nor fully present in either space.

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[217] كانت عيونها تطاردني حتى وجهها كان يشبه "زهوة" مُسلَّم أو كأن روحاً واحدة تسكنهما (59 *al-Khibā'* ,al-Ṭaḥāwī).

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However, the power between Asouf and the mouflon is balanced through their equal status as both/neither "victim and executioner." Asouf the hunter falls mercy to the will of the mouflon as predator, his former prey. In contrast, both Fāṭima and the gazelle are and remain victims of her father's authority and violence. Abdo explains that "hunting is key to survival, male virility, and pride in a Bedouin community," so a comparison between women, like Fāṭima, and the animals men hunt, like the gazelle, "reflects and defines women's position as prey in the landscape" (Abdo, 269).

Fāṭima gains access to the desert through her human double, Zahwa. But Zahwa the gazelle does not offer acceptance into the nonhuman community for Fāṭima that can be compared to Asouf's integration into the mouflon community. Instead, the gazelle's capture and subsequent death represent her forced submission to the human community and disconnection from place. Fāṭima accepts responsibility for the care of Zahwa the gazelle, but her complete powerlessness in her environment renders her ineffectual as a guardian. When the gazelle's health continues to deteriorate, Fāṭima is unable to prevent her grandmother from ordering its slaughter so it can be eaten. Another gazelle that Fāṭima encounters, this one being held captive by Anne, a Western woman doing ethnographic research on the Bedouin in the region, similarly dies. Fāṭima refers to Anne's gazelle as Zahwa as well. As first a girl and then a woman, Fāṭima does not possess the authority for effective ecological stewardship. She cannot protect the nonhuman animals under her care or herself.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Fāṭima repeatedly aligns herself with the nonhuman animals that surround her. Some level of affiliation is imposed by cultural attitudes, which are enforced by men as well as by women like Fāṭima's grandmother, Ḥakīma, and embedded in the proverbs and Bedouin poetry found throughout the text. Women's affiliation

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with animals and the land is imposed as a means of subjugation, justifying and confirming possession. Anne, as an outsider, also forces these connections on Fāṭima. The focus of her research is "horses, hawks, hunting, women" (الخيول، الصقور..القنص، المرأة), emphasizing the linkage in her mind between animals, especially those pressed into the service of human beings, and women (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 99).[218] Although Anne educates Fāṭima, she also manipulates her into the role of native informant, as will be explored at greater length in Chapter 4. When she is at Anne's place, Fāṭima draws a direct comparison between herself and the animals in captivity: "I felt that my existence was like that of the birds in their cages and Khayra [the mare] in her stall" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 99).[219] Once again, the affiliations between Fāṭima and nonhuman animals do not create productive relationships for environmental care and change, but rather serve to highlight their parallel disempowerment.

These affiliations provide Fāṭima with a means of articulating her experiences, however. She reads her emotions in the nonhuman animals around her, as in the example of caged animals given above, and she expresses her own abuse, oppression, and suffering through tales about other nonhuman animals. For example, a female falcon left in Musallam's care is tethered to the sand, its eyelids stitched shut and its wings trussed so it cannot fly. When Fāṭima wants to untie it, or remove the stitches from its eyelids at the very least, both Siqīma, Musallam's wife, and Zahwa discourage her. This tale, which unfolds in the space of Fāṭima's imagination, hints at the ways in which women can contribute to a system that seeks to keep them similarly confined and ignorant of the world. Ḥakīma's behavior, discussed above, is a parallel. Near the end of the novel, unable to escape, Fāṭima explicitly compares herself to the falcon, saying: "I am crucified

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[218] al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 106.

[219] أشعر أن وجودي مثل وجود الطيور في قفصها و"خيرة" في مربطها (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 106).

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like the she-falcon on the tent peg" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 118).[220] Over time, Fāṭima also begins to physically become more animal-like. A childhood injury permanently disables her in her youth. She falls from a tree, injuring her leg. It does not heal properly and Anne has it amputated without Fāṭima's consent while she is in her care. Frustrated with her limited mobility, Fāṭima eventually reverts to crawling and dragging herself across the ground, refusing to use her crutch and scandalizing her father. Her animal-like movements become a way to reject the social norms and cultural expectations that seek to control her. Although she remains in her father's house, Fāṭima carves out small freedoms, protected by the cloak of her supposed madness.

Siqīma also exhibits many nonhuman-animal-like qualities. Fāṭima repeatedly compares her to a rabbit in a story she tells for Anne and her guests. For example, Siqīma's footprints, Fāṭima narrates, "resembled those of a wild rabbit as it darted between the dunes and hollows"[221] and her teeth "were worn down like the teeth of mountain rabbits who are always nibbling rough thorns"[222] (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 101). Later, after her husband's disappearance in a sandstorm, Siqīma physically transforms into a rabbit. Passing pilgrims, Fāṭima says, "were no longer afraid when a wild rabbit skipped across the rocky path before them, or ran alongside with shining eyes, revealing behind its worn-down teeth the face of a woman" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Tent* 128).[223] Siqīma has become one of the desert's creatures. Like Fāṭima's transformation into the gazelle, however, her becoming-rabbit mainly serves to emphasize her status as prey, even to the quasi-

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[220] وأنا مصلوبة كالفرخة على الوتد (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 126).

[221] كانتا تشبهان نقرات أرنب بري يتلوى بين النتوءات والحفر (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 108).

[222] تبدو...المقصوفة كالأرانب الجبلية التي اعتادت على قضم الأشواك الخشنة (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 108).

[223] فلا يخافون إذا جاءت أرنبة برية وقفزت بين مسالك الطريق الوعر وظلت تركض بعيون لامعة، وكشفت أسنانها المقروضة عن وجه امرأة (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 136).

ecologically-minded "good" Bedouin Musallam. It is a rabbit, after all, that he attempts to fell with his slingshot while Fāṭima looks on earlier in the text.

Of course, Asouf also serves as prey to Qābīl Ādam in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and 'Assāf's death is a sacrifice that ultimately sustains the human community of al-Ṭayyiba. However, Asouf and 'Assāf are manifestations of a *ḥanīn* that creates a space for questioning present relationships with the environment and the nonhuman world and articulating an alternative future of ecological responsibility. Their ruined bodies serve as *aṭlāl* after their deaths, providing the site and impetus for change and, in the case of 'Assāf, reflection. In contrast, Musallam is a representation of pure nostalgia for a way of life that existed only in the past, if it ever existed at all. Significantly, he disappears rather than dying at the end of the text, erasing any trace of his existence. It is the female characters in *The Tent* who function as catalysts for change.

The Bleeding of the Stone and *Endings* were written by men, their protagonists are male, and human female characters make only brief appearances. The desert is presented as a masculine space. Asouf's mother, the only human female character to make her home in the desert in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, is swept up in a flood, her body dismembered. A female gazelle narrates an entire chapter about her and her daughter, but they both meet violent ends at Qābīl Ādam's hand. In the settled oasis, Qābīl Ādam's ex-wife has a small role. She divorces him after dreaming that he ate her after killing off all of the gazelles. She "wanted to escape the beast before the beast ate her" (al-Kūnī, *Stone*, 121).[224] Female characters are victims and prey. In *Endings*, no women enter the desert. They remain in al-Ṭayyiba, where they are recipients of 'Assāf's kills and their sole narrative purpose seems to be to mourn him after his death. As men,

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[224] إنّها تريد أن تنجو قبل أن يأكلها الوحش (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 131).

Asouf and 'Assāf are already in possession of a certain amount of social and physical power when they forge their relationships with animals. Their authority is bolstered by their perceived sacredness (in the case of Asouf) or their hunting expertise (in the case of 'Assāf).

The Tent, in contrast, was written by a woman, Mīrāl al-Ṭahāwī. Fāṭima is also female, developing from a girl into a woman over the course of the novel. Her mother only gives birth to girls, which, along with a series of miscarriages of male fetuses and more than one rumored female infanticide, contributes to her psychological deterioration. Fāṭima hints that Ḥakīma is responsible for the deaths of some of her mother's baby girls. She tells Zahwa: "Grandmother Hakima doesn't throw them into the well; she just strangles them" (al-Ṭahāwī, *Tent* 73).[225] Ḥakīma becomes an agent of patriarchy in her son's absence, wearing men's clothing and shoring up the walls of a system of oppression that is destabilized and crumbling with no men left to reinforce it. At the core of Fāṭima's fantasy about Musallam is the devotion she imagines he has for his daughter, Zahwa. However, it is eventually revealed that he, too, thinks about harming her, when he considers killing her to protect her honor: "Everywhere they camped he would dig a hole behind the sand dunes, a grave for her, but every time he went to do the deed, pure water gushed forth from the hole and he took it as a sign from heaven that she should live" (al-Ṭahāwī, *Tent* 128-129).[226] Fāṭima thus lives in a world of girls and women. She has no brothers and her father is mostly absent, passing fleetingly through her life, until old age begins to limit his movements. After the death of Fāṭima's mother, the next woman that Fāṭima's father marries is also unable to produce a son. Fāṭima and her sisters serve as signs of fertility, their

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[225] قُلتُ لها "الجدة حاكمة لا تلقيهن في البئر، فقط تخنقهنَّ" (al-Ṭahāwī, *al-Khibā'* 90).

[226] وكيف كان يحفر لها بين كل وهدة ووهدة قبراً وأنَّه كلما همَّ أن يفعل تفتق البئر عن الماء الطاهر وأن ذلك كان نبوءة من السماء بمحياها (al-Ṭahāwī, *al-Khibā'* 147).

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existence evidence of productive coupling. But there is no male seed to carry this Bedouin way of life or the desert traditions that are preserved in Fāṭima's imagination into future generations.

All of the characters that exist in the subterranean world, including Musallam, are Fāṭima's creations. By default, then, the desert that Fāṭima imagines is also a feminine space, although the desert where her father spends his time is not. Translator Anthony Calderbank notes in his introduction that "[t]he English language lacks the grammatical and morphological devices to express the feminineness that the Arabic language enjoins upon this text," referring to the feminine singular and plurals that dominate the narration (Calderbank, viii). While Musallam is the figure of the ecological native in *The Tent*, it is the women who affiliate with and transform into the nonhuman animals in the text. The only authority that Fāṭima possesses stems from her status as the creator of her subterranean world and the author of this narrative. The "other" that she positions herself against is not an outside force like colonialism, as Asouf does in *The Bleeding of the Stone*, nor, truly, the settled life represented by her father's house, which 'Assāf invokes in *Endings.* It is instead the patriarchal society in which she lives, and in which Zahwa and Siqīma live. The space of *barzakh* she creates, in which she, Siqīma, and Zahwa all transform into nonhuman animals and into each other, grows out of a recognition of her status as prey, as a victim of masculine power and violence, rather than out of a rethinking of relationships to the nonhuman environment over which she has no control. In this way, Fāṭima has more in common with the figure of the nomad conjured up by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' as a predecessor to modern man than she does with the contemporary figure of the ecological native. For both Fāṭima and the figure of the nomad, it is weakness and the basic need to survive that frames relationships with the surrounding environment and its creatures, rather than a conscious desire to behave ecologically.

IV. Conclusion

Asouf, 'Assāf, and Musallam are manifestations of a yearning for an imagined premodern, nonurban world. Asouf and 'Assāf embody a forward-looking *ḥanīn*. They are representations of Elmusa's Ecological Bedouin, a figure that is most effective when we frame him (this figure is never a woman) as the "'conscience of nature,' nagging us to tread gently, without expecting to chance on him in flesh and blood somewhere in the desert" (Elmusa, 33). In contrast, the figure of Musallam is a representation of a nonproductive nostalgia. He is a memorialization of the past that Fāṭima employs to critique her present, but his existence in her private world does not suggest a reimagining of the future. Perhaps because of this backward-looking orientation, Musallam never takes on the responsibility of environmental stewardship, and resource management in particular, in the way that Asouf and 'Assāf do. Upholding the covenant of the *amāna* and discharging the work involved in the maintenance of ecological *tawāzun* are forward-looking processes.

I have argued that it is the female characters who transgress and challenge the social orders of their human communities in *The Tent*. Despite their transformations and affiliations with the nonhuman animals of the desert, though, they are unable to play the role of "conscience of nature." This role is reserved only for men in the texts studied in this chapter. In *The Tent*, as well as in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*, girls and women can serve as representations of the earth itself and its animals, in desperate need of protection. Or, they can transform into nonhuman prey, falling victim to forces rooted in the same systems of oppression and exploitation that lead to the extermination of the gazelles and the mouflon. But they are not guardians in these texts. And their constant and unmet need for defense and empowerment undermines the work of earth care done by Asouf and 'Assāf. Their presence undoes the myth

that ecological *tawāzun* can be achieved through the protection and preservation of landscapes

empty of human communities, without paying heed to the imbalances of the rest of creation.

The Bleeding of the Stone and *Endings* critique irresponsible and destructives behaviors

and attitudes toward the environment, creating a record of human intervention and its

consequences. But neither text offers concrete solutions for the slow violence reshaping their

wild desert landscapes. *The Tent* functions, in a way, as a not particularly fond farewell to a way

of life that is gone, carefully recording oral traditions and cultural practices but recognizing their

connection to oppressive and violent practices and not advocating for their continuation

anywhere except in literature. All three texts seek to effect a general change in mindset among

their readerships, dismantling anthropocentric and/or patriarchal beliefs that structure the

treatment of nonhuman animals, the physical environment, and/or women, without doing the

work of translating a shift in thinking into suggestions for practical action in the world outside of

the text.

In the next chapter, I will return to the populated landscapes of Palestine and Israel. Here,

ecological behavior is directly linked to claims of entitlement to the land, as also discussed in

Chapter 1. Mostly gone are the intimate connections to wild animals explored in this chapter.

Instead, the figure of the Palestinian ecological native demonstrates his (and, less commonly,

her) responsible stewardship of the land through intervention, namely productive cultivation,

often across generations. As such, this figure is a manifestation of the *fallāḥ/a* (peasant)

character. However, *Palestinian Walks* also works to reclaim the West Bank wildernesses from

their legal and emotional categorizations as Israeli spaces through the act of walking, as well as

through litigation in the court of law, offering two additional expressions of the ecological native

figure. Finally, I ask how texts written by authors who are cut off from the landscapes they seek

to protect and preserve, either through exile or restrictions placed on their movements, can effectively care for these spaces, especially when their characters face the same obstacles. I propose the idea of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism to describe this frustrated stewardship, which nevertheless continues to be articulated as a means of maintaining an imaginal connection to geographies that are no longer physically accessible.

Chapter 3
The Figure of the "Ecological Native" in Spaces of Cultivated Nature

In the Palestinian texts discussed in this chapter, the figure of the ecological native, a

figure that embodies environmental responsibility through claims of superior stewardship of the

land articulated against the allegedly exploitative or destructive behavior of another group, is

often framed in very different ways than in the desert novels discussed in the previous chapter. In

works of Palestinian pastoralism, the figure of the ecological native is portrayed as most at home

in a settled population center (a village, town, or city), surrounded by a human community,

rather than alone in the wilderness. Ecological responsibility and connection to place are

demonstrated through strong reciprocal relationships with domesticated animals and productive

cultivation of the land, often across generations. As in the texts discussed in the previous chapter,

responsible stewardship of the *amāna* (trust) encompasses earth care, but earth care does not

mean nonintervention in this context. The preservation of the *tawāzun*, or balance, of creation

can be a process of active management, especially in a pastoral context in which relationships to

the land and animals are by their very nature transformative. Cultivation relies on the

transformation of wilderness into farmland and the maintenance of that farmland throughout the

seasons. Domestication is likewise a process of transformation through which animals become a

part of the labor force that sustains their lives, as well as the lives of human beings. Ecological

responsibility in a work of Palestinian pastoralism is demonstrated through productivity:

abundant harvests and working animals are narrative evidence of good stewardship. In this

chapter, I will mainly focus my discussion on three Palestinian texts: Yaḥyā Yakhlif's novel

Buḥayra warā'a al-rīḥ[227] (1991; *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, 1999), a work of Palestinian

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[227] Yaḥyā Yakhlif, *Buḥayra warā'a al-rīḥ* (Acre: Mu'assasat al-Aswār, 1997).

pastoralism; Saḥar Khalīfa's *al-Mīrāth*[228] (1997; *The Inheritance*, 2005), which interrogates the figure of the Palestinian ecological native by exposing his/her ecoambiguity; and Raja Shehadeh's autobiographical *Palestinian Walks*, which offers an alternative framing of the figure of the Palestinian ecological native. I also touch more briefly on several other short stories and poems. I conclude with a discussion of the physical distance that often exists between Palestinian authors and characters and the land over which they claim rightful stewardship, which impedes active management or protection—a trend I call Palestinian cosmic pastoralism.

Yaḥyā Yakhlif (b. 1944) was born in Samakh, where the majority of *A Lake Beyond the Wind* is set. He has written several collections of short stories and three novels, including *Mā' al-Samā'* (2008; Heaven's Water), which was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2009. Yakhlif's work deals centrally with the *nakba*, the expulsion and exodus of Palestinians from Israel following its establishment in 1948, and the *naksa*, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel in 1967.

A Lake Beyond the Wind features a host of characters who are as integrated into their human communities as they are connected to their physical environments. The novel, set in the Galilee, opens on the eve of the war that was to lead to the founding of the State of Israel. The ecological natives in this text seek to assert their right to the land through the claim of superior stewardship and ecological knowledge. While the desert novels of al-Kūnī, Munīf, and al-Ṭaḥāwī focus on largely empty, wild spaces of wandering, *A Lake Beyond the Wind* is concerned mainly with settled places with a long history of habitation. Responsible care of the *amāna* (trust) is demonstrated through cultivation and respectful, productive relationships with domestic animals, both of which are embodied by the figure of the *fallāḥ/a*.

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[228] Saḥar Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1997).

Saḥar Khalīfa (b. 1941) was born in Nablus. She earned her M.A. in English literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Ph.D. in Women's Studies and American literature from the University of Iowa. She has authored several novels, the most well-known of which is *Ṣubār* (1976; *Wild Thorns* 1985), and has received several awards and recognitions for her writing, including the 2006 Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature for *Ṣūra wa-ayqūna wa-'ahd qadīm* (2002; *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, 2007). In 2010, her novel *Aṣl wa-faṣl* (2009; Of Noble Origins, 2012) was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction. In 1988, Khalīfa founded the Women's Affairs Center in Nablus, which also has branches in Gaza City and Amman now.

The Inheritance is about Zaynab, who is born to an American mother and a Palestinian father and grows up in the United States. She is disowned by her father after she gets pregnant at the age of fifteen and is raised by her American grandmother in Washington, D.C. Although Zaynab achieves great professional success as an anthropologist, she is lonely and eager for kinship. When she receives word that her father is dying, she travels to his hometown of Wādī al-Rīḥān in the West Bank, ostensibly to settle her inheritance, but eager in reality to connect with her extended family and its history.

In this chapter, I also return to *Palestinian Walks*, which I analyzed in Chapter 1, to explore the different manifestation of the figure of the ecological native that it introduces. Although Raja adopts a self-consciously environmentalist message about stewardship and his hillwalking locates him in and connects him to the land, his most effective advocacy occurs in his capacity as a lawyer specializing in land law, rather than through direct material engagement with the land. Raja complicates the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* and challenges its contemporary relevance in narratives of ecological responsibility, while offering several alternatives.

Despite the differences between the representation of pastoralism in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and *Palestinian Walks*, both the Palestinian community of Samakh and Raja have been forcefully and physically separated from the land over which they see themselves as stewards by the end of each text. In the third section of this chapter, I explore the concept of the "cosmic pastoral" as a way to understand the role of ecological native figures who are physically disconnected from the land they seek to protect.

I.   *Palestinian Pastoralism*

Palestinian pastoralism, as adopted, referenced, or challenged in the literature studied in this chapter, idealizes village and rural life. The difficult labor and social hierarchy that produce these idyllic landscapes are often elided, creating a space for the romanticized image of the *fallāḥ* ([فلاح] male; female: فلاحة [*fallāḥa*]; plural [colloquial]: فلاحين [*fallāḥīn*]), or peasant.[229] Derived from the verb *falaḥa*, which means "to plow, till, cultivate (الأرض *al-arḍa* the land)," the noun is inextricably linked to the land and the working of it (Wehr, 850). It is this labor that transforms the land into a landscape, creating a space that is both inhabited and produced by human beings. In "Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror," Gary Fields reminds the reader that the word "landscape" can be read as a noun or a verb in the study of geography. It

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[229] For example, Fadwā Ṭūqān (1917-2003) writes in "Illā al-wajhi illadhī ḍā'a fī al-ṭīh" (1969; "Face Lost in the Wilderness," 1969):

كان قومي يزرعون الأرض يحيون
يحبون الحياة
يأكلون الحب وزيت بحب وفرح (Ṭūqān, "al-Wajh" 2).

My people used to plant fields and love life
Joyfully they dipped their bread in oil (Ṭūqān, "Face" 459).

Fadwā Ṭūqān, "Illā al-wajhi illadhī ḍā'a fī al-ṭīh," *al-Ādāb* 5 (1969): 1-2.
Translation from Fadwā Ṭūqān, "Face Lost in the Wilderness," Trans. Patricia Alanah Byrne, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, and Naomi Shihab Nye in *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia U P, 1987), 458-460.

can refer to a "social product" that is "the outcome of human interaction with human subjects and material objects that reorders the surface of land." Or, it can reference "a *process* in which human agency transforms what is occurring on land" (Fields, 64).[230] The work of the *fallāḥ/a* is usually portrayed as communal. Thus, Nadia Latif argues that the labor performed by the *fallāḥ/a*, the landscaping of the land through cultivation, is "part of the process of producing and reproducing the social fabric of peasant life." The resulting "fruit" is "not only the crops [s/]he [produces], but also the social relations kin/neighbor/patron/client—engendered by this particular manner of sustaining and reproducing life" (Latif, 47).[231] The *fallāḥ/a*'s productive and seemingly timeless relationship with the space he/she cultivates is thus proof of a connection to a specific territory that is social, economic, and historical.

The figure of the *fallāḥ/a* is not unique to Palestinian literature. The connection between the *fallāḥ/a* and the land has been referenced in nationalist literatures and ideologies across the Arab world and far beyond that seek to establish a "natural" link between a people and the land within the boundaries of the nation. The *fallāḥ/a* becomes a representation of the roots of the nation that ties even those citizens who reside in urban centers to its territory.

An early and well-known example of nationalist literature in Arabic that relies on the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* is Egyptian Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's "village novel," *Zaynab* (1914; *Zainab*, 1989), originally published under the pseudonym "*miṣrī fallāḥ*" ("An Egyptian Peasant").[232] *Zaynab* was part of a major trend of "Egyptian political, ideological, and

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[230] Fields, "Landscaping."

[231] Nadia Latif, "Fallahin, Fida'iyyin, Laji'in: Palestinian Camp Refugees in Lebanon as Autochthons," *The Arab Studies Journal* 19.1 (2011): 42-64.

[232] Other examples of this trend include *al-Arḍ* (1954; *Egyptian Earth*, 1962), which was made into a film by the same name in 1970 (directed by Youssef Chahine), and *al-Fallāḥ* (1967; al-Fallāḥ) by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī from Egypt; *al-Dagla fī 'arājīniha* (1959; Bunches of Dates) by al-Bashīr Khurayyif from Tunisia; and *Dafannā al-māḍī* (1966; *We Have Buried the Past*, 2018) by 'Abd al-Karīm Ghallāb from Morocco.

imaginative narratives of nationhood" written "[d]uring the first four decades of the twentieth century," in which, as Muhammad Siddiq explains in *Arab Culture and the Novel: Genre, Identity, and Agency in Egyptian Fiction*, "the *fallāḥ* was valorized…as the carrier and custodian of quintessential Egyptianness" (Siddiq, 80).[233] In *The Novel in the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985*, Samah Selim, speaking of twentieth-century Egyptian literature more broadly, goes so far as to argue that "[e]ven properly urban fiction is almost always haunted by the presence of the village, as an intensely problematic geographical and historical place of origins" (Selim, 2).[234] Selim actually traces the emergence of the *fallāḥ/a* as "a recognizable and recurrent literary character" in Egyptian literature even farther back, all the way to the late nineteenth century, arguing that its development is directly tied to the nationalist movement that culminated in the 1881-1882 ʻUrābī Revolt (Selim,17). The *fallāḥ/a*, and the rural village life he/she represents, acts as a foil to the urban subject, while simultaneously inviting self-identification with a common history intimately connected to place.

Outside of the Middle East and narratives written in Arabic, the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* is found in Frantz Fanon's writings in French on colonialism and decolonization, which draw from his experiences in Algeria. Fanon seems to use the term primarily to locate himself geographically, employing it as a kind of shorthand to flag some of the particularities of settler colonialism in Algeria and areas of North Africa that distinguish it from other oppressive systems, even while his message of revolt remains mostly universalist. The *fallāḥ/a* here is thus little more than a romanticized peasant figure in whose hands, Fanon suggests, lies the future of the nation. For example, in his essay "De la violence" ("On Violence") in *Les damnés de la terre*

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[233] Muhammad Siddiq, *Arab Culture and the Novel: Genre, Identity, and Agency in Egyptian Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[234] Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

(1961; *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963),[235] Fanon writes: "the fellah [*fallāḥ*], the unemployed and the starving do not lay claim to truth. They do not say they represent the truth because they are the truth in their very being" (Fanon, *Wretched* 13). Here, the *fallāḥ/a* is valorized. He/she is juxtaposed with "the colonized intellectual," who gets lost in the details of revolution, while "the people," represented by the *fallāḥ/a*, "take a global stance" toward the struggle for independence and nationhood that succeeds through its simplicity: "Bread and land: how do we go about getting bread and land?" (Fanon, *Wretched* 13-14). While the Egyptian *fallāḥ/a* discussed above is identified by the difficult, but uninterrupted, labor through which he/she affirms his/her, and all of Egypt's, ties to the land, Fanon's Algerian *fallāḥ/a* is defined by struggle. Another population that has forged a connection to the territory of Algeria must be displaced before the *fallāḥ/a* can reclaim the space through his/her labor, helping to produce the independent nation.

The Palestinian *fallāḥ/a* is yet another manifestation of this pastoral figure. In "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," Ted Swedenburg locates the figure of the Palestinian *fallāḥ/a* within its historical context.[236] He argues that its manifestations and significations are the result of "confrontation with a specific form of settler-colonialism" and "the endangered status of the Palestinian nation" that is its consequence (Swedenburg, 18). The figure of the *fallāḥ/a* is thus formulated against the Israeli state, and the Zionist movement in particular, embodying an outward-looking alterity distinct from a pastoralism that relies on a rural/urban tension for its formulation. Swedenburg characterizes the pastoralism embodied by the *fallāḥ/a* as "anti-colonial" rather than "anti-capitalist" (Swedenburg, 21).

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[235] All translations from Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

[236] Ted Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," *Anthropological Quarterly* 63.1 (1990): 18-30.

Swedenburg traces the contemporary manifestation of the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* in art and literature to post-1948 Palestinian poets who were not displaced by the establishment of Israel, but were rather incorporated into the new state as second-class citizens (Swedenburg, 20). Barbara Parmenter notes in *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* that it was also in this period that Palestinian literature began to reflect a sustained interest in the environment, partly in response to a clearly formulated Zionist "land rhetoric." Prior to this period, Parmenter argues, Palestinians "were insiders largely unconcerned with articulating their relationship to their home" (Parmenter, 26).[237] Following the establishment of Israel, a new symbology of rural imagery was devised that was "readily understood by readers and listeners as allegories for Palestine, the land, and the people's intention of remaining permanently on that land" (Swedenburg, 20). These included elements of Palestinian village dress; plants like the olive tree, orange tree, and *zaʿtar* (wild thyme); and, of course, the figure of the *fallāḥ/a*. In the 1950s, this literature was nostalgic and romantic and it was only in the years that followed that detailed, personalized descriptions of the environment became common. Parmenter notes that their "dense detail" and focus on the "foreground" rather than "sweeping vistas of mountain, plain, valley, or town" were designed to communicate Palestinians' imbrication in their environment (Parmenter, 72, 95, 73).

Descriptions of and affiliation with local flora and fauna are commonly utilized in Arabic literature (and outside of it) to emphasize indigenousness, as discussed in the previous chapter.[238] In "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear

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[237] Barbara Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1994).

[238] The constructed nature of these affiliations is highlighted by the fact that prickly-pear cactus [*al-ṣabr*], which is embraced as a symbol by Palestinians and Zionists alike, is not, in fact, indigenous to the Middle East. Bardenstein notes that it "is itself a transplant from Mexico dating from the 1700s" (Bardenstein, 14).

Cactus in Israel/Palestine," Carol Bardenstein zeros in on three nonhuman, nonanimal living organisms as "hyper-saturated and contested symbols" that are claimed and privileged in Palestinian collective memory to emphasize connection to place: trees, the Jaffa orange, and the prickly-pear cactus (Bardenstein, 1). Bardenstein focuses her study on these three symbols in particular because they have been co-opted into the Zionist discourse of belonging as well. In both, the rootedness of the self is asserted, while that of the other is suppressed or denied, through alignment with the natural world.

An example of the kind of pastoral and natural imagery described by Swedenburg and Bardenstein is found in Palestinian poet and politician Tawfīq Zayyād's poem "Hunā bāqūn" (1976; "Here We Will Stay," 1987).[239] It reads, in part:

<div dir="rtl">

في اللد، والرملة، والجليل
إنا هنا باقون
فلتشربوا البحرا
نحرس ظل التين والزيتون
ونزرع الأفكار، كالخمير في العجين (Zayyād, "Hunā" 525).[240]

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In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee,
we shall remain,
[Go ahead and drink the sea
as we] guard the shade of the fig
and olive trees,
[and sow ideas]
as yeast in the dough (Zayyād, "Here" 486).[241]

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[239] See also Maḥmūd Darwīsh's famous "Biṭāqat huwiyya" (1964; "Identity Card," 1971).

[240] Tawfīq Zayyād, "Hunā bāqūn" in *al-Adab al-ʿarabī ʿabra al-ʿuṣūr*, ed. Hudā Al-Tamīmī (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2015), 525-526.

[241] I rely here on the translation by Elmusa and Doria, which reads as follows:

In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee,
we shall remain,
guard the shade of the fig
and olive trees,
ferment rebellion in our children
as yeast in the dough.

The stanza opens with Zayyād's invocation of the cities of Lidda (al-Lidd) and Ramla (al-Ramla) in what is today central Israel, as well as the region of the Galilee. All three sites are home to a significant number of Palestinian Arabs. They made up a majority in al-Lidd and al-Ramla until their 1948 massacre and mass expulsion in what became known as the al-Lidd Death March.[242] They outnumber Jewish Israelis in the Galilee to this day. Al-Lidd and al-Ramla were given the Hebrew names Lod (לוֹד) and Ramla (רַמְלָה) after Israel's establishment. This was part of a widespread effort undertaken with the assistance of archaeologists and biblical scholars to "Hebraize" the geography of the new state (Pappe, 226). Zayyād's use of the Arabic names "al-Lidd" and "al-Ramla" is thus a form of excavation that reinscribes the Palestinians in the landscape and asserts their historic connection to place, as well as their continued presence in the Jewish state.

