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The Biopolitics of Belonging: Europe in Post-Cold War Arabic Literature of Migration

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**The Biopolitics of Belonging: Europe in Post-Cold War Arabic Literature of
Migration**

by

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For Elias and Nils

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**The Biopolitics of Belonging: Europe in Post-Cold War Arabic Literature of
Migration**

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Since the 1990s, a corpus of Arabic literary narratives has appeared that stage Europe from the perspective of forced migrants. This literature on refugees, asylum seekers, and clandestine migrants articulates central problems of migration to Europe in a period of migration policy reform in response to globalization. In this dissertation, I analyze a selection of Arabic and francophone North African literary narratives, including Mahmoud al-Bayaty's 2006 *Dancing on Water*, Iqbal Qazwini's 2006 *Zubaida's Window*, Farouq Youssef's 2007 *Nothing and Nobody*, Hamid Skif's 2006 *The Geography of Danger*, Youssef Fadel's 2000 *Hashish*, and Mahi Binebine's 1999 *Welcome to Paradise*.

This study is situated at the intersection of forced migration studies and Arabic literary studies. As the effort to standardize European migration policy and manage migration has increased states' power to filter and exclude, the human rights framework of migration policy has weakened (Fekete 2009; Menz 2008). Such shifts represent an intensification of what Michel Foucault calls

“biopolitics,” modern states’ propensity to manage populations by producing belonging and exclusion (Foucault 2003). Literature of migration has become an important vehicle for reflecting on the ways that migration policies produce belonging and exclusion in contemporary Europe.

Literature of forced migration requires modes of analysis that differ from the more modernist notions of exile that have dominated literary studies (Malkki 1995; McLeod 2000; Parvati 2010). In this study, I draw attention to the ways that literary narratives of migration re-figure Europe as a wilderness. The works that I analyze explore precarious migrant subjectivities through forests, urban jungles, and cannibalism, spaces onto which fantasies (and often nightmares) of the outside of political community can be projected. Furthermore, I argue that wilderness provides sites of negotiation between the biopolitical and ideals of rights-based citizenship. While the biopolitical does not serve as a foundation of belonging in these narratives as suggested by some theorists (Agamben 2008), the literature posits new modes of belonging through the very exclusions produced by forced migration.

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from original Arabic and French are mine except when I cite from Mahi Binebine's *Welcome to Paradise*. In this case, I refer to the English translation of the novel in Binebine, Mahi. *Welcome to Paradise*, translated by Lulu Norman, London: Granta, 2003. In other cases, when texts have previously been published in English translation, I refer to them by the title under which they were published even though the in-text translations are my own.

I have based all transliterations from Arabic on the guide provided by *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)*. I transliterate glottal stop or *hamza* (ء) as (‘) and the consonant (ع) as (‘).

Rather than transliterating authors' and literary characters' names I have used the most common romanized spellings.

This dissertation adheres to MLA style.

Introduction: A “Season of Forced Migration:” Post-Cold War Arabic Literature of Migration to Europe

In 2004, a review article appeared in *al-Mada al-Thaqafi* discussing the Iraqi novelist ‘Ali ‘Abd al-‘Al’s novel, *Black Iraqi Moons in Sweden* (*Aqmar ‘Iraqiyya Sawda’ fi al-Suwayd*), which was published the same year. The book’s genre lies somewhere between a novel and a series of journalistic vignettes of the everyday lives of a migrant Iraqi community in Sweden. To describe it, the author of the review refers back to a corpus of well-known Arabic novels of travel to Europe and suggests that readers of *Black Iraqi Moons* may already be familiar with some of its themes from Tawfiq al-Hakim’s 1938 *Bird of the East* (*Usfur min al-Sharq*), Yahya Haqqi’s 1944 *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* (*Qandil Umm Hashim*), and Tayeb Salih’s 1966 *Season of Migration to the North* (*Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal*). The author plays on the title of Salih’s acclaimed postcolonial novel *Season of Migration to the North* when pointing out that in contrast to the characters of earlier literary renderings of travel to Europe, the Iraqi refugees in *Black Iraqi Moons* are living a “season of forced migration” (*mawsim tahjīr*).

The title of the article, “The Disheartened Birds of the East Appear in *Black Iraqi Moons in Sweden*” (“Tuyur al-Sharq al-Ta‘isa Tazhar fi ‘*Aqmar ‘Iraqiyya Sawda’ fi al-Suwayd*”), begins to gesture toward the broader contours of an emergent corpus of literary texts that could be described as Post-Cold War Arabic Literature of Migration to Europe. Furthermore, in another play on words, it evokes Tawfiq al-Hakim’s canonical novel *Bird of the East*, a romantic

rendering of travel to 1920s Paris that affirms the superiority of a stereotypically eastern spirit over western materialism. In doing so the review article implicitly contrasts the sense of purpose that permeates Hakim's novel, which is of a late colonial era with high aspirations for change, with 'Abd al-'Al's disheartened characters. Specifically, in the narrative, *Black Iraqi Moons* likens its characters to moons that have lost their orbits. A sense of lost grounding, lost paths, and despondency runs through the narrative, infiltrating the lives of its many characters who, in various ways, struggle to find a foothold in Sweden. The book's suggestive title, which plays on the words *suwayd* (Sweden) and *sawda*' (black), invokes not only the darkness of Swedish winters but also *suwayda*' (melancholia). Moreover, the review article uses the juxtaposition of the singular *'usfūr* (swallow) and the plural *tuyūr* (birds) to draw attention to the progression from individual narratives of travel and return in Arabic literature to the dynamics of mass migration. In these various plays on meanings, the article suggests a convergence between the dynamics of mass migration and a loss of community that is not easily overcome.

'Abd al-'Al's many literary renderings of Iraqi refugee communities in Sweden¹ represent one small facet of a growing corpus of Arabic literature of forced migration (*adab al-tahjīr*). The International Migration Organization defines forced migration as "a migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from

¹ These include his 1995 *Times of Exile: Three Stories* (*Azman lil-Manafi: Thalath Hikayat*), *A Sorrowful Birth: A Novel* (*Milad Hazin: Riwaya*) in 2005 and *Iraqi Embers on Swedish Snow: Jessica* (*Jamr 'Iraqi 'ala Thalj Suwaydi: Jisika*) in 2008.

natural or man-made causes.”² The literature of forced migration that is analyzed in this dissertation stages the experiences of refugees, asylum seekers, and clandestine migrants on journeys between the Arab world and Europe. Written mostly in Arabic while in Europe, this literature dramatizes departures, travel, and arrivals (and sometimes returns/deportations) during a period when both mobility and displacement have come to define the global. As such, it constitutes an emergent genre of Arabic literature that articulates some of the central problems of migration to Europe in the 1990s and onward.

In the post-Cold War period, large-scale forced migration has transformed the way that Europe is represented in Arabic literature. Most apparently, literary narratives of forced migration often take place in geographical locales rarely depicted in previous Arabic literature on Europe, such as Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Spain. In this way, such narratives contribute to a shift in the center of gravity of Arabic diasporic literature in Europe away from the postcolonial literary centers of London and Paris and the cosmopolitan perspectives that they often convey.

Furthermore, in Arabic literature, the transition from *hijra* (migration, journey) to *tahjīr* (forced migration) has produced creative and compelling reflections on migrant subjectivities. For example, when *Black Iraqi Moons* metaphorically renders its characters as moons that have lost their orbits it conjures a sense that its diasporic community has lost a center of gravity.

Something has gone missing in exile, maybe even the idea of what exile *should*

² <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/about-migration/key-migration-terms-1.html#Forced-migration>

be. The idea of lacking a center or clear purpose for exile recurs in other narratives of migration as well. Mahmoud al-Bayaty's 2006 novel *Dancing on Water* (*Raqs 'ala al-Ma'*) revolves around an Iraqi narrator in Sweden who searches for the owner of a lost wallet. The quest to find the owner of the wallet metaphorically renders a desire to re-locate a sense of meaning in exile. In Iqbal Qazwini's 2006 novel *Zubaida's Window* (*Mumarrat al-Sukun*) "history" is personified as a man standing next to the celebrations of the crumbling Berlin Wall. His refusal to acknowledge the presence of the Iraqi narrator who arrived in the GDR years earlier signals a lost link to exile and leads the narrator to new forms of alienation. In yet other literary narratives, clandestine migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees encounter Europe as a wilderness. Such literary narratives explore precarious migrant subjectivities through forests, urban jungles, and cannibalism, spaces onto which fantasies (and often nightmares) of the outside of political community can be mapped. One of the premises of this dissertation is that there is much to be gained from reading these literary narratives of migration comparatively. As they explore, re-imagine and fantasize the links that bind migrants to new homes, they provide compelling insights into migrant subjectivities in an era of forced migration. Furthermore, read together, they point toward changing aesthetic models of Europe in Arabic literature.

