

REPRESENTATIONS AND VISIONS OF HOMELAND IN MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE

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Edited by Sebastian Günther
and Stephan Milich



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in Modern Arabic Literature



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The Collected Studies now in hand are primarily the result of the International Workshop “Representations and Visions of Homeland in Modern Arabic Prose Literature and Poetry” held June 30 to July 1, 2011 at the Lichtenberg Kolleg for Advanced Studies, University of Göttingen. The Editors of the volume are delighted to present in the following pages the more formal and, in some cases, significantly expanded versions of the scholarly presentations given at this meeting. At the same time, we gratefully acknowledge the generous financial and logistic support provided to this workshop by the administration and staff of the Lichtenberg Kolleg.

Special thanks are due to a number of colleagues and friends whose support, in one way or another, made the present publication possible: Many faculty members and students from the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Göttingen assisted either with the organization of the workshop or the editing of the present volume. Dr. Agnes Imhof (Göttingen) must be mentioned in particular for her efficient help in the editorial process of preparing this volume for publication. Likewise, Dr. Dorothee Lauer, Jana Newiger, Ahmed Sagheer and Akram Bishr, assisted in various other ways. Furthermore, the Editors wish to thank Elizabeth Crawford (Göttingen) and Rebekah Zwanzig (Pennsylvania State University, University Park) for their professional support in checking and editing English texts.

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We would also like to warmly thank Fadi Yaziji (Damascus) who readily agreed to give us permission to reproduce the image of one of his fascinating art works on the cover of this book. Last but by no means least, the Editors of the present collative studies volume are most grateful also to Dr. W. Georg Olms and Dietrich Olms for accepting this book as part of Olms Publishers’ *Arabic Texts and Studies* Series.

*

While the Editors take full responsibility for the technical appearance of the contributions published in this volume, the opinions and analyses expressed in the individual studies remain entirely those of their respective authors. Such academic freedom is perhaps particularly called for in studies on themes whose relevance—paradoxically—goes beyond mere academic interest. To some degree or another, political and humanitarian issues are inevitably emotionally charged,

especially those pertaining to *Representations and Visions of Homeland*, whether in the context of the Arab world or elsewhere.

This is particularly pertinent now in view of the entirely new dimensions of loss of home and homeland, of the uprootedness not only of individuals but of entire communities and nations, and the mass exodus of refugees from their Arab native countries. Dramatic political and societal upheavals are currently shaking an entire region, and these shed an utterly different light on the acute relevance of critical research on issues relating to home and homeland in the Arab world and beyond. Obviously, these recent cataclysms in large parts of Africa and Asia have reached a magnitude and an accelerating speed that was completely unforeseeable—and indeed unimaginable—at the time our workshop took place in Göttingen.

The Editors

Göttingen and Köln, February 2016

Note on Transliteration and Style

This volume adheres to the following system of transliteration of Arabic script, which is based on the scheme used in Brill's *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*:

Consonants

ʾ	d	ḏ	k
b	dh	ṭ	l
t	r	ẓ	m
th	z	ʿ	n
j	s	gh	h
ḥ	sh	f	w
kh	ṣ	q	y

Vowels

Long Vowels Short Diphtongs

ā a aw

ū u ay

ī i

-a (-at in *idāfa*) al and (-)l- (e.g. *al-kitāb*; *wa-l-kitāb*; no sun letters)

bi-l-kitāb *but* lil-masjid Abū l-Walīd; fī l-Qur'ān

b. and bt. ʿAbdallāh *but* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān

iyy (final form ī) uww (final form ū)

no initial hamza, e. g. *al-amr* baytuhu, only in poetry, if desirable, *baytuhū*

Proper names, technical terms, and geographic designations that are common in English are either not transliterated or used in simplified transliteration. Examples of such words include: Cairo, Baghdad, Islam, as well as Quran (not Qur'an) and Sura.

References in the footnote apparatus are given, from their very first appearance on, in brief form. The full bibliographical data of all publications cited may be found in the bibliography included at the end of each contribution. Note that the Arabic article "al-" remains disregarded in the alphabetical ordering of the bibliographical entries, while "ibn" is taken into account. For abbreviations of frequently cited periodicals and reference works, see the following list of abbreviations.