As noted above, the Galilee, the third site named by Zayyād, continues to maintain a Palestinian majority. This is despite government-sponsored and private "Judaization" efforts that aim to increase the Jewish population in the region through "mass expropriations and settlement construction" (Blumenthal, 78).[243] Max Blumenthal explains in *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* that the goal of Judaization is "to expand Jewish towns in the area while

However, I have made several modifications [bracketed] that, while they may make the stanza less poetic, I believe more closely reflect the original Arabic of the poem.

Tawfīq Zayyād, "Here We Will Stay" in *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, Trans. Sharif Elmusa and Charles Doria, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia U P, 1987), 486.

[242] See Michael Palumbo, *The Palestinian Catastrophe: The 1948 expulsion of a people from their homeland* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 126-138.

[243] Max Blumenthal, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (New York: Nation Books, 2013).

preventing the natural growth of those populated by Arabs" (Blumenthal, 78). The roots of these efforts can be traced all the way back to 1949.[244]

In December 1973, Zayyād (1929-1994) was elected mayor of the Galilee city of Nazareth. At the time, the Galilee was "ground zero" for a Judaization project that "planted exclusively Jewish communities between and around Arab population clusters in order to interrupt their demographic continuity" (Blumenthal, 78). In 1976, in response to land confiscations planned as part of the Judaization effort, Zayyād led a strike that became known as "Land Day" (Yawm al-arḍ) and continues to be commemorated each year. Zayyād published "Here We Will Stay" in the lead-up to Land Day.

Zayyād's focus on sites with significant Palestinian populations, in combination with the title of his poem ("Here We Will Stay"), emphasizes his message of ṣumūd. Raja Shehadeh explains in *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* that ṣumūd is an approach to occupation that means "to stay put, to cling to our homes and land by all means available" (Shehadeh, *Third Way* vii). The active participle (*ism al-fāʿil*) ṣāmid is derived from the same root and refers to a person who is steadfast or perseveres. The term was adopted in 1978 at the Arab League Summit in Baghdad to describe the Palestinians living under Israeli control, either within the State of Israel or in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. However, Shehadeh argues that "[l]ong before Arab politicians defined ṣumūd as a pan-Arab objective it had been practised by every man, woman and child here struggling on his or her own to learn to cope with, and resist, the pressures of living as a member of a conquered people" (Shehadeh, *Third Way* viii). Ṣumūd is the titular "third way" that exists "(b)etween mute submission and blind hate" (Shehadeh, *Third Way*). It is a path to survival, but Shehadeh stresses that it can also progress "from an all-

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[244] See Dan Rabinowitz, *Overlooking Nazareth: The Ethnography of Exclusion in Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1997), 6.

encompassing form of life into a form of resistance" (Shehadeh, *Third Way* viii). The figure of the Palestinian *fallāḥ/a* is intimately connected to the notion of *ṣumūd*. He/she, according to Swedenburg, "has become the epitome of what it means to be *samid*, to stay put, anchored to the earth with stubborn determination" (Swedenburg, 22). The *fallāḥ/a*'s identity is so deeply tied to the land itself that he/she only exists relationally to it in literary narratives.

Zayyād is also an embodiment of *ṣumūd*; like Shehadeh, whose literary work I will revisit below, he is *ṣāmid*. As a politician who served as mayor of Nazareth for 19 years, until his death in 1994, and as a member of the Knesset, where he represented Rakah (רק"ח), Israel's former communist party, Zayyād resisted oppression from within the state and its systems.[245] "Here We Will Stay" is above all an assertion of Palestinian presence. The "we" in the poem, referring to the Palestinian Arabs within Israel, protect the fig and olive trees that represent their connection to the land. They have not come here, but rather communicate their intention to "stay" or "remain" (إنا هنا باقون) making a claim that encompasses past, present, and future. By guarding the trees from seizure or destruction, they proclaim themselves to be responsible ecological stewards while also defending this evidence of their historical relationship with the space. Both kinds of trees are indications of centuries of cultivation and the fruit they produce enable *ṣumūd* by helping to nourish and sustain the communities that nurture them.

The mention of the fig and the olive together echoes sura 95 of the Qur'an, which opens with "By the Fig and the Olive" (وَالتِّينِ وَالزَّيْتُونِ) (Qur'an, al-Tīn [The Fig] 95:1). Here, the sura invokes the authority of both symbols to emphasize that Allah truly created human beings "in the best of moulds" (فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ) (Qur'an, al-Tīn [The Fig] 95:1). This is the case even though human beings may give in to their baser instincts and fail to uphold the covenant of the *amāna*,

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[245] Jamal Assadi, ed., *The Story of a People: An Anthology of Palestinian Poets Within the Green-Lines* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 227.

which requires that they live a righteous and virtuous life as Allah's *khalīfa* on earth. Sura 95 reiterates the idea, discussed in Chapter 3, that humanity contains within itself the capacity for "unjustness" (ظَلُوم) and "foolishness" (جَهُول), even while stewardship of the *amāna* grants human beings alone the potential to become "noble angels" (الملائكة الكرماء), elevated above all others through their goodness.

Arguing that the fig "can stand as a symbol of man's destiny in many ways," 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī draws a comparison in his commentary between the fruit's cultivated and wild states: "Under cultivation it can be one of the finest, most delicious, and most wholesome fruits in existence: in its wild state, it is nothing but tiny seeds, and is insipid, and often full of worms and maggots" ('Alī, n.6194 1669). The fig trees in Zayyād's poem thus represent not just a history stretching back to the moment of their planting, but also a continuous presence asserted through active cultivation. The production of edible figs is a sign of good stewardship that fulfills the covenant of the *amāna*. Here, intervention in the nonhuman world is not only permitted, but required for the sake of ecological *tawāzun*, which includes the shaping of the earth, its landscaping, for the purpose of sustaining human life. Olive trees are likewise products of the *fallāḥ/a*'s labor, though their longevity highlights a cross-generational, hereditary connection to space rather than the work of a single lifetime. Because of the history the olive tree embodies, it is often employed as a representation of *ṣumūd*, especially in the visual arts, where, Bardenstein writes, it has become "emblematic of Palestinian rootedness" (Bardenstein, 29).

The focus on racination (and deracination) emerges in the Palestinian collective imagination at "the moment of beginning to be uprooted and physically displaced from Palestine" (Bardenstein, 18). Bardenstein cites the short story "Arḍ al-burtuqāl al-ḥazīn"[246]

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[246] Ghassān Kanafānī, "Arḍ al-burtuqāl al-ḥazīn" in *Arḍ al-burtuqāl al-ḥazīn* (Cyprus: Dār Manshūrāt al-Rimāl, 2013), 83-92.

(1962; "The Land of Sad Oranges," 1978) by Palestinian author Ghassān Kanafānī (1936-1972) as an example, containing as it does a vivid description of this moment. In the text, when a Palestinian child and his family are transformed into refugees after being barred from returning to their home in Jaffa in 1948, the city's famous oranges quickly become a reminder of their connection to their lost home and Palestine more broadly. The Jaffa orange tree, often distilled down to the fruit, has come to serve as another common representation of Palestinian connection to place asserted through cultivation. Both the name and history of the fruit link it to a specific territory (Jaffa and its environs). The orange groves are thus a sign of local cultivation and rootedness. However, they also form the heart of a vital citriculture export industry that has thrived in Palestine since the middle of the nineteenth century[247] and continues to flourish under Jewish Israeli control.[248] The loss of orange trees thus explicitly communicates the economic impact of displacement on the Palestinian community.

In "The Land of Sad Oranges," the family stops to purchase some of the fruit from a *fallāḥ* selling it on the side of the road as the crossing into Lebanon comes into view. Here, the Jaffa orange has not yet been entirely reduced to a symbol. The purchased oranges do evoke the orange trees left behind as well as the trauma of the family's displacement, causing the men and women travelling with the narrator to burst into tears when they hold them in their hands. However, each Jaffa orange is also a singular fruit that bears a connection to a specific *fallāḥ* who nurtured the tree that produced it.

Then, at the border, the narrator beings to cry as well. Speaking in the second person to a fellow refugee who was also a child at the time of exile, he says: "And all the orange trees which

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[247] See Nahum Karlinsky, *California Dreaming: Ideology, Society, and Technology in the Citrus Industry of Palestine*, 1890-1939, Trans. Naftali Greenwood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).

[248] See Bardenstein, 14.

your father had abandoned to the Jews shone in his eyes, all the well-tended orange trees which

he had bought one by one were printed on his face and reflected in the tears which he could not

control" (Kanafānī, "Oranges" 58).[249] The father's recollection of his "well-tended orange trees

which he had bought one by one," which brings him to tears, communicates rootedness and

connection to place through an emphasis on the local and personal nature of the labor of

cultivation and production. However, while he may remember each tree, these individual losses

become cumulative in the narrator's telling. The oranges sold by the *fallāḥ* on the side of the

road and held in the hands of the narrator's fellow travelers have become the collective orange

trees of the stolen groves ("all of the orange trees which your father had abandoned"). The blame

for the loss is also placed on the father, who failed in his duty to care for the land of which he

had stewardship by leaving it and its trees.

The story ends with the narrator remembering a *fallāḥ* who once told him that the orange

trees "would shrivel up if a change occurred and they were watered by a strange hand"

(Kanafānī, "Oranges" 61-62).[250] The rootedness of the *fallāḥ/a* contains within it a right to

possession of the land that is demonstrated through a self-reinforcing reciprocity that affirms

his/her status as ecological native: fruitful cultivation on the part of the *fallāḥ/a* is evidence of

good stewardship while the land's productivity is a sign of its recognition of the *fallāḥ/a*'s right

to that stewardship.[251]

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[249] وكانت تلتمع في عيني أبيك كل أشجار البرتقال التي تركها لليهود ..كل أشجار البرتقال النظيف التي اشتراها شجرة شجرة ، كلها كانت ترتسم في وجهه ..وترتسم لماعة في دموع لم يتمالكها (Kanafānī, "al-Burtuqāl" 85).

All translations are from Ghassān Kanafānī, "The Land of Sad Oranges" in *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, Trans. Hilary Kilpatrick (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1978), 57-62.

[250] إنه يذبل إذا ما تغيرت اليد التي تتعهده بالماء (Kanafānī, "al-Burtuqāl" 92).

[251] The nonhuman world's support is marshalled to bolster claims of rootedness and connection to place in Maḥmūd Darwīsh's poem "Khuṭbat 'al-hindī al-aḥmar mā qabla al-akhīra amāma al-rajul al-abyaḍ" as well (1992; Speech of

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This is an example of what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin refer to as "entitlement" in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*.[252] In postcolonial pastoral literature, they argue, there is often a tension between legal land ownership and "the imaginative and/or emotional possession of a place" (Huggan and Tiffin, 82). The result is a distinction between "one's right to live in a place," which does not always encompass "belonging," and the ability "to dwell in it or inhabit it," which "implies an at-homeness with place" but does not necessarily include ownership (Huggan and Tiffin, 82). The *fallāḥ/a*'s cultivation, landscaping, and stewardship of the land, as in "Here We Will Stay" and "The Land of Sad Oranges," are expressions of dwelling and at-homeness that communicate entitlement through narratives of ecological alterity in which belonging is formulated against an Israeli other.

In the next section, I will explore these same processes in *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, a novel that narrates Palestinian connection to place even as it ends with physical displacement from it. Then, I analyze the critique of the figure of the Palestinian ecological native as *fallāḥ/a* in *The Inheritance* and *Palestinian Walks*. I argue that both of these texts challenge the notion of productive cultivation as evidence of responsible and rightful stewardship by highlighting the

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the American Indian; "Speech of the Red Indian," 2000), although the focus here is on wild animals and spaces. The speaker in Darwīsh's poem asks:

وَلكِنْ أَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْغَزَالةَ لا تَأْكُلُ الْعُشْبَ إِنْ مَسَّهُ دَمُنا؟ (44 "Khuṭba" ,Darwīsh).

But do you know that a deer
will never approach grass that's been
stained with our blood? (Darwīsh, "Speech" 136).

Like the orange trees that cannot flourish if they are not tended by those who planted them, the animals in Darwīsh's poem recognize their rightful co-inhabitants of the space.

Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Khuṭbat 'al-hindī al-aḥmar mā qabla al-akhīra amāma al-rajul al-abyaḍ" in *Aḥada 'ashara kawkaban* (Beirut: Dār al-Jadīd, 1999), 33-51.
Translation from Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Speech of the Red Indian," in *The Adam of Two Edens*, Trans. by Sargon Boulos, eds. Munir Akash and Daniel Moore (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 2000), 127-145.

[252] Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

ecoambiguity of their Palestinian characters' behaviors and attitudes toward the environment. In this way, Khalīfa and Shehadeh expose some of the similarities between this discourse and the Zionist narrative of "making the desert bloom," revealing the shortcomings of both formulations of earth care. In the following section, I will discuss Shehadeh's reframing of the figure of the Palestinian ecological native in *Palestinian Walks*. In this text, Raja asserts his right to the land by modeling a more straightforwardly environmentalist attitude toward the natural world than has been seen in the other texts studied thus far in this dissertation. He stresses the importance of preservation and ecological responsibility, landscaping the space through walking rather than through cultivation. At the same time, Raja upholds the enduring importance of cultivation (past as well as current) as embodied by the Palestinian *fallāḥ/a* in the courtroom. As a lawyer, he addresses the competing legal rights of Palestinians and Jewish Israelis to land in Palestine and Israel as a complement to opposing emotional and imaginative narratives of belonging. Finally, I propose the idea of "cosmic pastoralism" as a way to understand both the impulses, and the shortcomings, of the ecological native figure whose only remaining relationship to the landscape exists in literature and in memory.

II. The Figure of the Fallāḥ/a *as Ecological Native*

Yakhlif's novel *A Lake Beyond the Wind* is centered on the village of Samakh, located on the shore of Lake Tiberias. The narrative follows the daily lives of the village's inhabitants in an episodic narrative that culminates in their expulsion in 1948 in the course of Israel's establishment. The fundamental roles of the *fallāḥ/a*, cultivation, relationships with domesticated animals, and communal labor in Palestinian village life are emphasized throughout the text. For example, the harvest of Ḥājj Ḥusayn's land, narrated from 'Abd al-Karīm's point of view, is described as follows:

أيام الحصاد [الحاج حسين] تأتيه [العونة] من كل الفلاحين ..
يأتي من يحصد، ومن يجمع الغمار، ومن يرجد البيادر، ومن وراء الحصادين يلتقط الفقراء السنابل التي
تسقط من الغمّارين أو تلك التي تنجو من منجل الحصاد. ومن وراء الحصادين والغمارين واللقاطين تأتي
الدواب فتمتلىء الضروع حتى لتكاد تتشقق (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 143) .

> At harvest time he [Ḥājj Ḥusayn] got help from all the peasants [*fallāḥīn*]. Some came to reap and some to gather up the grain, while others still came to work the threshing floor. Behind them came the poor people who gleaned the ears of grain the gatherers had dropped, or which had escaped the reapers' scythes. And behind them again came the animals, who ate until their stomachs were ready to burst (Yakhlif, *Lake* 106).[253]

Care of the land, demonstrated through a good harvest, is portrayed as a collective process that sustains the entire community, human and animal alike. Even the very poor benefit from the reaping, gathering up the crumbs of the plentiful crop. Numerous bodies come together to complete the task. Their presence maps out a sizeable plot of land and simultaneously hints at the effort, not made explicit in the text, that was required to sow it. Although the land is owned by Ḥājj Ḥusayn, the hierarchy embedded in the *fallāḥīn*'s work is glossed over. Instead, a narrative of productive communal labor that affirms the Palestinian people's connection to the land, to the domesticated animals, and to each other is privileged.

The goat hair tent woven by Ḥafīẓa over "three seasons" (ثلاثة مواسم) is another representation of Palestinian dwelling, or embeddedness in the environment, expressed through pastoralism (Yakhlif, *Lake* 50).[254] The black goat hair to make the tent is sheared from local goats and washed in the nearby Yarmouk River. Its production and subsequent use reaffirm a connection to place. The tent is the product of Ḥafīẓa's individual labor. As she weaves it, "she [won't] let anyone help her" (تأبى أن يساعدها أحد) (Yakhlif, *Lake* 51).[255] However, it is also an act

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[253] All translations are from Yaḥyā Yakhlif, *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, Trans. May Jayyusi and Christopher Tingley (New York: Interlink, 2003).

[254] Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 71.

[255] Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 71.

of communal labor. The herdsmen wash the goat hair for Ḥafīẓa "all singing together" (وهم يغنون

أغنية جماعية) and erect the tent on her behalf, singing once more as they do so, emphasizing their

pleasure in their collective hard work (Yakhlif, *Lake* 51).[256] After the tent has been completed,

Ḥafīẓa prepares coffee for all of the men. Through this lengthy process, Ḥafīẓa deepens her

connection to her environment and community. At the same time, Ḥafīẓa's efforts, as part of a

broader pattern of activities and behaviors that connect the *fallāḥ/a* to the landscape he/she

produces, contribute to the narrative of Palestinian rootedness.

However, Ḥafīẓa's connection to the nonhuman world is distinguished from that of many

of those around her by its extension beyond the domain of domesticated animals with a direct,

symbiotic relationship with her human community. Ḥafīẓa does have a relationship with the

goats, which are nurtured by the local shepherds and in turn provide her with the hair for her tent.

But Ḥafīẓa also affiliates in at least one instance with a nonhuman creature that is not farmed,

raised, or domesticated by her or her human community: a fish caught by her nephew, Rāḍī.

Ḥafīẓa's sense of stewardship expands to encompass a responsibility for wild creatures that share

the same space. While Rāḍī begins to think about eating the fish for lunch, Ḥafīẓa looks out at

the lake. The narrator, adopting Rāḍī's perspective, speculates: "Maybe she was thinking of

some spring past, full of tranquility, comfort and goodness, and of a spring approaching, when

there'd be no peace of mind, when only God knew what would happen" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 50).[257]

Ḥafīẓa asks Rāḍī to return the fish to the lake. She seems to recognize her plight, the plight of her

people, in the fish. The fish has been uprooted from its home—a fate that the Palestinians will

also face. However, rather than reading her own suffering as a Palestinian in the surrounding

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[256] Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 71.

[257] لعلها تفكر بربيع مضى فيه السكينة والراحة والخير، وبربيع قادم لا يهدأ فيه بال ولا يعلم ما سيحدث فيه إلّا الخالق
(Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 70-71).

environment, Ḥafīẓa is able to see and acknowledge the unique pain of the fish through its similarity to her experiences and those of her community. Rāḍī identifies the fish as a *balbout* (سمك البلبوط), "which can live for hours after leaving the water" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 50).[258] This trait further highlights the parallels between the fish that has been forcibly removed from its home and the Palestinians who will survive as refugees following the *nakba*.

There are instances in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* in which all of the natural world seems to be in synch with the Palestinian population, further emphasizing its rootedness. When the *nakba* is foreshadowed early in the text, the signs of the impending human catastrophe are read in the natural, nonhuman world:

الغول قادم، وثمة ما يوحي بأنَّ الأرض آخذة في الاهتزاز. وفي هذا الوقت——وقت القيلولة——يصمت الشجر، والهواء، وتُصيب السكينة حتى أمواج البحيرة.

صمت وسكينة يشبهان اللحظة التي تسبق انفجار اللغم في مقالع الحجارة (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 8-9).

A disaster was coming and there was a sense of the earth starting to tremble. Around this time, the time of siesta, the trees and the wind fell silent. Even the waves of the lake were still.

It was like the silence and stillness before an explosion at the stone quarries (Yakhlif, *Lake* 2).

Shaking in fear and falling silent in anticipation of the coming conflict, the earth communicates both a warning to its human inhabitants and its loyalty to them. Palestinian pastoralism depends on affiliation with a place and a place's recognition of that connection in turn. Entitlement to the land is communicated through narratives of dwelling that are based on reciprocal relationships between human beings and their environments. This harmony represents a kind of *tawāzun* and is often expressed by linking responsible human stewardship with agricultural productivity, as discussed throughout this chapter. However, it can also be conveyed through an embeddedness

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[258] الذي يظل حيّاً بعد أن يخرج من الماء لساعات طويلة (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 70).

in the environment demonstrated through the natural world's anthropomorphized allegiance to the human community. Elsewhere, the text goes so far as to suggest that the land itself takes up the fight against the Jewish forces alongside the Palestinians fighters: "We climbed into the trucks, and, as we drove off, the fields set out with us. So did the olive trees, and the prickly pears, and the china trees" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 132).[259] The militarization of the spaces (the fields) and the plants (the olive trees and the prickly pears) that are nurtured by the Palestinian *fallāḥ/a* and in turn nourish the community recenters them in the battle over the right to landscape and assign meaning to the land.

The Palestinian community's connection to domesticated animals and cultivated spaces, like wheat fields, that do rely on human intervention for survival or preservation supports the notion of a landscape loyal to the hands that planted and tended it. However, while the farmland in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* seems to be in synch with its Palestinian inhabitants at times, as in the above discussion of the bountiful communal harvest of Ḥājj Ḥusayn's land, at others the mutuality of the connection is revealed to be an illusion or a projection—no more than a case of pathetic fallacy. For example, the crops planted by the *fallāḥīn* provide cover for Jewish forces and Palestinian fighters alike, undermining the narrative of allegiance. The Palestinian community of Samakh's claim of affiliation with a sympathetic landscape is destabilized by the ultimate impassivity of that landscape. This is made even clearer in the case of Palestine's wild spaces and creatures, the independence of which resist narratives of reciprocity.

The white birds that appear near the lake throughout the novel further illustrate the tension between human explanations of their environments that invoke ideas like loyalty and the natural world's indifference to this anthropomorphization. Abū Ḥāmid observes a flock of the

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[259] صعدنا إلى السيارات. ودارت المحركات. فمشت معنا الحقول. مشت معنا أشجار الزيتون والصبّار والزنزلخت (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 177).

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white birds after the nearby city of Tiberias falls and refugees pour into Samakh. As he works to

assist the refugees, he runs out of gas. In this moment, the birds reflect his feelings of

helplessness and terror back to him, as well as the experiences of the refugees: "Those birds

could smell danger, and they showed their fear by moving from one area to another, without ever

folding their wings or nestling their heads on their breasts, to give themselves a rest" (Yakhlif,

Lake 181).[260] Abū Ḥāmid understands the behavior of the birds to be a reaction to the human

community's distress. Although they themselves are not under immediate threat, they share the

fear of the refugees and human inhabitants of Samakh. Their constant movement foreshadows

the rootlessness of the Palestinian refugees as well.

The white birds also make an appearance earlier in the text in a section narrated from the

perspective of al-Dhīb [Wolf], a dog. While the adult human population is concerned with the

sound of distant shelling and planes overhead, the dog and the local children are focused on

playing. That play does reflect a superficial awareness of the greater conflict taking shape around

them, but there is no sense of fear. From Wolf's point of view, the narrator describes the

following scene:

عادوا [الأولاد] يبسطون أذرعتهم ويدورون حول أنفسهم ويصدرون أصواتاً تشبه أزيز الطائرات. هبَّ
الذيب على رجليه، شبَّ في الهواء كأنه يعبِّر عن أقصى حالات المرح.

كان الأولاد يقلِّدون الطائرات، ولكنهم في تلك اللحظات كانوا يشبهون الفراشات الصغيرة الملوَّنة. نطَّ الذيب
هنا وهناك بينهم. اندمج بهم فترة فتركوه يشاركهم اللعب.

ويا لروعة الصدفة! فقد عاد سرب الطيور البيضاء يحلِّق فوق المحطة، فكأنَّ هناك تناغماً ما بين حركة
الأذرع ورفيف الأجنحة.

دار السرب دورة واسعة، ثم مضى إلى عمق البحيرة كأنَّه حيّا الأطفال لدى مروره في فضائهم، وواصل
طريقه.

هلَّل الأولاد، وقفزوا في الهواء كأنَّما يريدون أن يقبضوا على الفرح بأصابعهم الطريّة
(Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 213).

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[260] كانت تلك الطيور البيضاء تشم رائحة الخطر، وتعبِّر عن ذعرها بالانتقال من مكان إلى مكان دون أن تخلد إلى السكينة وتطوي أجنحتها وتسند
رؤوسها على ريش صدرها الأبيض (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 236).

> Their arms outstretched, [the children] whirled about making droning noises like the planes. Wolf sprang up, then leaped rapturously into the air. The children were imitating planes, but really they looked like small colorful butterflies. Wolf jumped around among them and wasn't chased off.
>
> Then, by a marvelous coincidence, the flock of white birds came back too, hovering over the station, so that there was a harmony between the movements of the arms and the flapping of the wings. The flock veered in a wide sweeping circle, then headed for the heart of the lake, as though they were greeting the children as they passed by. The children were jubilant, leaping into the air, as though intent on seizing joy in their soft hands (Yakhlif, *Lake* 161).

Here, children and animals, domesticated and wild alike, seem immune to the tension caused by unrest in the area. The movement of the white birds is interpreted as an expression of joy, a reading that corresponds to the mood of the children and the dog in the same way that the attribution of fear to the flock mirrors Abū Ḥāmid's human emotions in the episode described above. But the children and Wolf *are* in harmony with the world around them, as indicated by their behavior. The children may be trying to imitate the planes that the adult population see as an unnatural intrusion into their space but the result is that they come to resemble both the planes and elements of the natural world—butterflies and the birds themselves. The children and Wolf are embedded in their environment, truly dwelling in it with an unconscious and therefore complete sense of at-home-ness. The result is not that the environment reflects their emotions. Instead, the children and Wolf reflect their environment by becoming bird- and butterfly-like, and even plane-like. In other words, the harmony that exists between the environment and the community stems from human feelings and emotions that lead to modifications in behavior and attitudes rather than from any sort of innate sympathy on the part of the natural world for its Palestinian inhabitants.

At first glance, such a reading challenges narratives of Palestinian rootedness that rely on reciprocity, but Wolf's alignment with the children reestablishes a connection between the

human and nonhuman animal communities of Samakh. A distinction is made between wild creatures like the birds and domesticated animals like Wolf. While the former reveal their impartiality and independence from the Palestinian human community, good care of and peaceful coexistence with the latter continues to function alongside cultivation as an assertion of virtuous stewardship of the *amāna*.

Wolf represents a "useful" animal in the text with utility to human beings, like other domesticated working animals such as 'Abd al-Karīm's mare, discussed at greater length below. These "useful" animals are contrasted with animals that threaten the life or livelihood of Palestinians, such as hyenas. The white birds analyzed above represent a kind of in-between animal—they neither help nor harm the community but may be marshalled to communicate a connection to the natural world when expedient. In *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, a bond with and care of "useful" animals demonstrate embeddedness in a community that encompasses not just other human beings, but also nonhuman animals as well as the land itself. Ecological behavior, which is expressed here as respect for "useful" animals and attentive cultivation of the land, is thus inseparable from place, contributing to a narrative of rootedness and dwelling.

The character of Khālid al-Zahir, a shepherd, models these values. He "[lives] in the stables where the seeds and straw and plowshares [are] kept, along with various other old odds and ends, and where swallows and lizards and spiders [make] their home" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 2).[261] When Khālid is not out tending his flock, he sleeps alongside the tools used to farm the land (the seeds and plowshares) and the food used to nourish the working animals necessary for agricultural production (the straw). He even coexists peacefully with nonhuman animal inhabitants of the land (swallows, lizards, and spiders) that might be perceived as pests by others,

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[261] يسكن في البايكة حيث يُخزَّن التبن والحبوب، وحيث تُحفظ أدوات الحراثة والغرابيل وسقط المتاع، وتعشّش طيور السنونو والسعالي وأبو بريص وأم اربع وأربعين (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 8).

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in the same category as threatening or dangerous animals, emphasizing the depth of his connection to the space as a true *fallāḥ* and ecological native. A few pages later, it is explained that "[Khālid] [treats] animals the way he [does] humans. He [is] compassionate with them, and [he keeps] them clean and [takes] care of their hooves. Though some animals [are] disobedient, he never [whips] them" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 9).[262] Again, Khālid's rootedness in place, his right to stewardship of the land, is asserted through his positive treatment of nonhuman animals. His behavior reflects a recognition of the reciprocal relationship that exists between human beings and nonhuman animals in the community, which mirrors the perceived reciprocal relationship between human beings and the land expressed through cultivation.

"Threatening" animals, in contrast, are wild creatures that represent a danger to Palestinian life or cultivation. As such, they are invoked as metaphors to represent the Jewish settlers or fighters, positioned in opposition to the Palestinian community. For example, the mosquitos that attack a group of Palestinian refugees as they attempt to rest for the night are compared to the Jewish forces and the malaria that they spread is juxtaposed with the *nakba*, drawing a link between them: "The savage, bloodsucking mosquitos, with malaria in their sting, swarmed in the sky while the disaster swept along streets and squares and forsaken paths" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 212).[263] In another instance, the Jewish population's spread across the land is likened to that of locusts, "eating everything, green or dry" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 74).[264] "Threatening" animals are considered especially dangerous when they are pests that resist the artificial

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[262] خالد الزهر يعامل الدواب مثلما يعامل البشر، يحنو عليها. ينظّفها ويعالج سنابكها ويداويها. وعلى الرغم من أنَّ بعضها صعب المراس فإنه لم يكن يلهب ظهورها بلسعات الكرابيج (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 18).

[263] البعوض الوحشي.. المفترس الذي يحمل في خراطيمه ومجسّاته الملاريا يسدُّ الفضاء، أما الكارثة في ترمح في الطرق والساحات والدروب الذابلة (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 274).

[264] يأكلون الأخضر واليابس (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 99).

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boundaries between wilderness and home imagined by human beings, crossing into the settled spaces of human belonging and undermining feelings of at-homeness.

In *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, the wilderness represents a threat to the Palestinian population that is as present and real as is that of the Jewish population. An assertion of rootedness and belonging to place does not preclude conflict, possibly violent, with other, nonhuman indigenous creatures that share the same or inhabit adjacent spaces. In one illustrative episode, Abū Ḥāmid and ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Ḥamad find themselves stranded on a dirt road in the countryside, where they encounter a group of hyenas in the middle of the night. Even before the animals make their appearance, ʿAbd al-Karīm is struck by how isolated they are in the idyllic landscape, made up of farmland and shepherds with their flocks. He notes "the scent of grass, the smell of open country, and the sound of birds"[265] as well as "desolation as far as the eye could see"[266] (Yakhlif, *Lake* 90). ʿAbd al-Karīm feels out of place here, thinking to himself: "How far away Samakh seemed at moments like this!" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 91).[267] Although the area where the two men find themselves is part of a greater Palestine, home is more locally defined.