I situate this study of Arabic literature of migration to Europe at the intersection of forced migration studies and Arabic literary studies. Specifically, I draw on the many insights of migration scholars as the field of inquiry has shifted away from Refugee Studies toward Migration Studies (Zetter 189). Significant

research suggests that the many shifts heralded by post-Cold War globalization have eroded the rights-frameworks from which migrants can make claims on receiving states (Boccardi; Fekete; Menz). Such shifts include the European Union's standardization of migration policies and its embrace of managed migration, both of which have aimed to restrict migration.

Biopolitics is an ideal theoretical approach because it postulates a link between state management of populations and the regulation of belonging and exclusion in political community. Michel Foucault describes biopower as the modern state's propensity to govern by managing entire populations according to a biological logic. In his 1976 lectures at College de France, published as *Il faut défendre la société* (*Society Must Be Defended*), he argues that modern governance techniques produce fractures in populations between rights-bearing citizens and those who are rendered rightless (255-256); the latter category becomes reconceived as a threat to the former (255). When marginalization is recast in these biological terms, he argues, the excluded become represented as external and internal threats to the health and wellbeing of a population.

In addition to Foucault's theories on the biopolitical and citizenship, I also consider Hanna Arendt's argument in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) that the figure of the refugee, by virtue of being outside of citizenship, exposes the fiction of universal human rights by showing how rights are anchored in the national framework. She argues that the decline of the nation state must mean the decline of rights unless other frameworks are created. From Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, I build on the conception of biopolitics in as the moving threshold

between the inside and outside of political community (131). Indeed, literature of migration has become an important vehicle for reflecting on citizenship, exclusion, and the ways that these categories are produced in contemporary Europe.

In my readings of migration literature I emphasize the idea that at a moment in history when the question of rights-centered citizenship is at stake, especially in the realm of migration, we see an overlap between the biopolitical and Arabic literary representations of migration. Indeed, novels and short stories of migration often represent the threshold between belonging and exclusion as a reduction to the body or an encounter with wilderness and alternately, by exploring lost links to exilic space. As such, they reimagine the moving boundary between the inside and outside of political community and the way that it is produced in contemporary migration policies.

Wilderness

One of the rich textures of post-Cold War Arabic literature of migration is the recurring appearance of wilderness in the migrant's encounter with Europe. With wilderness, I refer to the kinds of tropes that, for example, transform European spaces into empty forests, barren snowy landscapes, and fantastical arctic vistas, or into spaces where humans are hunted, cannibalized, and subject to unmediated bodily violence. It encroaches upon narratives, I argue, as a way to explore the outside of the social contract and citizenship or in the precarious spaces produced by forced migration. The theme of representing the encounter

with Europe as a confrontation with wilderness – or at least a wilderness that appears for migrants – cuts to the heart of the biopolitical as these spaces of wilderness seem to be produced as the migrant broaches the legal boundaries between belonging and exclusion. In such literary renderings wilderness can appear either as a threatening space or an idealized refuge from society.

In Arabic, as in many European languages, the concept of wilderness / the wild draws on various modes of separation and isolation from community. The consonantal root *wa-ḥa-sha* و – ح – ش generates many of these concepts. The *wahsh* is the monster or beast, *wahshī* means wild or untamed by humans, *tawahḥush* savagery and violence, and *wahsha* alienation and loneliness. These concepts all refer to various states of being outside the spatial and moral bounds of community. In migration literature, wilderness resonates as an outside space, conceived in ways that relate to migration, belonging, and exclusion in the post-Cold War context.

But beyond the immediate historical context, the idea of wilderness has long served as a flexible and changing signifier of what is outside of human community as there are rich and varied discourses of wilderness in both European and Arab intellectual history. For example, Hayden White writes an archeology of the idea of the “wild” in pre-modern and early modern Western thought in his 1998 book *Tropics of Discourse*. He argues that it has served in various ways as a self-authenticating device (it is whatever “we” are *not*). A similar archeology of a trope could be written in regards to Arabic intellectual history, which also holds a multi-layered archive of discourses on wilderness and wildness. From the role of

the desert in al-Shanfara's "Lamiyyat al-'Arab" and the classical qasida to Ibn Khaldoun's reflections on civilization (*'ilm al-'umrān*) and wildness (*tawahhush*), the idea of wilderness has signified not only the outside of human community and its moral and political boundaries, but also the possibility of transformation. Furthermore, in contemporary literary and societal discourse in the Arab world the idea of wilderness is often invoked to describe breaches in the citizen-state contract.³

The intellectual historian Birgit Schaebler makes a provocative case for investigating the idea of wildness in discourses on global modernity in general and in the Arab intellectual context in particular. In "Civilizing Others: Global Modernity and the Local Boundaries (French / German / Ottoman and Arab) of Savagery,"⁴ she situates the progression from the early 19th century Arab reformers' focus on universal standards for civilization (technology, science, reason) to the late 19th century intellectuals' discussions on how to revive an Arab and Islamic heritage - *turāth* –within the larger context of global modernity. She insists that the imperative to conceive of an authentic and modern civilization mirrors modernizing processes in Europe,⁵ the Ottoman government, and

³ A couple examples from film and literature include the Egyptian film *The Forest (Al-Ghāba)* ('Atif, 2009) about street children living on the margins of Cairo and the 1981 play *The Barber on the Street of the Poor (Hallaq Derb al-Fuqara')* by the Moroccan writer Youssef Fadel. The play created political difficulties for the author as he portrayed Casablanca as a forest (ghāba).

⁴ Here, Schaebler follows the cautioning of Shmuel Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter in "Introduction: Paths to Early Modernities—A Comparative View" against seeing global modernity as a process of Westernization. Instead, she interprets the Nahda as one of many iterations of global modernity born out of globalizing economic systems and cross-cultural encounters.

⁵ She makes the point that there are significant parallels between the Nahda modernization project and that of 19th century Germany, where the development of the concept of *Volk* validated an

elsewhere. Initial encounters with global modernity, in this reading, tend to replicate the French Enlightenment categories of civilization.⁶ They do so by demarcating internal and external boundaries between the civilized and the savage / wild. In later stages of modernization projects, reformers often recuperated and validated these previously rejected categories, positing them as the foundation of an authentic modernity. Her readings of the classic early Nahda travel narrative *The Extraction of Gold in the Abridgment of Paris (Taklis alOibriz fi Talkhis Baris)* Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi’s travelogue of his 1826-1831 stay in Paris, the emergence of the concept of Eastern and Western Civilization in the latter part of the 19th century, and the kinds of discourses on authenticity related to early nationalism, suggest modern discourses on authenticity work by appropriating ideas of wildness.

While Schaebler’s reading suggests that the idea of the wild is an unstable signifier whose use differs in various contexts, she makes a compelling case that notions of the wild have informed conceptions of modernity, both as a signifier of “savagery” and authenticity. In contrast, it is notable that the wild re-emerges in Arabic literature of migration not to signal authenticity but rather to signify against it. In other words, by exploring the production of belonging and exclusion

archaic past and a shared language (Bauman and Briggs) as a response to the universalizing ideals of French civilization.

⁶ The modern concept of civilization, indeed the term itself, dates back to the French Enlightenment and the intellectual struggles of the encyclopedists and *philosophes* to replace the political and social values of the *ancien régime* with a new political, social, and moral order based on reason. Over the course of 18th century France, the term “civilization” was adopted by proponents of progress to express the ideal of a societal order based on reason, replacing the older concept of *un peuple policé* (Zemmer, Schaebler 9-10). In opposition to civilization lay the realm of the wild, a concept encompassing both the archaic and the primitive whose boundaries were drawn both within France (the yet uncivilized countryside) and outside, in territories awaiting colonial expansion.

from the perspective of migrants, the literature of migration examined in this dissertation de-emphasizes concepts of authenticity, culture, and heritage as the foundation of belonging. In its treatment of citizenship, wilderness is the terrain situated outside of community.

The Question of Aesthetics

With a literature of forced migration, we have arrived at a crucial juncture where it is important to put the literary in dialogue with migration studies. In doing so, this study resists the tendency in both literary studies and forced migration studies to keep the fields separate. Liisa Malkki's seminal 1995 article on the emergence and development of the field refugee studies, for example, reveals a common perspective that continues to shape approaches to the topic. In this article Malkki broaches the question of aesthetics of displacement. Discussing Edward Said's "Reflections on Exile," she notes that "exile" connotes a readily aestheticizable realm, which has been amply explored in 20th century world literature. In contrast, she suggests, the label "refugees" signifies a bureaucratic and international humanitarian realm" (513) with a dearth of corresponding artistic and literary representations.

On the other hand, literary studies does not always rise to the challenge of considering the intersection of aesthetics and migrant subjectivities shaped by forced migration. Critic Nicoleta Pireddu, who has written on harraga literature of clandestine migration from North Africa to Southern Europe, argues that the urge to testify to the harsh realities of clandestine migration can lead to literary

approaches that are ethnographic in style and paternalist in intent (29). There has been a similar tendency in Arabic literary studies to dismiss literature of forced migration. While there are many compelling studies on literature of travel and exile in Europe (Enany; Hassan; Munif), there are few that theorize the role of globalized realities of forced migration in literature. Nevertheless, the appearance of more artistic and literary stagings of forced migration in the past few years have given rise to a need to theorize links between migrants and cultural production. Recent journals such as *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* begin to take on this challenge. In doing so, it is useful to consider the kinds of literary spaces to which literature of forced migration belongs. Below, I will briefly explain how I situate literature of migration vis-à-vis European migrant literature and Arabic exile literature.