Abbreviations

AI = Annales Islamologiques

Arabica = Arabica. Revue d'études arabes

ASQ = Arab Studies Quarterly

EI² = Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., Leiden 1954-2004

IJMES = International Journal of Middle East Studies

JAL = Journal of Arabic literature

JPS = Journal of Palestine Studies

MES = Middle Eastern Literatures

SI = Studia Islamica

ZDMG = Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft

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Foreword

HOMELAND IN MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE:

A PRELIMINARY OUTLINE*

Maher Jarrar

During my weaning stage, while I was still crawling and shedding tears behind my mother as she abandoned me, being busy with sweeping, cleaning and shaking off dust, I used to eat all what my tender nails could reach from the earth of the threshold, the street and the courtyard. It seems that I have eaten my share of homeland since then.

Muḥammad al-Māghūt¹

The term homeland (*waṭan*) in Arabic has many nuances, making it especially difficult to fully understand. It has had a wealth of multifaceted denotations throughout its long literary and historical usage, giving rise to variegated attempts at conceptualization of the term, and has furthermore been fraught with heavy politicization since the advent of colonialism, nationalism and the rise of the purported 'nation-state' in the lands which formed part of the Ottoman Empire. The emerging conceptions of (*waṭan*) came to occupy an interstitial position between various disciplines and terrains, geographic, geo-strategic, 'patriotic,' social, public, private, idyllic, emotional and nostalgic.

Any study of the term *waṭan* and how it was variously used in classical Arabic literature must benefit from looking into the illustrious study by Wadad al-Qadi, who investigated the ways in which homeland and the longing for one's abode and early dwelling place was expressed in early Arabic literature.² The main catalog of elements imbued in this idiom covers the notions of family, tribe, clan and comrades; "one's attention is attracted to the strong ties which bind one to his homeland: his youth having been spent there, and his having sucked the homeland's milk, eaten its food, drunken its water, touched its soil, and witnessed its rain, dew, and trees." Moreover, this love is considered "a major criterion of initiating human civilization."³

* I am deeply grateful to Dr. Maya Kesrouany, Mellon Grant post-doctoral Fellow at the American University of Beirut, for her gentle corrections and generous feedback. My sincere thanks are due to Elizabeth Crawford for her thorough editorial skills.

¹ Al-Māghūt, *Sa'akhūnu waṭanī* 410 (my translation).

² Al-Qadi, *Dislocation*.

³ *Ibid.* 8.

This primordial familiarity with the place of origin grows from bodily experiences, emotions and memories which are encountered, discovered and felt in this “topography of our intimate being.”⁴ Moreover, it secures at the same time a sense of an affirmative collective identity; thus the notion of homeland that resides in geographically ambiguous terms as *waṭan* could refer not only to a specific encampment, but rather to a territory in which the tribe moves (*awṭān*), as well as to an urban dwelling, a city, a region or a country (*balad/bilād*).

To my mind, this was the prevailing understanding of the term until the advent of the colonial intervention at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since the intrusion of European modernity and under the impact of the new transnational, global forces, the term *waṭan* has become loaded with the ideologies and the jargon of European nationalism. The discourse of ‘patrie’ and patriotism in the wake of Bonaparte’s venture in Egypt,⁵ and the assimilation of these ideas by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī during his sojourn in France (1826-31) had a significance which can hardly be exaggerated for the development of Egyptian national awareness. The late Professor C. Ernest Dawn argued that al-Ṭaḥṭāwī “rendered the French *patrie* by the Arabic *waṭan*, spoke of the love of the *watan* and, ultimately, of *waṭaniyya*, patriotism. Tahtawi’s *waṭan* as Egypt, and the people of Egypt, had been a distinctive entity since the time of the pharaohs.”⁶ Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Ottoman intellectuals in Istanbul and the various provinces started formulating national and patriotic ideas under the pressure of momentous global events which were challenging the very existence of the Ottoman Empire, the ‘Sick Man of Europe.’ This drive intensified during the reformation period (*tanẓīmāt*) in the Ottoman Empire (1839-78); nevertheless, the concept of homeland and country (*waṭan*) remained vague, mainly understood as propagating local or regional Arab patriotism under the political principle of Ottomanism (*al-rābiṭa al-’uthmāniyya*). This is seen in the reformist ideas of the Ottoman Tunisian Chancellor, Aḥmad Ibn Abī l-Ḍiyāf (1804-74)⁷ and Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (1822-90)⁸ as well as in the political thought of the two Syrian intellectuals from Mount Lebanon, Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804-17)⁹ and Buṭrus al-Bustānī (1819-83), all of whom stressed the idea of *waṭan* and *waṭaniyya*.¹⁰ Al-Bustānī in particular called for a Syrian patriotism and “aimed to establish the identity and the legal status of the subjects upon secular ideals, rather than upon religious belief.”¹¹ At the end of the communal violence which broke out in Mount Lebanon in 1860 and the massacre of the Christian population of Damascus in the same year, al-Bustānī stressed the urgent need to establish patriotic solidarity

⁴ Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* xxxvi.