Two threats confront Abū Ḥāmid and ʿAbd al-Karīm: hungry hyenas are juxtaposed with a nearby Jewish settlement. Both heighten ʿAbd al-Karīm's fear and sense of alienation. The hyenas embody the wilderness that will overtake the land and erase its Palestinian inhabitants if it is not consciously and constantly policed. The Jewish settlements compete with the Palestinian villages' right to belonging, in part through their inhabitants' own landscaping of the earth. If the two men build a fire, it will keep the hyenas at bay. However, there is the risk that it will attract

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[265] رائحة العشب. ورائحة البراري. وأصوات العصافير (120 *Buḥayra* ,Yakhlif).

[266] والوحشة ثم الوحشة ثم الوحشة (120 *Buḥayra* ,Yakhlif).

[267] ما أبعد سمخ في هذه اللحظات (121 *Buḥayra* ,Yakhlif).

the unwanted attention of the settlement. 'Abd al-Karīm feels trapped: "The hyena on one side and the Jews on the other" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 96).[268] Daybreak will bring little relief because, though it will discourage the hyenas, it will further expose them to watchful eyes in the Jewish settlement and its inhabitants working the nearby fields. Both are similarly hostile from the perspectives of Abū Ḥāmid and 'Abd al-Karīm, and both stand in opposition to spaces that are marked by Palestinian dwelling, expressed through habitation and cultivation.

In this text, the land is divided in the Palestinian characters' imaginations between settled, cultivated spaces, where either they or the Jewish population experience a sense of belonging, and dangerous, wild spaces, where all human beings are out of place. As in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*, the isolation of the wilderness in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* facilitates individual freedom but comes at the cost of certain safeties. The bedrock of Palestinian belonging, community, is absent. There is no one to offer help and support and, unlike Asouf and 'Assāf, the Palestinian characters lack the deep knowledge of their environment that would mitigate the risks of isolation. This becomes apparent when 'Abd al-Karīm's beloved mare stumbles and breaks its leg while he is riding in the countryside. After the fall, 'Abd al-Karīm views the landscape around him in the same way he does after being stranded during his journey with Abū Ḥāmid: "He was there, alone, in a vast, desolate wilderness" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 147).[269] The horse, a domesticated beast, belongs, as does 'Abd al-Karīm, to the settled, cultivated space of Samakh. In a final attempt to save the injured horse, 'Abd al-Karīm brings the community into the wilderness, leading a group of men back to the mare. When it's clear that nothing can be

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[268] الضبع من جهة، واليهود من جهة أخرى (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 129).

[269] كان يقف في الخلاء وحده. الخلاء الواسع الموحش (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 196).

done, responsible stewardship and care for the nonhuman members of the community are demonstrated when the horse is humanely put down.

When several hyenas enter Abū Ḥāmid and ʿAbd al-Karīm's makeshift camp in the wilderness, they decide that the animals represent a more immediate threat to their safety than does the Jewish settlement. So, they light a fire. When the lights of the settlement are turned off, they fear they have been spotted. But then, as they watch, one fire after another appears around them, lit by the Palestinian shepherds in the surrounding hills. Although it is possible that they are also responding to the threat of wild animals, ʿAbd al-Karīm sees it as a sign and begins to feel "at peace" once again (عاد إليه اليقين) while Ḥāmid marvels, "We're not alone any more, are we?" (لم نعد وحيدين .. أليس كذلك؟) (Yakhlif, *Lake* 101).[270] The fires connect Abū Ḥāmid and ʿAbd al-Karīm to the shepherds, creating a Palestinian community in the wilderness that challenges the power of the hyenas as well as that of the inhabitants of the Jewish settlement. This solidarity is emphasized by the narrator's description of ʿAbd al-Karīm: "In his joy ʿAbd al-Karīm could see the lake growing ever bigger" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 101).[271] ʿAbd al-Karīm invokes Lake Tiberias because it forms the foundation and core of the community of Samakh, which lies at the heart of his localized understanding of Palestine. It is "the lake that [provides] a living, that [grants] life to man, bird and plant" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 102).[272]

ʿAbd al-Karīm then experiences "a longing for his house and garden" in particular, further narrowing his concept of home to the space of dwelling that he cultivated, built up, and continuously inhabited (Yakhlif, *Lake* 101).[273] Landscaping—the act of transforming the land—

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[270] Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 135.

[271] فرح عبد الكريم الحمد، ورأى في خياله البحيرة تتسع وتتسع (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 135).

[272] البحيرة التي تعطي الرزق وتهب الحياة للإنسان والطير وحشائش البحر (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 137).

[273] اشتاق إلى بيته وبستانه (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 135).

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is central to the creation of a sense of entitlement and belonging. This is again emphasized when 'Abd al-Karīm is later forced to abandon his home. His sense of loss coalesces around the plants he has cultivated and the infrastructure he has built to nurture them. He wonders: "Were the water conduits for the tomatoes and eggplant caked up now? Had the basil and *qarn al-ghazal* and the lavender flower wilted? Had the damask rose bushes and the vines dried up?" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 189).[274] 'Abd al-Karīm is concerned for the flora that depend on human care to maintain the *tawāzun* that enables them to survive and flourish. He yearns for this agricultural wealth even before he recalls the money, gold, and jewelry he has buried underneath the very same garden.

After spending the night in the wilderness, 'Abd al-Karīm arrives safely back in Samakh, where he finds the villagers preparing for an attack from another nearby Jewish settlement. Once again, the danger of the Jewish settlers is conflated with that of the hyenas 'Abd al-Karīm previously encountered, though here the nonhuman wild animals serve as a manifestation of his anxieties rather than as a physical threat to his person. As 'Abd al-Karīm pictures his home being overrun by the settlers, "[h]e could see, in his imagination, the hyenas' fangs, and feel the dark forms approaching him" (Yakhlif, *Lake* 111).[275] Here, however, the threat is not to 'Abd al-Karīm's personal safety and property alone. Rather, the presence of the hyenas in 'Abd al-Karīm's home frames the attack as an invasion by the wilderness of a space of cultivation. Such an erasure would undo the process of homemaking and the putting down of roots achieved through landscaping.

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[274] هل يبست أسراب نباتات الباذنجان والبندورة؟ هل ذوت زهور الحبق والخزامى وقرن الغزال؟ وهل جفّت شجيرات الورد الجوري والدوالي؟ (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 247).

[275] أطلّت في مخيلته مخالب الضباع وأحس بكتل الظلام تقترب (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 149).

Early on in the text, just such an uprooting is foreshadowed through a description of the

disruption of Samakh's seasonal rhythms by the growing Jewish population and the

accompanying conflicts between it and the Palestinian population:

ومنذ بدأت القلاقل الأخيرة توقَّف الحديث عن الغلال والخير والأبقار التي ستلد عجولاً في الربيع، وحلَّ
مكانه الحديث عن اليهود الذين بدأوا يتدرَّبون وراء مستعمرة دجانيا، وصاروا يقطعون الطرق كلما خطر
لهم خاطر.

لم يعد الرجال في المضافة يتحدَّثون عن قصص الضباع والثعالب وبنات آوى، فلا حديث إلا حديث الأيام
القادمة التي تشيب لشدة هولها سود النواصي.

وعلى الرغم من الفضاء الفسيح، فإنَّ طيور الدوري تحطُّ على أسلاك أعمدة الهاتف، وقد أوجست خيفة
(Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 8).

> And, since the latest round of troubles, all talk of harvest and the calves to be born
> in spring had given way to talk of the Jews, who'd started drilling behind the
> settlement of Degania and blocked the road whenever they felt like it. The men no
> longer told tales of hyenas and foxes and jackals. All the talk revolved around the
> coming days, whose terrors would turn the blackest hair white. Even the sparrows
> sensed the fear and, shunning the wide open spaces, settled on the telephone lines
> (Yakhlif, *Lake* 2).

The "natural" environmental terrors that the people of Samakh feared in the past, such as hyenas,

foxes, and jackals, are displaced by the "unnatural" terrors brought by the Jewish settlers. At the

same time, the productive harmonious relationship of the Palestinians with the land, represented

by discussion of the "harvest" (الغلال والخير) and "the calves to be born in spring," is displaced by

conversation about the Jewish settlers "who'd started drilling behind the settlement of Degania."

Bringing food and calves into the world, an abundance that is shared with the community, is

contrasted with destructive and exploitive drilling, which benefits from the wealth of the land

without laboring to help create it. The sparrows are also afraid, again highlighting the perceived

reciprocity of their connection to the Palestinians and the Palestinian's rightful place on the land,

as well as their embeddedness in their environment. The "ecological native" here is a figure that

is tied to the land. However, there is no myth of complete nonintervention. The birds take refuge on the telephone lines, not on trees or in forests.

The displacement that comes with the establishment of the State of Israel separates the human inhabitants of Samakh from the land. The spaces they cultivated and the nonhuman animals, domesticated and wild alike, they lived alongside are left behind, to be co-opted into Jewish Israeli narratives of stewardship and entitlement. After leaving Palestine as a refugee, Najīb, a fisherman-turned-fighter, recalls that he came to Umm Qays, a village in Jordan that overlooks Lake Tiberias. Gazing at Samakh from the opposite shore, he began to talk to figures from his past,

> رجالاً ونساءً، يكلِّم الشجرة والخيول. حكى كلاماً فيه نعومة وسلاسة ويكاد يجرح القلب. حكى مع الحسّون، مع القبَّرة، مع الحجل البري. حكى مع الشومر، مع الكرسعنة، مع المرّار، مع النعنع البري ..
>
> تحدث إلى سطح البحيرة الذي يشبه بطن الغزالة، وحكى مع سمك المشط، وسمك الكرسين، ومع العظاظي والبلبوط والمرمور .. (Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 276-277).

> to men and women, and to trees and horses too, in words that were tender, simple….He talked with the goldfinch and the lark and the wild quail. He addressed the fennel and the vetch, the *marar* and the wild mint.

> He talked to the surface of the lake, that was like the underbelly of a doe, and the *musht* fish, the *karseen*, the *athathi*, the *balbout*, and the *marmour* fish (Yakhlif, *Lake* 214).

Together, these human beings, nonhuman animals, plants, and even the lake itself make up the lost Palestinian community. Through their enumeration, a record of their existence is created. Furthermore, the act of calling each of these creatures and plants by their names communicates an intimate, lived knowledge of the land, a knowledge that the Zionist project of *yedi'at ha'aretz* (ידיעת הארץ), translated as "knowledge of the land," seeks to replicate, as discussed below. However, at the same time, the process of anthropomorphization that occurs when Najīb addresses them as his (former) co-inhabitants of the (lost-to-him) space shifts the focus from

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their ecological and physical reality to the place they hold as symbols in literature, like this novel. The fracturing of the community and the forced separation of its human population from the land is emphasized by the final lines of the novel: "I realized then that everything had been lost, and that all paths led to exile and dispersion. Such a melancholy prospect. Such a lonely road" (Yakhlif, 214).[276] The road is made lonely through Najīb's separation from other Palestinians as well as through the severing of all of his connections to the nonhuman world of Samakh.

Referencing modern Caribbean literature, Huggan and Tiffin employ the term "ecological reclamation" to describe a text that is "less a history that seeks to compensate for irrecoverable loss and dispossession than a history re-won. As the term 'ecology' suggests, this is a history of place as much as it is a history of people" (Huggan and Tiffin, 111). *A Lake Beyond the Wind* rewrites the exiled Palestinian community into the history of the land of what is today Palestine and Israel. However, it also functions as an ecological reclamation that excavates the former ecosystem of Samakh and its environs, reinscribing its exiled human inhabitants as participants in, as well as stewards of, its past balanced functioning. The figure of the *fallāḥ/a*, the figure of the ecological native, in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* asserts his/her identity as such through positive and productive relationships with domesticated animals and agricultural land. In this way, he/she maintains *tawāzun*—a state of balance that is interrupted, even if only temporarily from the perspective of the broader ecosystem, through displacement.

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[276] أدركت عند ذلك أنه قد ضاع كل شيء، وأن كل الدروب أصبحت تُفضي إلى الغربة والشتات، فيا لكآبة المنظر، ووحشة الريق!
(Yakhlif, *Buḥayra* 277).

III. Ecoambiguous Natives

Post-1948, the landscapes of Palestine and Israel have been produced through the joint

Palestinian and Jewish Israeli shaping of the land. This takes the form of cultivation, as described

in the texts foregrounding the labor of the *fallāḥ/a* discussed above, but it also involves processes

of destruction and remaking designed to protect and exclude. As discussed in my analysis of *A

Lake Beyond the Wind*, nonintervention is not a necessary component of responsible stewardship

of the *amāna* as described in Palestinian literature concerned with the environment. Human

presence, and habitation in particular, are viewed as forces that inevitably write themselves on

the nonhuman landscape. However, in *Palestinian Walks*, Shehadeh differentiates between

Palestinian cultivation, which he views as a productive process of reshaping that is in harmony

with the land, and the complete Jewish Israeli remaking of the land, in which disruptive and

discordant processes of destruction precede any creation.

Fields observes that "landscapes are representations of the societies anchored to them and

the relations of power that govern them" (Fields, 64). Israeli control and occupation, and

Palestinian resistance, can be read in the landscapes of Palestine and Israel. The Israeli

confiscation of land and destruction of fruit trees; the construction of settlements, roads, walls,

and checkpoints; and the creation of nature reserves has altered "the economy, demography, and

culture of territorial space itself" (Fields, 63-64). Together, these acts represent an intentional

transformation of the landscape that, Fields argues, is a manifestation of "the practice of

enclosure," bearing many similarities to the enclosure landscaping of mid-18th-century England

(Fields, 64). Fields defines enclosure as "the application of force to land by groups with

territorial ambitions who mobilize the institutional power of law and the material power of

architecture to reorder patterns of land ownership, use, and circulation and reorganize

socioeconomic life and demography in a place" (Fields, 66). The combination of law and landscape architecture is employed "by dominant groups to consolidate systems of control over subalterns" (Fields, 66). The resulting landscapes in Palestine and Israel limit Palestinian movement and access to land, isolating Palestinian villages, towns, and cities until they are separated from each other and often from the farmland and fields owned and traditionally cultivated by their inhabitants. Fields argues that Israeli reshaping of the land focuses on destabilizing "three anchors of Palestinian identity affixing Palestinians to landscape": the farm, the home, and the village, town, or city (Fields, 72). The produced landscape thus undermines economic and social ways of belonging to place and community, challenging the foundations of Palestinian connections to their environments.

As part of Jewish Israeli landscaping in the West Bank, the construction of settlements and supporting security apparatuses like checkpoints transforms space. Roads are built for efficiency, requiring the confiscation of Palestinian land and the obliteration or modification of natural topographical features so they can run straight. Shehadeh writes that the hills are "massacred" as a result (Shehadeh, *Walks* 108). He describes Jewish settlements more broadly as a "hastily constructed" imposition on the land (Shehadeh, *Walks* 161). Inadequate infrastructure creates environmental crises. As an example, Shehadeh cites a Jewish settlement in the West Bank that does not have a sewage treatment facility, so human waste is "just disposed of down the valley into land owned by Palestinian farmers" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 166).

Shehadeh thus draws a clear distinction between Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements, depicting the former as more "natural" than the latter. He writes: "Palestinians built their villages to embrace the hills not to ride them.…The Israelis, with an eye on security and military advantage, took the hilltops. This is why the settlements stand out. One can tell, by

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looking at the hills, a Jewish settlement from a Palestinian village" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 161). The settlements are a part of the "language of conquest" that is "writ large over the hills, over the wilderness, in every corner of the land" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 112). They help transform the West Bank into a panopticon. In contrast, Palestinian villages are portrayed by Shehadeh as an extension of the land, as much a part of the natural environment as are the wild plants and animals. They "have developed slowly over a long period of time and blend organically into the land," Shehadeh asserts (Shehadeh, *Walks* 161). A long history of habitation and a relationship of *tawāzun* with the environment are given as evidence of dwelling and are utilized to support claims of entitlement to the land, while challenging competing Jewish Israeli claims.

This conception of the integration of Palestinian presence in the environment, and the perceived naturalness of the transformation of the earth when it is undertaken by Palestinians in particular, draws on many of the same themes as the Zionist notion of "making the desert bloom." Both discourses connect agricultural production to entitlement, drawing a link between cultivation and stewardship, though, in general, the Palestinian narrative rests on a notion of multi-generational rootedness while the Jewish Israeli narrative is drawn from the Zionist idea of rightful reclamation and rehabilitation of the land. Each formulates itself against and seeks to undermine the other. In Chapter 1, I discussed the ideological and practical shortcomings and blind spots of Jewish Israeli environmentalist discourse that relies on this juxtaposition. Here, I want to talk briefly about the complex, ecoambiguous realities that underly Palestinian claims to good-stewardship-through-cultivation in literature. Shehadeh's characterization of the Palestinian villages and their farmlands as "natural" spaces in synch with their environments occludes the processes of landscaping through which they came into being and continue to change. However,

they are brought to light throughout texts like *Palestinian Walks* and *The Inheritance*, often in unexpected ways.

In *Palestinian Walks*, for example, when Raja and some friends are walking in the countryside one day, he observes: "[T]he Palestinian spring has brought its carpets of anemones and shy stands of cyclamen to the hills….We see the increasing sprawl of Israeli settlements that threaten the fragile and violated landscape, but still we sit under an olive tree in a quiet valley and look at the play of light and shadow on the terraced hills" (Shehadeh, *Walks* ix). Raja highlights the ecological destruction caused by the Jewish settlements which, perceived as out of place and dangerous, disrupt the landscape. They are juxtaposed with pristine nature, represented by the wild flowers. However, they are also held up against the "terraced hills" that represent a historical Palestinian reshaping of the land and are viewed from "under an olive tree" that is likewise a sign of Palestinian presence.

Raja further complicates the self-other divide he sets up between ecological Palestinian and ecologically irresponsible Jewish settler by acknowledging the ecoambiguity that becomes apparent through careful examination of the relationships of both groups to the environment. For example, Palestinian picnickers leave behind their garbage and food scraps in a nature reserve established by the State of Israel (Shehadeh, *Walks* 196). Raja also describes the expansion of Palestinian urban centers like Ramallah, both through natural growth and exceptional periods of influx caused by political events, such as the Second Intifada. The unavoidable result is urban sprawl that encroaches on the wilderness.

Palestinian ecoambiguity is further introduced through the co-option of Palestinian labor into the service of Jewish settlements. The Palestinian inhabitants of the villages that previously depended on agriculture for survival are separated from the land. It is either expropriated or

made inaccessible through changes to the landscape or intimidation tactics. So, the former

fallāḥīn become day laborers and "construction workers building the settlements which stood on

land that once had belonged to them" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 168). The result is "a new relationship to

the land" through which their labor connects the settlers more deeply to the space, while

distancing the Palestinian workers from it (Shehadeh, *Walks* 169). This destabilizes efforts to

formulate relationships to the land based on identities of ecological nativeness.

Elsewhere, the edge of a Palestinian village is defined by "piles of rubbish" which spread

into the farmlands and wilderness beyond its borders (Shehadeh, *Walks* 162). This is due in part

to the lack of a waste management system. However, it is also the result of the increase in non-

biodegradable garbage, which has made traditional disposal practices unsustainable. Here, Raja

draws a distinction between "walkers" like himself who view the village and the valley beyond it

"as one integral whole" and the inhabitants of the village for whom "only their house and the

small area surrounding it [are] considered their space, to be kept clean" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 162).

Raja suggests that his positioning of himself as an ecological native is not an identity embraced

by all Palestinians. It is a conscious choice, seemingly informed as much by his education and

background as by his being Palestinian.

Saḥar Khalīfa's *al-Mīrāth* (1997; *The Inheritance*, 2005) goes even farther, reducing the

Palestinian ecological native to no more than an imaginary figure conjured up by a character

with only a remote connection to the physical space of Palestine. From the distance of the United

States, Zaynab envisions the small village where her father was born, Wādī al-Rīḥān, as a

pastoral paradise, contrasting sharply with the pollution and crowding of American cities like

New York City and Washington, D.C. She narrates: "A huge gap separates Wadi al-Rihan from

New York and Washington. I had always visualized Wadi al-Rihan as being the opposite of New

York, a small clean town inhabited by simple people, good-hearted and nature-loving, not like New York" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 3).[277] Here, the ecological other of the environmentally conscious Palestinian village that Zaynab creates in her mind is an American metropolis. The warmth and connection to place that Zaynab is lacking in America are articulated through a distant vision of simplicity, purity, and ecological harmony. Zaynab's idealized image of a Palestine where human beings exist in harmony with their environment is bolstered by the memories of an elderly émigré from Palestine living in New York. He tells her: "In the old country, whenever a horse fell ill we used to stay with it, we did the same for a donkey. We would talk to it, sing for it, as if it were a family member or a neighbor. Here, however, there is no family and no neighbor" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 23).[278] As in *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, relationships with nonhuman, domesticated animals are framed as evidence of a human community with strong ties to each other and to place, in contrast to the superficial connections formed when a deep connection to the environment is absent.

What Zaynab actually finds in Wādī al-Rīḥān is quite different than what she pictured. Even before she comes to see the tears in the human fabric of her father's family and the Palestinian community more broadly, she is shocked by her first encounter with the village. While the garden surrounding the house belonging to her uncle, Abū Jābir, is clean and abloom, this verdant abundance only serves to highlight the ways in which the village falls short of her expectations. Zaynab notes: "[A]ll along the road I had seen nothing but garbage, walls

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[277] فرق كبير، مسافة طويلة، بين نيويورك وواشنطن ووادي الريحان. وادي الريحان كانت أبداً في ذاكرتي عكس نيويورك. بلدة صغيرة، بلدة نقية، أهلها بسطاء يحبون الخير والطبيعة، بعكس نيويورك (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 11).

All translations are from Saḥar Khalīfa, *The Inheritance*, Trans. Aida Bamia (New York: American U in Cairo P, 2006).

[278] كنا في البلاد متى يقع حصان نقعد جنبه، حتى الحمار نقعد جنبه، نسولف معه ونغني له كأنه من العيلة أو الجيران. وهون لا عيلة ولا جيران (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 35).

splattered with white and black paint, paint covering writing on the walls, streets filled with scrap metal, sewage, and more garbage" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 31).[279] Despite this reality, the generation of Zaynab's father, represented by her uncle, continues to cling to the idea that the fruitful cultivation of the land is a manifestation and sign of Palestinian connection to place, seeing no inconsistency between a sense of responsibility for the family's farmland and a disregard for communal village space.

Zaynab quickly grows disenchanted with Wādī al-Rīḥān as it becomes clear that the ecological harmony between human beings and the environment that she imagined from the distance of the United States is a myth. By the end of the novel, when Zaynab's cousin, Māzin, asks her how the United States could possibly be more beautiful than Wādī al-Rīḥān, she romanticizes it in her mind in the same way she did the West Bank before her arrival. She thinks to herself: "Of course America is more beautiful. America is a continent, it has all the colors of nature" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 204).[280] Descriptions of the four seasons then flow through her mind, her *ḥanīn* focused on the ever-changing but enduring beauty of nature rather than the overcrowding and pollution of the metropolises through which she previously defined the United States. Interestingly, one of the images that comes to her mind is that of "cherry blossoms in Washington," expressing a yearning for one of the very same cities that she employed as a negative foil for Wādī al-Rīḥān before encountering it in reality (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 204).[281]

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[279] فطول الطريق ما رأيت إلا الزبالة والحيطان الملطخة بالأسود والأبيض وألوان الطراشة المبعثرة فوق الكتابة على الجدران، والشوارع المملوءة بالخردة ومياه المجاري والوسخ الكثير (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 45).

[280] طبعا أحلى؟ أميركا قارّة. أميركا فيها كل الألوان (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 257).

[281] زهر التفاح في واشنطن (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 257).

When Māzin does not get a response from Zaynab, he continues to praise Wādī al-Rīḥān, saying: "I would defend the smallest of its weeds with my life" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 204).[282] This almost seems to be a mockery of the figure of the Palestinian ecological native as embodied by the *fallāḥ/a*. Māzin espouses an ethics of stewardship familiar from the texts discussed above, but rather than holding up the products of abundant agricultural production to justify this claim, he focuses on the weeds or blades of grass that appear as the result of neglect and lack of human nurture and care. He thus raises a question about the utility of a discourse of belonging based on cultivation to a generation that has no interest or desire in working the land, as evidenced by his and his siblings' refusals to respond to Abū Jābir's pleas to tend their family plot.

Kamāl, another of Abū Jābir's sons, falls into the same trap that Zaynab does before her arrival as he reimagines Wādī al-Rīḥān and the surrounding environment as a place of idyllic pastoralism from the distance of Germany, where he lives and works. He searches his memories of the West Bank as he wonders to himself: "How could he have forgotten, while working in his lab and on his daily jog, that he still longed for those horizons, for the shade of the evergreen cypress and the narcissus?" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 153-154).[283] In an effort to explain his enduring connection to the land, and the uncritical nostalgia that it inspires, he figures himself as a *fallāḥ*, with an almost genetic and certainly biological rootedness in place: "despite his fairness, he was black under his skin. His heart beat to the rhythm of the flute and the taste of dill eaten under the trellis and the fig tree" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 154).[284] Kamāl goes so far as to recall the Orientalist musings of a colleague who, during a visit to Syria and Egypt, was struck by their

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[282] أنا بفدي بعمري وحياتي عشبة صغيرة من أعشابها (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 257).

[283] كيف نسي في مختبره، في ركضه اليومي حول النادي أنه ما زال يحن لتلك الآفاق وظلال السرو والنرجس (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 193).

[284] وهو، على شقرته، أسمر، تحت جلده، أسمر كالليل، لأنَّ قلبه مازال يدق للشبابة وأكل الشومر تحت التينة (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 193).

peoples' simplicity and closeness to the earth, framing these qualities as a kind of superiority: "People there are better than us….We're surrounded only by the noise of machines. We have lost our capacity to dream and we smell only of deodorant and cologne" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 154).[285]

After returning to the West Bank, Kamāl is eager to reestablish his roots and proposes that his father sell the farm and use the money to build a factory. However, Abū Jābir refuses. He will not even entertain the idea of his children selling it after his death. Although Abū Jābir acknowledges that the family farm is "a source of worry,"[286] the land has been in the family for generations and he believes that "[h]e who sells his land sells his soul"[287] (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 95, 97). For him, Palestinian land ownership continues to signal a belonging to place that is formulated against a state that works to undo that belonging.

It is Kamāl's friend, Hayk, an outsider who also works in Germany, who conceives of and communicates practical means of taking responsibility for the environment. He tells Abū Jābir about "some organic pesticides, free of poison and gentle to the environment" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 207).[288] He then explains how "to raise cattle and livestock without grains and how to plant zucchini and strawberries without soil" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 207).[289] Thus, in the same conversation, Hayk both provides an option for ecologically responsible management of the family's land and expresses the belief that it has little practical value. The future will bring with

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[285] الناس هناك أحسن منا، لهم أصوات، لهم أحلام وروائح، نحن هنا فقدنا الأصوات، مجرد ضجّة، مجرد آلات، وفقدنا القدرة على الأحلام وما عدنا نشمّ إلا الديودورانت والكولونيا (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 193).

[286] بدل ما تعينني تخبلني (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 120).

[287] اللي ببيع أرضه ببيع روحه (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 123).

[288] مبيدات طبيعية تخلو من السم ولا تسهم في تلويث الجوّ (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 261).

[289] تربية مواش ودواجن من غير علف، وزراعة كوسى وفراولة من غير تراب (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 261).

it cattle and strawberries that do not need the land to flourish. Kamāl's friend thus articulates two conflicting creeds. The first seeks to keep the land in the family, preserving the generational connection to it while caring for it in an environmentally responsible manner. The second encourages an independence from place that, while environmentally responsible, ignores the psychic need for belonging that is articulated in part here through land ownership.

Ultimately, Kamāl designs and embarks upon a recycling and sewage treatment plant project. Within the community, the project is misunderstood from the start and viewed as a foreign import, unsuited to the environment of the West Bank. Residents of Wādī al-Rīḥān and the surrounding villages say to each other: "A sewage factory and a shit factory, this is what Abu Jaber's son brought from Germany. It means that your shit comes back to you in a can like the beer can and you would drink it and get drunk from its smell" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 99). [290] Kamāl also faces opposition from the municipality. Half of the committee members make the argument that garbage and sewage are "public property" (ملكٌ عام) and granting a private individual the permit to develop them could be followed by applications to similarly privatize the management of other forms of public property, most importantly water resources (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 99). [291] Kamāl eventually obtains the permit but the project cannot succeed precisely because of the water issue: he does not take into account the limited reserves of clean water in the West Bank when he draws up his plans. The project fails spectacularly, creating a terrible stench, attracting pests, and spreading illness and disease.

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[290] مصنع نضح ومصنع شخاخ، ابن أبو جابر جاب من ألمانيا، زي ما بقولك، مصنع شخاخ، شختك يا سيدي بترجع لك بعلبة بيرة، وبتشربها وتسكر وتخمر من ريحتها (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 125).

[291] Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 126.

Zaynab goes to see the sewage treatment plant for herself. She remembers similar sites she has visited in the United States and Europe which "were truly wonderful, with public parks, fertilizer factories, and water purification centers" (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 212). [292] The project conceived by Kamāl is "a real catastrophe" (ما هذا المشهد والكارثة!) in comparison and she looks at it "saddened and grieving" (ننظر من بعد ونتحسَّر) (Khalīfa, *Inheritance* 212). [293] Kamāl leaves behind the environmental crises created by the sewage treatment plant to return to Germany. It is as he is contemplating the project's failure that he recalls the nostalgia for the West Bank he felt before his arrival. He remembers the conversation with his colleague who romanticized the lives of the people of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine because they allegedly live a life close to nature, removed from the "noise of machines." In the end, Kamāl incredulously rejects the notion that these people are superior to him simply because he lives in Germany, challenging the idea of the Palestinian ecological native by recognizing the truth of his/her ecoambiguity.

Ultimately, environmentalism and earth care in *The Inheritance* are widely viewed as foreign imports or as elitist past times, like speaking a second language or playing the piano. They are luxuries of the rich and educated. Rob Nixon indicates that Edward Said echoed this sentiment in a conversation between them in the nineties. He explains that Said "was very dismissive of environmentalism, which he saw as a kind of a boutique politics for people who lacked a proper cause. And he didn't see any way in which it would be more than a style of politics for the affluent and the predominantly white" (Nixon, Keynote).