On Overlapping European and Arab Literary Spheres

As with any literary genre, there are no watertight categories. Writers and texts cross boundaries at many junctures, and translations from Arabic and French into other languages brings literary texts to new audiences who may re-interpret their genres. That said, by locating Arabic literature of forced migration in contrast to European migration literature and contemporary Arabic exile literature, I will justify the way that I contextualize the literature in subsequent chapters in relation to Europe's role in the modern Arabic literary canon on the one hand, and in relation to globalized forms of migration and its policing, on the other.

European “migrant literature” is an important reference point for Arabic literature of migration to Europe. By European migrant literature I refer to the literature of first- and second-generation (im)migrants in Europe written in the dominant language of the society of arrival and that explores questions of identity and belonging (Mardossian; Merolla; Ponzanesi; Shafi). In contrast to Arabic literature of migration, European migrant literature primarily engages with its national and trans-European canons, literary criticism, and audiences. A product of journeys and displacement shaped by colonial and postcolonial ties, labor migration, and forced migration, European migrant literature defies classification in clear temporal or geographical terms (i.e., for how many generations is one a migrant? What types of origins are categorized as migrant? Is literature written by migrants always “migrant literature”?). It includes many subcategories, such as the literature of North African immigrants in France, the literature of Turkish guest workers in Germany (*Gastarbeiterliteratur*), which later becomes Turkish-German literature, and the multicultural literature of Great Britain. It also includes literature written and read in European nations with a more recent history of immigration, such as Italy, Spain, Denmark, and Sweden.

Just as migration has played an important role in reshaping European identities in the past few decades and earlier, so have migrant literatures in Europe played an important role in both reshaping national canons within Europe and opening them up for transnational readings. Daniela Merolla and Sandra Ponzanesi capture many of the complexities of defining and critically reading European migrant literature in their book *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural*

and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe (2005). They argue that migrant literature in Europe has played an important role in questioning, deconstructing, and re-imagining national narratives and literary canons. They ask:

Within the European scenario it is high time to ask when migrant literature will be an object of comparison without having to pass via the national canon. What are the implications of globalization for literature? Does it reinforce the “re-location” of literature by rekindling regional literature? Is Europe really moving toward a European literature that also reflects new migrant writings? To which audiences is migrant literature directed? Does the migrant label enhance the visibility of writers shifting between languages and cultures or does it simply relegate them to a luxury ghetto? (4)

These questions of canonization, readership, and classification probe the changing meanings of national belonging and literary identity in a period of globalization. But, as Merolla and Ponzanesi also note, the category of migrant literature often implies ethnic othering. They ask whether “the migrant is not just a traveler, a wanderer, but implicitly the person who reproduces the colonial divides in new global terms” (4). In other words, although migrant literature helps dislocate secure notions of literary canons and national identity, the category of the migrant, seldom applied to intra-European movement, often depends on established notions of ethnic and racial belonging.

If clear temporal, geographical, and identity markers of migrant literature are difficult to demarcate, then there is, at least, some thematic coherence in migrant literature. Ponzanesi and Merolla make the case that

[t]he only clear connection is that these are writers and artists who address and investigate issues of home and abroad, identity and language, private and public domains, in more acute forms. They often posit questions of cultural affiliation in terms of the way the inherited legacy of migration impinges upon integration and belonging in the country of destination – or better, in the country of new belonging. (4)

Migrant literature articulates these themes of belonging differently across national, ethnic, and, literary heritages. As for migrant literature in Europe written by writers with roots in the Arab world, there are a number of literary spaces that are relevant.

A history of colonial ties and decolonization has indelibly shaped the literature of North African migrants in France. The writings of established North African writers residing in France such as Assia Djebar, Nabile Farès, and Tahar Ben Jelloun grapple deeply with questions of postcolonial identities and creative expression in French. In contrast, the writing of second-generation immigrants that emerged in the 1980s tends to explore the biculturalism of the children of the postcolonial labor migrants who came to France in the 1960s and life in the marginalized metropolitan suburbs of French cities. Since the 1980s, literature of second-generation writers of North African origins has become increasingly visible in the French literary sphere. The French slang word for North African migrant – *beur* – quickly gained currency to describe the novels of writers such as Azouz Begag, Farida Belghoul, and many others who explore themes of belonging and exclusion in France. Nevertheless, as in other debates about migrant writings, writers and critics have also disputed the validity of categorizing writers according to their North African origins.

More recently, migrant literature by writers of Arab origins has begun to reshape the literary spheres in other European national contexts. The Swedish-Tunisian writer Jonas Hassen Khemiri, for example, has become a major literary figure and public intellectual in Sweden. His writings have critiqued notions of

cultural authenticity and instead highlighted fluid belongings within debates about contemporary racism and national identity. In Holland, many writers of Moroccan, Iraqi, and Palestinian origins have reshaped contemporary Dutch writing. For example, the Dutch poet and filmmaker Ramsey Nasr who was elected poet laureate of the Netherlands in 2009 has broached topics such as the Israel-Palestine conflict and the kinds of anxieties about national belonging that give rise to contemporary nationalist movements.

Arabic literature of (im)migration in English has a long history, with genealogies that go back to the early Arab American writers in the United States in the late 19th c. to the early 20th c. In his recent book *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* Wail Hassan argues that a defining characteristic of Arab immigration literature in English is how it negotiates literary and cultural identities through the East / West categories of Orientalism. Arab American and Arab British literature, he offers, is “translational” in the sense that writers often take on the role of mediator between East and West and thus rely on notions of Arab identity that are already present in host societies, even if they work to unsettle dominant assumptions. Ahdaf Soueif, for example, writes on British-Egyptian postcolonial relations in *The Map of Love* (1999) and Leila Aboulela’s novels focus on Muslim spaces in Britain and the challenges of negotiating life as an immigrant.

Arabic literature of forced migration, I argue, overlaps with the broader category of European migrant literatures. Both genres explore questions of belonging and identity in European societies from the perspective of those who

are not part of the dominant national or European narratives. However, there are some important differences to keep in mind. Migrant literature is written in the language of its host society and tends to engage primarily with local audiences and literary debates even as these intersect with the global. Literature of forced migration, like European migrant literature, depicts the act of migrating and early encounters in new societies, but forced migration literature tends to foreground the legal boundaries that produce belonging and exclusion. That is, the legal focus is more central to literature of forced migration. In a globalized context of migration management, of which there will be a deeper discussion in the first chapter, depicting migration means portraying the kinds of policing and boundary-making practices that have proliferated in a globalized age. Furthermore, in contrast to European migrant literature, literature that depicts migration from the Arab world to Europe is written primarily in Arabic (with some in French by Algerian and Moroccan writers). Therefore, its readership is primarily in the Arab world and within diasporic Arab communities in Europe. While Arabic literature of migration offers valuable reflections on the European post-Cold War context, it continues to engage with Arabic literary heritages and debates.

Finally, it is useful to make a distinction between Arabic literature of migration in Europe and the significant literary output of some very prominent Arab writers who reside in Europe, especially in the major metropolitan centers of London and Paris. While there is some overlap between migration literature and, for example, the Iraqi poet Saadi Youssef's important reflections on his many

sites of exile from Iraq, there is a spirit of modernist detachment in exile literature that often does not translate into literature of forced migration. The Syrian poet Adonis is another major Arabic literary figure who, residing in Paris, projects a cosmopolitan sense of belonging through language. Hoda Barakat, whose novels are primarily set in Lebanon during the civil war, treats the question of exile and the Lebanese diaspora in France in her 2004 book *The Stranger's Letters (Rasa'il al-Ghariba)*. In it, she defines exile as a series of moments when loss becomes apparent and she questions the extent to which the Lebanese diaspora forms a coherent community. While these writers offer astute and engaging reflections on exilic conditions, often from a rich perspective of cosmopolitan humanism, their positionality tends to be distinct from that of forced migration literature.

Literature, Intertextuality, and Transformation

Even though its themes overlap with European migrant literatures and Arabic exile literature, Arabic post-Cold War literature of forced migration emphasizes distinct questions about belonging that often intertwine with biopolitical models of migration management in the post-Cold War period. In doing so, Arabic forced migration literature often draws on older memories of Europe from Arabic literature – what can be referred to as a canon of writing – even if it is only to mark discontinuity, lost paths, and narrative dead-ends in need of reinvention. Such shifts help account for the mode of despondency identified in the *Iraqi Moons* review article. But despondency and disappointment are also ways of reprocessing the past and re-imagining the present; Arabic literature of

forced migration invokes past aesthetic models even as it transforms them in new migratory contexts.