⁵ For the patriotic discourse of Napoleon: Hughes, *Forging Napoleon’s Grande Armée* 52-79; Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt* 171-2.

⁶ Dawn, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* 4-5; see also Hourani, *Arabic Thought* 70-81.

⁷ See, e.g., the *pacte fundamental* document of 1857 (*’ahd al-amān*) in Ibn Abī l-Ḍiyāf, *Ithāf ahl al-zamān* 4: 240-59, and Demeerseman, *Formulation de l’idée de patrie en Tunisie 1837-1872*, 61-5, 114-5.

⁸ Choueiri, *Arab History* 57-9.

⁹ Al-Maṭwī, *Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq* 633.

¹⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought* 100-2; Dāya, *al-Mu’allim Buṭrus al-Bustānī* 51-63.

¹¹ Abu-Manneh, *Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism* 297.

calling for secular education; as a narrative of remedy and reconciliation, he translated Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* into Arabic (1861), invoking the metaphor of Crusoe as a vehicle for the instruction of society and *waṭan* at large, as Nadia Bou Ali argues.¹² Syria, as a geopolitical unit including Mount Lebanon, Palestine and Trans-Jordan, with the intermixture that constituted its population at the time, was the *waṭan* referred to by Buṭrus al-Bustānī, his son Salīm (1848–84) and many other intellectuals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³

In the Ottoman provinces of Palestine, patriotic feeling, local loyalties, Arabism, and religious sentiment were already widespread before World War I, as Rashid Khalidi has shown.¹⁴ Khalidi argues further that from around the turn of the century, “the reaction of the Palestinian Arabs to modern political Zionism drew upon all these preexisting elements: religious attachment to what both Muslims and Christians believed was a holy land, the conception of Palestine as an administrative entity, the fear of external encroachment, and local patriotism.” It is during this time that the notions of *waṭan* and *waṭaniyya* found circulation in the local Palestinian newspapers. However, under the impact of rapid, momentous, and unsettling changes during the period from the onset of World War I to the beginning of the British Mandate for Palestine in 1922, the sense of political and national identification of most politically conscious, literate, and urban Palestinians underwent a series of major transformations.¹⁵ Further, the Balfour declaration of 1917, which promised to support the establishment of a “national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine,” was crucial in the formation of a Palestinian self-identity.¹⁶

By the end of World War I, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the partitioning of its territories by the Imperial powers, primarily France and Great Britain, the Arab East had—more or less—settled into its present “national” divisions; North Africa fell into the grip of colonial France, Algiers having fallen as early as 1830. Hardt and Negri argue that “the establishment of colonial administrations, the imposition of trade exclusives and tariffs, the creation of monopolies and cartels, differentiated zones of raw material extraction and industrial production, and so forth all aided capital in its period of global expansion.”¹⁷ It was in the interest of creating new markets and ensuring political control that the partitioning of Asia and Africa into colonial states started taking shape; they gradually developed into so-called ‘nation-states,’ not necessarily representing effective or legitimate territorial units.

Nationalism—except in the case of Egypt—was still relatively new at that point. Ochsenswald argues that “its terms, meaning, and implications were

¹² Bou Ali, Buṭrus al-Bustānī and the Shipwreck of the Nation 2.

¹³ Choueiri, *Arab History* 27–49.

¹⁴ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* 28–34, 93–117.

¹⁵ Khalidi, *The Formation of Palestinian Identity* 172–3.

¹⁶ Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* 158–72; Pappé, *De-terrorising the Palestinian national struggle: the roadmap to peace* 132; see also Said, *Reflections on Exile* 421.

¹⁷ Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 332.

amorphous and were poorly understood.”¹⁸ The Arab revolt of 1916 under al-Sharīf Ḥusayn called for an Arab kingdom incorporating Syria, Iraq and part of the Ḥijāz; however, other possible federations were considered as well.¹⁹ It is worth noting that the new paradigm of *waṭan* as a so-called ‘nation-state’ remained anomalous in the beginning, as the process of identification between the individual and a specific geographic terrain known as ‘homeland’ remained vague: the intimate provincial locality was one’s *waṭan*, as was Syria (in the Levant), the tribe’s territory (in the Levant, Iraq, the Ḥijāz, the Yemen and North Africa)²⁰, or the equivocal notion of the ‘Arab World.’ And why should it not be so? A survey of modern Arabic literature will show that this fluctuating approach towards the notion of homeland has prevailed.