Although Raja acknowledges in *Palestinian Walks* that his embrace of the identity of ecological native is a choice, he resists the notion that it is a luxury. Good stewardship of the

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[292] وكانت فعلاً شيئاً رائعاً، حدائق عامّة، مصانع أسمدة وتكرير مياه (Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 268).

[293] Khalīfa, *al-Mīrāth* 268.

amāna is certainly vital for the preservation of the earth, inside and outside of Palestine. However, approaching an environmentalist perspective as integral to Palestinian identity also opens up new possibilities for laying claim to the land, which is vital in a space where the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* and the pastoralism he/she represents are largely relics of the past. Raja himself is not a *fallāḥ*. His father did not own farmland around Ramallah when he settled there after being expelled from Jaffa in 1948, and neither does Raja. Raja's closest personal link to the Palestinian pastoralism he describes is his grandfather's cousin, Abu Ameen, who embodies the figure of the *fallāḥ* and was discussed in Chapter 1. For Raja, Palestinian cultivation of the land around Ramallah is a part of history, rather than a present reality. He writes: "There was a time, I'm told, when the hills around Ramallah were one large cultivated garden with a house by every spring. Olive trees dotted their slopes and grapevines draped the terrace walls" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 3). However, by the late 1970s, "they [the hills] had become an extensive nature reserve" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 3). The olive trees and terraces that remain become *aṭlāl*, abandoned ruins kin to those lamented and extolled in centuries of Arabic poetry and prose, providing evidence of a history of cultivation for those who know how to read the signs. Raja does, and by making a record of this history, he works to combat its erasure.

IV. Ṣumūd *in the Wilderness and in the Courtroom*

The return of the land to its wild state also introduces the possibility of new relationships to it. Rather than cultivation, one way in which Raja practices *ṣumūd* and asserts his status as ecological native is by hiking in the wilderness. *Palestinian Walks* is organized around Raja's movements through the unsettled areas of Palestine, while the population centers and cultivated farmland hover at the margins. Raja describes himself as the last in a long line of hill walkers. He refers to each excursion as a *sarḥa*, a practice that requires that the walker "roam freely, at will,

without restraint." Raja explains that "[t]he verb form of the word means to let the cattle out to pasture early in the morning, leaving them to wander and graze at liberty" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 2). Although Raja does not plant crops or tend to fruit trees, his walking then represents an alternate manifestation of Palestinian pastoralism, emphasized by the connection of the word *sarḥa* to pasturing cattle. Furthermore, his description of the *sarḥa* as a traditional activity that he has inherited from his ancestors strengthens its connection to the landscape, as well as his own ties to space when he practices it.

The *sarḥa*, as characterized by Raja, is a very different act than the Israeli practice of *yedi'at ha'aretz* (ידיעת הארץ), translated as "knowledge of the land," which is a vital component of Israeli national culture. In the case of *yedi'at ha'aretz*, institutionalized and informal hikes and outings strengthen connections to the homeland by transferring knowledge about the nation's geography, flora, and fauna. The propagation of this knowledge is an integral part of the Zionist project. The free wandering of the *sarḥa* as Raja frames it stands in contrast to the intentionality of the project of *yedi'at ha'aretz*. Moreover, the *sarḥa* is an act of landscaping undertaken in a space where one is already at home, rather than a process of homemaking like *yedi'at ha'aretz* through which an unknown environment is made familiar.

However, the acts of hillwalking themselves as described by Raja, separate from their philosophical framing, seem to bear more than a passing similarity to the Israeli project. They serve in many ways as a response or corrective to the colonizing impulses of *yedi'at ha'aretz*. Raja is not just wandering the hillside, as his ancestors did as part of the *sarḥa*. Instead, he is mapping out a space with intentionality, fully aware of the political implications of laying claim to it in this way. Ultimately, Raja resists the Israeli enclosure and remapping of the West Bank through the *sarḥa*, asserting his entitlement to share in the landscape and challenging borders

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through their transgression. By preserving these journeys in writing, Raja creates a record of Israeli environmental irresponsibility that resists greenwashing of Israeli interventions in the West Bank. He describes, for example, the sink holes created by the recession of the Dead Sea, caused by the diversion of the River Jordan. In contrast, Raja positions himself as an ecological native, contesting negative stereotypes of Palestinian attitudes towards the environment through his assertion of a personal ethics of stewardship. This is expressed both through his professional work in the Israeli courts as a lawyer specializing in land law, explored at greater length below, as well as through this recreational hillwalking in the West Bank countryside.

In *L'Invention du quotidien* (1980; *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984),[294] Michel de Certeau writes that consumption (such as the act of reading or the act of walking) is in fact just another form of production, which "…does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order" (de Certeau, *Practice* xii-xiii). De Certeau locates the practice of "walking in the city" within a linguistic framework, defining it as an act of enunciation, a "*speech act*" (de Certeau, *Practice* 91). It possesses "a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian…; it is a spatial acting-out of the place…; and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements" (de Certeau, *Practice* 97-98). Each "pedestrian speech act" ("enonciation piétonnière") is discrete because, when walking, individuals may choose to utilize some routes, avoid others, and even create their own paths (for example, through shortcuts), though they always must do so within a certain context and framework (de Certeau, *Practice* 97). Ultimately, it is not the mappable route taken by the individual that matters, but the act of walking that

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[294] All translations from Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 1*, Trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984).

particular route itself that is a new production—that of space. According to de Certeau, place "implies an indication of stability," it has "its own 'proper' and distinct location" whereas "*space is a practiced place*" (de Certeau, *Practice* 117).

Although Raja walks the West Bank countryside, rather than the streets of a city, the landscape takes on many of the same qualities of de Certeau's urban text in that it exists both as an actual territory and as a "concept," an authoritative structuring by the Israeli state, urban planners, and other institutions (de Certeau, *Practice* 94). The boundaries and borders that fragment and enclose it reimagine the space. However, Raja is able to produce an alternate landscape, creating "space" and recreating "place" in a way that challenges the Jewish Israeli production of the West Bank and its "concept," even while moving within its established structures. As a part of this process, Raja calls the sites he passes by their Arabic names, rather than their Hebrew names, as Najīb does with the plants and animals as he bids them farewell at the close of *A Lake Beyond the Wind*. Through his movement, he inhabits restricted areas and structures lose their authority. Raja appropriates the space that he walks, making it not just Palestinian but his own.

This production is temporary and unique. Raja's resistance will only last for as long as he remains in motion, and the alternate space that he has created is gone almost as soon as it is brought into existence, impossible to replicate. However, by recording his walks in writing, Raja attempts to preserve the space that he animates and the sites he resurrects, sharing them with his readers. He himself describes the act of writing as his "eighth journey" and it is a *sarḥa* that it is only complete upon the consumption of the text (Shehadeh, *Walks* xix). By suspending the enunciative act in writing, Raja amplifies and multiplies it, opening it up to other interpretations and meanings at the hands of his readers.

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Even though Raja spends a significant portion of his narrative describing nature reserves and sparsely populated countryside, the ruins that dot the landscapes of his text serve as a constant assertion of the human *in* nature. And *Palestinian Walks* is centrally concerned with contemporary spaces of Palestinian dwelling as well. Raja positions himself as an ecological native through the hikes he takes through the countryside, but he also asserts himself as a responsible ecological steward through his work as a lawyer specializing in land law. Before Raja becomes intimately acquainted with the West Bank landscape as a hillwalker, he encounters "the language of the hills" in the courtroom with his father, who is also a land law expert (Shehadeh, *Walks* 4).

In his discussion of the West Bank landscape as an enclosure system, Fields identifies the law as a necessary complement to architecture in the reshaping of the land. Changes to the laws "governing how less powerful subalterns exist on, circulate across, own, and use land" impact demographics, the built environment, and socioeconomic activities, including cultivation (Fields, 67). The State of Israel relies on the old Ottoman Land Law of 1858 as an instrument for the redistribution of land in the West Bank. Within this framework, *mīrī* (uncultivated) and *mawāt* (unused or vacant; literally "dead") land reverts to state ownership.[295] In *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine*, Irus Braverman, writing in 2009, notes that "Israel has declared more than 40 percent of the occupied West Bank to be state land" through the use of "this seemingly marginal legal tool" (Braverman, 18).[296] The law was originally designed to encourage cultivation and thus increase tax revenues for the Ottoman Empire. However, Fields

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[295] See Raja Shehadeh, "The Land Law of Palestine: An Analysis of the Definition of State Lands" in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11.2 (1982): 82-99.

[296] Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

argues that, under Israeli administration, it has been utilized to "evade overt confiscation of private Palestinian land for development of settlements in favor of a legal process for land seizure" (Fields, 74).

As a part of this policy, Palestinian land in the West Bank that does not have a title "has no ownership and thus becomes classifiable as unused or uncultivated, perched at all times on the precipice of legal confiscation" (Fields, 74). Although the Ottoman Land Law encouraged the registration of land, a process that continued under first British and then Jordanian control of the West Bank, many Palestinians never obtained titles to their land, even if they lived on or cultivated it for generations. In *Palestinian Walks*, Shehadeh explains that the classification of "non-registered land in the West Bank" as "public land" meant that "the only non-registered land that truly belonged to Palestinians was that over which they could prove use either by living on it or continuously cultivating it for a period of not less than ten years" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 57). Here, it becomes clear that cultivation, more than just an expression of dwelling and groundedness, is also utilized to establish legal ownership of the land. However, even when Palestinian landowners possess proof of ownership, Shehadeh notes that descriptions of boundaries "in terms of the physical features, in the language of hill farmers" introduce an "ambiguity" that is exploited in the Israeli courts to question their claims (Shehadeh, *Walks* 4).

Within this context, the reasons for the emphasis on productive cultivation rather than the preservation of wild spaces in Palestinian texts that seek to communicate a close and positive relationship with the environment become clear. Dani Kramer, an Israeli legal advisor encountered by Shehadeh in the courtroom, demonstrates the threat represented by wilderness through his frequent use of the word *naṭsh* (النطش) (Poterium spinosum), a kind of thistle, in his descriptions of land he is attempting to seize on behalf of the government for use by Jewish

settlements. *Naṭsh* is a species indigenous to Palestine, as much a part of the landscape as heather is in the Scottish Highlands, Shehadeh argues. When dry, it is traditionally used by farmers as a broom or "as a substitute for a spring mattress by people who are sleeping out in the open" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 53). *Naṭsh* may even have been used to make Jesus's crown of thorns. However, in the courtroom, *naṭsh* becomes a weapon. Shehadeh writes: "Never has a weed been more exploited and politicized" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 53). By claiming that the land in question "is full of *natsh*," Dani Kramer seeks to prove that it "was uncultivated and therefore public land that the Israeli settlers could use as their own" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 53). While the militarization of flora in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* is employed to assert Palestinian embeddedness in the environment, it is weaponized here to undermine such narratives.

Israel does use the legal tools it has carefully assembled to transform some of the Palestinian land it confiscates into nature reserves. However, even in such cases, it reclassifies these spaces in such a way as to make them off-limits to Palestinians. So, while the creation of nature reserves is "beneficial for the land" and ensures that damaging "construction and road building [will] not be allowed and that the natural flora and fauna [will] be protected," they are accessible only to Israelis. They remain just "out of reach" for West Bank Palestinians (Shehadeh, *Walks* 163-4).

Raja, too, finds himself barred from the physical landscape of Palestine during his final *sarḥa* in the wilderness. In the epilogue to *Palestinian Walks*, Raja describes a walk he takes with a visiting English writer. The barriers between him and the space he once claimed as his own are evident from the beginning of their *sarḥa*. The entry point into the valley that Raja utilized in many of his earlier walks is no longer usable "because the area is now chock-full of high-rise apartments" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 204-205). As they begin their hike from another

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location, he is nervous about being spotted by Israeli army vehicles, especially since the area is legally off-limits to Palestinians without a permit. They hike down into the valley to a spring near an abandoned *qasr*, evidence of past Palestinian presence, as discussed in Chapter 1. The old path is obstructed by debris from the construction of a settlement road above in the 1990s, further highlighting the differences between this space and the space frequented by Raja in the 1980s.

Then, two masked Palestinian men appear. They carry clubs and are skeptical when Raja explains that he and his companion are there for no reason other than to walk. The two young men threaten the English writer. They see themselves as responsible for guarding the valley, but they are not guardians of its environment and ecosystems, concerned solely as they are with the movement of human beings. Shehadeh compares them to the settler road that reshaped the landscape of the hills, noting that "it was no longer the only despoiler" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 208). As Raja and the English writer leave, he makes an effort to transfer stewardship to the two young men by reminding them of their responsibility to uphold the covenant of the *amāna*. He says: "I must let you know that it is important for Palestinians to walk in these hills and learn about them and experience their beauty" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 213). The masked men respond dismissively, rejecting the mantle of ecological responsibility.

Raja feels alienated from the landscape, due to both its transformation and the physical danger and fear he experiences. The sense of dwelling and at-homeness that formed the foundation of his entitlement to this wilderness have been unsettled. He thinks to himself: "the familiar valley was no longer mine" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 208). Like *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, *Palestinian Walks* ends for its human characters with the wrench of separation from the physical, nonhuman environment of Palestine. Its final line mirrors the act of leave-taking performed by

Najīb in *A Lake Beyond the Wind*. Raja narrates: "I bid this valley farewell. I would not be coming back here for a long time" (Shehadeh, *Walks* 215). Although Raja will continue to fulfill his role as ecological native in the courtroom, acting as responsible steward through his legal defense of land owned and cultivated by other Palestinians, he experiences a disconnection from the land itself. The spaces he seeks to protect exist, for him, in deeds, titles, and the memories of other Palestinians, rather than beneath his feet.

V. Palestinian Cosmic Pastoralism

In *The Zephyrs of Najd*, Jaroslav Stetkevych makes the argument that the pastoral in Arabic poetry from the pre-Islamic through the Abbasid periods "takes as its theater not the earth but the sky," rendering the figure of the Bedouin poet "the pastor of the stars" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 146). J. Stetkevych highlights the recurring use of the Arabic verb *ra'ā*, which means to "to tend" or "to pasture," in this context across the centuries to develop his argument. For example, al-Khansā' composed these lines in the seventh century: "I tend the stars, although not tasked to tend them (أرعى النجوم وما كلفت رعيتها) (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 149, 222). And Ibn Shuhayd wrote in the 11th century: "Sleepless I spent the night, pasturing the stars in flocks large and small" (سهرت بها أرعى النجوم وأنجما) (J. Stetkevych, Zephyrs 154, 224). Beyond simple stargazing, this is a self-framing in which the poet refers metaphorically to the sky as a pasture, transforming the stars into herds and herself or himself into their shepherd.

J. Stetkevych asserts that "the motif of pasturing the stars…ought to be associated in its mood-effect, as well as structurally, with the motif of the ruinous abodes (*aṭlāl*)" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 149). As discussed at length in Chapter 1, the *aṭlāl*, or ruins, function in the classical Arabic *qaṣīda* as well as in later texts that draw on or reference this motif as a connection to another time, providing a site for the co-presence of past and present. They create a space of

ḥanīn, or yearning, that enables the envisioning of a future that challenges the present reality. In the "cosmic pastoral" described by Stetkevych, the *aṭlāl* of the Arabian Peninsula "remain as symbolic references tied to the ground" while its "meadows and grazing herds are lifted into the dark nightly firmament" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 164, 161). The poet's "yearning for things lost retains him below, while his sense of loneliness carries him upward" (J. Stetkevych, *Zephyrs* 161). The *aṭlāl* are nothing more than the traces of past habitation, overtaken by nature. The imaginational work of forging a connection to place, of making them a space of human dwelling once again, even if only in memory, is described as the pastoral labor of tending the stars.

Just as the Bedouin poets tended to flocks they did not have in the classical Arabic poems referenced by J. Stetkevych, the Palestinian authors of texts like *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and *Palestinian Walks* cultivate or map out land that they no longer possess, if they ever did, and are unable to access at the time of writing. The "cosmic" in J. Stetkevych's cosmic pastoralism here points to that which is both inconceivably vast and exists in a space not bound to the earth, rather than serving as a reference to astronomy. The immeasurable loss of Palestine, the beloved, evokes the concurrent yearning and loneliness experienced by the Bedouin poets. By the end of each text, the ecological natives in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and *Palestinian Walks* care for and walk the land in memory and in the courtroom, rather than in reality. They are portrayed as fulfilling the covenant of the *amāna* by responsibly discharging their duty of stewardship, thus asserting their enduring entitlement to the land even if they are absent from it.

The link between the cosmic pastoralism of the classical Arabic *qaṣīda* and that of post-1948 Palestinian literature is further emphasized in Darwīsh's poetry. For example, he writes in "Tadābīr shiʿrīyya"[297] (1995; "Poetic Regulations," 2003):

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[297] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Tadābīr shiʿrīyya" in *Li-mādhā tarakta al-ḥiṣān waḥīdan* (London: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 1996), 99-102.

لم يكُنْ للكواكب دَوْرٌ،
سوى أنها
عَلَّمَتْني القراءةَ:
لي لُغَةٌ في السماءُ
وعلى الأرضِ لي لغةٌ
من أنا؟ من أنا؟

لا أُريدُ الجوابَ هنا
ربما وَقَعَتْ نجمةٌ فوق صورتها
ربما ارتفعتْ غابةُ الكستنا
بِيَ نَحْوَ المَجَرَّةِ، ليلاً،
وقالتْ: ستبقى هنا!

القصيدةُ فوق، وفي وُسْعِها
أن تُعَلِّمني ما تشاءُ
كأنْ أفتحَ النافذةُ
وأُدير تدابيري المنزلِيَّةَ
بين الأساطير. في وسعها
أنْ تُزَوّجني نفسها ... زمنا

وأَبي تحت، يحملُ زيتونةً
عمرُها ألفُ عامٍ،
فلا هِيَ شرقِيَّةٌ
ولا هِيَ غربِيَّةٌ.
ربما يستريح من الفاتحين،
ويحنو علَيَّ قليلاً،
ويجمَعُ لِيْ سوسنا! (Darwīsh, "Tadābīr" 99-101).

The stars had only one task: they taught me how to read.
They taught me I had a language in heaven
And another language on earth.
Who am I? Who am I?
I don't want to answer yet.
May a star fall into itself,
And may a forest of chestnut trees rise in the night
toward the Milky Way with me, and may it say:
Remain here!

The poem is "above" and can teach me whatever it wishes.
It can teach me to open a window
and to manage my household in between legends.
It can wed me to itself for a while.

My father is "below," carrying a thousand-year olive tree
that is neither from the East nor the West.
Let him rest from the conquerors for a while,

and be tender with me, and gather iris and lily for me (Darwīsh, "Regulations" 85).[298]

In this poem, Darwīsh draws a distinction between two "languages." The first, "the poem" (القصيدة), is "above" (فوق), like the stars tended by the Bedouin poets—it is the language of "heaven" (السماء). The second, the cultivation of the land by the *fallāḥ*, the speaker's father, is "below" (تحت)—it is the language of "earth" (الأرض), although the word *al-arḍ* can also be translated as "the land." The thousand-year old olive tree he carries embodies a history of dwelling and cultivation and represents a claim of entitlement to the land. It is tied to a specific space. However, the olive tree, along with the iris and the lily, are transformed by the absence of both the speaker and his father into *aṭlāl*, manifestations of ecological *ḥanīn*. Their unmooring is further indicated through the description of the olive tree as being "neither from the East nor the West" (لا هِيَ شرقيَّةٌ ولا هِيَ غربيَّة). This line directly references the Qur'an, where the olive tree "neither of the East nor of the West" (لا شرقية ولا غربية) represents the universality of the Light of Allah (Qur'an, *al-Nūr* [The Light] 24:35). However, in his commentary, ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī makes note of a second possible interpretation of these words, writing: "An olive tree with an eastern aspect gets only the rays of the morning sun; one with a western aspect, only the rays of the western sun….But a tree in the open plain or on a hill will get perpetual sunshine by day: it will be more mature, and the fruit and oil will be of superior quality" (ʿAlī, n. 3001 877). The plentiful and high-quality harvest from such a tree is evidence of the kind of productive relationship between *fallāḥ/a* and land that, as I have shown, helps define the figure of the ecological native in these texts. The tree represents a history of responsible stewardship stretching back centuries, though its current caretaker now lacks the land in which to nurture it

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[298] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Poetic Regulations" in *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, Trans. and eds. Munir Akash and Carolyn Forché with Sinan Antoon and Amira El-Zein (Berkeley: U of California P, 2003), 85-86.

and thus preserve the relationship. Separated from its environment, the olive tree can only serve as a painful reminder of its past fruitfulness.

It is through poetry that Darwīsh recreates a sense of at-homeness, reestablishing Palestinian entitlement by making a record of Palestinian presence in and landscaping of the environment. Angelika Neuwirth writes in "Hebrew Bible and Arabic Poetry: Reclaiming Palestine as a Homeland Made of Words" that Darwīsh "perceives the world as an exile-home 'made of words,' *ein aufgeschriebenes Vaterland* (Heinrich Heine)," which, she argues, "for an Arab deprived of place must be located in poetry" (Neuwirth, 192).[299] For example, Darwīsh writes in "Nusāfir ka-n-nās" (1984; "We Travel Like Other People," 1984): "We have a country of words. Speak Speak so we may know the end of this travel" (Darwīsh, "Travel" 31).[300]

In Anton Shammas's "Autocartography,"[301] Palestine is reduced to nothing more than language, with the cosmic pastoralism of poetry eclipsing even the *aṭlāl* of cultivation of the land. Shammas (b. 1950) was born in Fassūṭa, located in what is today northern Israel, and is now a professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, Shammas writes and translates across the three languages. He has authored poems, plays, essays, and a novel, *'Arabesḳot* (1986; *Arabesques*

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[299] Angelika Neuwirth, "Hebrew Bible and Arabic Poetry: Reclaiming Palestine as a Homeland Made of Words: Mahmoud Darwish," in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, Eds. Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (Saint Paul, Saqi, 2010), 171-196.

[300] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "We Travel Like Other People" in *Victims of a Map*, Trans. Abdullah al-Udhari (London: Al-Saqi Books, 2005), 31.

لَنَا بَلَدٌ مِنْ كَلاَم. تَكَلَّمْ تَكَلَّمْ لِنَعْرِفت حَدَّاً لِهَذَا السَّفَرِ ! 30 (Darwīsh, "Nusāfir").

Maḥmūd Darwīsh, "Nusāfir ka-n-nās" in *Victims of a Map*, Trans. Abdullah al-Udhari (London: Al-Saqi Books, 2005), 30.

[301] Anton Shammas, "Autocartography," *The Threepenny Review* 63 (1995): 7-9.

1988),[302] written in Hebrew. Following its translation into English, *Arabesques* was selected by the *New York Times* as one of the seven best works of fiction published in 1988.[303]

The protagonist of "Autocartography," A., is the granddaughter of a Palestinian refugee and lives in Michigan. The story traces her efforts to develop a relationship to Palestine without ever having been there. For A.'s grandmother, Palestine has narrowed in her imagination to "no more than a lemon tree [*shajarat al-laymūn*] in the backyard of the house she left in Jafa" (Shammas, 7). By the time of narration, A. has forgotten most of the Arabic she once knew, but she holds on to the word "*lamoon*" [*laymūn*] as a representation of that tree. It

> seemed to have found refuge inside A.'s personal diction, thus letting the distant past of her grandmother permeate her own present, the present that seemingly had nothing to do with that past. And like the persistent grains in a giant, one-way sand-glass, ever flowing through the narrow opening, Palestine of the past kept invading the Dearborn present, grain by grain, through the narrow opening of a single word: *lamoon* (Shammas, 7).

The rubble of A.'s knowledge of the Arabic language serves as her *aṭlāl*, over which she stands in an effort to access a history that is hers but has no markers in the Michigan landscape. The past and the present converge in the word "*lamoon*," which is an abstraction of a real lemon tree that was planted in Jaffa and to which A. has a family, but not a personal, connection.

A. tends to the lemon tree through her fixation on the word, becoming a *fallāḥa* nurturing it in the space of her imagination, with no real link to the landscape of Palestine. This becomes clear when the narrator suggests that A. overcome her feelings of homesickness by relocating to Palestine, Michigan. The narrator of the text urges the reader to "imagine her [A.] going home to Palestine, this time in Michigan" and "planting a lemon tree in her backyard, a unique single

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[302] For more on the reception of *Arabesques*, see Chapter 1, n.23.

[303] "Christmas Books; Editor's Choice: The Best Books of 1988," *The New York Times*, 4 December 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/04/books/christmas-books-editor-s-choice-the-best-books-of-1988.html >.

reproduction of that authentic, irreproducible tree in Yafa" (Shammas, 8). In the story, all of

Palestine becomes a single lemon tree that is no longer rooted in the landscape. The possibility of

its transferability to Palestine, Michigan is evidence of this uprooting. Even if the original tree is

"irreproducible," the word *lamoon* can take form. There can be a lemon tree in a backyard in a

Palestine. However, once "A. has found her own Palestine" in Michigan, she discovers that

"there's no rush to go home anymore" (Shammas, 8). So, the lemon tree remains no more than a

tree A. plants in the sky and perhaps returns to now and again to water, highlighting the limits of

pure cosmic pastoralism for the ecological wellbeing of a physical space. The forward-looking,

productive, creative longing of ecological *ḥanīn* is absent.

VI. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified three different incarnations of the ecological native in

Palestinian literature. Together, they form a trajectory that reveals the Palestinian community's

distancing from the land. *A Lake Beyond the Wind* describes the romanticized but productive

relationship between the *fallāḥ/a* and the earth that existed prior to 1948, the severing of which

exacerbated the trauma of separation and expulsion. Both *Palestinian Walks* and *The Inheritance*

challenge the framing of the figure of the *fallāḥ/a* as ecological native by drawing attention to the

fractures of ecoambiguity, shining a light on the complexity of the relationships between

Palestinians and the nonhuman world. The character of Raja serves as a bridge, excavating and

critiquing this period of ecological stewardship-as-cultivation and environmental intimacy

through his wandering in the wilderness and, more practically, providing an alternative

manifestation of the figure of the ecological native through his work as a lawyer. Adopting the

tradition of the *sarḥa*, Raja reinscribes the history of Palestinian reshaping of and presence in the

land as he walks, landscaping the hills through his movement and narration. After political

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realities force him to suspend this activity, Raja continues to practice ṣumūd through his work as a lawyer.

The third incarnation of the figure of the ecological native is connected to Palestinian cosmic pastoralism. Both *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and *Palestinian Walks* contain elements of the Palestinian cosmic pastoral, in which the *aṭlāl* of a history of agricultural activity tether the ecological-native-as-pastor to the physical landscape while a sense of dwelling and entitlement are developed in the creative spaces of literature and memory. However, the cosmic pastoral introduces the possibility of writing about the environment in a way that undoes the connection to the real, material environment, especially when employed by Palestinians writing in exile or diaspora. Of the texts discussed in this chapter, only *Palestinian Walks* offers a path toward ṣumūd and practical activism. That path leads not into nature or even literature, but rather directly into the courtroom. However, literature, through the tending of the stars, bolsters the imaginational work required to create and maintain the sense of entitlement and dwelling that provides the psychological foundation for legal claims to the land, the work of ecological reclamation, and activism.

Chapter 4
Lost Landscapes Found in The Wandering Place

In the 14th century, Moroccan traveler and geographer Ibn Baṭūṭa journeyed across North Africa and Asia, encountering political rulers and religious figures, sampling new cuisines and learning about different cultures, and making note of the flora, fauna, and natural features and resources of the places he visited. Upon his return to Morocco, he related the details of his explorations to Ibn Juzayy, who chronicled his journeys, producing the only known record of Ibn Baṭūṭa's adventures. Moroccan literary critic ʿAbd al-Fatāḥ Kilīṭū devotes a chapter of his *Lan tatakallama lughatī*[304] (2002; *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, 2008) to Ibn Baṭūṭa's life and Ibn Juzayy's text. In the course of this discussion, Kilīṭū writes: "Wandering is of no great value if it does not turn into a narrative transmitted to listeners and readers" (Kilīṭū, *Language* 53).[305] Kilīṭū is predominantly referring to voluntary travel, rather than forced migration or exile. However, the notion of the "wandering narrator" seeking throughout his journeys to find the right tale told in the right way to reach his intended audience speaks to some of the same challenges of representation faced by contemporary authors centuries later, especially those who are far from the spaces they describe. It is through the successful translation of Ibn Baṭūṭa's impressions into stories, and the subsequent translation of these stories into more literary renderings by Ibn Juzayy, that his name, his view of the world, and, more importantly for our purposes, the landscapes he passed through and re-created in narrative have endured.

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[304] ʿAbd al-Fatāḥ Kilīṭū, *Lan tatakallama lughatī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa lil-Ṭibāʿa wa-al-Nashr, 2002).

[305] ليس للجَوَلان قيمة كبيرة إذا لم يتحوّل إلى سردٍ، إذا لم ينقل إلى مستمعين أو قرّاء (63 *Lughatī* ،Kilīṭū).

All translations are from ʿAbd al-Fatāḥ Kilīṭū, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, Trans. Waïl S. Hassan (Syracuse: Syracuse U P, 2008).

Kilīṭū titles this chapter "Between Movement and Stillness" (بين الحركة والسكون), focusing

on the tension between these two poles that Ibn Baṭūṭa felt and discussed in his chronicles. For

Ibn Baṭūṭa, this represented a choice he faced over and over again throughout his life. In the

modern world in which the texts discussed in this chapter are set, movement and stillness are the

oppositional forces that shape not just narrators and characters, but also the lands themselves.

Even without human intervention, environments are always in motion. However, when the

cyclical stasis of a place is replaced by linear transformation, a forced and irreversible march

forward in time brought on by the exhaustion of resources and the destruction of natural

spaces,[306] overcoming the challenges of translating these disappearing landscapes into literature

gains new urgency. In the texts analyzed here, the difficulties of representation are further

complicated by the location of these threatened or disappearing places "elsewhere," in spaces

removed temporally and/or spatially from the contemporary reality of each author and much, if

not all, of her/his readership. Thus, even as these places wander with the authors who create and

re-create them in literature, changing as they are brought to encounter other landscapes and

geographies, they remain fixed to an extent by their physical inaccessibility, which locates them

always in the past, in memory, and/or in the imagination.

I argue in the following sections that the crisis of representing land that has been lost in

some sense is resolved in *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* (the wandering places; singular: *al-makān–al-

matāh*) created in literature. *Al-Makān–al-matāh* is a term coined by Adūnīs in his discussion of

the landscapes of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and explored at greater length below. I adapt it here

to describe a kind of literary space produced through the movement of places and people, inside

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[306] Nixon describes this process of "profound temporal rupturing" as a part of the "tectonic shift in resource priorities" that occurs following the discovery of extensive oil reserves in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf's *Cities of Salt* (Nixon, *Violence* 80).

and outside of texts. These *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* provide entry into inaccessible geographies by framing them as either translocal or universal, excavating them from the past or the imagination and bringing them into the present with the power to influence and shape the future. By granting these places the same literary space and emphasis as the human characters that inhabit or pass through them, the reader is invited to feel anger at their despoliation and stand over their *aṭlāl* to mourn them when they are gone, accessing the *ḥanīn* that provides a space for reflection on the costs of poor stewardship of the *amāna* and the possibility of change.