This dissertation examines the literary models that have been brought into being by changing forms of migration and experiences of Europe. As the following chapter summaries indicate, the selected literary texts are drawn heavily from the northern and southern extremes of Europe. While these areas are important emergent spaces for modern Arabic literature, and migration literature specifically, the scope of the dissertation has been partially limited by my own experiences, contacts, and research venues. Further research will surely expand the comparative breadth and depth of research into Arabic literature of forced migration. Nevertheless, by drawing connections between literary representations of different kinds of forced migration that represent different geographical locales in Europe, this dissertation argues that while Arabic literature of forced migration transcends national borders, it explores the kinds of boundary making practices that have become endemic in the post-Cold War period of globalization.

Chapter Division

Chapter One situates Arabic post-Cold War literature of forced migration to Europe against relevant literary and migratory contexts. First, it discusses the Nahda origins of the discourses on “East” and “West” that shaped many 20th century Arabic literary representations of Europe and shows how they have been reshaped and transformed across critical colonial and postcolonial junctures. It shows how modern Arabic literary renderings of travel and exile formulate

notions of self and community in relation to abstracted versions of Europe that index various readings of the Enlightenment. Secondly, the chapter outlines critical shifts in migration and European migration policies during the post-Cold War period. Specifically, it discusses how, in a globalized era, European migration policies have shifted away from rights-centered models of migration, especially with the embrace of policies that restrict migration and seek to manage it on a transnational level. Finally, it suggests ways to read Arabic literature of migration intertextually with the older canon, practices that can highlight important literary transformations and societal commentaries.

In Chapter Two, I analyze Iraqi writer Mahmoud al-Bayaty's novel *Dancing on Water (Raqs 'ala al-Ma')*, which is about an Iraqi poet who has become a refugee in Sweden after an extended exile in Prague. The chapter argues that al-Bayaty's novel parodies post-1967 Arabic exile literature, especially that of the politically committed Left, in order to reflect on post-Cold War paradigms of migration and exile. It does so through a comparative reading between al-Bayaty's novel and Hanna Mina's iconic 1986 novel of exile in 1960s Budapest, *Spring and Fall (Al-Rabi' wa al-Kharif)* and Iqbal Qazwini's 2006 novel on exile in Berlin before and after German reunification, *Zubaida's Window: A Novel of Iraqi Exile (Mamarrat al-Sukun)*. *Dancing on Water* is structured by the narrator's search for the owner of a wallet that he finds at a central Göteborg café. The wallet is an apt metaphor for a displaced materialism and the question of citizenship amidst the economic modalities of migration and citizenship in the post-Cold War era. Indeed the narrator's search for the owner of the wallet –

presumably “Alfons,” the name that is printed on it – becomes a quest for re-defining exile and citizenship. The many challenges to this plot of “becoming” include the narrator’s anxieties about the precarious position of migrants in Sweden and the hostile discourses directed against them. While his search for “Alfons” is initially guided by a relational discourse of “East” and “West,” the novel performatively abandons this framework as the narrator re-imagines what citizenship means at a critical historical juncture.

Chapter Three focuses on three literary narratives of migration to Europe that use the trope of wilderness in order to explore spaces of precarious refuge. In addition to the biopolitical framework, which helps contextualize why wilderness has emerged as a recurrent trope for depicting the outside of political community, I draw on Derrida’s theorization of “hostipitality.” Derrida interprets “hostipitality” as the tension between conditional and unconditional welcoming that is necessary for practicing hospitality. He argues that in its more managerial forms, migration policies risk abandoning the grounding in ideals of welcoming that is necessary for ethics, the ability to relate to others. The chapter analyzes Ibrahim Ahmad’s imaginative rendering of the outside of political community in “The Arctic Refugee” and Farouq Yousef’s 2007 travel diary *Nothing and Nobody: A Diary in Northern Europe (La Shay La Ahad: Yawmiyat fi al-Shamal al-Urubi)*, discussing how both texts project an ideal of refuge and welcoming onto wilderness. In both literary depictions of exile, wilderness contrasts with the city and the nation in ways that reveal an anxiety about the precariousness of refuge outside of such idealized spaces. Finally, the chapter analyzes the 2006

novel *The Geography of Danger* (*La Géographie du Danger*) by Algerian writer Hamid Skif, which depicts the constrained life of a clandestine migrant in an unnamed European city. In contrast to the depiction of wilderness as a refuge (though shaped by similar anxieties about the political), Skif's novel transforms the urban space into a wilderness where clandestine migrants are hunted. However, the narrator, who views the city from a small hiding place, constructs a fantasy world that acts as a lens that renders the city more hospitable. All three narratives use tropes of wilderness to depict the threshold between belonging and exclusion and as a way to re-imagine community. Furthermore, they project the kinds of idealizations and abstractions of Europe that were prevalent in earlier canonical Arabic literary renderings of travel and exile onto the non-space of fantasy. In doing so, I argue, they performatively displace previous aesthetic models of writing Europe to engage with the globalized realities of migration. Chapter Four analyzes literary depictions of “harraga” migration, clandestine migration from North Africa to Southern Europe. It suggests how the tropes and narrative structure of harraga literature intersect with globalized phenomena of irregular migration and the attempts to manage it. The term “harraga” – those who burn – signifies multiply. It can refer to the burning of citizenship papers, passports, and boundaries. It thus strongly evokes a liminal position where the liminal is understood as a departure from a normative legal framework of rights and citizenship. This chapter focuses on two novels –Mahi Binebine's *Welcome to Paradise* (*Cannibales*) and Youssef Fadel's *Hashish*. I analyze the novels' performance of a rupture with the past and citizenship and the way that

they un-imagine relationality with their homes. Unlike some of the literary narratives previously explored, the novels' narratives (marked by the loss of political community) fail to proceed into renewal or a re-imagining of community. The depictions of clandestine migration as a form of perpetual liminality that we see in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* thus offer a powerful commentary on the biopolitical construction of citizenship and exclusion at the edges of Europe in the post-Cold War period.

Chapter One:

Dueling Contexts: Europe in the Modern Arabic Novel and Europe in the Biopolitical Project to Manage Migration

In Ibrahim Ahmad's 1994 short story "The Arctic Refugee"⁷ we encounter a narrator who, due to a series of displacements, has been pushed over "the edge of the world" into an Arctic wilderness. Forced out of Iraq for political reasons, he works in Libya until his contract expires. Expelled from Libya, he travels to Sweden and tries to apply for political asylum at the Stockholm airport. Here, his claim is denied because he is arriving from a country that is signatory to The Geneva Convention Relating to Status of Refugees and thus, under European Union law, responsible for processing his application. His deportation from Sweden becomes the first of many, each carried out with the same gesture toward the Geneva Refugee Convention. In a Kafkaesque foreclosure of possibilities within the legal structures that govern asylum and migration policies in Europe, the narrator is eventually forced over the northern edge of Europe into the Arctic, a wilderness that functions as an imagined space outside of the legal parameters of migration. And there, in the Arctic, he applies for asylum again.

"The Arctic Refugee," a short story that will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three, is one among many Arabic literary narratives from the post-Cold War period that depict migration to Europe as an encounter with wilderness.

Tropes such as forests, urban jungles, and cannibalism abound in these literary

⁷ The story was originally published as "Lāji 'ind al-Iskīmū (A Refugee with the Eskimo) in Ibrahim Ahmad's 1994 story collection *Ba'd Maji' al-Tayr: Qisas min al-Manfa (After the Bird's Arrival: Exile Stories)*.

representations of the experience of clandestine migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. With these imagined landscapes, they seem to theorize a wilderness that is produced *for* the migrants as they broach territories that are situated outside of citizenship. In “The Arctic Refugee,” for instance, wilderness functions as a space where community can be re-imagined after all conventional possibilities of legal belonging have been foreclosed. It performs a fantasy of hospitality in the face of the weakening of rights-centered approaches to migration (exemplified here by the ineffectiveness of the Geneva Refugee Convention) in a period of globalization. As such, it is one of many new imaginative renderings of the threshold between the inside and outside of political community in Arabic literary renderings of Europe.

There is a convergence of at least two crises that shape this literature, both of which are deeply embedded in a post-Cold War literary and political context. First, Arabic post-Cold War literature of migration problematizes the East-West discourses that have shaped the genre of writing Europe since the Nahda and moreover, the way that this literature is often interpreted. More specifically, literature of migration counters the post-1967 tendency in Arabic literature to idealize Europe as a space of freedom and rights. Secondly, the genesis of Arabic literary forms is also tied to a crisis of political subjectivity created by shifts in migration and migration policies in the post-Cold War period of globalization. Europe’s embrace of “managed migration” has undermined its stated adherence to the imperatives of the Geneva Refugee Convention and the ideal of a horizontal political community that was re-asserted in the post-WWII era.