Homeland in modern and contemporary Arabic literature

There are various ways to approach the notion of homeland in modern and contemporary Arabic literature. Keeping a set of recurring themes in mind, I will briefly explore the formation of and fraught associations with the idea of the homeland across various Arab literary trends.

Syrian Émigrés in the Americas

The journeys of Syrian emigrants (from Syrian provinces including Mount Lebanon) to the Americas started in the second half of the nineteenth century as a repercussion of the communal violence and the massacres of 1860. Some, specifically young men, joined other emigrants in an attempt to avoid mandatory military service imposed on them by the Ottoman Army. Emigration intensified during the famine that struck Syria in World War I.²¹ These immigrants, known as “Turcos” in Latin-American countries, established Arabic newspapers and founded literary societies and clubs which fostered the publishing of Arabic literature and nationalistic ideas.²² In a familiar romantic trope, the *mahjar* poets resorted to a nationalist discourse calling for Syria’s independence from the Ottoman Empire. For them the idea of homeland embraced Arabism and Syrian nationalism combined with a local component (e.g., Ḥimṣ for Nasīb ‘Arīḍa; Mount Lebanon for Jubrān Khalīl Jubrān). Driven by a strong feeling of longing, they recognized ‘home’ and ‘country’ as a mythic place of desire and the embodiment and repository of all forms of innocence, natural beauty, warmth and heritage. Thus the *waṭan* back home came to represent a fabulated *arcadia*²³ beyond the demonic-dynamic trajectory of material culture representing the consummately

¹⁸ Ochsenwald, *Ironic Origins* 200.

¹⁹ Hourani, *Arabic Thought* 288-92; Muslih, *The Rise of Local Nationalism* 167-85.

²⁰ In the Anti-Atlas Berber regions, the term *tamazirt* refers to home, homeland, countryside, and village; cf. Hoffman, *Moving and Dwelling* 929.

²¹ Hitti, *The Syrian in America* 51; Issawi, *Historical Background* 13-31.

²² Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry* 361-4; Naff, *Becoming American* 319-30; Nweihad, *La emigración de sirios, libaneses y palestinos* 252-4.

²³ ‘Abbās and Najm call it the forest (*al-ghāb*), *al-Shi‘r al-‘arabī* 41-130.

inhuman. Broadly speaking, homeland thus becomes a symbol for disparate cultural identities. Another feature of *maḥjar* literature is its engagement with the national struggle in Palestine against the British mandate and the Balfour declaration. This awareness was mainly represented by the émigré writers of the Latin American countries (*al-maḥjar al-janūbī*) and by Amīn Rihānī, Nasīb ‘Arīḍa and ʿIlīyyā Abū Mādī of North America (*al-maḥjar al-shimālī*) and it had a remarkable impact on the writers in Syria and the Levant.²⁴

Palestinian Anthem and Displacement

From the onset of the British mandate, the Palestinian question played itself out as an ethical and urgent matter that engaged Arab writers not only in Palestine,²⁵ but in the *maḥjar*, North Africa, the Levant and Egypt.²⁶ In this context, the popularity and wide dissemination across the Arab world of a hymn entitled *mawṭinī* (my homeland), written by the Palestinian poet Ibrāhīm Ṭūqān in 1930, is not surprising;²⁷ it was set to music by the Lebanese Fulayfil brothers in 1934 and has since become kind of a national anthem in the Arab World. In fact, Palestinian literature on home/land has exercised quite an exigent force in inspiring themes and motifs in modern Arab literature generally.

Anthems, however, and patriotic jargon do not make a home/land. Formed within the confluence of colonial strategies, each one of the newly formed, so-called Arab ‘Nation-States’ following the end of World War II fought to form its own identity, embedded in the general notions of an Arab and Islamic cultural identity and, to use Akhil Gupta’s words, to “write the history of the “nation” (itself an entity consolidated during or after colonial rule) stretching into the distant past.”²⁸ Nations, as Anderson argues, are real yet imagined communities; they are made and unmade in culture and politics.²⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan explains that with the nation-state becoming the world’s dominant political unit, “the sentiment that once tied people to their village, city, or region had to be transferred to the larger political unit, the nation-state, rather than any of its parts, was to achieve maximum visibility.”³⁰ He further explains how this centralization is achieved through legislative decrees, maps, history books and ideology. It is important to keep in mind, however, that most of the Arab states that were founded in the twentieth century made “Arabness” a part of their national self-understanding; history books and maps as well as state ideologies emphasized an alleged ‘unity’ of the “Arab nation.” However, experiences of cultural identity do not necessarily correspond to national territories, and the fluidity of identity cannot be contained within an abstract idea such as “Arabness.” In this fluidity, the

²⁴ Haddād, *Filastīn fī l-adab al-maḥjarī*.