In this chapter, I look at the creation of two separate and distinct wandering places in which the environmentalist ethics of ecological stewardship are articulated in the literature of North Africa and the Middle East more broadly: the deserts of North Africa and Palestine. After elaborating on the idea of *al-makān–al-matāh*, I return to the spaces of the desert explored in Chapter 2. Written by authors removed from the land they describe but with intimate knowledge of it, these deserts are transformed by the foreign exploitation of their natural resources. I argue that, within the literary space of the novel, the desert is revealed to be a translocal site incorporated into economic or social networks that connect it to urban centers at a geographical remove, and/or becomes a spiritual space that gestures toward universality. Here, I revisit Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *The Bleeding of the Stone* and Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent* and introduce Ṣabrī Mūsā's *Fasād al-amkina*[307] (1973; *Seeds of Corruption*, 1979). Next, I build on my discussion of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism from Chapter 3 to argue that the lands of Palestine as described by authors exiled or displaced from them create literary *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* that similarly offer entry through translocal and/or universal frameworks. In this section, I return to *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* and discuss Muḥammad al-Makhzangī's *Laḥaẓāt gharaq jazīrat al-ḥūt*[308] (1997;

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[307] Ṣabrī Mūsā, *Fasād al-amkina* (Cairo: Maktabat Rūz al-Yūsuf, 1976).

Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl, 2006). In all of the

wandering places described in this chapter, geographically distinct sites expand to encompass

each other, re-mapping their landscapes into translocal and/or universal geographies, while

maintaining the specificities that ground them in space.

I. The Translocal and the Universal

In *Dīwān al-shiʿr al-ʿarabī* (1964; Anthology of Arabic Poetry) the poet Adūnīs (b. 1930)

describes the desert environment of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, or ode, as "a kind of place-time" (نوع

من المكان – الزمان).[309] In her gloss on this line, Gil Z. Hochberg explains that "place becomes (also)

time" in the desert setting as represented by the *qaṣīda* because the blowing wind and sand create

a landscape that is in continuous flux. (Hochberg, 165).[310] The only spaces that are static are in the

past, fixed by their relocation in memory. I explored the elaborate descriptions of the desert and

its flora and fauna contained in this poetry at greater length in Chapter 1. They reflect Bedouin

societies that structured their lives around seasonal migrations and the cultivation of intimate

knowledge of their environments.[311]

Adūnīs's understanding of place-time in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* has certain similarities to

that of the *chronotope* ("time-space") conceptualized by Bakhtin, which he defines in his essay

"Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal

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[308] Muḥammad al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt gharaq jazīrat al-ḥūt* (Cairo: Al-Haʾia al-ʿĀmma li-Quṣūr al-Thaqāfa, 1998).

[309] Adūnīs, *Dīwān al-shiʿr al-ʿarabī*, Volume 1 (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyya, 1964), 17.

[310] Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton U P, 2007).

[311] In *Metapoesis in the Arabic Tradition: From Modernists to* Muḥdathūn, Huda J. Fakhreddine stresses that while the term pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* or "Bedouin *qaṣīdah*" is commonly used to refer to "a poem inspired by and rooted in the transhumant lifestyle of the Bedouin Arabs before Islam," not all poetry from the pre-Islamic period is desert poetry (Fakhreddine, 60).

and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 84).[312] According

to Bakhtin, the literary chronotope plays a vital role in the definition of genre in the novel.

However, the *nasīb*, the first portion of the tripartite pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, possesses a comparable

generic import. Here, the poet, traditionally standing over the *aṭlāl* (ruins) of an abandoned

campsite or abode that has been overtaken by the desert, delivers an elegy, often for his beloved

who has departed. It is a place, as Jaroslav Stetkevych notes in "In Search of the Unicorn: The

Onager and the Oryx in the Arabic Ode," "where the poet is no longer, and which, in his

absence, has been absorbed…into the pristine idyll of nature" (J. Stetkevych, "Unicorn" 87).[313]

As discussed in Chapter 1, the parallel descriptions of the *aṭlāl* and the encroaching nonhuman

desert environment in the *nasīb* provide a space for the accessing of a *ḥanīn* that evokes the past,

comments on the present, and, when that *ḥanīn* is productive and forward-looking, envisions an

alternate future at a site of co-presence of the human and nature. In the *nasīb*, time becomes

interconnected with space, forming a chronotope. Here, as Bakhtin writes, "[t]ime…thickens,

takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" while, concurrently, "space becomes charged and

responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (Bakthin, 84).

     The generic conventions of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*, and specifically the *nasīb*, can

certainly be read chronotopically, and such readings provide important insights into its

conventions, tropes, and themes. A chronotopic approach to reading, when appropriate, provides

greater understanding of a text's cultural, historical, and geographic contexts, as William

Granara notes in "Nostalgia, Arab Nationalism, and the Andalusian *Chronotope* in the Evolution

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[312] M.M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981), 84-258.

[313] Jaroslav Stetkevych, "In Search of the Unicorn: The Onager and the Oryx in the Arabic Ode," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 33.2 (2002): 79-130.

of the Modern Arabic Novel." Chronotopes, he writes, "connect history with poetics, lived experience with art, and the local/temporal with the transhistorical." They also "dialogize with specific extra literary contexts" to "stock the narrative with spatial and temporal markers that evoke, arouse, and create their most transcendent meanings" (Granara, 59).

Adūnīs means something different by his notion of place-time in the desert environment created by the pre-Islamic poet. As noted above, each "place" in the *qaṣīda* corresponds to a particular moment in time due to the constant change and movement of the landscape. Place, Adūnīs explains, "meanders, intertwines, roams, bewilders, and misleads" (Adūnīs, *Dīwān* 17).[314] It becomes more than place-time. It also becomes *al-makān–al-matāh* ("the wandering place") (المكان – المتاه) (Adūnīs 1971, 15). To fully understand Adūnīs's notion of *al-makān–al-matāh*, it is instructive to look at each term separately before revisiting the hyphenated term as a whole.

"Al-Makān" is translated here as "place," but Hochberg goes deeper in her analysis of what Adūnīs means by his use of the word, writing: "Pointing at the root *kana* [كان] shared by the two Arabic words *makan* [مكان] (place) and *kawan* [*sic*] (being) [كون], Adonis argues that 'to be' in Arabic is 'to take place'" (Hochberg, 165). *Makān* is a noun of place (اسم المكان) derived from the verb *kāna* (كان), "to be." Since nouns of place by definition refer to the locations where the actions of their corresponding verbs are carried out, Hochberg concludes that *makān* is where "being" is done. Human beings exist, they *are*, in place. So, the environment shapes and limits the ways that a human being, animal, plant, or nonhuman object can *be*, just as anything that inhabits a space influences it. The relationship between the individual and her/his environment is reciprocal and inescapable.

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[314] ينحني، يتداخل، ينتقل، يحير ويضيع (Adūnīs, *Dīwān* 17).

The second term of Adūnīs's coinage, *al-matāh*, gives an indication of what he views as specific about the act of being in the environment of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. *Al-Matāh* is derived from the verb *tāha*, meaning "*[h]e deviated from,* or *lost*, or *missed*, *the right way*; *he lost his way*" (Lane, Book I, 326). *Tāha* takes on a more specific additional meaning within the context of the desert: "*[H]e was*, or *became*, *confused*, or *perplexed, and unable to see his right course:* [or *his mind*, or *intellect*, *was*, or *became*, *disordered*, *confused*, or *unsound:*] and *he perished*" (Lane, Book I, 326). *Tāha* can thus convey a psychological wandering, as well as a physical one. The implication that the wanderer will be unable to find her/his way again once s/he enters this mental state and will die as a result frames "*al-matāh*" as a cognitive and emotional condition, perhaps resulting from the harsh conditions of the external environment but more aptly approached as a kind of existential crisis.

The noun *al-tīh*, which shares a root with the noun *al-matāh* and the verb *tāha*, is one of the words for desert, of which there are several in Arabic. "*Al-Ṣaḥrā'*," a feminine adjective meaning "of a fawn color," is probably the most recognizable to the English speaker (Yver, "Sahara").[315] It refers to the Sahara Desert in Africa but also means more broadly "a desert" or "a waste" (Lane, Book I, 1654). Lane lists *al-barīyya* as a synonym of *al-ṣaḥrā'*, although *arḍ barīyya* can also refer more broadly to "uncultivated land; without seed-produce, and unfruitful" (Lane, Book I, 177). Other possibilities for "desert" include *al-qafr* and *al-baydā'*.

The noun *al-tīh* does not appear in the Qur'ān but the verb *tāha* is used to describe the Children of Israel's (بنو إسرائيل) forty years of wandering in the desert of the Sinai Peninsula: "Allah said: 'Therefore will the land be out of their reach for forty years: In distraction will they

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[315] G. Yver, "Sahara" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 1ˢᵗ ed., eds. M. Th. Houtsma, T.W. Arnold, R. Basset, and R. Hartmann, 2012, <http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_5054>.

wander [*yatīhūn*] through the land" (Qur'an, *al-Mā'ida* [The Repast] 5:26).[316] Medieval Arab

geographers thus referred to the desert of the Sinai Peninsula as Faḥṣ al-Tīh (Honigmann, "al-

Tīh").[317] In addition to "desert," *al-tīh* can also mean "maze" or "labyrinth," further emphasizing

that it is the disorienting effect of the landscape on the human being within it that gives the desert

this name, rather than any intrinsic quality, unlike the words *al-ṣaḥrā'* and *al-barīyya* which

communicate the color of the land and/or the type and quality of its vegetation (Wehr, 121). *Al-*

Tīh, then, can refer to the physical space of the desert but it also communicates a state of being

that, though it may be brought on by place, is not necessarily tied to it. With that in mind, it is

noteworthy that the grammatical structure of *al-matāh* permits a reading of it as a noun of place,

like *al-makān*. *Al-Matāh* is where the act of wandering takes place. This word alone, without the

term *al-makān* attached to it with a hyphen, arguably encompasses the meaning of "the

wandering place," which can be a physical or a nonphysical space.

Taken as a whole, the hyphenated term *al-makān–al-matāh* can be understood

grammatically as a case of noun complementation in which *al-matāh* acts as an appositive

modifying *al-makān*, known in Arabic as *badal* (بدل). In *Early Arabic Grammatical Theory:*

Heterogeneity and Standardization, Jonathan Owens notes that the most basic definition of *badal*

is "the substitution of one item for another" (Owens, 70).[318] Here, in *al-makān–al-matāh*, it

serves the purpose of clarification. Keeping *al-makān* in *al-makān–al-matāh* more clearly

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[316] قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ۛ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً ۛ يَتِيهُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ .

[317] E. Honigmann, "al-Tīh" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 2012, <http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7546>.

[318] Jonathan Owens, *Early Arabic Grammatical Theory: Heterogeneity and Standardization* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1990).

reflects the reciprocal influence of physical place and human being-in-place that produces the literary space of the wandering place.

Today, it is much more common for Arabic literature to be set outside of the desert than inside of it. Furthermore, the generic conventions of contemporary fiction and poetry are distinct, as expected, from those observed by Adūnīs in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. However, though the notion of *al-makān–al-matāh* has its roots in a specific time and literary space distinguished by certain motifs and themes, the broader concepts of unfixed spaces and conditions of existence based on wandering find expression in the modern prose writings of authors writing in Arabic. *Al-Makān–al-matāh*, understood as a literary space that is brought into existence through the shuttling interactions of human beings in motion with places that are also unfixed or wandering in some sense, can be found, and is in fact animated, by the transnational movement of people displaced by crisis. Writers who are refugees, migrants, and in exile are 20th- and 21st-century nomads, taking the place of the poets who roamed the desert in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda*. They often create or re-create in literature the sites that have been rendered inaccessible to them outside of it. These places wander with their former inhabitants in the spaces of memory and literature, becoming untethered from their corresponding physical landscapes even while forging and re-forging imaginational connections to them. At the same time, these physical landscapes have also been put in motion through the same crises that displaced their former inhabitants, changing them until they are often unrecognizable to those who once called them home. When one of these places is written into literature by a writer who has been displaced from it in some sense, *al-makān–al-matāh* is created. The notion of *al-makān–al-matāh* encompasses a concern for the relationship between human beings and their environments, at least as early as the pre-Islamic period. In the contemporary period, this concern becomes more explicitly ecological in

some of its manifestations. This intersection of *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* with the expression of ecological responsibility is the focus of my analysis in this chapter.

The description of spaces like the Sahara Desert and Palestine that exist outside of literature preserves and materializes their geographies, while the detailing of the exploitation of their human and natural resources creates a record that often corresponds to, while not necessarily mirroring, historical reality. When these spaces are "lost" to indigenous populations through environmental degradation and/or displacement and migration, the documenting of their former inhabitation and subsequent despoliation prevents the erasure of their social, cultural, and environmental histories. In short, the literary works analyzed in this chapter offer counter-narratives that forcibly challenge dominant perspectives and histories and the acts of violence, both slow and fast, that they conceal. However, these records created through the chronicling of human and environmental crises capture spaces that are in flux, in the process of being transformed through the alteration of their landscapes and the often-forced movement of their populations. The result is the articulation of *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* in literature in which neither places nor the human beings that once inhabited those places are static, but are rather defined by their constant wandering. Furthermore, though these wandering places are made accessible through literature, they remain inaccessibly distant in space and/or time in reality, inhibiting the transformation of their ecological messages into practical activism. At least at first glance, this means that stewardship of the *amāna* is confined to the literary and imaginational spaces created by fiction.

All of the literary works explored in this chapter overcome the challenges of accessibility by framing the literary space of *al-makān–al-matāh* as translocal and/or universal, in this way offering alternate roots of entry. *Seeds of Corruption* and *Memories of a Meltdown* create *al-*

amkina–al-matāhāt characterized by translocalism. What distinguishes translocalism from other buzzwords like transnationalism, globalism, and even planetarity is its dual focus on the particularities of multiple small-scale geographies alongside the broader-scale connections that tie them to each other. In the texts studied in this chapter, the result is an internationalization of the environmental struggles portrayed that expands their messages of ecological stewardship and highlights the reach of the threats of environmental degradation they represent, even while they often fall short of offering material solutions for the crises facing the sites described. In some texts, like *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Tent*, and *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, *al-makān–al-matāh* provides access to the Libyan Desert, the Eastern Desert of Egypt, and Palestine, respectively, by instead rendering these spaces as universal. In the following section, I will turn to the desert to explore its expression as a translocal and/or universal wandering place. Then I will do the same for Palestine.

II. The Space of the Desert in the Arabic Novel

In Chapter 2, I discussed how the deserts in 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf's *Endings* and Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *The Bleeding of the Stone* are reclaimed as indigenous spaces of human-animal ecological harmony, imagined as foils to the city or other population centers. When outsiders from these sites come to the desert, their destructive behavior violates the land ethic articulated and modeled by the "ecological native" characters that consider it their home. In this section, I will revisit *The Bleeding of the Stone*, here focusing on the desert as a universal space, rather than as the local and particular geography explored in Chapter 2 that takes shape through al-Kūnī's detailed descriptions of geography, flora, and fauna. I then introduce Ṣabrī Mūsā's *Seeds of Corruption* before turning once more to Mīrāl al-Ṭaḥāwī's *The Tent*. In the latter, I shift my attention from the figure of the ecological Bedouin and the connections between girls/women

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and nonhuman animals in the text that I analyzed in Chapter 2 to Fāṭima's creation of the desert

as a haven and her coerced "performance" of it for foreigners. All three novels are set in a desert

in the Arab world—*The Bleeding of the Stone* in the Sahara in Libya and *The Tent* and *Seeds of*

Corruption in the Eastern Desert of Egypt. In none of them is the desert a mere setting, nor is it

reduced to a theater for human drama and the processing of human emotions. Rather, each author

foregrounds these spaces, mapping out detailed, grounded topographies and filling them with

nonhuman animals with individual lives and vibrant flora and even mineralia with value

independent from the human beings that describe, use, or exploit them. I would go so far as to

argue that the desert becomes a character in the novels discussed in this chapter.

In "The Ecological Bedouin: Toward Environmental Principles for the Arab Region,"

Sharif Elmusa notes that the authors of *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Seeds of Corruption* write

with "a double gaze" as they address "the non-native familiarizing himself with the landscape

and culture of desert life" from the perspective of "the native writing from exile" (Elmusa, 9). In

both of these texts, these two gazes are reflected in the juxtaposition of one or more native

characters with a character who is an outsider encountering the desert for the first time. In *The*

Tent, this tension of the double gaze is embodied in the doubling of the author herself in the

character of Fāṭima, who is in turn doubled in Zahwa, leading to the creation of a multi-layered

world. In "Go Underground, Young Women: Writing Selves in Miral al-Tahawy's *The Tent*,"

Diya Abdo explains that, for al-Ṭaḥāwī, writing the desert is an expression of "nostalgia" for

what the author herself calls the "lost oasis," a place located in the imagination as much as in the

past (Abdo, 270). It has been "lost" through the author's own distance from the desert as well as

through its transformation and the erasure of its inhabitants' traditional ways of life as part of the

movement toward modernity. The "lost oasis" is located and reclaimed by al-Ṭaḥāwī through its

re-creation in literature, a process that draws from the wells of collective as well as personal memory. Al-Ṭaḥāwī's act of writing is mirrored by Fāṭima's parallel re-creation of the "lost oasis" in the world of her imagination. Abdo argues that "Zahwa's world is an allegory for Fatima's, which is an allegory for al-Tahawy's" (Abdo, 272).

In all three novels, the authors serve as interpreters of the desert landscapes they re-create in their texts. Nixon draws a distinction between what he calls a "vernacular landscape" and an "official landscape" in his discussion of the environmentalism of the poor. The former "is shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features." Although it is "neither monolithic nor undisputed," it contrasts with an official landscape that "writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental" (Nixon, *Violence* 17). Al-Kūnī, Mūsā, and al-Ṭaḥāwī act as interpreters of vernacular desert landscapes. Al-Kūnī and Mūsā also record the competing official landscapes that seek to lay claim to the desert.

The difficulty of this task of representing both the self and the other to a readership that may be affiliated or familiar with neither is perhaps best expressed as a challenge of translation. Kilīṭū addresses the issue from a linguistic and cultural perspective in *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*. In his opening chapter, Kilīṭū describes the thought that went into his introduction of al-Hamadhānī's *maqāmāt*, a form of short fictional narratives written in rhymed prose, for a French-speaking audience in Strasbourg unfamiliar with the author, the genre, or even Arabic literature at the most basic level. He finds himself stumped from the outset as he tries to contextualize al-Hamadhānī and his work. The convention in Arabic scholarship on pre-modern Arabic literature is to provide the Islamic date, often followed by the Gregorian calendar date—

in the case of al-Hamadhānī, this would mean dating him to the 4th century A.H. (*anno hegirae*, a calendar starting with the Hijra) and the 10th century A.D./C.E. However, Kilīṭū realizes that even dropping the Islamic date and locating al-Hamadhānī squarely in the 10th century of the chronology most familiar to his audience would communicate little about his contemporary relevance. Kilīṭū frames this as an issue of "literary memory" (الذاكرة الأدبية) (Kilīṭū, *Language* 8). Excavating a 10th-century German writer, Roswitha, fails to solve the problem since he assumes his audience will be no more familiar with her and her work than they are with al-Hamadhānī and his. He finally settles on using the 16th- and 17th- century Spanish picaresque novel as a point of comparison. In the course of this thought exercise, Kilīṭū arrives at the darker conclusion that these interpretive cartwheels are the result of a cultural power imbalance with roots, of course, in the political and military power imbalances that shaped and continue to shape the modern Arab world.

The vernacular landscapes of the desert are made accessible to the non-desert-dwelling Arabic reader as well as to readers in other languages in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Seeds of Corruption* through their re-creation in literature, in *al-amkina–al-matāhāt*, where they are articulated as translocal and/or universal. Roger Allen notes that al-Kūnī's unique contribution to Arabic literature has been the insight he provides into the Tuareg world of the desert through *The Bleeding of the Stone* and other works, offering "a realistic evocation of a region and landscape that are as unfamiliar to most Arab readers as they are to those of other languages" (Allen, *Arabic Novel* 245). As discussed in Chapter 2, the landscape of the desert in *The Bleeding of the Stone* comes into focus through al-Kūnī's detailed descriptions of its geography, flora, and fauna. Official place names exist alongside Asouf's personal map that he charts based on his own wandering and experiences

At the same time, even while *The Bleeding of the Stone* grounds itself in a specific

locality, it gestures toward universality. The paratextual materials that frame *The Bleeding of the*

Stone—the epigraphs, drawn from the New Testament, the Old Testament, Ovid, and Sophocles,

for example—situate the novel within the corpus of world literature. However, in interviews, al-

Kūnī also expresses a view of the desert that emphasizes its universal spiritual significance. He

connects a spirituality bordering on holiness of the desert to the idea of freedom (*al-ḥurrīya*) and

his characters echo this view.

Al-Kūnī's physical distance from the space of the desert that he repeatedly re-creates in

literature untethers his landscapes, even as his carefully drawn geographies maintain a

connection to their counterpoints in the "real" world outside of fiction. In an interview with

Swiss World, al-Kūnī acknowledges this tension, explaining that, in his writing, he relies on

"memory of another kind, what the Sufis, the Islamic mystics, like to call 'inner memory' and

psychologists refer to as 'the unconscious'" (al-Kūnī, Fähndrich).[319] He acknowledges that the

resulting landscapes are personal: "[T]he desert that lives in my heart is precisely not the same

desert as exists outside my heart" (al-Kūnī, Fähndrich). However, a relationship is preserved

between the desert of al-Kūnī's memory and imagination and the one outside of it. The former

could not exist without the latter and the desert created in the literary space of the novel provides

access to a physical space that is now inaccessible, because of the distance and logistical

challenges that separate many readers from it as well as the transformative impact of the passage

of time and outside intervention. Al-Kūnī speaks to this tension between the local and the

universal in his writing:

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[319] Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, "Ibrahim al-Koni," Interview with Hartmut Fähndrich, Trans. Rafaël Newman, *Swiss World*, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Accessed 6 September 2009, <http:www.swissworld.org/en/Switzerland/ resources/why_switzerland/ibrahim_al_koni/>.

I am talking specifically about the north-west edge of the desert we call the Hammadah al Hamra or "red plateau." More generally, I mean the immense emptiness that stretches endlessly to the horizon, where it meets that clear sky which equals it in its nakedness. Together they make up one continuous body (al-Kūnī, Fähndrich).

Al-Kūnī's emigration out of Libya's desert created a distance between him and it that has been maintained through decades of wandering as he has lived and worked in other countries. As a result, he must rely on childhood memories and his imagination to map it out when he writes. The landscapes he creates thus become disconnected from time and physical space.

These landscapes are also portrayed as being in a state of rapid and profound change. In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, foreign influence, especially in the form of colonialism, and urban modernity are blamed for the ecological transformation of the desert and the replacement of its timeless cyclicality with an exploitation of its nonrenewable resources that is located firmly in time. The literary space of *al-makān–al-matāh* offers the possibility for the desert, even when grounded in place, to take on universal significance. However, for al-Kūnī, this universality is already intrinsic to the space of the desert and has been so for as long as it has existed. It is only the destruction of the desert environment that threatens to bind it in time and space.

Focusing on the mystical and the spiritual, al-Kūnī calls the desert "the world's soul" (al-Kūnī, Fähndrich). It is a "transcendental place" where time "is a mythical time" that is "eternal" and "[t]he past, present, and future all prevail in the same moment" (al-Kūnī, Hastrup).[320] This universal space provides a setting for stories conceived from the outset to transcend their local contexts. As Jehan Farouk Fouad and Saeed Alwakeel write in "Representations of the Desert in Silko's 'Ceremony' and Al-Koni's 'The Bleeding of the Stone,'" the desert in *The Bleeding of*

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[320] Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, "Ibrahim Al-Koni Interview: In the Desert We Visit Death," Interview with Anders Hastrup, *Louisiana Channel*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 22 April 2014, Accessed 11 December 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8sMbKQ-HEE>.

the Stone: "is depicted…as a timeless microcosm that allows for a re-enactment of the story of creation and the everlasting struggle between good and evil. It becomes the locus for the rituals and ceremonies necessary for restoring balance in the universe" (Fouad and Alwakeel, 39).[321] Here, then, al-Kūnī interprets the vernacular landscapes of the Libyan Desert for an audience unfamiliar with it in part by crafting a narrative with intentional cosmic significance.

Al-Kūnī's memories of the desert, once his home, his abode, are reduced to *aṭlāl*. They evoke his beloved, which is also the desert, the desert of the past that is now gone. The space of al-Kūnī's childhood no longer exists outside of literature, if it ever truly existed at all. The joint presence in the desert that resides in *al-makān–al-matāh* of what al-Kūnī himself describes above as "the past, present, and future" supports this reading, echoing the *ḥanīn* accessed by the pre-Islamic poet of the *qaṣīda* in the *nasīb*. Al-Kūnī repeatedly returns to stand over the *aṭlāl* of the desert, using it as a site for summoning the past, critiquing the present, and envisioning an alternate future in which his urgings for environmental responsibility have been heeded in a way that protects the local spaces that he records in his fiction as well as other spaces in Libya and beyond.

Within the text of *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the desert is articulated in a way that echoes the parallel gestures of grounding in specific place and expansion to mystical universality described by al-Kūnī in interviews. In Chapter 2, I talked at length about the particularities of the desert landscape in *The Bleeding of the Stone* that prevent it from being uprooted from the physical space it references and transformed into pure allegory or myth. So, I will primarily focus here on how that emphasis on the particular and the local co-exists alongside the repeated framing of the desert as a universal space in the text.

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[321] Jehan Farouk Fouad and Saeed Alwakeel, "Representations of the Desert in Silko's 'Ceremony' and Al-Koni's 'The Bleeding of the Stone,'" *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 33 (2013): 36-62.

In *The Bleeding of the Stone*, the desert is never portrayed as a paradise for its inhabitants, even indigenous men and women who have memorized its cycles and laws and possess a deep knowledge of their environment. Survival depends on self-reliance, courage, vigilance, and cleverness. The desert exists as a space that is very much *in* the world, connected to population centers and other sites within Libya and beyond. This is made clear in the narrative, for example in the description of how news of the Italian invasion quickly reaches even the most remote populations: "Nothing's ever secret in the desert, no matter what lonely spot you choose" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 24).[322] What distinguishes the desert, then, is not its isolation from the world.

Instead, the desert is defined by the freedom it represents, which is in turn connected to death in the novel as well as in the interviews given by al-Kūnī. For example, Asouf's father sings the following Sufi *mawwāl*:

<div dir="rtl">

الصحراء كنز. مكافأة لمن أراد النجاة من استعباد العبد وأذى العباد.
فيها الهناء، فيها الفناء، فيها المراد (24 *al-Ḥajar* ,al-Kūnī).

</div>

> The desert is a true treasure
> for him who seeks refuge
> from men and the evil of men.
> In it is contentment,
> in it is death and all you seek (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 18).

Through the encounter with death, the desert dweller or visitor to the desert gains access to the space of *barzakh*, which we might translate here as "isthmus" or "imaginal reality," to borrow once again from William Chittick. In my analysis of *The Bleeding of the Stone* in Chapter 2, I discussed al-Kūnī's use of the idea of *barzakh* to describe a space, often somewhere between life and death, where the divide between human beings and nonhuman animals is destabilized or even collapses and the possibility of "becoming animal" is introduced. Here, in the Sufi *mawwāl*,

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[322] <div dir="rtl">لا يخفى شيء في الصحراء، مهما اعتزلت في الصحراء (32 *al-Ḥajar* ,al-Kūnī).</div>

the creation of an imaginal reality facilitates a deeper understanding of the self through the realization that s/he is connected to communities of nonhuman animals and the physical environment itself, which in turn "[merges] into the vastness of God" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 59).[323] For al-Kūnī and Asouf's father, freedom is linked to a lack of ties to the earth, such as those signified by human relationships and settled life in a fixed abode. This mystical view of the desert universalizes it until it becomes a holy state of being accessible through the mind from any physical space. At the same time, the local desert rendered particular and specific through careful narration acts as a counterweight, tethering the universal desert back to the earth. The result is *al-makān–al-matāh*, which provides space for the nurturing of a land ethic not bounded by national borders and forces the recognition of the transnational or global nature of many environmental crises.

In *Seeds of Corruption*, the Eastern Desert is similarly portrayed with careful attention to the vernacular landscape that ties it to a physical space. Concurrently, the text links the specific mining site of the Darhīb to Cairo, exposing the translocalism that facilitates the exploitation of the former by the latter. Finally, the desert is also framed as a mystical, universal space, but here this universalism is repeatedly undermined by the text's simultaneous resistance to it.

Ṣabrī Mūsā (1932-2018) was born in Damietta, an Egyptian port city near the Mediterranean. He worked as a journalist and was a well-known screenwriter, in addition to authoring several collections of short stories, works of travel literature, and three novels: *Seeds of Corruption*, which was first published serially in the Egyptian magazine *Ṣabāḥ al-khayr* between 1969 and 1970, *Ḥādīth al-niṣf mitr* (1972; The Half-Meter Incident), and *Al-Sayyid min ḥaql al-sabānikh* (1982; The Lord Arrived from the Spinach Field). Mūsā was widely recognized within

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[323] حتى تختفي في رحاب الله (al-Kūnī, *al-Ḥajar* 69).

Egypt for his writing and received the Pegasus Prize for Literature, notably awarded by Exxon Mobil, for *Seeds of Corruption* in 1978.

Seeds of Corruption sets up a tension between indigenous ecological native characters and foreign intruders that despoil the environment similar to that found in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Endings*, discussed in Chapter 2. *Seeds of Corruption* is distinguished by the identity of its central protagonist, Nicola, a non-indigenous immigrant to the desert whose behavior and attitudes locate him somewhere between these two poles. He is an embodiment of ecoambiguity.

Seeds of Corruption is centrally concerned with the foreign exploitation of Egypt's natural resources and the environmental fallout of that exploitation. The novel is set in Egypt, but many of its central characters are European. Nicola is born in a small Russian city, grows up in Istanbul, and spends his adult life moving around Europe. Through his constant wandering, he develops an uncomfortable relationship with place, always searching for a home but never finding one. During a brief stay in Italy, Nicola marries a Caucasian woman named Ilya who gives birth to a daughter, whom she also names Ilya. He finally settles down as a mining engineer at the Darhīb, a mountain in Egypt's Eastern Desert, which is located between the Nile and the Red Sea. The younger Ilya eventually comes to join Nicola in Egypt when she is a child.