These shifts represent an intensification of what Michel Foucault calls “biopolitics,” the modern state’s propensity to govern by managing entire populations (which now exceed the national framework). This theory runs counter to the standard accounts of modern citizenship as the liberation of the individual and the Enlightenment readings of political community as the transcendence of the body and of nature. One of the ways that biopower works, Foucault argues in his 1976 lectures at College de France, published as *Il faut défendre la société* (*Society Must Be Defended*), is by fragmenting and creating “caesuras” in populations where the marginalization of some, or their “political death” (255-256), is imagined as necessary for the health of the whole. When marginalization becomes reconceived in these biological terms, he argues, the excluded become represented as external and internal threats to the health and wellbeing of a population. It is perhaps not surprising then, that at a moment in history when the question of rights-centered citizenship is at stake, we see an overlap between theories of the biopolitical and Arabic literary representations of migration. Indeed, novels and short stories of migration often represent the threshold between belonging and exclusion as a reduction to the body or an encounter with wilderness.

This chapter engages both the Enlightenment models that were re-affirmed in the post-WWII period and the theories of biopolitics whose alternate readings of political community help contextualize the erosion of migrant rights in the post-Cold War period. As humanist endeavors, however, literary representations of migration creatively navigate these poles, dramatizing the tension between

laying claims to rights frameworks for migration, on the one hand, and re-theorizing political community through the biopolitical, on the other. If biopolitics can be conceived as the moving threshold between belonging and exclusion, then the literature engages in questions such as: How do you depict the outside of political subjectivity? What does the threshold between belonging and exclusion look like?

This chapter outlines some of the literary and historical contexts of Arabic post-Cold War literature of forced migration to Europe. The topics and theory explored here are far ranging; migration literature, which treats departures, journeys, and arrivals, necessarily implies multiple contexts. In order to foreground the kinds of literary shifts, intertextuality, and subversions of previous models of writing Europe elaborated in subsequent chapters, the first section gives one account of the history of modern Arabic literary representations of Europe. This reading emphasizes the emergence of discourses on “East” and “West” in the Nahda, and the ruptures and continuities associated with the literature’s transformation in late- and post- colonial contexts. Secondly, in order to contextualize the literary themes of legal status and identity (citizenship, asylum seeking, clandestine migration) that we see in migration literature, the next major section considers the shifts in patterns of migration and European migration policies under the post-Cold War era of globalization. Of particular significance is the way that migration policies have shifted away from rights-centered models of migration toward more restrictive and managerial policies of managed migration. Thirdly, the chapter argues that the recurring literary renderings of Europe as a

wilderness represent spaces where these themes – the Arabic literary context, modern citizenship, and the biopolitical – converge. It is often in these spaces of wilderness, and in the spaces where the loss of previous models of writing and interpreting travel to Europe are registered, that we find the questions that are so central to migration literature and to this project: How is community legally constructed and deconstructed, imagined, and un-imagined?

Theorizing East-West Relationality in the Nahda

Like Edward Said's well-known argument in *Orientalism* which holds that European representations of the Middle East often tell us more about self-perception in the West than about any so-called "Oriental" culture they claim to portray, so have literary articulations of Europe in Arabic been heavily imbricated in regional, national and social projects of modernity in the Arab world.

If one of the central questions of the Nahda - how to re-interpret Islamic and Arab heritage in the context of encroaching European domination - was relatively straightforward, then the answers were much more complex.

Multifaceted as they were, a recurring trend in Nahda thinkers' theorizations of modernity is that they often relied on abstractions of Europe against which notions of self were developed. From Mohamed Abduh's re-reading of Islam as a system of rational principles that are in harmony with a modernizing world in *Tafsīr al-Qu'ran al-Karim (Interpreting the Holy Qu'ran)* (1911) to Qasem Amin's argument for women's liberation as an extension of natural rights in his 1899 *Tahrir al-Mar'a (The Liberation of Woman)* Nahda thinkers often grappled

deeply with the idea of the West, debating what to emulate, what to reject, and what aspects to transform. Reformist projects tended to refer to an abstracted notion of the West associated with the Enlightenment. I use the term abstraction because Europe often came to signify in ways that were abstracted from historical and social realities and more closely aligned with the broad philosophical claims of the Enlightenment.

In *A History of the Arab Peoples* Albert Hourani defines the “new kind of literature” (305) of the mid- to late-19th century as one that sought to express “the place of the Arabs in the modern world” (305). The reinvention of self that was so central to the Nahda’s “re-awakening” was often expressed as a relational endeavor and formulated against an abstracted notion of the West. The concept of *tawfiq* – reconciling between East and West – often drew on essentialisms about these very categories which were not dissimilar from Orientalist representations of the Middle East. That is, “West” is synonymous with progress, freedoms, materialism, and “East” with religion, spirituality, continuity, and tradition. The resilience of these binaries is particularly thought provoking considering that they thrived in a context when European colonial ambitions in the region were becoming more pronounced. As Rasheed Al-Enany suggests, there is a profound ambivalence in Arabic representations of the West for this very reason. He writes, “[t]he tension we feel in their writings on the East-West encounter stems from their recognition of the necessity of the very other, against whom they are trying to assert the self” (4). It is useful, however, to consider a few theoretical models that resist taking the Nahda and its East-West discourses at face value.

The Egyptian philosopher and Islamic scholar Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd critiques the foundational assumptions of the Nahda project in his 1995 book *Text, Power, and Truth: Religious Thought between Knowledge and the Desire for Hegemony (Al-Nass, al-Sulta, al-Haqiqa: al-Fikr al-Dini bayna al-Ma'rifa wa Iradat al-Haymana)*. He argues that in its appropriation of European Orientalist categories of East and West, Nahda intellectuals' reading of both the Islamic heritage and of Europe was highly problematic, even false (*zā'if*) (26). The Nahda's reading of *turāth*, he suggests, is limiting because in its focus on an Islamic identity that is anchored in the past, it forecloses more creative interpretations of religious practice and philosophy. Likewise, he argues, Nahda intellectuals misread Europe by focusing on Enlightenment philosophy at the expense of a more historically and materially grounded reading.

Europe of the mid-19th century and early twentieth century was colonialist and imperialist, while that Europe which Arabic thought wanted to reconcile to Islamic thought was that of the eighteenth century, Enlightenment Europe. (quoted in Hassan 4)

He suggests that the ideas that Nahda intellectuals ended up producing were closer to *talfīq* (fabrication) than *tawfīq*. Nasr's critical reading of the Nahda's project to reconcile East and West, then, has implications for the changing discourses on East and West in modern Arab intellectual history.

While the discourses on the West produced by Nahda thinkers were often abstracted from the realities of colonialism on the one hand, and reproduced the binaries of Orientalism, on the other, they were also central to the production of new societal visions, including literary models. Maybe instead of thinking of these kinds of relational modes as fabrication, *talfīq*, we can think of them as

productive – if problematic – ways of formulating reflections on modernity by way of engagement with Enlightenment thought. This relational stance, which would be operative in modern literary renderings of Europe, puts curated notions of authenticity and Enlightenment in dialogue. One can say that it fostered a relationality with blind spots.

While Nasr critiques the Occidentalism of the Nahda as a misreading of Europe that obscured reflections on the power dynamics of colonialism, a recent book by Tarek El-Ariss *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (2013) seeks to decenter the “master narrative” of the Nahda and modern Arabic literature which relies on binaries of East and West, modernity and tradition. Challenging the notion that equates modernity with innovation (*ihdāth*) vis-à-vis tradition he focuses on the related concept of “incidents, trials, and episodes” (172), arguing that close attention to affect and the body disrupt the texts’ ideological production. In this reading,

modernity takes shapes in a series of trials, never realized or complete, arising from experiences of anxiety and disorientation, fascination and confusion. These spaces of fantasy and literary embodiment reposition the political by systematically undermining its ideological production and exposing its modes of physical and discursive violence. (173)

The book thus locates textual moments within the canon of the Nahda and modern Arabic literature that undermine and undo the East-West binary that would locate modernity in the West and tradition and the necessity of borrowing in the East.

While Nasr and El-Ariss’s readings poses formidable challenges to established interpretations of the Nahda and Arabic literary representations of Europe, I am returning to a reading of the canon of writing Europe in Arabic

literature that focuses on how East and West functions as a way to reflect on concepts such as the nation, the intellectual, and political exile. I do so because I believe that these accumulated texts *and* their prevailing interpretations, which have often emphasized the East-West binary and the centrality of political projects in the Arab world, weigh heavily on the literature that is the main focus of this dissertation, that is, literature of migration in post-Cold War Europe. These long-standing narratives in and about literature help shape notions of what encounters with Europe *should* be – in some other time, in some other place, in some other person’s body. They thus inform migration literature’s registers of loss and renewal.