²⁵ Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones* 34-42.

²⁶ See, e.g., Ibn Bādīs, *Āthār* iv, 412-5; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, *Miṣr wa-Filastīn* 79-145; al-Sawāfirī, *al-Shi’r al-‘Arabī*; Jarrar, *A Tent for Longing* 361-2.

²⁷ Ṭūqān, *al-A‘māl al-shi‘riyya al-kāmila* 128-9.

²⁸ Gupta, *The Song of the Nonaligned World* 328.

²⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6-7, 12.

³⁰ Tuan, *Space and Place* 177-8.

construct of identity repeatedly transcends the boundaries of the national and invokes other forms of loyalties which are intrinsically local and communal, and more sensitive to the troubling overtones of the term home/land as well as to an experiential and intimate sense of place, a *Heimat*. By this term I mean a secure and positive space of rootedness and collective memory;³¹ a 'gathering,' as Edward Casey puts it, "which gives to place its peculiar perduringness, allowing us to return to it again and again as the same place and not just as the same position or site."³²

Homeland as Metaphor

In the following I explore this tenuous construction of the homeland in relation to three recurring metaphors, using a few examples from modern Arabic literature: the home/land as a feminine space; as a deterritorialized space; and finally as a generation's family home.

Home/land as a Feminine Place

Home/land is often represented across various cultures in female imagery,³³ perceived as the 'first universe' which is in a sense that of the mother earth.³⁴ For instance, Samah Selim has noted the 'feminization' of the national discourse, which became absolutely central to Egyptian literature.³⁵ Likewise in Palestinian literature home/land is constructed through the imagery of the mythical mother and the beloved.³⁶ The idyllic village, home and natural landscape also emerged as a forceful emblem of Palestinian national identity.³⁷ In early modern Arabic literature there is a romanticization and abstraction of the homeland which amounted to quite a negative abstraction of the peasantry and the masses.³⁸ However, after the 1948 *Nakba*, the abstraction materializes as a real condition of permanent exile and loss for the Palestinians. Honaida Ghanim argues that "post-*Nakaba* poets depicted their national loss with the sexualized language pre-*Nakaba* Palestinian society shunned." She contends that "their poetry was overloaded with symbols of the homeland as a woman presented interchangeably as a beloved, mother and fiancée, and betrayer, prostitute, floozy, and unfaithful."³⁹ Actually, the depiction of the homeland as a symbol of debauchery and prostitution entails a binary opposition that bears within it at the same time

³¹ I am aware that the term *Heimat* is a highly complex and charged term in German language, culture and politics in the last centuries (see Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory*; Leach, The dark side of the Domus 31-42); I am using it here, however, in one of its meanings as a familiar, intimate space of belonging and as a 'milieu,' Brepohl, *Die Heimat als Beziehungsfeld* 13-21.

³² Casey, *How to Get from Space to Place* 26; Embaló, *Beirut the City-Woman*.

³³ Blickle, *Heimat* 83-92; Casey, *The Fate of Place* 326-30.

³⁴ Neumann, *The Great Mother* 39-45.

³⁵ Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary* 20-1.

³⁶ Neuwirth, *Darwish's Re-Staging of the Mystic Lover's Relation* 170-1.

³⁷ Especially in the poetry of Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones* 70-85; Rahman, *Threatened Longing and Perpetual Search* 41-56.

³⁸ See Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary* 63-74.

³⁹ Ghanim, *Poetics of Disaster* 33.

both harmony and abhorrence, exemplified most lucidly in the very rich metaphor of the cultic mother/prostitute: the double metaphor manifests in contradictory and often overlapping ways in the consciousness of the prototypical exiled 'male' son. This trope finds ingenuous poetic articulation in the work of Tawfīq Ṣāyigh,⁴⁰ but it is also quite prevalent in the poetry of other Palestinian poets.⁴¹

In Aḥlām Mustaghānmī's novel, *Dhākirat al-jasad*, the narrator, previously an Algerian *mujāhid* during the war of independence against the French colonizer and now an artist who dedicates his creative talents to painting the bridges of his home city Qasāṭīna, identifies his beloved through erotic language with Qasāṭīna;⁴² through his vivid memory he merges the sacred beloved with the eroticized object of desire to represent Algeria, *al-waṭan*, as the mother.⁴³ This ontological vision ends in frustration, however, as the cruel reality of Algeria emerges as a *waṭan*, which is orphaned from its mother and which in reality resembles the father.⁴⁴