Under Nicola's supervision, the mine becomes a great success, resulting in a visit from the king. He rapes Ilya while Nicola is incapacitated by an illness. Suffering from a high fever, Nicola dreams he has sex with his daughter. However, he does not realize it is a dream and believes that he is the father when he learns that Ilya is pregnant. Horrified by this tragedy, he suffocates the baby boy. At the end of the novel, Ilya is buried alive in the mine and Nicola remains on the mountain, alone. A direct translation of the Arabic title of the text, *Fasād al-amkina* (فساد الأمكنة), would be "the corruption of places," pointing more directly to the link

between Nicola's (imagined) transgression of the father-daughter relationship and his violation of the land.

The British colonial presence (1882-1952) forms the backdrop of the story. Ilya's rape by a monarch dates the central conflict to sometime between 1922, when Egypt achieved nominal independence and Sultan Fu'ād I became the first king of modern Egypt, and 1952, when the Free Officers overthrew King Fārūq. British colonialism and neocolonialism opened Egypt up to foreign exploitation of its resources, including the working of many mines that had not been in use since the time of the pharaohs. The labor-intensive but often lucrative job of reopening these mines was regularly given to non-Egyptians, who paid all rents, royalties and taxes directly to the government. Nicola is told by a friend about the opportunities in Egypt. The country is, his friend says, "a land not ruled by its people. Anyone who wished could go there and explore and obtain a permit to drill and eventually become the owner of one of those great mountains" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 13).[324] In *Seeds of Corruption*, the native Bedouin workers are mostly in the background, laboring so that foreigners, mainly in distant cities and in Cairo in particular, can reap the rewards. Non-Egyptians have more power and rights than Egyptians do. Laws and security forces protect them and their wealth, especially "the proliferating companies exploring the mountains of the desert for gold, tin, lead, zinc, and talc" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 33).[325]

The importance of place is emphasized before the novel even begins. Mūsā dedicates the English translation of *Seeds of Corruption* "To the desert which loved me" and in both it and the Arabic original provides a note to the reader in which he promises: "I will serve you a meal from

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[324] أرض لا يحكمها أهلها. ينزح إليها كل راغب فينقب ويعثر، ويستخرج ترخيصا للحفر، فيصبح مالكا لواحد من هذه الجبال العظيمة التي لا يملكها حتى الآن أحد (15 Mūsā, *Fasād*).

All translations are from Ṣabrī Mūsā, *Seeds of Corruption*, Trans. Mona N. Mikhail (Brooklyn: Interlink Books, 2002).

[325] تلك الشركات التي انتشرت في جبال هذه الصحراء بحثا عن الذهب والنحاس والرصاص والزنك والتلك (33 Mūsā, *Fasād*).

the mountains, from mountains unknown to the city dweller" (Mūsā, *Seeds*).[326] Here, he

emphasizes the unfamiliarity and strangeness of the desert landscape to the average Arabic

reader. Mūsā himself visited the Darhīb in the Eastern Desert twice and then lived in the area for

a year, the idea of the novel already in his mind. He was an outsider but wanted to become

intimately acquainted with the landscape before writing about it. Born in 1932, Mūsā also

certainly had first-hand knowledge of British colonialism in Egypt.

Following Mūsā's dedication (in the English translation) and note, the novel opens with a

bird's-eye description of the Darhīb, which emphasizes that it is a place that is both other-

worldly and ancient, "a huge crescent, like a meteor that had fallen from its place in the heavens

long ago and landed on earth, shattered and petrified" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 3).[327] The landscape of the

valley within it has been "formed by the winds and erosion of a thousand years" while the

broken shells on the mountain's sides are "a thousand million years old" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 3).[328]

Nicola, believing that he has finally found a place where he belongs, begins to identify as

a Bedouin and adopts the land as his own. He claims kinship with one of the tribes. He is able to

make this leap following a near-death experience that leads to his rebirth. His claim of kinship is

based in his belief that the local al-Bashāriyya tribe originated in the Caucasus, like his wife. A

friend tells Nicola that he and the Bedouins have a tenuous ancestral connection, based on

marriage and ancient history rather than blood: "These [the al-Bashāriyya] too are immigrants

from the Caucasian mountains. In ancient times, they came across the Lebanon and the Sinai

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[326] فإني مضيفكم اليوم في وليمة ملوكية، سأطعمكم فيها غذاء جبليا لم يعهده سكان المدن (6 *Fasād* ,Mūsā).

[327] ... لرأى الدرهيب هلالا عظيم الحجم، لابُدَّ أنَّه قد هوى من مكانه بالسماء في زمن ما، وجثم على الأرض منهاراً متحجِّراً (7 *Fasād* ,Mūsā).

[328] أحدثتها الرياح وعوامل التعرية خلال آلاف السنين (7 *Fasād* ,Mūsā).
والقواقع المهشمة من مليون ألف عام (7 *Fasād* ,Mūsā).

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Peninsula" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 24).[329] The connection that Nicola forms to the land is highlighted by the transformation of his body by his environment, his skin growing dark under the sun. However, his love for the desert suffers somewhat when he realizes, following the death of his friend Īsā, that it is not reciprocal. The desert has no loyalty to him.

The local Bedouins, in turn, claim descent from a great ancestor named Koka Lanka (كوكا لوانكا), who lived under the holy mountain of ʿUlba until, it is said, he became part of the rock itself. There is a belief that Koka Lanka is also Adam, the first prophet as well as the first man. If Koka Lanka, who was physically absorbed into the mountain itself, is an ancestor of the indigenous population, then he has also passed on his connection to the land as part of this population's inheritance. The connection is so intimate that it enables the Bedouins to actually become a part of this piece of earth. Their environment has shaped them over the centuries: "[F]ive thousand years of residence under the hot African sun is bound to burn the skin and dye it a dark coffee color" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 24).[330] But the Bedouins have also shaped it, their ancestors creating "trodden paths…with their constant passing between the mountains" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 15).[331]

Īsā is the most fully fleshed-out figure of the ecological native in the text, though he is still romanticized by protagonist Nicola and author Mūsā. He embodies the values of virtue, courage, strength, and respect for the land that are framed as Bedouin and similarly embraced by characters like Asouf in *The Bleeding of the Stone*. *Seeds of Corruption* also articulates a Sufi idea of the desert as a universal space similar to that expressed in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and

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[329] هؤلاء [البشارية] أيضا مهاجرون من جبال القوقاز، لقد جاءوا قديما عبر بلاد الشام وشبه جزيرة سيناء (Mūsā, *Fasād* 24).

[330] خمسة آلاف سنة من الهجرة تحت شمس افريقيا الحارة..كفيلة بأن تحرق جلدك وتصبغه بلون البن الغامق (Mūsā, *Fasād* 24).

[331] الدروب المطروقة التي سواها اجدادهم القدامى بسعيهم المنتظم بين الجبال (Mūsā, *Fasād* 17).

by al-Kūnī. For example, when Nicola observes the pilgrims on their way to visit the desert shrine of the Sufi saint Abū al-Ḥassan al-Shādhilī, he wonders: "How many men had left their homes and roamed the earth, renouncing everything, yet growing during their wanderings, which somehow enabled them to liberate themselves from the burden of humanness, to transcend humanity and become pure to the point of flying towards God?" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 148-149).[332] Mūsā's language here, of men who "transcend humanity and become pure to the point of flying towards God" is uncanny in its echo of al-Kūnī's description of the desert "merging into the vastness of God" (al-Kūnī, *Stone* 59). The location of Al-Shādhilī's shrine, the final resting place of his body, in the desert seems to confirm it as a holy site, a wandering place where this freedom from "humanness" can be eternally maintained.

As for Nicola, he develops an unparalleled knowledge of the mine that grants him authority over the subterranean space. These buried tunnels are no longer known to the indigenous Bedouin, unlike the surrounding desert. Before the series of tragedies that leads to Ilya's death and Nicola's self-destruction, he views the isolated mountain where he makes his home as Eden, and Ilya as his Eve. She becomes a duplicate of the other Ilya, Nicola's wife, who remains in Europe. When the younger Ilya insists on remaining in Egypt with Nicola while she is still a child, her strong personality leads him to the conclusion that his wife Ilya "had been copied" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 74).[333]

Nicola's attraction to his daughter is hinted at before he actually acts on his lust in his dream, and it is conflated with lust for the desert, represented by Īsā, and the Darhīb in particular: "Ilya was overpowering lust, and the mountain was overpowering lust, and the surrounding

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[332] هاكم رجل غادر وطنه وجاب الأرض زاهدا، فنما خلال الترحال، وأمكنه أن يخلص جسمه البشري من أثقال بشريته، فسما به وشف حتى أمكنه التحليق في الطريق إلى الله.. (Mūsā, *Fasād* 136).

[333] قد تكررت فعلا (Mūsā, *Fasād* 92).

desert in its mystical silences was greater lust, more acutely overpowering" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 77).[334]

Within the mine, Nicola "[feels] a tremor of ecstasy that [moves] his spirit like that instant when the life-engendering liquid flows from body to body" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 77).[335] He views himself as "fertilizing the mountain…aiming to impregnate it and make it give birth" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 77).[336] Here, Nicola takes credit for the mine's yield, framing it as something that he will somehow create rather than as a resource not belonging to him that he will exploit and claim as his own. The act of mining is explicitly sexualized, clearly linking Nicola's rape of the land to his eventual (imagined) rape of his daughter. In the first printing of *Seeds of Corruption* by Maktabat Rūz al-Yūsuf in Cairo, this link is emphasized by a line drawing of a naked woman on her back, her knees bent, large breasts and wide hips suggesting her fertility, that closes each chapter, space permitting.[337] Although the mine is productive, it never leads to the development of the city that is Nicola's true dream. Its growth is stunted by its connection to violation.

After Nicola comes to believe that he has raped Ilya, he attempts to kill himself. Though he survives, he is left impotent. Anṭūn Bey, who later marries Ilya, is also infertile. Over the course of the portion of the narrative that unfolds in Egypt, only Ilya and the king have a sexual encounter that results in a child, who does not survive past infancy. Furthermore, the king's arrival sets in motion the chain of events that destroys what Nicola and Ilya view as a utopia in the desert. And the incident that most directly leads to the king's rape of Ilya is yet another

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[334] ايليا شهوة جامحة .. كما أنَّ الجبل شهوة جامحة، كما أنَّ تلك الصحراء من حوله بسكونها الصوفي، شهوة كبرى أشدّ جموحاً (Mūsā, *Fasād* 73).

[335] فما الغريب في أن تتكرر داخل جسده رجفة النشوة التي تهز الروح وتسرقها لحظة انتقال سائل الحياة المخصب من جسد إلى جسد (Mūsā, *Fasād* 73).

[336] كأنَّه فعل جنسي من أفعال الإخصاب....
وما انزلاقك الدؤوب في رحم هذا الجبل .. سوى سعي لزرعه وإيلاده (Mūsā, *Fasād* 73).

[337] This image, along with several other illustrations, do not appear in subsequent Arabic editions or in the English translation.

unproductive sex act: a local fisherman has intercourse with a dead sea cow, believing it to be a mermaid, as a kind of performance for the king and his entourage.

After Ilya is buried alive in the mine, Nicola continues to imagine that he can hear her calling to him, "beckoning him back, back to a magical world they would create together in those mute rocks, living together side by side as it had always been, a man and his daughter, a man and his mother, a man and his beloved chosen woman" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 168).[338] However, unlike the story of Adam and Eve, *Seeds of Corruption* ends with Ilya forever trapped in Eden, and Nicola forever barred from re-entering. Furthermore, whereas Adam and Eve were cast out together to populate the earth, Nicola is the end of his line. His infertility makes him unable to reproduce at all.

At the beginning of the novel, Nicola is a man without a country, not at home anywhere. His wife Ilya tells him before his daughter's birth: "I will make a copy of you, Nicola, and nail you to the earth with it" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 12).[339] While the birth of Nicola's daughter does not succeed in keeping him in Italy as her mother wanted, her death finally binds him to a place. Ilya's blood and their (imagined) sin gives Nicola an inescapable connection to the mountain so deep that he believes he will turn to rock as Koka Lanka did and unite permanently with it and Ilya.

Although Nicola believes Ilya's death is punishment for the act of incest, the text instead frames it as the cost of his exploitation of the desert's natural resources: "It was as if the mountain had exacted its own revenge against the men who tried to possess it" (Mūsā, *Seeds*

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[338] كأنها تلوح له بعالم مسحور هما كفيلان بخلقه في تلك الصخور الصماء، ليعيشاه معا جنبا الى جنب كما كان دائما .. رجل وابنته ... أو رجل وأمه أو رجل وامرأته المعشوقة والمفضلة (Mūsā, *Fasād* 151-152).

[339] سأكررك يا نيقولا، واسمرك في الأرض بهذا التكرار (Mūsā, *Fasād* 14).

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14).[340] The seeds of Nicola's downfall were planted the moment he took over leadership of the

mine, perhaps the moment he arrived in Egypt and attempted to claim it as his own country. The

imagined act of incest leads to the defamiliarization of the landscape—materially, through the

destruction of the mine, and psychologically, through the transformation of Ilya in Nicola's eyes

from his "paradise and salvation" (جنته وثوابه)[341] to his "sin and punishment" (خطيئته وعقابه).[342]

After Ilya's death, Nicola feels that he has finally forged a connection to place. However, both

his roots in Eurasia and his own role in the defilation of the landscape mark him as eternally

other. The lustful feelings he has toward his daughter as well as his imagined sexual relationship

with her are evidence of the internal moral bankruptcy that allows him to play a role in the

exploitation of the land and its people. His actions and their repercussions communicate a

broader condemnation of colonial and neocolonial practices that produce environmental crises.

Nicola's downfall as a representative of foreign exploitation and a beneficiary of

colonialism is absolute. However, this narrative thread also exposes the translocal connections

that tie the desert, and the Darhīb in particular, to the capital of Cairo in *Seeds of Corruption*.

Although Nicola lives and works at the mine, overseeing its operation, his funding comes from

men located outside of the desert, such as Anṭūn Bey, who resides in Cairo. After the talc is

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[340] Mikhail grants the mountain agency in the English translation through her use of the word "revenge." The original Arabic is more oblique, framing Ilya's death and Nicola's downfall as the price or natural consequence of possessing the mountain:

وهو [نيكولا] يحلم بامتلاكه [الجبل]..والآن.
ها هو نيكولا المأساوي يمتلك جبله فعلا..فأي ثمن رهيب ذلك الذي دفعه فيه؟ (16 *Fasād* ,Mūsā).

Here is my more literal translation:

"He [Nicola] dreamed of possessing it [the mountain]…and now…
Here is the tragic Nicola, truly in possession of his mountain…But what terrible price did he pay for it?"

[341] Mūsā, *Seeds* 134.

[342] Mūsā, *Seeds* 125.

mined, it is transported to Cairo for use in Anṭūn Bey's cosmetics factory. During the school

year, Ilya spends her weekends and short breaks with Anṭūn Bey and his wife, who are unable to

have children. She refers to him as "her winter father" (والدها الشتوي) (Mūsā, *Seeds* 126).[343] Like

Nicola, this father figure lusts after Ilya. He goes so far as to arrange her meeting with the king,

confident that once she has been raped, he will be able to overcome any objections and marry

her, despite the significant age difference between them. At the time, Ilya is sixteen years old.

Figures like Sheikh 'Alī, Īsā's uncle, self-consciously "[become] a link between the

desert and the urban centers" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 67).[344] Sheikh 'Alī serves as a guide, revealing the

desert's natural resources to foreigners and Egyptians unfamiliar with the land. He views their

exploitation of the mines as a path to obtaining the knowledge and skills that will enable him and

his people to take over and benefit from these riches in the future. Sheikh 'Alī's goal is not to

protect the environment and prevent its exploitation and development, but rather to eventually

replace foreign intervention with indigenous intervention.

Seeds of Corruption closes with Nicola yearning to be absorbed into the desert. He wants

to turn to stone like Koka Lanka, becoming a part of the earth. Nicola tells himself: "This is the

miracle of true belonging, Nicola, and it will be repeated with you."[345] However, as he "[mutters]

curses in his poorly accented Arabic," the reader is reminded that Nicola does not belong to this

space any more than it belongs to him (Mūsā, *Seeds* 166).[346] He is not fluent in nor a part of its

vernacular landscape in the way that Īsā was, for example.

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[343] Mūsā, *Fasād* 118.

[344] يكون جسراً ومعبراً بين الحضر والبدو (Mūsā, *Fasād* 66).

[345] The translation here is mine.

تلك هي معجزة الانتماء الحقيقي يا نيكولا، وسوف تتكرر معك (Mūsā, *Fasād* 150).

[346] ويبرطم بلكنة ركيكة سبابا عربيا (Mūsā, *Fasād* 151).

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Following Ilya's death and the shutdown of operations at the Darhīb, the desert begins to slowly reclaim the mining camp. Dust fills the courtyard, reducing it to *aṭlāl*. The collapsed mine is already in ruins. As Nicola awaits his own hoped-for transformation into stone, he "[wipes] the dusty sweat that [flows] on his body with his big dusty palm, thereby filling all the pores of his body with sand" (Mūsā, *Seeds* 169).[347] Nicola is being claimed by the desert, but he is turning to blowing sand and dust rather than fixed stone. In his death, he will become a part of the universal desert. However, unfixed in space, he will pass through but remain separate from the local, specific landscape of the Darhīb. He will turn to grains of the sand described by Adūnīs, defined by the movement and change which in turn define the geography of the desert, but only indexing time, not place. Nicola will remain, in death, like the reader who accesses the space of the desert through the translocal and universal connections offered in *al-makān–al-matāh* but who can only approach its vernacular landscapes through translation, as an outsider.

Like *Seeds of Corruption* and *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *The Tent* represents the desert as a space that is both grounded in the local and unbounded by it. Although Fāṭima does not live in the wilderness like Asouf or Īsā and she may not be at home in the desert itself, her home is in the desert. When she is at Anne's house and the light pollution blots out the stars and planets, she feels lonely, disconnected from the familiar celestial and terrestrial landscapes that she knows. As discussed in Chapter 2, Fāṭima's physical movement into the material desert is restricted by the walls that surround her father's house and courtyard as well as, later, by her disablement. For Fāṭima, these walls represent impenetrable borders. However, she creates a subterranean desert world in her imagination where her double, Zahwa, can roam the desert in her place. Zahwa is at

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[347] ويزيح العرق المترب الذي ينهال غزيراً من جسده العاري المترب بكفه الكبيرة المتربة فيصبح التراب ملء مسامه جميعاً
(Mūsā, *Fasād* 152).

home in this environment, in stark contrast to Fāṭima. Fāṭima draws a comparison between them, narrating: "Her [Zahwa's] laughter rang out even louder as my feet sank into the soft sand and I struggled to move them forward, while she stepped lightly and ran across the sand without her feet leaving a single trace" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 39).[348] Even in this world of her imagination, Fāṭima recognizes that she does not quite belong to the desert, no matter how much she may desire it.

For Fāṭima, the desert represents a literary space of freedom where she can rewrite her reality. Abdo notes that Bedouin women historically enjoyed greater independence and fewer restrictions on their movement when they lived the traditional life of the desert nomad: "Settling has changed the Bedouin's use of the landscape, negatively affecting the women who must now live in walled, barred, and gated houses" (Abdo, 270). Abdo describes the world that Fāṭima imagines as a "golden past" (Abdo, 270). As touched on above, she argues that Fāṭima's act of creation mirrors al-Ṭaḥāwī's own effort, motivated by nostalgia, to reclaim and preserve the "lost oasis" of her Bedouin childhood. Traditional myths, songs, and proverbs are gathered within the text alongside descriptions of the desert inhabited by Musallam, Siqīma, and Zahwa. This project is framed by an econostalgia expressed through Musallam's deep knowledge of the land and its creatures. Siqīma and Zahwa enjoy greater freedom than does Fāṭima, but they do not demonstrate the same environmental knowledge as does Musallam. Rather, they assert their connection to the desert through their affiliation with its nonhuman creatures, especially Siqīma, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Outside of Fāṭima's subterranean world, Mūḥā, a gypsy goatherd, is the only named female character to demonstrate a true belonging to the space of the desert. She is free to wander and roam, coming and going as she pleases. She and the young girls of her community are a part

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[348] تجلجل ضحكتها أكثر وقدماي تغوصان في الرمل الناعم بصعوبة، أنقلها وهي تنقر بساقيها في الرمل وتعدو بلا خوف ولا أثر لقدمها (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 49).

of the wilderness. Fāṭima narrates: "The sand stretched forever, tinged with the color of a youthful sun, and their faces drank up the gold poured over the heavens and the earth" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 18).[349] Their skin is described as colored by the sun, like the sand itself. They belong to the landscape, like the Bedouins in *Seeds of Corruption*. However, this belonging does not inspire affinity with or sympathy for other desert creatures. Mūḥā and the other girls hunt down scorpions, crushing their tails, and when one of them discovers a snake, she stitches its mouth shut. Women like Fāṭima and Siqīma are affiliated with nature in a way that facilitates the abuse, oppression, and exploitation of both, by women as well as by men, as evidenced here.

Although the physical desert that surrounds Fāṭima is inaccessible to her, Anne, a Western woman doing ethnographic research on the Bedouins, regards her as an important source of information, treating her as a native informant. Anne's house is a miniature oasis, surrounded by a variety of trees and plants. She keeps a small menagerie of animals, including tortoises, hedgehogs, snakes, and birds, as well as a young gazelle that reminds Fāṭima of her own gazelle, Zahwa, which died. The wild animals, kept in captivity, are a manifestation of Anne's desire to possess the desert and all of its creatures—human and animal alike, including Fāṭima. Anne tells Fāṭima: "You are untamable. This is civilization," confirming Fāṭima's otherness by comparing her to a wild animal and asserting her right to keep her in captivity, another specimen in her menagerie (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 94).

Fāṭima's role as an interpreter tasked with rendering the vernacular landscape comprehensible to Anne is most clearly evident when Anne asks her to perform her Bedouin-ness, and the desert with it, at a party. Anne requests a story and Fāṭima feels forced to oblige. Fāṭima relates the story of Siqīma, Musallam, and Zahwa from Siqīma's perspective, beginning

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[349] الرمل لامنته، مخضب بلون الشمس الفتية، والوجوه تتشرب لون الذهب المسكوب في السماء والأرض (26 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

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with Siqīma and Musallam's courtship and ending with his disappearance in a sandstorm. She occasionally interrupts the flow of her narrative to explain characters, events, and contexts, attempting to make them accessible to her non-Bedouin listeners. However, echoing Kilīṭū, Fāṭima is not always able to find a point of entry that is true to the narrative but comprehensible to her audience. For example, when she introduces Musallam, she struggles to explain who he is and how he was perceived by the Bedouin community upon his arrival among them. She says: "The slave is a slave and the horseman is a wanderer, but he was neither slave nor horseman. He looked like the priest who visited the church on the Coptic Mountain" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 100).[350] Fāṭima describes the process of interpretation itself, narrating: "I would interrupt the stories and explain them, and I would pause and repeat" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 100).[351] Following these interludes, Anne urges Fāṭima to return to the narrative, saying things like, "The story, ya-Fatim, tell the story," and "Carry on, ya-Fatim," treating her once again like a trained animal, an entertaining curiosity (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 100, 102).[352]

Following the conclusion of Fāṭima's story, Anne reinterprets the narrative once more for the audience: "She took a while to explain to her guests" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 105).[353] Anne pressures Fāṭima to universalize the space of the desert she narrates, making it accessible to an audience of outsiders by domesticating it. At the same time, Fāṭima must perform the desert in a way that maintains the exoticism that makes her and it attractive, worthy of their Orientalist gaze. There is a now-familiar tension between the universal and the particular at play here. However, Fāṭima's

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[350] العبد عبد والفارس جوَّال، لكنه لم يكن عبداً ولا فارسا، كان يبدو كالقسيس الذي زار كنيسة الجبل القبطية (118 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

[351] أُقطِّع الحكي وأُفصِّله، أُمهل وأُعيد (118 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

[352] حكاءة .. حكاءة .. ها يا فاطم .. قولي (118 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

ها .. ها .. قولي يا فاطم (119 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

[353] تشرح كثيراً .. (122 *al-Khibā'*, al-Ṭaḥāwī).

entrapment, her inability to wander in the physical spaces outside of her imagination, eventually leads to a breakdown of the boundaries between the subterranean desert world that she makes and remakes and the space where her physical body exists. This is linked to Fāṭima's psychological distress and her subsequent inability to distinguish one world from the other. The resulting narrative increasingly forecloses the possibility of the reader or listener's entry into either space, rendering the desert inaccessible once more. Movement and change are a constant in the desert, as Fāṭima herself acknowledges earlier in the text: "The soft swells and winding curves of the desert's body shift and change. The sands creep and the floods trace furrows of sadness across the lonely desert tracks" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 85).[354] However, Fāṭima's authentic performance of the personal geographies of her private desert, distinct from the performance she is forced to give for Anne and her guests, is inspired not by her physical wandering but rather by forced stillness. It is a path to escape and a form of empowerment.

Later, Fāṭima rebels against Anne. She thinks: "I am not a frog in a crystal jar for you to gaze upon….I'm not going to perform Bedouin folk songs. And I don't want to jabber away in any language. All I will do is wail like the ravens of doom" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 107-108).[355] Fāṭima reverts to an animal state, fully embracing her affiliation with the nonhuman world, to resist Anne. She compares herself to her mare, Khayra, which Anne repeatedly mates with different studs to produce new horse breeds. Fāṭima asks: "Are you fed up, Khayra, like me? Books and writing paper, pregnancy and labor" (al-Ṭaḥāwī, 108).[356] The unrecognizable translations and

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[354] الصحراء تلفظ حدباتها وتعاريج جسدها الرخو وتتغير، والرمال تحبو، والسيول تختط أخاديد حزنها فوق المسالك
(al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 103).

[355] أنا لست ضفدعةً في بلورة تتفرجين عليها .. لأن أهنهن بالمجاريد، ولن أرطن بأية لغة، فقط سانوح مثل الغربان المشؤومة
(al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 125).

[356] هل سئمت يا "خيرة" مثلي .. الورقة والكتاب، الحمل والنتاج (al-Ṭaḥāwī, *al-Khibā'* 126).

interpretations of Fāṭima's stories that Anne captures on her pages are the strange breeds to which she gives birth. Their telling physically affects Fāṭima's body. She wails, as if in labor.

In *The Tent*, al-Ṭaḥāwī collects poems, songs, and stories traditionally told and recited by women. Abdo explains that she "is deeply invested in the recuperative excavation and recording of Bedouin women's lost or uncredited 'oral tradition'" (Abdo, 274). However, the narratives Fāṭima crafts for Anne and her friends represent a corruption of this tradition and the desert world of her imagination that she "writes" to understand and escape her limited physical reality. Furthermore, Anne then steals these stories from Fāṭima, laying claim to them by setting them down in writing. Fāṭima, already not fully at home in her desert world, resists Anne by policing the borders of the subterranean space she creates, preventing anyone else from entering and making it their own. Her wail foreshadows the text's transformation into a pure cry of *ḥanīn* like *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, though this transformation does not foreclose the possibility of access in the Palestinian text in the same way that it does here. The meaning of *ḥanīn* I have employed throughout most of this dissertation, which is also the most common definition of the term, focuses on the complex act of yearning itself. However, as I touched on in Chapter 1, *ḥanīn* can also refer to "the sound produced" by that yearning (Lane, Book I, 653). I would argue that the *Tent*, more than any other text I have analyzed in these pages except perhaps *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, is itself an embodiment of *ḥanīn* in this sense, giving voice as it does on almost every page to Fāṭima's various feelings of *ḥanīn*.

As in the other two novels discussed in this chapter, *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Seeds of Corruption*, the desert environment of *The Tent* represents an "evacuated scene," to return to the terminology adopted in Chapter 1, in which human presence is limited and nature is foregrounded. This facilitates the imagining of the desert as "empty" in a way that enables its

reframing as universal. The translocal, in contrast, relies on the particular for the expansion of its geographies. In literature, translocalism and universality can provide the entry points for the cultivation of a sense of responsibility, stewardship, or, at the most basic level, shared loss over the destruction of flora, fauna, and the land. However, when narratives focused on "evacuated scenes," especially narratives of universality, are not checked by a simultaneous groundedness in place, and that provided by vernacular landscapes in particular, they can open the door to exploitation, co-option, and erasure—like that experienced by Fāṭima.

The "crowded scene," in contrast, unfolds in sites of nature with a significant human presence. This is the focus of the works of Palestinian literature studied in this dissertation, which repeatedly assert that human presence even when their narratives wander into the (currently) uninhabited wilderness. "Empty" space represents a threat, providing evidence to support the Zionist myth of a "land without a people" and increasing the possibility of seizure, so *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* in Palestinian texts that articulate a universality do so alongside a careful detailing of the local or the translocal. In the following section, I return to *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, reading it alongside Muḥammad al-Makhzangī's *Memories of a Meltdown* to explore the ways in which this tension is negotiated.

III. The Space of Palestine

In Chapter 3, I traced some of the manifestations of the ecological native in Palestinian literature through Yaḥyā Yakhlif's *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, Saḥar Khalīfa's *The Inheritance*, and Raja Shehadeh's autobiographical *Palestinian Walks*. *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, I argued, expresses Palestinian ecological responsibility through the description of the productive cultivation of the land by the *fallāḥ/a*, or peasant, before 1948. *The Inheritance* challenges the myth of the ecological native articulated in *A Lake Beyond the Wind*, reframing this figure as an

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ecoambiguous native. *Palestinian Walks* references the history laid out in *A Lake Beyond the Wind* but makes a claim to the land through Raja's environmentalist message, articulated as he attempts to re-map the landscape through his walks and in the courtroom as a lawyer. *A Lake Beyond the Wind* and *Palestinian Walks* reveal a physical distancing of the Palestinian from the space of Palestine—through exile or through legal and physical restrictions on movement within Palestine and Israel. I introduced the idea of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism to describe the cultivation or care of the land in literature and the imagination that establishes a connection to place when that land is no longer physically accessible. This tending of the stars is largely personal, forging or reestablishing an intimate connection between the writer or character and the land.

Unlike the writers of the works of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism explored in Chapter 3, Muḥammad al-Makhzangī's ties to Palestine in *Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl* are neither personal nor inherited. Instead, al-Makhzangī connects the Chernobyl disaster to the Palestinian crisis, using it in turn to explore the tension between his humanism and his reflexive anti-Semitism. *Memories of a Meltdown* expands a local narrative of environmental degradation centered on Kiev to encompass the geography of Palestine, crafting a transnational understanding of place through the lens of ecological crisis in *al-makān–al-matāh*.