Europe in the Modern Arabic Novel of Travel and Exile

The genesis of the literary genre of writing Europe and transformations over time are closely linked to the political and societal transformations of nation building in the Arab world. The emergence of nationalism and anti-colonial resistance at the turn of the century coincided with a range of literary representations of travel to Europe in early Arabic novels. Early novels (or novel “prototypes”) such as Mohamed al-Muwaylihi’s serialized narrative *The Story of Issa Ibn Hisham (Hadith ‘Issa Ibn Hisham)* (1907)⁸ emphasize the Nahda’s imperative of selective borrowing from Europe and caution of the dangers of blind imitation. Since then, the East-West discourses of modern Arabic literary renderings of Europe have undergone many transformations. In what is probably

⁸ The journey to Paris, or *The Second Journey (al-Rihla al-Thaniyya)* was published later, in 1927.

the most comprehensive study of the representations of the West in modern Arabic literature, Rasheed Al-Enany's 2006 *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* periodizes literary representations of travel and exile to Europe into the following categories: 1) Pre-colonial ("Enchanted Encounters"), 2) Colonial ("Encounters under Duress"), 3) Early Postcolonial ("Proud/ Encounters"), and 4) Post-1967 Postcolonial ("Humbled Encounters"). This periodization, on which I will elaborate below, begins to tell the story of a relational practice of writing home through the lens of Europe that is intertwined with political projects.⁹

In the interwar period, literary representations of Europe tended to reconcile the established binaries of East and West with the increased urgency of independence movements. The two literary narratives discussed below, Tawfiq al-Hakim's 1938 novel *Bird of the East* (*'Usfur min al-Sharq*) and Yahya Haqqi's 1944 *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* (*Qandil Umm Hashim*), put forth the concerns of liberal intellectuals in a period of growing nationalism. They both emphasize the pride in national culture while adhering to Orientalist / Occidental ideas of the East. Like other literary representations of Europe from this period, they both construct and creatively navigate these binaries, exploring the question of selective borrowing from the perspective of an intellectual elite.

⁹ It is worth noting the degree to which the subsequent chapters focus on literary narratives that relate masculine experiences of forced migration. Although a range of gendered experiences is represented in the following chapters, the majority of them focus on male perspectives. Consequently, in this brief and quite standard account of the canon, I have emphasized a particular lineage of writing Europe that highlights male perspectives as I think these are the kinds of narratives that weigh on later representations of forced migration.

Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Bird of the East* introduced many of the themes that would later recur and be reshaped Arabic literary representations of travel to Europe. Although the novel depicts travel to Paris of the 1920s, its concerns are closely tied to Egypt. Written in the context of a burgeoning Egyptian nationalism and resistance to continued British control of Egyptian affairs, the novel participates in the attempts to forge an independent national culture.¹⁰ It does so by theorizing an authentic identity that romanticizes the "East." In the opening scene, for instance, we find the protagonist Muhsin, a young idealistic student (nicknamed "Bird of the East") contemplating the statue of Alfred De Musset in the Comédie française square. While the Parisian crowd is preoccupied with staying dry in the heavy downpour, Muhsin lets himself be soaked by the rain and, addressing the Romantic poet-statue, declares: "Nothing makes us great except for great suffering!" (7). In the following chapters, Muhsin moves through a series of public spaces in Paris, a city square, a church, and an opera. The declarations of the moral bankruptcy of each space¹¹ emphasize Muhsin's sentimental and spiritual capacity. His failed relationship with Susie, a ticket-box girl, further emphasizes the binaries of East and treated in the novel; while Muhsin imagines the blossoming of eternal love, he soon finds out that Susie is

¹⁰ In a 1949 article published in *Yaqzat al-Fikr* Hakim contextualizes his earlier romantic rendering of travel to Europe. He argues that Muhsin's perspective was necessary for evoking a sense of national pride against British colonialism and during the period following the 1919 revolution.

¹¹ For example, the son of Muhsin's landlord, André, mocks his reverence upon entering a church to attend a funeral: "Oh you Bird of the East! ...Are you preparing yourself to enter the church?! What is the meaning of that? We enter the church as we enter a café...what's the difference? ...that's a public space and this is a public space...one has an organ, the other an orchestra! (15) Similarly, Muhsin's visit to the opera is tainted by his perception of flattening of great art and trivial matters (20).

cynically using his courtship to get the attention of her former lover. Invested in familiar East-West binaries, the novel casts “Eastern spirituality” as not only superior to “Western materialism” but also as the true spring (*manba*) of the West’s material and cultural progress. The East, the novel warns, is in danger of losing sight of its superior values. Muhsin, for example, portrays some of his Egyptian compatriots as monkeys parading in Western clothes, in danger, it would seem, of falling prey to a profoundly inauthentic modernity.

Similar to the self-Orientalization of *Bird of the East*, Yahya Haqqi’s classic 1944 novella *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* calls on romanticized binaries of East and West. However, unlike *Bird of the East* – but in the spirit of reconciling difference, or *tawfiq*, the novel enacts a synthesis between them. The novella depicts the coming of age of Ibrahim, a young man from the popular Cairene neighborhood Sayyida Zainab. The life of the neighborhood centers on the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab, a metaphor for the neighborhood’s unflagging dedication to spirituality and community. However, Ibrahim undergoes a radical transformation during his travels to England when he studies to become an ophthalmologist. Just like Muhsin, his encounter with Europe is represented by a romantic relationship. Ibrahim’s lover Mary embodies the kinds of Enlightenment abstractions that Nasr refers to, that is, “Western” progress, science, freedom, and reason devoid of sentimentality. Ibrahim, who is gradually converted to her perspective, returns home and suffers a spiritual crisis. In a fit of anger upon seeing his mother treat Fatima’s (his betrothed) trachoma with the oil from the sacred lamp, he destroys this central metaphor of the novella and embarks on a process of reconciliation. In

a Hegelian synthesis of binaries or in the Nahda's spirit of *tawfiq* Ibrahim successfully treats Fatima through a combination of modern medicine and the oil of the lamp.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the spirit of political commitment in Arabic literature *adab al-iltizam* also infused literary representations of Europe. In the context of a burgeoning Arab nationalism, an internationalist spirit of decolonization, the non-aligned movement, and the rivalries of Cold War politics, there was a broad reaction against the perspectives of previous elite. During this early postcolonial period, Arabic literary narratives staging travel to Europe become less invested in East-West binaries.

Tayeb Salih's 1966 *Season of Migration to the North* is perhaps the strongest literary condemnation of the romanticized binaries of East and West. In his book *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction*, Wail Hassan argues that Salih's canonical novel of European travel and return "presents an uncompromising figuration of 'the return of the repressed' – one in which the wishful dream of the Nahda gives way to the nightmare of history" (82). Indeed one of the central themes of the novel is its critical postcolonial reading of the Nahda-inspired literary representations of travel and return. The novel's cynical rendering of its characters' travel to London and return to Sudan takes place around the time of Sudan's independence from Britain in 1956. The first person account of an unnamed narrator who returns to his home after completing a doctorate in English poetry intersects with the account of the older Mustafa Saeed, an outsider to the narrator's village, who confides the details of a secret

past life in London. The intersection of the two narratives signifies multiply. For example, it can be read as a juxtaposition of a colonial and bureaucratic postcolonial elite on the one hand, or as a conflict between the narrator's conscious efforts to simplify postcolonial realities and a subconscious that brings to life the violence, desires, and traumas of Sudan's encounter with colonialism, on the other. Upon return, the narrator naïvely hopes for stability and an uncomplicated transition from colonialism to independence. However, the certainties to which he clings gradually wear away as he becomes increasingly drawn into Mustafa Saeed's past life and he finds himself increasingly adrift in the postcolonial context.

About his own novel, Tayeb Salih has noted, "I have redefined the so-called East/West relationship as essentially one of conflict, while it has previously been treated in romantic terms. We know better now."¹² The character Mustafa Saeed performs this distance from the self-orientalization of his literary predecessors Muhsin, Ibrahim and the main character of *The Latin Quarter*. A prodigal child of the colonial school system, Mustafa Saeed quickly moves up its ranks, studying in Cairo before acquiring his doctorate in London and becoming professor of economics at The University of London. Here, his academic work on the economics of colonial exploitation parallels an intimate world where, as he proclaims, he will liberate Africa with his penis. He creates an extravagantly orientalized lair where he seduces several British women. But far from the romantic renderings of intimacy in previous narratives, Mustafa, in a cold and

¹² Cited in *Arab Representations of the Occident*, quoted from M.T Amyuni, ed. *Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North: A Casebook*, American University of Beirut, 1985, p. 16.

calculating manner, drives two of the women to commit suicide and murders a third – his wife. He thus performs both an inversion of colonial violence and a disavowal of the romanticization of the encounter with Europe in Arabic literature.

In its indictment of the Nahda-inspired narrative, *Season of Migration to the North* offers a prescient telling of the 1967 *naksa* or “setback.” Just as the 1967 Arab defeat against Israel and the loss of most of the Palestinian territories represented the end of Arab nationalism and, arguably, the Nahda project (Abu-Rabi‘), so did this important moment in Arab intellectual history re-shape Arabic literary representations of Europe. However, unlike *Season’s* parodic undoing of the Nahda’s East-West relationality, the more dominant trend in post-1967 Arabic literary representations of Europe was a re-emergence of pronounced East - West binaries, which began to signify differently. The kinds of self-chastising discourses that were so prevalent in the period following 1967 were translated into literary representations of Europe that contrast political oppression in the Arab world with a blatant idealization of Europe. The operative binaries transform into Eastern political and societal oppression vs. Western freedom. The more that the European characters in these novels epitomize the blossoming of life and individuality in an idealized society the more it seems that the protagonists look bleakly upon his or her own.