Deterritorialized Home/lands

The desert and steppe, homeland of Arab and Berber tribes, make up a vast component of the physical geography of the Arab World in the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Egypt, Libya and North Africa.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that "The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them."⁴⁵ "The nomadic trajectory *distributes people (or animals) in an open space*, one that is indefinite and non-communicating [...] It is in this sense that nomads have no points, paths, or land, even though they do by all appearances. If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization afterward as with the migrant, or upon *something else* as with the sedentary (the sedentary's relation with the earth is mediated by something else, a property regime, a state apparatus)."⁴⁶

"Because the steppe (*al-bādiya*) is enormously vast, and its darkness intensifies and thickens, it is the mind alone which constructs homelands," says 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf, who was exiled from his homeland because of his political ideas. "I am one of those people who is deprived of a *waṭan*, if you will, and I lived in almost all Arab countries."⁴⁷ Although Munīf, as an Arab nationalist, considers all Arab countries his homeland and had actually lived for long periods of time in

⁴⁰ Ṣāyigh, *Al-A'māl al-kāmila*, National Anthem 53.

⁴¹ Ghanim, *Poetics of Disaster* 34-5.

⁴² The representation of the city as female, beloved, *femme fatale*, etc., is quite a familiar motif in world literatures. See, e.g., Weigel, *Traum – Stadt – Frau* 173-96; on Arabic literature: Cooke, *War's Other Voices* 74-5.

⁴³ See, e.g., Mustaghānmī, *Dhākirat al-jasad* 27, 164, 184.

⁴⁴ Idem, *Dhākirat al-jasad* 289.

⁴⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 380; see, however, the critique of Caren Kaplan, *Deterritorializations* 187-98.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 380-1.

⁴⁷ Interview with Fayṣal Darrāj in *al-Kātib wa-l-manfā* 288.

Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, one can detect in the above quotations the experience of a fragmented sense of belonging.

Munīf's epic novel, *Cities of Salt* (*Mudun al-milh*) in all its five volumes, reflects a deterritorialized perception of space in the Arabian Peninsula, where deterritorialization is a reality of the colonized and the postcolonial condition. The novel opens with a panorama of an idyllic oasis (*Wādī al-ʿuyūn*) which is the dwelling place (*dīra*) of an Arab tribe living in harmony with nature and its inhabitants, moving along a trajectory of points in the desert that they call their home. The narration captures the traumatic changes that the desert and its inhabitants have undergone through the discovery of oil, the intervention of colonial powers and the corruption of the ruling family. The displacement of the inhabitants and the destruction of the habitat amounts to a double-deterritorialization, in a sense, with the loss of the sense of identity and the trajectory in space, trying to negotiate a new relationship with their own habitat and with a heteronomous state apparatus.⁴⁸

Both the metaphorical trope and physical presence of the desert as a unique deterritorialized space have been brilliantly depicted by Tahar Djaout in his novel, *L'invention du désert* (1987). Djaout's novel follows a multi-layered, fluid trajectory that mobilizes space, identity and the history of the Algerian 'nation'. Tahar writes,

Mais, dans un thème et un espace aussi vastes et aussi érosifs (les Almoravides, la région de Biskra), l'écriture ne peut que se déliter ou s'enliser. Le choix d'une direction, d'une halte définitive, par exemple, est strictement impossible. Comment vêtir l'absence autrement que par des mots à la présenter corps ou cadavre?⁴⁹

In his study on Djaout's novel, Bensmaïa argues that the desert is "an allegory of the (impossible) text about Algeria that he is trying to write."⁵⁰ He quotes Djaout:

The territory is not delimited in a precise and definitive way; the homeland will continue to be invented from the union of births that rarely bear fruit – a bitter fruit when it comes forth, like that of wild orange trees. The winds that rise from the sand, the unceasingly altered edicts, beget new frontiers – imminent evictions or new prohibitions to wandering.⁵¹

With an eye on a remarkable set of ruling desert themes, Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's novels situate identity not only in the deterritorialized spaces of the North African Sahara, but moreover, in the Tuareg individuals' multifaceted relationships with the desert. In al-Kūnī's novels, the relationship with the desert as a homeland is in constant fluctuation. "The homeland (*waṭan*) of the tribe is a wilderness marked by dunes," says the narrator of al-Kūnī's novel, *Lightning without Rain*

⁴⁸ Edward Said comments, on the jacket-cover of the English translation, that it is "the only serious work of fiction that tries to show the effect of oil, Americans and the local oligarchy on a Gulf country."

⁴⁹ Djaout, *L'invention du désert* 31.

⁵⁰ Bensmaïa, *Experimental Nations* 74.

⁵¹ Ibid. 79.