Al-Makhzangī (b. 1950) was born in al-Manṣūra in the Egyptian Delta. He studied medicine in Cairo and psychiatry and alternative medicine in Kiev, earning a Ph.D. He is also a journalist and an accomplished author, primarily of short fiction. Many of the short stories published in his first collection, *al-Ātī* (1983; The One Yet to Come), are drawn from his own experiences as an intern at a tuberculosis treatment center in the port city of Damietta. Al-Makhzangī's interest in the natural world is reflected in the collections *Ḥayawānāt ayāminā*

(2006; Animals in Our Days), in which each short story or vignette is centered around a different animal, and *Funduq al-thaʻālib* (2010; The Foxes' Hotel), which is subtitled "33 stories about nature and creatures" (33 حكاية عن الطبيعة والكائنات).

Memories of a Meltdown brings together two autobiographical works that record the author's impressions of the Soviet Union as a medical student studying there during the late 1980s and 1990. It is this displacement that lays the groundwork of human wandering necessary for the creation of *al-makān–al-matāh*. The first text, "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl," reflects on the ecological and psychological impact of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster on the city of Kiev, located 85 kilometers from the nuclear power plant. The beauty of Kiev and the surrounding countryside is juxtaposed with descriptions of the effects of the accident at the nuclear reactor on the human and natural environments. The text is composed of vignettes that the author describes as "moments…collected while traveling through the fearful depths of an irradiated season" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 22).[357] The second text, "Moscow Queues," captures Muḥammad's[358] musings during a 1990 visit to the titular city. He utilizes his encounters with anti-Jewish sentiment, both in Moscow and within himself, to explore the contemporary Palestinian crisis. The violence of the First Intifada (1987-1993) and al-Makhzangī's disillusionment with the Soviet Union in its last years form the often-unspoken background.

In his preface to *Memories of a Meltdown*, al-Makhzangī discusses the unexpected connections between "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" and "Moscow Queues." Although the two texts were written in different periods of the author's life and superficially have little

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[357] لحظات رحت أجمعها. وأنا أمضى بين حنايا الربيع الملفوح بالاشعاع أو الرعب من هذا الاشعاع (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 32).

All translations are from Muḥammad al-Makhzangī, *Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl*, Trans. by Samah Selim (Cairo: American U in Cairo P, 2006).

[358] As in *Saʼakūnu bayna al-lawz* and *Palestinian Walks*, I refer to the narrator of *Memories of a Meltdown* as Muḥammad to distinguish between him and the author, even though the text is explicitly autobiographical.

relationship to each other, common themes bind them together, linking the events they describe and forging translocal connections between the various geographies—Kiev, Moscow, and Palestine/Israel—explored. Both texts share the same catalyst for their writing: Muḥammad's unique positionality. As an Egyptian in Kiev, he is both an outsider and a firsthand witness to and victim of the Chernobyl disaster in "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl." He is a writer, journalist, and doctor, and he feels a responsibility to record his "experience of an unprecedented historical moment of human terror" in these capacities (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 20).[359] In "Moscow Queues," Muḥammad is similarly situated as outsider, participant, and witness with regard to anti-Jewish sentiment.

"The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" and "Moscow Queues" unfold in cities that are for Muḥammad spaces of transit. Psychologically, he straddles the border between the Soviet Union and Egypt. He creates *al-makān–al-matāh* when he encounters, through his wandering, a Palestine and Israel that are unfixed by the weight of competing efforts by him, a Russian nationalist he overhears, and the members of Moscow's Jewish community whom he later meets to imagine them. Here, in *al-makān–al-matāh*, he juxtaposes the horror of the Chernobyl meltdown with that of the Palestinian crisis.

As alluded to above, this is accomplished in part through the simple, almost accidental act of publishing the texts together in a single volume. Reading the two works alongside each other serves to highlight shared themes, even when their subjects do not overlap. The key to one of these connections lies in the title of the collected works. As noted, the English title of the translated volume that contains both "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" and "Moscow Queues" is *Memories of a Meltdown: An Egyptian between Moscow and Chernobyl*. The original Arabic

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[359] تجربة في لحظة من لحظات تاريخ الرعب البشري (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 30).

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volume containing the two texts is called *Laḥaẓāt gharaq jazīrat al-ḥūt* (لحظات غرق جزيرة الحوت).

A direct translation would be "moments from the sinking of whale island." The story of a "whale island" appears in the first of Sindbād the Sailor's seven voyages, sailors' tales that are believed to have been recorded in Arabic sometime between the 10th and the 12th centuries.[360] In the course of their journeys, Sindbād and his fellow sailors anchor their ship to what appears to be an island. However, it is in reality a large whale floating on the surface. When they come ashore for the night, the whale feels the heat of their fires and dives to the bottom of the ocean, drowning the sailors. It is a story about unhoming and defamiliarization, whereby the safe, knowable surface of the island is rendered uncanny through the revelation of its true nature. In the English translation, al-Makhzangī's preface is titled "The Descent of the Whale," really driving home the link to the tale. Building on the idea of an attractive surface concealing the potential for destruction, al-Makhzangī draws a link between Chernobyl, the Soviet Union, and, ultimately, the post-1967 Zionist movement. This move also more subtly highlights the parallels between the modest campaign for Ukrainian independence from "Soviet 'occupation'" that was unfolding in 1989 and the First Intifada resisting Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories that began in 1987.[361] While the former culminated in independence gained through the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the latter came to a conclusion with the Madrid Conference the same year and the subsequent signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Although al-Makhzangī explicitly links the story of whale island to the illusion carefully crafted by the Soviet Union, it also provides a useful analogy for the notion of unstable

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[360] U. Marzolph, "Sindbād" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 2016, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sindbad-SIM_7046>.

[361] Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Random House, 2009).

geographies. Such sites may rapidly displace their populations as they are transformed. Those who survive to bear witness may re-create the pre-crisis landscape in memory and literature, but these re-creations must be constantly reimagined to counteract the material realities that exist beneath them, threatening to burst through.

"Memories of a Meltdown" opens with an accounting of the Chernobyl accident that occurred on April 26, 1986. Muḥammad discusses the warning signs that were either missed or ignored. Chernobyl was part of a comprehensive Soviet nuclear power program, although it was the first nuclear power plant built in Ukraine. It was intended to provide power to Kiev and the surrounding countryside, much of which was farmland. Construction began in 1970. The explosion contaminated areas of Ukraine, Belarus, and the Russian Federation and 28 workers died quickly from severe radiation. In Belarus, 485 villages and settlements had to be abandoned. Seventy were buried. In the weeks that followed, elevated levels of radiation were recorded across the world.[362] A concrete "sarcophagus" was ultimately designed to seal in the worst of the radioactivity. Muḥammad highlights the central role played by the Chernobyl accident in the eventual fall of the Soviet Union, calling it "the first large crack in the walls of the magnificent edifice that was the Soviet Union" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 7).[363] The threat of radiation poisoning, undetectable by the human eye, spread fear and distrust among the population, which were compounded by Soviet efforts to conceal the scope of the disaster. Although the Chernobyl accident is the most obviously catastrophic ecological crisis of the Cold War period, it is worth

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[362] Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*, Trans. Keith Gessen (New York: Picador, 2006), 1-2.

[363] تشيرنوبيل...بدت لي كأول صدع كبير يُرصد في جدران البناء الهائل للاتحاد السوفيتي (13 *Laḥaẓāt* ,al-Makhzangī).

noting that it was part of a larger global trend of significant interventions in the environment driven by political and military considerations.[364]

The shifting geographies of Palestine and Israel under the First Intifada form the background for the events that unfold in "Moscow Queues." Israel is evoked early on when Muḥammad overhears a Russian nationalist exclaiming: "We can't live with the Jews. They must return to the place which has been given them. They must be forbidden in Moscow and all our other Russian cities" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 95).[365] The source of the Russian nationalist's anger is the continued presence of Jews in Russia after the establishment of Israel, a place he views as explicitly reserved for them. Muḥammad is not Palestinian, and he does not make any personal claim to the landscape of Palestine. He is also not Russian, so the Jewish presence in Moscow will cease to impact him personally once he returns home to Egypt. However, while later observing a Jewish man on the street, Muḥammad is surprised to also be overwhelmed by feelings of immense hostility toward him. He locates the source of his anger in his sympathy for Palestinian suffering under Israeli rule during the First Intifada. However, his forced affinity with the Jewish population in Moscow on the basis of their shared outsider status and similar appearance relative to the Russian majority population also discomfits him. As in the case of the Chernobyl disaster, then, Muḥammad finds that in addition to being a witness, he is also very much a part of the events taking place around him. Muḥammad is made a participant through his own anti-Semitism, which is complicated when he recognizes himself in another Jewish man. This act of identification emphasizes his lack of true belonging *here* even as it forges an

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[364] See *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, eds. J.R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2010).

[365] نحن لن نستطيع العيش مع اليهود. لا بد أن يعودوا إلى المكان الذي سُمح لهم بالإقامة فيه. لا بد أن يمنعوا من دخول موسكو ومدننا الروسية كلها
(al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 154).

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uncomfortable alliance with a group he thought of as purely "other" when he was in the *there* of Egypt.

While walking, wandering the streets of Moscow, Muḥammad sees a Jewish man in "a dark, shiny summer suit with a knee-length jacket; the diamond-studded Star of David hanging from a gold chain tightly clasped around his neck" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 98).[366] This encounter forms the gateway for Muḥammad's entry into an imagined Palestine and Israel. As Muḥammad watches him bargaining in what he perceives to be an aggressive manner, he speculates: "This is exactly the sort of man who will go to Israel, don the tight, Khaki uniform and patrol the streets with an Uzi. In a collapsed, deadly moment, he'll turn a score of tired, defenseless Palestinian workers against a wall and fire" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 99).[367] The Palestine and Israel that Muḥammad sketches out through this vivid description are his personal imagining of real events, though not lived reality on his part. Muḥammad's Israel is different from the parallel landscape evoked by the Russian nationalist as he speaks. Although they both harbor anti-Jewish sentiment, the Russian nationalist's feelings are based on the Jewish presence here, in Moscow. Muḥammad's feelings, on the other hand, are expressed in a way that connects them to the Jewish presence in Palestine and Israel, and specifically to the establishment of Israel, a different geography from that of the city in which he now walks.

Muḥammad finds that he, too, is on unsteady ground, the earth moving beneath his feet. Watching the Jewish man, he thinks "You hate him and try to discover the real source of this hatred" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 99).[368] Then, comes the following thought: "Perhaps you

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[366] بزته الصيفية الغامضة اللماعة طويلة السترة حتى الركبتين، ونجمة داوود المعلقة في سلسلة ذهبية محبوكة على عنقه ووسطها فص ماسي (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 165).

[367] هذا بالضبط هو من سيذهب إلى إسرائيل ويرتدي الزي العسكري المرقش المحبوك ويتيه برشاشة ((العوزي)). وفي لحظة من لحظات النفوس الميتة سيدير عشرة من العمال الفلسطينيين المتعبين العزل نحو جدار في تل أبيب ويطلق عليهم النار (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 167).

[368] تشعر نحوه بكراهية تحاول أن تتعقب مصدرها (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 166).

should rethink this whole idea of a common ancestral heritage. You hate his arrogance[; he is

from 'here' but he boasts that he belongs 'there.' Then he corrupts and ruins 'here'] (al-

Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 99).[369] This segment precedes Muḥammad's description of the scene of

violent confrontation and Palestinian death that he first heard reported on the radio and then

imagines in vivid detail, quoted above. However, the image appears in Muḥammad's mind in

this exact moment not because of anything that happened over *there* but rather because he has

come face-to-face with his Jewish other *here*. Muḥammad's hostility is connected to the creation

of Israel and the violence of the First Intifada. But it's also rooted in his desire to separate

himself from the "common ancestral heritage" that displaces them both in Moscow, exposing

whatever sense of belonging to the Soviet Union that he has cultivated through his years here as

equally "false." This builds on a quandary Muḥammad finds himself pondering after overhearing

the Russian nationalist, when he thinks to himself: "You are an Arab and a sea of blood and

bitterness and pain lies between you and Zionism. But you're also a humanist and an intellectual.

You love Kafka and *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the beauty of Einstein's theory of

relativity and Chagall's murals. The contradiction frightens you" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 95-

96).[370] Muḥammad believes that his animosity toward militant Zionists more broadly and this

Jewish man in particular undermines his vision of himself as a humanist and an intellectual,

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[369] لعلك تعيد النظر ولا يميل ميزانك ناحية الموروث والدراج. لكن الكراهية تجتاحك نحو صلافته..فهو من ((هنا))، ويتبجح بأنه ينتمى إلى ((هناك))، ثم إنه ((هنا)) يفسد ويخرّب (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 166).

I've altered Selim's translation in the bracketed section to more closely correspond to the original Arabic. In full, Selim's translation reads: "Perhaps you should rethink this whole idea of a common ancestral heritage. You hate his arrogance, and the way he pretends to be from that contested place, even though he's really from here; his false air of belonging elsewhere."

[370] أنت عربي وبينك وبين الصهيونية بحر من الدم والمرارة والألم. يفزعك الخلط. لكنك مثقف إنساني أيضا. فأنت تعشق كافكا وكتاب تفسير الأحلام وجمالية نسبية اينشتاين وتعجبك بافتتان جداريات شاجال. يفزعك الخلط (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 155).

especially as that vision is based in part on his admiration for a number of great Jewish historical figures. He is lost in his personal geographies, the familiar landscapes destabilized, and is unsure how to find his way again.

The conflict in Palestine is also here, in Moscow. The failure of the concrete "sarcophagus" that was designed to seal in the fallout from the Chernobyl meltdown has certain parallels to that of the wall dividing the West Bank from Israel that was to be built in the years to come. Neither are able to contain their crises. In "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl," elaborations on the beauty of Kiev and the surrounding countryside alternate with descriptions of the effects of the accident at the nuclear reactor on the human and natural environments. Although the landscape maintains its splendor, it is poisoned. The poison reaches Egypt when contaminated baby formula is discovered in Muḥammad's home country, pointing once again to the failure of national borders to contain major environmental crises. A fellow Egyptian receives a letter from his wife informing him that their son drank this very same powdered milk.

The Jewish man Muḥammad encounters and follows in "Moscow Queues" eventually takes notice of him and confronts him with a group of his friends. Muḥammad narrates the moment in the second person: "The circle narrows around you on Gorky Street in the middle of Moscow, within site of the walls, bridges, and domes of the Kremlin" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 100).[371] Muḥammad's anger at Zionism and Israeli violence against Palestinians can also be understood as anger at the ways that Israel has transformed the landscape of Palestine since its establishment. He directs his anger toward a Jewish man walking in a city in which Muḥammad himself has witnessed anti-Semitism. This anti-Semitism maps out yet another Palestinian geography, one that provides space for the acknowledgement of Jewish suffering and a history of

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[371] وتطبق عليك حلقتهم فوق رصيف شارع ((جوركي)) في قلب ((موسكو))، وعلى مشهد من أسوار ((الكريملين)) وأبراجها وقبابها (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 168).

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persecution and a lack of homeland. The conflict between these competing landscapes of the imagination, which of course also find their counterpoints outside of literature, threatens to explode on a street geographically distant from both Palestine and Israel. This distance is emphasized by the architectural markers and monuments that surround Muḥammad. But this city is connected, like all cities of the world, to the violence and conflict there.

The Palestinian crisis is framed as an international crisis by creating a translocalism in *al-makān–al-matāh* that connects it to the massive environmental catastrophe of Chernobyl. The juxtaposition, though not a part of either text's conception or initial formulation, succeeds in highlighting the ecological aspect of the former and the political element of the latter. The switch from a first-person narrator in "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" to a second-person narrator in "Moscow Queues" implicates the reader, further expanding the text's reach. The reader becomes a participant in the narrative. The text's borders grow to encompass this reader, wherever s/he may be and in whatever language s/he is reading.

Despite the thematic similarities between "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" and "Moscow Queues" that enable this gesture toward translocalism, important differences do exist between the two texts. There is the matter of length: "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" is almost three and a half times longer than "Moscow Queues" in the English translation. The disparity is even greater in the Arabic volume. The pace of each text also acts as a foil to the other. "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" is full of movement as the author explores the effects of the disaster on Kiev and the surrounding countryside. As the population wonders what the long-term effects of this invisible menace will be, there is a sense of anticipation, but not of standing still. On the other hand, "Moscow Queues" is organized by the lines of people that Muḥammad encounters throughout the city, all waiting for something. While the full impact of the Chernobyl accident is

still unknown and the Soviet Union has yet to fall, there is a sense that the disaster itself has already occurred. The whale has already dived into the ocean depths. The landscape of Kiev and the surrounding countryside has been permanently defamiliarized through its poisoning. All that is left to do is to deal with the terrible aftermath. In contrast, the First Intifada and the Palestinian crisis were still very much ongoing at the time of writing.

This distinction is further highlighted through a comparison of the endings of the "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" and "Moscow Queues" in the English translation. The sections of the translated "Moscow Queues" do not follow the same order as the Arabic original, so each ends at a different point. In the English translation, "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" closes with Muḥammad's visit to a graveyard in Babi Yar on the edge of Kiev in winter. He finds himself there by accident, but quickly becomes intent on locating "a tombstone that marks a victim of Chernobyl" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 79).[372] Muḥammad makes no mention of Babi Yar's historical significance, but it haunts the text's final paragraphs, which provide a lead-in to "Moscow Queues" in the collected volume.

Babi Yar was the site of one of the largest massacres carried out by the Nazi regime and is a reminder of yet another occupation: German forces occupied Kiev on September 19, 1941. On September 29 and 30, the Jewish population that had not fled was rounded up and taken to the Babi Yar ravine, where 33,771 Jews were shot dead.[373] The horrific events that took place there have been recorded in music, memorials, and literature, but not here in this text.

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[372] شاهد لواحد قضى في تشرنوبيل (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 144).

[373] See Sarah Fainberg, "Memory at the Margins: The Shoah in Ukraine (1991-2011)" in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games*, eds. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 86-102.

After searching at length, Muḥammad finds what he is looking for. The tombstone bears a single word, the question "Why?" (لماذا). Muḥammad elaborates: "Why…to what end?" (ليه؟..وعلشان أيه؟) (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 80).[374] All that is left for Muḥammad and the other survivors of the Chernobyl disaster to do is to remember and to try to understand. The Babi Yar massacre, just beyond the margins of the page, seems to ask the same questions. But Muḥammad suppresses these voices. Adding them to the narrative would further complicate the internal conflict between his humanism and his hostility toward the other that he explores in the following text. It would also blur the narrative boundaries between the Chernobyl disaster and the Palestinian crisis, transforming al-Makhzangī's juxtaposition of the two events into a more direct comparison. Or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that doing so would create a coherent narrative tying World War II to both Soviet post-war reconstruction and the establishment of Israel. This would make clear the linkage and shared historical roots of the construction of Chernobyl and the intensification of the Zionist movement that led to the establishment of Israel and the Palestinian crisis. The graveyard is a site of memorialization through which the past is accessed. It is not fixed, as is evident by the competing histories that seek primacy here. But it is a place of the past that has already been laid claim to, making it static in a way. However, the narratives inspired by the dead have the potential to influence the geographies of places created in memory, literature, and the imagination, even destabilizing places that have already taken shape in these sites.

In contrast to the end of "The Four Seasons of Chernobyl" in a graveyard, the English translation of "Moscow Queues" concludes in front of a subway station, a site of transit. Here, the narrator takes leave of the man who rescued him from the confrontation with the Jewish man

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[374] al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 144.

and his friends. It is a space of movement and border crossing, a micro-wandering space, much as Kiev and Moscow are for Muḥammad. By way of explanation for the altercation, Muḥammad tells his savior that the man he had been watching had been "wearing a six-cornered star" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 102).[375] The crimes of Zionism fade away, eclipsed by Muḥammad's anti-Semitism as he realizes that the man to whom he is speaking is also very likely Jewish. Again addressing the reader, Muḥammad says: "At that very moment, you notice that his skin is olive-tinted, his eyebrows, thick and dark in spite of his gray hair, and his eyes black. 'Like us,' you say to yourself as you clumsily bid him good-bye in front of the subway station" (al-Makhzangī, *Meltdown* 102).[376] This tenuous acceptance of identification with the other seems to offer a hint of mutual understanding and open the possibility, no matter how unlikely, of a jointly imagined and shared geography of Palestine and Israel, in literature if not outside of it. However, this act of recognition occurs in a liminal space, a wandering place, where both parties are ultimately outsiders to the conflict, despite their loyalties.

Palestine is an idea that exists in literature and songs and the memories of its refugees. It is a space that wanders, encountering other spaces through the movements of Palestinians in diaspora. However, it is also the site of an ongoing crisis transforming the physical landscape of Palestine even as it unfolds suddenly on a distant street in another country. By linking the political calamity of Palestine to the environmental crisis of Chernobyl, social justice is connected to ecological responsibility, and both transcend the national borders within which they are occurring, forging translocal connections in *al-makān–al-matāh* that demand recognition. In

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[375] يُعلق نجمة سداسية أريضاً وهذا.. (al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt* 170).

[376] في هذه اللحظة تكتشف وأنت تنظر إليه أن بياضه يخالطه سمرة... حواجبه كثيفة وعميقة الدكنة رغم الشيب في رأسه وعيناه سوداوان ((يشبهنا)) – تقول في نفسك ذلك، وترتبك وأنت تودعه أمام مدخل نفق المترو (170 al-Makhzangī, *Laḥaẓāt*).

this way, Muḥammad magnifies his critique and simultaneously amplifies the narration of both Palestine and Chernobyl, though physically distant from the former.

The re-creation of Palestine in literature by refugees and exiles similarly removed from its material geographies as well as by West Bank residents cut off from their former homes and other spaces they once laid claim to can also produce *al-amkina–al-matāhāt*. These wandering places maintain local, intimate connections while generating a universality that invites identification with Palestine's landscapes and makes the reader complicit in their continued, unchecked destruction. Such imaginal realities, stemming from the transformation of *al-makān–al-matāh* into a space of *barzakh*, force a recognition of the ecological, human, and political crises shaping Palestine as the product and responsibility of international as well as local forces.

An example of a literary work in which *al-makān–al-matāh* is created and becomes a space of *barzakh* is *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* by Ḥusayn al-Barghūthī, also discussed in Chapter 1. The semi-autobiographical text follows Ḥusayn's return to Palestine after he is diagnosed with terminal cancer. In *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, the *aṭlāl* of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, a former monastery that has been reclaimed by nature, and the surrounding environment provide a gateway into Ḥusayn's personal and family memories. However, although al-Deir al-Juwwānī is firmly located in a meticulously described geographical area, it is also, in Ḥusayn's imagining, an unbounded "state of mind": "It is a city that flies...a city that is not chained like trees are to their roots. It has no roots, in actuality. Rather, it is very light (al-Barghūthī, 96).[377] Al-Deir al-Juwwānī possesses a mobility that enables it to expand beyond its physical boundaries.

The refugees Ḥusayn encounters in al-Ruṣayfa, Jordan who have been born outside of Palestine have crafted personal geographies for themselves that are similarly untethered from the

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[377] فإنَّها مدينة تطير...مدينة ليست مقيَّدة كالشجر بجذوره، لا جذور لها، في الحقيقة، بل خفيفة جداً (al-Barghūthī, 96).

landscapes that inspired them, with a key distinction: many of them have never set foot in Palestine, to say nothing of experiencing narrower sites of belonging firsthand. In spite of this, each refugee has a "city of his name" (مدينة اسمه) that "has been assembled in his imagination from the stories of his mother, father, and grandfather, from the pictures of an old camera, from books, and so on, and so on" (al-Barghūthī, 96).[378] Even those born in al-Ruṣayfa do not consider it their city, their home. Located northeast of Amman, al-Ruṣayfa is known for its overcrowding and environmental challenges. Phosphate was discovered here in 1908, which was mined beginning in 1935. The Greater Amman Municipality began using the open mining pits for solid waste disposal in the 1980s, creating the informal al-Ruṣayfa Landfill. [379] Even for those born here, Ḥusayn narrates, al-Ruṣayfa "is a container in which names that have lost their cities reside, and search for what they have lost. They are names roaming at night in the desert, like the wind, or in time" (al-Barghūthī, 96).[380] Here, Ḥusayn references the place-time of the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* described by Adūnīs. These names have been severed, possibly permanently, from the material sites they signify due to their inaccessibility and their transformation under Israeli rewriting and reshaping of the landscape. Without the tether providing grounding in a physical place, these spaces become no more than names, like the word "*lamoon*" in Anton Shammas's "Autocartography," discussed in the previous chapter.

While the wandering of al-Deir al-Juwwānī is portrayed positively, the lack of rootedness of these "cities" is viewed with sadness and a sense of loss. This is because the refugees born

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[378] ((مدينة اسمه))...فهي مدينة ركَّبها في خياله من حكايات أمّه وأبيه وجده، ومن صور كاميرا قديمة، ومن كتب، وهكذا، وهكذا (al-Barghūthī, 96).

[379] "Cleaning up Jordan's Environment – Russeifah," USAID Jordan, Accessed 10 October 2015, <http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JXZW.pdf>.

[380] وعاء تقيم فيه أسماء فقدت مدنها، وتبحث عمَّا فقدته. وهي أسماء هائمة في الصحارى، كالرياح، ليلاً، أو في الزمن (al-Barghūthī, 96).

outside of Palestine have no material knowledge of the "cities of their names." This is in contrast to Ḥusayn, who has an intimate connection to the physical site of al-Deir al-Juwwānī that allows it to expand outward while remaining fixed firmly in the earth. It is, in a way, a form of elasticity, rather than mobility. The refugees' senses of the cities and villages in Palestine from which their parents or grandparents came are cobbled together from inherited artifacts, leading them to craft "states of mind" with no grounding in firsthand experience. They represent a forced and permanent state of wandering.

Since Ḥusayn's own absence from Palestine was voluntary, and he is able to and does return to it, *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* is deeply connected to a specific geographical place, resolutely grounded in both space and time. Ḥusayn's detailed descriptions of particular environments and sites resist the complete universalization of his landscapes. Instead, it is largely Ḥusayn's intentional movements across time and space, through travel and his exposure to different people, cultures, and worlds through literature, that expands al-Deir al-Juwwānī, enabling it to encounter other physical, psychological, and literary geographies.

By the end of *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, Ḥusayn's cancer has progressed to the point that he is no longer able to visit al-Deir al-Juwwānī. It becomes for him a space that he can re-create in literature and his imagination but can no longer physically access. However, the mountain where the *aṭlāl* lie finds a home inside Ḥusayn, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between human beings and their environments. While it is Ḥusayn's longing for the specific, personal geography of al-Deir al-Juwwānī that makes it the focus of his *ḥanīn*, the mountain is drawn to the lack of emplacement, the lack of groundedness, of Ḥusayn's life. Through its connection to Ḥusayn, al-Deir al-Juwwānī is defamiliarized and uprooted, set to wander even while standing

still, and thus creating a space of *barzakh* that encompasses both of Kilīṭū's two poles of movement and stillness. Ḥusayn says:

ويوماً ما، سيعرف الجبل أنه اختار الثبات، كمدينة البتراء، واخترت الحركة، كالنار، والهواء، والأغنيات، والحكايات، وقصص الجنّ، ولا بدَّ أن نتعارف ثانية...

الجبل بدايتي الأولى، ودفعته إلى ((أقصاه)): أوصلته إلى الإسكندر المقدوني، والمتنبي، وأمون، ورع، ورأس الرجاء الصالح، ولاو-تسو، وبوذا، وجلال الدين رومي، و بودلير، وماركيز، وميشيما، وغير هذا الكثير، والكثير جداً. وفيّ وصل هو إلى أقصاه، وصار هو، هو نفسه .

> One day, the mountain will realize that it chose to remain fixed in place, like the city of Petra, and I chose movement, like fire, air, songs, stories, and the tales of the *jinn*, and there is no doubt that we will become acquainted again…

> The mountain is my first beginning and I pushed it as far as it could go: I connected it to Alexander the Great, al-Mutanabbī, Amon, Ra, the Cape of Good Hope, Lao-Tzu, Buddha, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Baudelaire, Marquez, Mishima, and more, a great many more. In me, the mountain went as far as it could because it became itself (al-Barghūthī, 132).

Al-Deir al-Juwwānī has travelled with the narrator of the text, Ḥusayn, throughout his self-imposed exile from Palestine, granting it a universality while never severing its link to the local. Through his journey, both physical and intellectual, Ḥusayn has tied al-Deir al-Juwwānī to times and places that have no obvious connection to Palestine. He creates a literary space in which *al-makān–al-matāh* overlaps with a space of *barzakh*, destabilizing the ontological, ecological, and literary boundaries between al-Deir al-Juwwānī and the rest of the world.

By linking the mountain to authors and places located across space and time (Alexander the Great, al-Mutanabbī, Amon, Ra, the Cape of Good Hope, Lao-Tzu, Buddha, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Baudelaire, Marquez, Mishima, etc.), Ḥusayn extends the ruined monastery, the home to which he returns, beyond its physical borders, unhoming it while encouraging others to make a home there. The act of tying al-Deir al-Juwwānī to people and places with recognized global significance incorporates it into World History and Literature, asserting its comparable import and complicating its erasure by including it in these canonical cartographies. Ḥusayn compares

himself to songs, stories, and tales, literary forms that are highly portable and travel with relative ease across physical, linguistic, and cultural borders that often stop or slow the movement of human bodies. He positions his worldliness as a choice, juxtaposing it with that of the mountain to remain in place. The consciousness he grants the earth imbues their connection with an intentionality and reciprocity. The narrow focus of Ḥusayn's land ethic when positioned against the Israeli other as an expression of eco-alterity is replaced by a vision of universality.

Early on, Ḥusayn describes al-Deir al-Juwwānī as "a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West, its oil almost aglow, though untouched by fire" (Qur'an, Al-Nūr [The Light] 24:35).[381] This line, taken from a sura in the Qur'an and discussed in Chapter 3, describes a universality that refers to the light of God in the holy book. Here, however, Ḥusayn extends the metaphor by playing off of the idea of the olive's expansion when it is transformed into olive oil. He says: "The badgers, the partridges, the deer, the snake that ululates, Qadūra, my mother's memory, and I are drops of [al-Deir al-Juwwānī's] oil" (al-Barghūthī, 56).[382] If al-Deir al-Juwwānī is an olive tree neither of the East nor of the West, it is in part because Ḥusayn is a member of a larger, transnational community, which the mountain and the *aṭlāl* of the ruined monastery also join through Ḥusayn, a drop of its oil.

At the start of *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, Ḥusayn formulates his identity through his connection to al-Deir al-Juwwānī against the Israeli settlers' disconnection from the same geography. Memories of the landscapes of his childhood lead to a longing to return to a home that is clearly bounded and local: Not just Palestine, but al-Deir al-Juwwānī, and not just al-Deir al-Juwwānī, but the "unspoiled" al-Deir al-Juwwānī of the past. In the ecosystem of the text,

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[381] زيتونة مباركة لا هي شرقية ولا غربية ويكاد زيتها يضيء ولو لم تمسسه نار.