In Sulayman Fayyad’s 1972 novel *Voices (Aswat)* for example, Hamid, a successful Egyptian émigré returns to his native village with his French wife, Simone. Throughout the narrative, Simone serves as a counterpoint to the culture

of the village. Her beauty, intelligence, curiosity, and ability to sympathize with those around her become increasingly at odds with her surroundings. When the women of the village forcibly perform a cliterodectomy on Simone and she bleeds to death, the pronouncement of the coroner echo into the broader discourses of defeat from this period. He wonders if he is writing Simone's death certificate or that of his own culture.

Another piece that is emblematic of this post-1967 narrative of crisis is the Moroccan writer Mohamed Zifzaf's novel *The Woman and the Flower (Al-Mar'awa al-Warda)*. In it, the narrative begins with the account of a Moroccan who returns from Europe. The returnee contrasts the opportunities and humanism of Europe with foreclosed possibilities and repression in Morocco. The subsequent narrative focuses on the relationship between the protagonist Mohamed and a Danish woman, a relationship that comes to signify the possibility of salvation.

The post-1967 period also saw the emergence of a more pronounced exile literature, which focused on political repression at home. Although the idea of *manfa* (exile as a place of negation) and *ghurba* (the feeling of being strange and in the West) coincides with a tenor of nostalgia for home, literature of exile from this period tends to idealize European spaces and continue the tendency to project the Enlightenment political project onto Europe. Two examples of exile literature that exemplify these tendencies are Syrian writer Hanna Mina's 1984 novel *Spring and Autumn (al-Rabi' wa al-Kharif)* which idealizes communist Hungary of the mid-1960s and Egyptian writer Bahaa Taher's *Love in Exile (al-Hubb fi al-*

Manfa). Both perform East-West binaries where depictions of European spaces are anchored in reflections on political repression in their home countries.

Mina's 1984 realist novel *Spring and Autumn* idealizes Hungary through the protagonist's relationships with two Hungarian women, the young university student Perushka and the beautiful, middle-aged lounge singer, Erika (who, it is explicitly stated, is "a nation onto herself" (296). Karam, a university professor and writer from Syria, depicts Hungary in its mid-1960s setting as a society in which an ideal relationship between citizen and state has been achieved under Communism. Karam's relationships with the two women suggest both the ideal relationship between the Eastern Bloc and the Third World and the desire for the ideal state that is depicted.

In the novel, state-citizen relations and sexual relations are approached using the same vocabulary. On the one hand, the novel's discourse on prostitution describes both the ways in which the Arab students are taking advantage of the Hungarian state's generous stipends while making profits from the black market and refers to sexual relations that are based on coercion or a vague notion of debasement (250). This idea of prostitution is contrasted to forms of voluntary association and solidarity, ideas referring both to taking an active part in an idealized version of Hungarian society under communism and engaging in sexual relations based on mutual respect, honesty, and free and consensual exchange. Intimacy, in this formulation, provides the possibility of taking part in an idealized citizen-state contract.

In a different context and a later date, Baha Taher's 1994 *Love in Exile*, set in an unnamed European city at the height of the Lebanese civil war in 1982, portrays an ageing Egyptian journalist's relationship with the much younger Austrian woman, Brigitte. A Nasserite, he found himself alienated under Sadat's *infitāh* policies that opened up Egypt to the global market. The crumbling of his hopes for economic justice and Pan-Arabism is mirrored in the breakdown of his marriage with his feminist wife, who, with the changing currents in 1970s Egypt abandons her leftist convictions and embraces an Islamic identity. Brigitte's proclaimed rejection of grand solutions in favor of her search for her notion of pure love coexists with the narrator's idealization of the humanistic spirit of Europe. In the novel, this spirit is represented by the NGOs who petition for the victims of torture and the volunteer doctors and nurses who treat the wounded in war-torn Lebanon. Intimacy and love seems to provide the only refuge from personal disappointments in the changing social and political landscape of Egypt as well as the cruelties of the world, which in the novel is explored through the reporting on and reactions to the 1982 massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Shatila.

The End of Idealization

The literary narratives of migration analyzed in this dissertation move beyond colonial and postcolonial models of East-West relationality and put an

abrupt end to the post-1967 idealization of Europe.¹³ Instead of the discourses of self and other, which tie into commentaries on home, Arabic migration literature explores the boundaries between belonging and exclusion in dialogue with European discourses and legal structures that govern migration and citizenship. While previous literary narratives representing travel to and exile in Europe continue to echo and shape these newer more recent narratives of migration, their dominant modes are transformed and subverted in the migratory and diasporic contexts of forced migration. Likewise, there is a continued engagement with Enlightenment-derived notions of political community, but within a different context: globalized models of migration in Europe.

“Globalization” means many things for Arab diasporic writers. One common yet important reading of the effect of globalization on Arab literary diasporas can be found in Syrian writer and scholar Lutfi Haddad’s four volume *Anthology of Contemporary Arabic Diaspora Literature* (*Anthulujiyya al-Adab al-‘Arabi al-Mahjari al-Mu‘asir*). In the introduction to the anthology, he sketches an image of an Arab intellectual living abroad enjoying a daily morning newspaper from his own country and frequent trips home: globalization as a form of cosmopolitanism. He contrasts this more recent experience of diaspora, which is predicated on ease of movement and ready access to information, with the hardship of separation and nostalgia endured by previous generations of exilic

¹³ This is not to say that the former discourses on East-West don’t continue. Wail Hassan’s book *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (2011) argues that Anglophone Arab literary texts often strategically appropriate Orientalist understandings of Arab culture. Furthermore, the idealization of Europe in line with concepts such as freedom and rights continues in some Arabic literary renderings of migration and diaspora.

writers, *al mahjar al-qadīm*.¹⁴ While Haddad describes one of the many types of transformations of globalization, it is not the only reality that has shaped the literary renderings of diaspora in a globalized era. More palpably for many migrants, globalization has also meant new forms of policing boundaries and the rise of popular anti-immigration discourse.

Haddad points to an important source of creativity in new Arab diasporas: the ever-present interplay between the desire to hold on to memories and to embrace the present. While this is a largely universal description of the psychic challenges of migration, there is another dynamic that is more pertinent to literary narratives of forced migration and that is the confrontation with the legal structures that govern inclusion and exclusion. The literary narratives of migration analyzed in this dissertation are structured by the loss of *and* desire to redefine political community and belonging. But these anxieties about political subjectivity, born from globalized trends in migration and its management, have infected the literary and created intricate renderings of loss and fraught definitions of community.

Globalization in the post-Cold war era has created particular challenges for migration. In this discussion I am primarily interested in how the rapid integration of markets and the increase in transnational flows associated with it have coincided with the erosion of the frameworks in which individuals and communities – and migrants specifically – can assert rights. The “contradictions of globalization” (Castles 2002) are manifold. Here I will mention two. First, the

¹⁴ Most likely, Haddad’s point of reference is the generation of turn of the century Arab American writers that includes Khalil Gibran and Ameen Rihani.

global integration of markets, the “shrinking world,” has meant greater entrenchment of global economic inequalities. Second, the opening of borders to increasingly free flows of capital, goods, and information under globalization has coincided with globalized and state-led strategies to prevent and police the movement of certain human beings.

The end of the Cold War was perhaps most memorably marked by the tearing down of the Berlin wall and the surging optimism for a future unencumbered by Cold War divides. Many even wondered if globalization could be a unifying force. In reality, however, new forms of border and boundary building and exclusionary practices have proliferated in this globalized era. The militarization of borders (McNevin), the construction of separation walls (Nevins), and the resurgence of ethnic and cultural nationalist sentiment testify to the many paradoxes of globalization. These forces have shaped directions in migration policy in Europe in the post-Cold War period.

In Europe, the effects of globalization on migration policies have proved to be at odds with the human rights and national sovereignty framework of its foundational document defining political asylum, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. While the Convention continues to officially provide the guiding principles for political asylum, state implementation of migration policies have become quite distanced from the *kind* of political center proposed by the human rights discourses of its governing documents. In literary depictions of migration the loss of previous literary stagings of Europe converge with anxieties about political subjectivity.

The Refugee and the Horizontal Political Community

In many ways, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was emblematic of attempts in Europe following WWII to reaffirm a commitment to liberalism and human rights after the ravages of fascism. The Geneva Convention was the first comprehensive measure to codify the definition of a refugee and the obligations of states toward those who fit this category. In the aftermath of WWII, there was a pressing need to repatriate the millions of people who had been displaced by the war. Internationally, the project of creating an international order based on rights, national sovereignty, and decolonization was underway.