(*Barq al-khullab*);⁵² where the tribe is on a long-lasting nostalgic journey seeking an unknown, ever-pursued homeland of the free Tuareg tribesman, those “who make the desert no less than they are made by it.”⁵³

Palestinians under occupation in their own home/land and as ‘nomads’ in the diaspora live, likewise, a deterritorialized reality, through an ongoing struggle to redefine their territory and to re-situate their identity, language and dwellings under the atrocities and watchful gaze of an all-consuming panoptic state.⁵⁴

Two recurring symbols in Palestinian literature reveal this state of the deterritorialized space of the home/land: the cactus plant and the bridge. The cactus is planted by Palestinian villagers to demarcate boundaries between fields.⁵⁵ Kamal Boullata notes that “the earliest photographs of Palestine from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries show the omnipresence of cactus hedges dotting the landscapes;” however the cactus plant as Boullata argues is at the same time “a subject loaded with polarized emotional associations ever since the birth of the Jewish state. On one side, Israeli Jews raised the indigenous plant to the status of a national symbol; on the other, Palestinians saw in it the very incarnation of their national dispossession.”⁵⁶

The bridge is likewise a loaded symbol in literature; I have shown elsewhere that it is “a compelling symbol of contact, mediation and mobility, of crossing barriers, over-reaching, connectedness and passage. It is a threshold that advocates union, re-union, and ‘bridging,’ a certain separation which is usually associated with sacrifice.”⁵⁷

Heidegger argues that the bridge is ‘a thing that gathers’ the belonging of man and the fourfold (earth, heaven, divinities, mortals).⁵⁸ Nonetheless, Hillis Miller criticizes Heidegger’s tenets on topography⁵⁹ and reads “national aestheticism” in Heidegger’s essay.⁶⁰ In Palestinian literature, however, traversing a bridge is a personal event that invites an “inner experience” with all the complexity inherent therein. The bridge, moreover, symbolizes a “liminal, transformative space,”⁶¹ a threshold that is located both within and outside ordinary time, in the space of memory and traumatic remembrance as Nermine al-Ḥorr has shown by studying the complexity of crossing *the bridge* that separates/connects the Palestinian in the diaspora to his *waṭan*.⁶²

⁵² Al-Kūnī, *Barq al-khullāb* 17.

⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 382.

⁵⁴ Deleuze, *Negotiations* 153; Said, *After the Last Sky*; and Dallmayr, *The Politics of Nonidentity* 45-51; see also Jarrar, *A Narration of Deterritorialization*.

⁵⁵ Abufarha, *Land of Symbols* 346.

⁵⁶ Bouallata, ‘Asim Abu Shaqra 68, 69.

⁵⁷ Jarrar, *Redemptive Journey* 60 and 69 (note 5 and 6).

⁵⁸ “Die Brücke versammelt auf ihre Weise Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen bei sich.... Die Brücke ist und zwar als die gekennzeichnete Versammlung des Geviertes ein Ding,” in Heidegger, *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* 147; see also Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology* 233-4.

⁵⁹ Miller, *Topographies* 216.

⁶⁰ Miller, *Topographies* 217, 252; see also Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* 152-66; and Leach, “The Dark Side of the Domus,” as in footnote 31 above.

⁶¹ Lehmann, *Transnational Identities* 327; Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* 152-66.

⁶² al-Ḥorr, *al-Dhāt al-maṣḍūma* 67-9, 100-2, 140-2.

For Maḥmūd Darwīsh the bridge becomes a suspended life between entry and exit, between the self and the other, a flow of dualities and “an isthmus between exile and a neighbouring land.”⁶³

“With the mist so dense on the bridge,” he said to me,

“Is anything known to the contrary?”

I said, “At dawn, things will be clear.” ...

We have been walking on the bridge for twenty years,

we have been walking these twenty meters, there and back!

And I said, “There is not much left.”

And he said, “There is not much left.”

And we said together and separately, as well dreaming:

I shall walk lightly, steps on the wind—

a bow which crushes the land of the violin.

I will hear the pulse of my blood in pebbles,

and the veins of my place.⁶⁴

The Home

Another metaphor for the homeland is that of the generation’s family home (*al-bayt* or *al-dār*). The home, according to Dovey, is a relationship, an experienced meaning.⁶⁵ “Home is a highly complex system of ordered relations with place, an order that orients us in space, in time, and in society.”⁶⁶ Bachelard argues that home is “our corner of the world,” and “is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams.”⁶⁷ Dwelling engages familiarity, containment and care.⁶⁸ Moreover, the home opens up to the environment in which it is located and connects to a web of social and political relationships. As such, as Kovecses puts it, “both the static object of a house and its parts and the act of building it serve as common metaphorical source domains.”⁶⁹ In what follows I will give two examples of the deployment of this metaphor in modern Arabic literature that are both fictional and contingent, inflected by the particular socio-political contexts in which they emerge.