[382] وأنا، والغريرات، والحجل، والغزلان، والأفعى التي تزغرد، وقدورة، وذاكرة أمي، قطرات من زيت [الدير الجواني]! (al-Barghūthī, 56).

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Israel is decentered. But *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*'s final gesture creates a space that can be shared.

Throughout his travels that took him far from the West Bank, Ḥusayn carried al-Deir al-Juwwānī with him. The mountain where the old monastery's ruins stand, though rooted in place, was able to expand in the same manner the olive spreads when it is made into oil. The land ethic that shapes Ḥusayn's relationship to the natural world thus expands beyond the borders of al-Deir al-Juwwānī, beyond the borders of Palestine, beyond even the borders of North Africa and the Middle East, to encompass a greater human community in its unboundaried, borderless universal environmental consciousness. Through it all, through this gesture toward universality, Palestine and al-Deir al-Juwwānī remain material realities.

In *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, Āthar, Ḥusayn's young son, also notices the connection that exists between him and al-Deir al-Juwwānī and between al-Deir al-Juwwānī and the rest of the world. When he is shown an ear of wheat and asked what it is, he answers that it is something that is used to ring "the bell of the world" (جرس العالم) (al-Barghūthī, 112). Then, in response to the question "What sound does the bell of the world make?," he imitates an ambulance siren (al-Barghūthī, 112).[383] Ḥusayn begins to imagine that if he and Āthar were to ring the bell of the mountain, which is the bell of the world, it would summon all of the animals of the mountain and "the mountain would be extended in it" (ويمتد الجبل فيها), just as the mountain expands through Ḥusayn and through the wail of the text itself (al-Barghūthī, 113). This text is the sound of yearning, the sound of *ḥanīn*. The urgency of the siren echoes that communicated through the writing of *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*.

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[383] كيف صوت جرس العالم؟ (al-Barghūthī, 112).

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While space expands in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, it contracts in David Grossman's *To the End of the Land*, moving inward from the national to focus on the personal and the individual. I bring in Grossman briefly again here to highlight the power and privilege that enable Ora, as a Jewish Israeli citizen, to completely universalize the land, in contrast to Ḥusayn, who, as a Palestinian, articulates a universality that is still grounded in place and time. As Ora and Avram wander through the Galilee, they work to untangle themselves from the competing official and vernacular landscapes they pass through, as discussed in Chapter 1 in my analysis of Ora's desire to avoid acknowledging the history represented by the (possibly Palestinian) ruins that they encounter. Rather than consciously seeking *yedi'at ha'aretz*, knowledge of the land or country, in the nationalistic sense discussed in Chapter 3, Ora searches for a more intimate understanding of the earth itself. The text, largely composed as it is of stories about Ora's sons, is a cry of *ḥanīn* as surely as is *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*. It is her children, though, and the broken circle of her family, for which Ora yearns. The land itself, through its unfamiliarity, seems to offer a possible path back to them.

As noted in Chapter 1, Anne Golomb Hoffman reads Ora and Avram's hike as an effort "to repossess the land in its pre-political existence or to depoliticize the ground simply by walking on it" (Hoffman, 47). The two travelers come across numerous historical markers, such as monuments, shrines, and graves, and place names abound, but Hoffman observes that these encounters are disorganized, "resisting the linear narrative of the political record" (Hoffman, 50). As Ora hikes, the whole earth is shed of its boundaries and affiliations, to be re-marked by Ora's personal stories. When she learns at some point that the trail she and Avram are on is "The Israel Trail" (שביל ישראל), she feels as if "she had been robbed of something" (Grossman, *Land* 315).[384]

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[384] משהו נגזל ממנה בבת-אחת (Grossman, *Ishah* 318).

The knowledge of the trail's name fixes Ora back firmly in political and historical place, and she is eager to become unmoored once more.

Ora seeks to connect directly with the earth as a form of escape. She feels driven to talk about her son, Ofer, with his father, Avram, who has never met him. But Avram initially resists Ora's stories. When the forced silence begins to overwhelm her, she frantically digs a hole in the dirt, and "[buries] her face in the gaping earth," speaking to the soil (Grossman, *Land* 181).[385] Ora eventually stills, "as though she had learned how to breathe in the belly of the earth" (Grossman, *Land* 181-182).[386] The novel ends with Ora once again apart from Avram and lying on the ground: "Beneath her body are the cool stone and the whole mountain, enormous and solid and infinite. She thinks: How thin is the crust of Earth" (Grossman, *Land* 648).[387] Ora desires to be absorbed by the land. She connects directly and physically with a small patch of earth that is depoliticized and dehistoricized, just as she herself is stripped of all affiliations and identifications except those of mother and woman. Ora wanders but the space that she re-creates through her narration remains accessible to her and much of her (and Grossman's) intended audiences outside of it. Although Ḥusayn's communion with the mountain is just as intimate, it always echoes with the political realities of his context. As a Palestinian, he cannot risk becoming unfixed and intentionally erasing his history, lest he "[lose] his shadow that stretches across history," leaving it to be written by others (al-Barghūthī, 115).[388]

Unlike the olive that loses its original form when it is transformed into oil, the incorporation of Palestine and al-Deir al-Juwwānī into greater senses of belonging in *al-makān–*

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[385] [תוחבת] את פניה אל תוך האדמה הפעורה (Grossman, *Ishah* 191).

[386] כאילו כבר למדה לנשום בבטן-האדמה (Grossman, *Ishah* 193).

[387] תחת גופה היו האבן הצוננת וההר כולו, עצום ודחוס ואינסופי. היא חשבה, כל-כך דקה קליפת כדור-הארץ (Grossman, *Ishah* 632).

[388] فقد ((ظله)) الممتد في التاريخ (al-Barghūthī, 115).

al-matāh do not dilute their separate significances. Instead, their insertion into a broader conversation on environmental consciousness insists on the relevance of these sites not just to their inhabitants but to all of humanity.

The critique of Israeli settlement in the West Bank in *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, discussed in Chapter 1, also undergoes this simultaneous expansion and contraction as it is brought into a larger conversation about colonialism, oppression, and occupation without losing its focus on the particularities of its imbrication in the environment around al-Deir al-Juwwānī. Ḥusayn articulates an ecological consciousness that is not bounded in space, but is rather universal. This is encompassed by the text in *al-makān–al-matāh*, as well as in the space of *barzakh* that enables these radical connections. *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* reaches wherever Palestinians reach, and whomever they touch or are touched by. And, through its increasingly frequent references to non-Arabic works of literature, the ecosystem of the text reveals its links to the geographies of other texts and to the world.

IV. Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I talked about Nixon's notion of slow violence and the challenges of representing it, especially alongside forms of violence that are more immediate and eye-catching. Works of literature like *The Bleeding of the Stone*, *Seeds of Corruption*, *Memories of a Meltdown*, and *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz* foster concern for the wellbeing of environments that the reader may never encounter in the reality outside of the text. This is accomplished through the creation of *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* that provide entry into threatened landscapes by expanding their geographies beyond the local to forge translocal and/or universal connections. *The Tent* begins to create such a literary space but then actively works to dismantle it in an effort to protect its vernacular landscapes from corruption and preserve them as a private space of refuge.

As noted at the outset, all of these texts unfold in spaces that are "elsewhere," largely inaccessible to readers and often their authors as well. They chronicle the destruction or exploitation of environments with corresponding geographies in the world outside of the text, often serving as an important corrective to official records that once obscured these histories or even worked to erase the memory of their inhabitation by indigenous populations. In some cases, as in *The Bleeding of the Stone* and *Sa'akūnu bayna al-lawz*, the environmentalist message communicated presents a vision of the world that is all-encompassing and adaptable to other contexts, encouraging the adoption of a land ethic not limited by national borders. In others, such as *Seeds of Corruption* and *Memories of a Meltdown*, the roots and impact of ecological crisis are traced to multiple localities, bringing attention to a translocalism that is similarly not bound to a single place. All of the texts discussed in this chapter contain landscapes that encompass both the local and some form of the non-local. Where *al-amkina–al-matāhāt* are created, they maintain their effectiveness through their capacity to expand without becoming ungrounded from the geographies in which they are based.

Al-Makān–al-matāh, as a space of literature and the imagination, provides a path to environmentalism and responsible stewardship of the *amāna* for populations outside of literature who themselves may be unbound from the geographies they inhabit. The lives of many people, from refugees to the employees of transnational corporations, are characterized by movement and wandering, rather than by rootedness in a specific physical place. Texts like those discussed in this chapter reveal the urgency of inhabiting the earth in a way that is ecological even when the roots that are often the source of such attitudes and behavior do not find traction in a fixed physical space.

At the same time, as noted throughout this dissertation, material ecological stewardship of a place is inarguably limited when barriers of time, distance, politics, and/or historical reality render that place inaccessible. In the following epilogue, I provide an example of a text, a comic from Egypt, in which environmental responsibility requires concrete action in the present, rather than the difficult but more personal imaginational labor demanded by the majority of the texts treated in this dissertation. In part, this is because the site at risk—Alexandria—is not a wandering place in the sense explored in this chapter. Instead, it is grounded, accessible in the present to the author and much of his audience, wandering only in the possible future vividly brought to life on the page in an effort to prevent it from coming to pass.

Epilogue
Nature Overtakes the City

This dissertation has argued that the works of literature from North Africa and the Middle East studied here articulate their messages of ecological stewardship and criticism of the exploitation and degradation of the environment by others through the lens of eco-alterity. The challenges to representing the various timeframes, causes, and impacts of environmental crises are overcome through the utilization of one or a combination of three literary motifs: 1) ecological *ḥanīn* (feelings of nostalgia and yearning) accessed at the *aṭlāl* (ruins); 2) the figure of the ecological native; and 3) the creation of *al-makān—al-matāh* (the wandering place). By approaching this study regionally instead of linguistically, I have been able to focus on the transformation of two general geographies, Palestine and the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, through the analysis of the specific, local spaces described by texts in Arabic, English, and Hebrew. All of these works locate nature in pastoral or wild spaces that are largely empty of human beings, though there may be evidence of human presence.

In concluding this dissertation, I want to draw attention to another genre that has been used increasingly over the last decade to write the environments of North Africa and the Middle East: speculative fiction. I do so to emphasize the breadth of writing about the environment in this region, to underscore the diversity of geographies and the environmental crises facing them in literature, as well as in reality, and to suggest future applications, and limitations, of the framework developed over the last four chapters. Works of speculative fiction from North Africa and the Middle East, penned most often by authors from Egypt, are typically set in urban centers in the future or in alternate realities, rendering their landscapes as inaccessible in the world

outside of the texts as those discussed in Chapter 4. Here, I will focus on "Taman daʾāyi'"[389]

(2015; "8 Minutes," 2016), a comic by Muḥammad Salāḥ, after providing a brief overview of the

genre. "8 Minutes" is distinguished not by the intrusion of human beings into nature, a theme I

have returned to repeatedly throughout this dissertation, but rather by an opposite process

through which the environmental crisis of climate change causes nature to overtake a center of

human civilization, Alexandria.

In the lead-up to the Arab Uprisings that began across North Africa and the Middle East

in late 2010, some authors writing about these geographies turned to speculative fiction to

critique their present realities. This trend continued during the months of widespread hope in

which these rebellions and protests were recast as the Arab Spring and in the disappointing, often

devastating period of increased oppression, violence, and instability that followed. Layla Al-

Zubaidi, who co-edited the essay collection *Diaries of an Unfinished Revolution: Voices from

Tunis to Damascus* (2013), is explicit when talking to the *New York Times*: "These futuristic

stories are all about lost utopia. People really could imagine a better future, and now it's almost

worse than it was before."[390] Within the broader genre of speculative fiction, works of science

fiction and dystopian fiction in particular provide a space for commentary on authoritarian

governments, corruption, and massive income inequality and other socioeconomic issues. This

move is also reflective of a larger trend not limited by region. The United States, for example,

has seen a rise in recent years in the popularity of speculative fiction, as evidenced by renewed

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[389] Muḥammad Salāḥ, "Taman daʾāyi'," Twitter Post, 17 November 2015, 8:22 am,
<https://twitter.com/_abusalah_/media>.

The title and the comic are written in Egyptian colloquial Arabic. The transliteration of the title in Modern Standard
Arabic would be "Thamānī daqāʾiq."

[390] Layla al-Zubaidi, qtd. in Alexandra Alter, "Middle Eastern Writers Find Refuge in the Dystopian Novel" in *The
New York Times*, 29 May 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/books/middle-eastern-writers-find-refuge-
in-the-dystopian-novel.html>.

interest in classic novels like George Orwell's *1984* (1949) and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985).[391] Within Arabic literature and the corpus of texts written by Arab authors, one of the focuses of this contemporary speculative fiction is climate change.

As in the literary works discussed in Chapter 4, the alternate worlds or dystopian futures described in contemporary speculative fiction from North Africa and the Middle East are located "elsewhere," inaccessible to reader and author alike outside of the text. However, the novels, short stories, art, and graphic novels that deal with environmental crisis are based on present-day cartographies that have been transformed through the mismanagement of resources occurring in our time, in places known to their authors and often their readers. Unlike the texts already discussed in this dissertation, the majority of the works of North African and Middle Eastern speculative fiction that take on environmental issues are urban, displacing the countryside, the wilderness, and the desert as sites of contact between human beings and the natural world and acknowledging their interpenetration even in sites that would not be considered "nature" under the definition I gave in the course of introducing this dissertation. These works undo the artificial boundaries between spaces of nature and spaces of not-nature.

Although the last decade has seen a wave of speculative fiction from and about North Africa and the Middle East, the genre has many important predecessors in Arabic, especially from the 1970s. These include Ibn Ṭufayl's allegorical *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān* in the 12th century, Egyptian writer Nihād Sharīf's *Qāhir al-zaman* (1972; Conqueror of Time), Arab Israeli author Emīl Ḥabībī's *Al-Waqāʾiʿ al-gharība fī ikhtifā Saʿīd Abī al-Naḥs al-Mutashāʾil* (1974; *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*, 1982), Moroccan author Muḥammad ʿAzīz Laḥbābī's

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[391] John Maher, "'1984' and 'The Handmaid's Tale' Get Hardcover Reissues" in *Publishers Weekly*, 23 March 2017, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/publisher-news/article/73144-1984-and-the-handmaid-s-tale-get-hardcover-reissues.html>.

'Iksīr al-ḥayāt (1974; The Elixir of Life), and Ṣabrī Mūsā's *Al-Sayyid min ḥaql al-sabānikh* (1982; The Lord Arrived from the Spinach Field).[392] The most recent wave has included texts like *Ḥaythu la tasqut al-amṭar* (2010; *Land of No Rain*, 2014) by Amjad Naṣir from Jordan, *Ajwān* by Nūra Nūmān (2012; Ajwan) from the United Arab Emirates, *Nisā' al-karantīnā* (2013; *Women of Karantina*, 2014) by Nā'il Ṭūkhī from Egypt, *Al-Ṭābūr* (2013; *The Queue*, 2016) by Basma 'Abd al-'Azīz from Egypt, *Frānkishtāyn fī Baghdād* (2013; *Frankenstein in Baghdad*, 2018) by Aḥmad Sa'dāwī from Iraq, *'Uṭārid* (2014; *Otared*, 2016) by Muḥammad Rabī' from Egypt, and *Iraq +100: Stories from a Century After the Invasion* (2016), published in English and edited by Ḥassan Blāsim from Iraq.

Within the larger wave of speculative fiction published in the last decade by authors from and focused on geographies of the Middle East and North Africa, there is a smaller but significant trend of texts dealing centrally with climate change and other environmental crises, mostly within Egypt. *Yūtūbiyā* (2008; *Utopia*, 2011) by Aḥmad Khālid Tawfīq portrays Egypt in a 2023 in which the American manufacture of a new substance called "biroil" (بيرويل), invented to replace oil, has exacerbated socioeconomic differences to the point that a small, wealthy minority lives in a gated community called Utopia on the Mediterranean coast while the rest of the country is overrun by poverty and despair. *Istikhdām al-ḥayāt* (2014; *Using Life*, 2017) by Aḥmad Nājī attributes Egypt's collapse to a "Tsunami of the Desert" (تسونامى الصحراء), a series of sandstorms and earthquakes that wiped out Cairo, including the pyramids. Nostalgia for the past takes the form of yearning for a lost verdancy that never existed in reality. This nostalgia is mobilized in support of efforts to "Greenify the Desert" (تخضير الصحراء), with movements taking shape under slogans such as "Together, Egypt Fights Yellowism" (لنُحارب الأصفر) and "Let's Go

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[392] For a comprehensive history of science fiction writing in Arabic, see Ada Barbaro, *La fantascienza nella letteratura araba* (Rome: Carocci, 2013).

Green!" (عايزينها تبقى خضرة) (Nājī, 20).[393] Finally, *The Solar Grid*, a graphic novel in English by Egyptian artist Ganzeer, envisions a future world in which all of earth's water has been exhausted by former inhabitants who have relocated to colonies on Mars. However, they continue to mine the clouds of earth for what little water remains.

Here, I provide some insight into this current trend of using speculative fiction to communicate the urgency of environmental crisis through a more in-depth, though still brief, reading of "8 Minutes" by Muḥammad Salāḥ. "8 Minutes" was solicited for the Egyptian leg of a traveling exhibition, *Facing the Climate*, launched by Sweden in 2010 to address climate change. As of 2016, 280,000 visitors had seen the exhibition in different countries around the world and 115 cartoonists had contributed their work.[394] The exhibition functions as a collaboration between Swedish embassies and local organizations. The 2015 *Facing the Climate* exhibition in which "8 Minutes" appeared was co-sponsored by the Swedish Institute in Alexandria and the Mazg Foundation for Culture and Arts in Egypt. "8 Minutes" won the art competition portion of the exhibition.

In "8 Minutes," a young couple ventures out on the boardwalks to watch the sun set in a city that has been submerged by rising sea levels. Gangs of divers who swim the sunken streets, mugging the careless and then eating them, make the outing risky. The title refers to the eight final minutes of sunset, moments of spectacular beauty and relative safety before darkness falls. In just a single page, "8 Minutes" paints a vivid picture of a future in which climate change has significantly altered an urban geography, with water transforming its buildings and streets into

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[393] Aḥmad Nājī, *Using Life*, Trans. Benjamin Koerber (Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, 2017).
For the Arabic, see Aḥmad Nājī, *Istikhdām al-ḥayāt* (Cairo: Manshūrāt marsūm, 2014), p. 33.

[394] The Swedish Institute, *Facing the Climate: Swedish and international cartoonists take an amusing and alarming look at the climate* (Malmö: Exakta Print AB, 2016).
<https://issuu.com/swedish_institute/docs/facing_the_climate_book_web_version>.

aṭlāl in ways that echo the overwriting of the remains of human habitation by the desert or the wilderness in other texts analyzed in this dissertation.

Six of the comic's eight panels are drawn from perspectives that highlight the watery landscape. The first is an "evacuated scene" showing a flooded street, empty of human beings but crossed by a network of boardwalks—signs of human presence here, representing an effort to inhabit the seemingly uninhabitable environment. The narrator appears in the second panel, but his face is not revealed until the fourth. The only truly "crowded scene" portrays the divers capturing the narrator's friend, Hisham. Here, the divers are dehumanized by masks that cover their faces, transforming them into human-fish hybrids who survive thanks to this adaptation and bringing the focus to Hisham's shocked expression as he is pulled into the water. The flashback or imagining takes up an entire tier of the comic. It is dense with human beings, their bodies and the violence they embody taking up so much space that they seem poised to explode beyond the borderless panel.

The future imagined by "8 Minutes" is striking in part because it is beginning to seem not so much speculative as inevitable. The loss of entire cities and countries to the sea seems certain and will devastate local economies and populations, even if they are not overrun by cannibalistic divers. The city of Alexandria, where this comic debuted, is in the midst of a major environmental crisis caused by the confluence of rising sea levels, increased rain levels, and failing infrastructure. Muḥammad Salāḥ explains in an interview that it is this reality, "[t]he progression of the crisis and how people just adapted to its consequences," that served as his inspiration. He notes that "[i]n a few years, '8 Minutes' won't seem that fictional."[395] Rising waters have already led to the creation of climate refugees in Egypt's Delta. The Maḥmūdiyya

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[395] Muḥammad Salāḥ and Elisabeth Jaquette, "An Interview with Mohamed Salah and Elisabeth Jaquette," *the Offing*, 11 November 2016, < https://theoffingmag.com/art/8-minutes/>.

Canal near Alexandria and Lake Marīūṭ have repeatedly overflowed their banks following increased rainfall, wiping out once vibrant communities of fishermen. The repeated flooding of informal construction alongside waterways like the Maḥmūdiyya Canal has provided the justification for the removal of this housing and the forced relocation of its residents, part of a broader program spearheaded by President 'Abd al-Fatāḥ al-Sīsī to eliminate informal housing, especially in areas the government deems desirable for development.[396] Many residents cannot afford the rent of their new homes, putting them at risk of being displaced once more.

Egypt as a whole has been identified as one of the countries that will be most impacted across a range of indicators by sea level rise (SLR).[397] In part, this is because the population is concentrated along the north coast and in the Nile Delta, a region identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 as one of the three areas in the world most susceptible to climate change.[398] The World Bank lists Alexandria as one of the cites most vulnerable to flooding worldwide,[399] with Egypt's 2011 strategy report for climate change and disaster risk reduction, issued in partnership with the UNDP, determining that 13% of Alexandria's coastline is at risk.[400] The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) wrote in their 2004 report on climate change in Egypt that an SLR of one

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[396] Ruth Michaleson, "Houses claimed by the canal: life on Egypt's climate change frontline," *The Guardian*, 29 August 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/aug/29/alexandria-little-venice-egypt-climate-change-frontline>.

[397] Susmita Dasgupta, Benoit Laplante, Craig Meisner, David Wheeler, and Jianping Yan, "The Impact of Sea Level Rise on Developing Countries: A Comparative Analysis," *Climatic Change* 93 (2009): 379-388.

[398] John Bohannon, "The Nile Delta's Sinking Future," *Science* 327.5972 (2010): 1444-1447.

[399] "Climate Change Knowledge Portal: Egypt Dashboard," *The World Bank*, Accessed 14 January 2019, <http://sdwebx.worldbank.org/climateportal/countryprofile/home.cfm?page=country_profile&CCode=EGY>.

[400] The Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center and the UNDP, "Egypt's National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction," 2011, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/law/egypts-national-strategy-for-adaptation-to-climate-change-and-disaster-risk-management/>.

half meter would lead to the loss of 30% of Alexandria and force the relocation of more than 1.5 million people.[401] The impact of SLR is heightened by a range of other factors. Processes like coastal erosion, land subsidence (compacting of the soil that leads to sinking, in some areas of close to a centimeter a year), and soil salinization are part of the natural life cycle of the Delta. However, the effects of these processes on agriculture and land loss were mitigated for centuries by the natural flooding of the Nile, which brought new sediment into the Delta. The construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s controlled the flooding of the Nile, making irrigation more efficient and predictable in the short term, but also interrupting the restorative processes that ensured the region's long-term agricultural viability and made it habitable. If major steps are not taken to manage flooding in the Nile Delta region and along the Mediterranean coast, it has been estimated that a one-meter SLR would displace 8 million people: 4 million in the Nile Delta as well as the population of Alexandria.[402]

Major winter storms in the last two decades have already produced storm surges along the Mediterranean coast of up to about one meter.[403] In October 2015, one such storm led to massive flooding in Alexandria. Five people were electrocuted, inspiring widespread criticism of the country's failing infrastructure and forcing the resignation of the Governor of Alexandria,

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[401] Shardul Agrawala, Annett Moehner, Mohamed El Raey, Declan Conway, Maarten van Aalst, Marca Hagenstad, and Joel Smith, "Development and Climate Change in Egypt: Focus on Coastal Resources and the Nile" (Paris: OECD, 2004).

[402] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *The Regional Impacts of Climate Change: An Assessment of Vulnerability*, eds. Robert T. Waston, Marufu C. Zinyowera, and Richard H. Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1998), 66.

[403] "Climate Change Information Fact Sheet: Egypt," USAID, 2015, <https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/Egypt%20Climate%20Info%20Fact%20Sheet_FINAL.pdf>.

Hānī Al-Misīrī.[404] The headline the following day in the Egyptian daily *Al-Masrī Al-Yawm* read: "The Government Drowns in Alexandria" (الحكومة "تغرق" فى الإسكندرية).[405]

Additional flooding in early November of the same year left 17 more dead and 28 injured.[406] In a move that almost seems inspired by the often intentionally absurd authoritarianism of dystopian fiction, the Ministry of the Interior blamed the Muslim Brotherhood for the flooding. Seventeen of its members were arrested for allegedly filling Alexandria's drainage system with cement. In its official statement, which was posted on Facebook, the Ministry referred to the accused as "members of a terrorist cell" (عناصر الخلية الإرهابية) and charged them with using the floods as part of a bigger plan to incite anger against the state.[407]

In just eight panels, one for each titular minute, "8 Minutes" communicates the desperate need to address the crisis caused by the rising sea levels and changing weather patterns that are the result of climate change, which is in turn caused by human action and inaction. The setting of "8 Minutes" is never specified directly. However, the exhibition's staging in Alexandria and Salāḥ's own commentary seem to indicate that the reader is looking at Egypt's second largest city, introducing a new urban geography with direct contemporary relevance to millions of people to my analysis. In the comic, it is portrayed as a city in which nature has all but erased the

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[404] "Governor of Egyptian city Alexandria resigns over flooding," *The National*, 26 October 2015, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/governor-of-egyptian-city-alexandria-resigns-over-flooding-1.56930>.

[405] Nabīl Abū Shāl, Nāṣr Al-Sharqāwī, Ḥamdī Qāsim, and Manṣūr Kāmil, "Al-Ḥukūma 'taghraq' fī al-Iskandarīyya" (The Government Drowns in Alexandria), *Al-Masrī Al-Yawm*, 26 October 2015: 1.

[406] "Egypt blames Brotherhood for Alexandria floods," *Middle East Monitor*, 7 November 2015, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20151107-egypt-blames-brotherhood-for-alexandria-floods/>.

[407] "Juhūd al-wizāra li-mulāḥaqat al-bu'ar al-irhābīyya" (The Ministry's Efforts to Pursue Terrorist Outposts), Al-Ṣafḥa al-rasmīya li-wizārat al-dākhilīyya (The Official Page of the Ministry of the Interior), *Facebook,* 6 November 2016, 8:27 am, <https://www.facebook.com/pg/MoiEgy/photos/?tab=album&album_id=981095145267482>.

human population, although the *aṭlāl* of their abandoned and ruined abodes remain. The narrator and his companion embody what Naomi Klein calls "climate *ṣumūd*" in "Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World," an essay adapted from her 2016 Edward W. Said London Lecture. She coins the term to describe the "principled action" of victims of climate change who are "actively resisting" rather than accepting a fate as climate refugees. Klein draws an explicit comparison between them and the Palestinians who will not leave their land, naming "the residents of coastal Louisiana who have raised their homes up on stilts so that they don't have to evacuate" and "Pacific Islanders whose slogan is 'We are not drowning. We are fighting'" as examples (Klein, 4).[408] The act of venturing out to watch the sunset, representative of an insistence on finding a way to survive in a sunken city, communicates a similar message of steadfast resistance.

All of the texts treated in the four chapters of this dissertation express an ecological *ḥanīn* that utilizes the interpenetration of human beings and nature as a lens to revisit the past, critique the present, and imagine or gesture at a different future. I argued that these works of literature predominantly focus on one of two sites: Palestine or the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. They also give voice to two different value systems for protection and preservation of the environment, the first privileging wilderness and spaces largely empty of human beings and the second concerned with cultivated land transformed through responsible human intervention. These texts are, for the most part and with some important exceptions, reflective but not activist, as I have repeatedly observed. This is most evident in my discussion of Palestinian cosmic pastoralism, in which physical removal from the land prevents the earth care demonstrated through direct stewardship. Literary works that critique the present by looking back to the past

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[408] Naomi Klein, "Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World," *London Review of Books* 38.11 (2016).

mobilize nostalgia or *ḥanīn* to criticize the transformation of the physical environment by human beings that has already taken place or is currently unfolding. In contrast, works of speculative fiction like "8 Minutes" critique the present by looking to the future. This is not nostalgia, nor *ḥanīn*, nor cosmic pastoralism, but rather a form of activism, urgent in its message, that seeks to inspire action by giving the reader a glimpse of the long-term effects of the slow, accumulative violence of climate change and other environmental crises.

Although written in Arabic, "8 Minutes" was intended from its conception to reach a global audience. It was created and first exhibited as part of an international project and was then included in English translation in the *Facing the Climate* book alongside work by other cartoonists from Egypt, Syria, and Libya, as well as work by cartoonists from Russia, Greece, South Africa, Brazil, Vietnam, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Albania, China, Mali, Belarus, Slovakia, Austria, Ukraine, Latvia, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malaysia, Georgia, Croatia, and of course Sweden. The format of "8 Minutes" further lends itself to portability and quick consumption, enabling its message to reach distant and diverse audiences with relatively ease. Elisabeth Jaquette, who translated the comic into English, first became aware of it on Twitter.[409] Although Salāḥ communicates real concern over the fate of Alexandria, this grounding in the local provides the entry into a much larger and farther-reaching story about climate change.

The *aṭlāl* of Alexandria, submerged by the sea, evoke a past that is still our present. Salāḥ invites the reader to stand over these ruins, contemplating the current practices and behaviors that produced them, and, in so doing, to embrace the changes necessary to ensure that "8 Minutes" remains a work of speculation rather than a representation of reality. The messaging of

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[409] Muḥammad Salāḥ and Elisabeth Jaquette, "Interview."

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texts like "8 Minutes" is direct in its depiction of environmental crises like climate change, and can thus be convincingly understood as a universal call to action. Even a brief reading alongside the other texts discussed in this dissertation highlights the imaginative limitations of a framework of eco-alterity when it comes to the protection of landscapes and ecologies outside of the text. However, such activism is not always the goal of writing the environment, and its absence in most of the novels, autobiographies, short stories, and poems analyzed in the previous chapters should not be viewed as a shortcoming. Instead, the primary value of these texts when viewed through the lens of the environmental humanities lies in the general consciousness they raise and the record they create through their detailed, often loving, descriptions of their landscapes of what has already been lost and how and of what is still worth defending and preserving. Their critique of colonialism, neocolonialism, and occupation contains within itself a hope for a future in which the geographies and ecologies they describe are not subject to these forces, but are rather protected and shaped by the stewards who assert the right to care for these landscapes through their narration.

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