‘Ayn Wardah

In Jabbūr al-Duwayhī’s novel, *‘Ayn wardah* (2002), the family house of the deep-

⁶³ Darwīsh, *With the Mist so Dense on the Bridge* 243.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 234, 237.

⁶⁵ Dovey, *Home and Homelessness* 34.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 37.

⁶⁷ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* 4, 6.

⁶⁸ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 54.

⁶⁹ Kovecses, *Metaphor* 19. The ‘source domain’ is “the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain which is the target domain.” Cf. Bachelard, *Space* 4.

rooted, bourgeois Lebanese Maronite family of Āl al-Bāz is deployed as a metaphor of an unstable and decaying homeland which has lost its familiarity and grandeur and is gradually being taken over by ‘foreigners,’ represented by Āl Ḥamad Khoḍr al-Mānī, a family of Moslem Lebanese Arabs (Bedouins). The novel reveals a multi-layered structure built on a variety of themes and representations. It is written in a poetic language that explores the architecture of the home, both physically and figuratively, such that the depiction of spatial dimensions mirrors the transformations in power structures. The metaphor of home and the bourgeois family are deployed—on one level—to stage and critique an ideological, chauvinistic reading of the modern history of Lebanon and the Lebanese civil war and a pathological fear of ‘the Other.’⁷⁰

Al-Bayt al-Andalusī

In Wāsīnī al-A‘raj’s novel (2010), the home is not meant to be a general scaffold for the events of a multi-generational novel that tracks the history of the Algerian-Morisco family from its origins in fifteenth century Granada. Rather, home in this novel is the focal center around which this polyphonic novel organizes the multifaceted metaphor of homeland as a representation of history, memory and belonging. The semantic engagement of history through innovative technique of enframing personal stories and ‘memoirs’ within one another, interweaving various *mise en scène* accounts from across different epochs, all organized around the history of the generations that have dwelled in the family home, make it a national allegory about Algiers as a homeland, caught up in insurmountable social and political conflicts and identity crises. The family home with its Andalusian ‘presence,’ represented in its architecture, inner-garden enclosure with its fountain, plants, vivid all-encompassing odors, furniture, the Aljamiado manuscript and memories stands as a symbolic contrast to the cruelty of the corruption of the post-colonial state, the totalitarian party and the national, patriarchal, *nouveau riche* bourgeoisie portrayed as hyenas (*al-ḍibā*).

Defying Home/land

When home/land is approached from a precarious marginal position or from a position of exile, the voice becomes that of anger and discord revealing a ‘nomadic’ situation and a paradoxical position of hostility towards the homeland. Muḥammad al-Māghūt’s prose-poetry as well as his prose, for example, reveals a very roguish and unusual sense of bitter satire that challenges the prevailing ideology of homeland and nation. Asfour and Burch have noted that “the tragic leitmotif in al-Māghūt’s poetry is the theme of the beloved country, depicted by turns as betrayer and betrayed, yet finally indifferent to its lesser denizens.”⁷¹

Another post-modern trend that deserves mention is that of Arab exilic writers, who have dual identities and occupy two homelands as they can write

⁷⁰ Jarrar, Lebanon as Borderland 28.

⁷¹ Asfour and Burch, *Joy is not my Profession* 9.

from the safety of one about the other, invoking a different construction of identity and belonging.⁷²

“Without homelessness, we would not be concerned with what home means,” writes Dovey.⁷³ The sense of home becomes more urgent and at the same time more fragile when compared with homelessness. Thus Edward Said carved in exile a ‘home’ made out of his loss, homelessness, and nomadism.⁷⁴

However, with the homelessness and displacement in this age of a brutal globalization that destabilizes the conventions of place, identity and culture and deterritorializes humans and nations; in the wake of the violent and terrifying changes in the Arab World and the rapid shifting and dissolving of boundaries, the Arab ‘citizen’ cannot but seek refuge in pre-state formations of clan, sect and other forms of loyalty or disloyalty.

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⁷² For more on this refer to Hassan, *Immigrant narratives*; al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry* 168-218; and Stephan Milich, *Poetik der Fremdheit*.

⁷³ Dovey, *Home and Homelessness* 44.

⁷⁴ Cf., Said, *After the Last Sky* 150; Said, *Reflections on Exile* 170, 185-6; Dallmayr, *The Politics of Nonidentity* 51-3.

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