Drawing their impetus from Enlightenment documents such as the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,¹⁵ the series of declarations of rights in the post-WWII period sought to reaffirm a commitment to the idea of a horizontal political community made up of equal citizens. The UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was perhaps the most ambitious declaration of this era. Its thirty articles create an ideal order based on individual, civil, and political rights. The Geneva Refugee Convention draws its impetus from Article 14 of the UDHR, which states, "Everyone has the right to seek and

¹⁵ The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was the first document to refer explicitly to "human rights" in its definition of citizenship and in its formulation of political community. Written and signed in the early stages of the French Revolution, the declaration performed a break with the *ancien régime* by vesting sovereignty in the nation, a political community made up of equal citizens. Indeed, the first three articles of the Declaration outline the basic framework of this new conception of political community. Article One states, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good." Article Two affirms the Lockean notion that political association exists in order to protect the "natural rights of man ... [of] ... liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression" and Article Three declares that "the principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation."

to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”¹⁶ Although the article declares the right to “seek” and “enjoy” asylum, it places no clear obligations on receiving states. The Refugee Convention is unusual in this sense because it holds states responsible for the protection of non-citizens. Nevertheless, the emergent Cold War context left its imprint in the Convention’s definition of the refugee.

Like any translation, the relationship between Article 14 of the UDHR and the Geneva Convention’s codification of refugee rights and state obligation is not one of equivalence, but rather, it was shaped by historical circumstance. In the years following the drafting and signing of the UDHR, the geopolitics of the Cold War were becoming increasingly clear to the drafters of the Refugee Convention. In an increasingly divisive political climate, representatives of the Western Bloc were becoming wary of their potential liability and the political problems that a liberal refugee policy could cause with the Eastern Bloc. In interpreting the right to asylum listed in the UDHR, the drafters of the Geneva Refugee Convention thus pushed for a narrow definition of the term “refugee” and the state obligations towards persons who fit this category. The resulting definition was “a strictly legalistic concept of protection and persecution” (Boccardi 2) that emphasized state-led persecution of an individual.

In the Geneva Convention’s definition, a refugee is a person who:

...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (Article 1:2)

¹⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a14>

Thus the Geneva Refugee Convention focuses on a particular kind of displaced person, that is, an individual who is persecuted by a state actor and who, with recourse to an international regime of rights, makes the political claims associated with citizenship on another state. The Geneva Convention's definition of a refugee thus hinges on the possibility of reintegrating individuals into a new national framework of rights and citizenship.

Despite its ambitious scope, the Geneva Convention's definition of the refugee was put to use on a rather limited scale during the Cold War period. Then, the way that the label refugee was mobilized to address mass and individual displacement attests to the divisions between a Global South and a Global North, on the one hand, and the Eastern and Western Bloc, on the other. Large-scale displacement of populations resulting both from conflicts of decolonization and Cold War proxy wars was largely contained in the Global South and managed by humanitarian agencies (Zetter 172). At the same time, political dissidents arriving in the United States and Europe from the Eastern Bloc in relatively limited numbers were often granted refugee status under the individual and political persecution-oriented guidelines of the Geneva Convention. For them the Geneva Refugee Convention did provide a welcome political framework for asylum and mobility, but this kind of migration also served as one of the many propaganda tools for Western liberalism in the Cold War even as countries of the Global North were largely shielded from the realities of mass displacement. In the post-Cold War period, as a greater numbers of migrants arrive in Europe itself, dilemmas have arisen over how to mobilize the categories of the Geneva

Convention in a changing migratory contexts and, for migrants, how to make political claims on the states where they arrive.

The Forced Migrant and the Hierarchical Political Community

To be sure, the complex blend of political, economic, and social motives for migration in a globalized era do not tend to fit neatly into the categories of individualized and state-led persecution outlined in the Geneva Refugee Convention. In the face of complex factors that cause migration scholars have re-theorized the categories of the refugee and asylum. In *The Age of Migration* (2003) Stephen Castles and Mark Miller introduce the idea of an “asylum-migration nexus” to better reflect the complex ways that economic, political, and human rights issues interact to shape patterns of migration in a globalized era. A similar argument pertains to the use of the word “forced migrant” rather than “refugee” since the category of the refugee has become embattled in a false binary of political vs. economic migration. Roger Zetter, a migration scholar whose influential research deals with the ways that refugees are labeled, concedes that the term “forced migrant” better reflects the complexities of migration than the terms “refugee” or “economic migrant.” However, he argues that this shifting center of gravity in migration research away from Refuge Studies runs the risk of diminishing advocacy for the Geneva Refugee Convention’s rights-centered approach to refugee policy (189). Furthermore, he notes that the fractioning of the refugee label into different categories (for example Category B refugee status,

temporary protection, asylum seeker) in the post-Cold War period has meant that the kinds of protection that migrants can claim are less comprehensive (181).

From the politics of harmonization of the 1990s to the embrace of “managed migration” around the turn of the millennium, European migration policies have gradually displaced the rights framework that is central to the Geneva Refugee Convention. In the 1990s, EU member states worked together to harmonize migration policies between states. While a necessary component of opening up borders in Europe, harmonization had the result of restricting migration overall (Hansen; Boccardi; Menz; Fekete). After the Tampere summit of 1999, the EU embraced what is known as “managed migration.” Under managed migration states select migrants according to the labor niches they can fill on the one hand, and restrict unsolicited migration, on the other. From the Geneva Convention’s categorization of the refugee as a person who suffers persecution from a state actor and makes claims based on political rights, the post-Cold War migrant becomes a category to be managed, restricted, re-directed, and contained, according to an economic logic. The “managerial, economic, and restrictive” (Menz 3) logic of managed migration, in this case reproduces the managerial and economic logic of neo-liberalism.

For migration, these shifts coincide with the erosion of an ideal of a horizontal political community and the intensification of the hierarchical values of a market logic. As access to mobility - both legal and irregular - becomes subject to an economic logic, the potential to make rights-based claims decreases. Arun Kundnani in *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st century Britain*, for example,

argues that managed migration and the ways that it subsumes migration to the logic of the market entails a dual movement of “rendering asylum seekers as valueless and rightless” while [demanding] “a vast expansion in the powers of the state” (8). As managed migration sorts migrants according to their skills and their perceived economic contributions it plays a role in deepening global economic divides. Liz Fekete, in *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*, likens managed migration to a “socio-economic Social Darwinism that allows for the rich First World to maintain its economic dominance by emptying the poorer worlds of their skilled workforce” (27). Recent research points to how the commodification of migrants and protection through “burden sharing” via cash transfers between European nations has failed to increase refugee protection (Gerver). If, in a globalized era, citizenship is being re-conceived through relative market value (Somers), then migration is heavily imbricated in these realities.

The management of populations flows and the erosion of rights frameworks from which migrants can make political claims index the kinds of expansions of state power and individual subjugation that Michel Foucault explicates under his theory of biopolitics, the modern state’s tendency to operate by managing populations. The “migration-security nexus” (Khosravi 40), which has characterized discourses on migration in the post-Cold War Era, particularly after 9/11, frames migration in congruous ways: as a security threat that poses immediate danger to the nation state against which conventional legal structures are inadequate. Migration, increasingly criminalized, is thus construed both as a

circumvention of law and as an outmoded legal right that itself constitutes a threat to the sanctity of the nation or of an imagined European culture.

Biopolitics and the Forced Migrant

As discussed, there is a crisis of the kinds of aesthetic and ideological models of writing Europe, a disconnect between past literary representations of Europe and the kinds of realities explored in migration literature. The relational stance of older literary representations of Europe, which put the binaries of self and other in dialogue, is transformed in ways that question the established categories of self and other. Second, globalized patterns of migration and migration policies, resulting in the erosion of a human rights framework in Europe, have made the political subjectivity of migrants more difficult to discern. These two contexts are not unrelated. In both cases, the Enlightenment categories of state-citizen contract and of citizenship are at stake. The shift from the ideal of horizontal model of a rights-centered political community to the neoliberal model of globalization represents an intensification of the biopolitical.

The biopolitical is the shadow of the ideal of the horizontal rights-centered political community. The staging of wilderness in Arabic literature of migration overlaps with some of the ways that Enlightenment imagined the outside of political. Philosopher Agnes Heller notes that for the modern social contract theorists, who provided the philosophical underpinnings to modern sovereignty and citizenship, the formation of political community was framed as an act of “denaturalization” in which “[t]he domination of the body and the state of nature

was relegated into the pre-political world” (4). Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau imagined political community and citizenship as a transcendence of a state of nature and the immediate demands of the body. Furthermore, the French Enlightenment’s conception of civilization was defined in direct opposition to savagery and wilderness. Theorists of the biopolitical, by contrast, overturn some of these assumptions about political modernity. In the place of seeing the formation of modern political community as a way to liberate the individual from the body and nature, they examine how modern states work to manage populations by producing categories of belonging and exclusion.

In his reading of political modernity, Foucault seems to reiterate some of Hannah Arendt’s writings on the challenge of locating the political (the sphere of “action”).¹⁷ What happens to the political in modern societies when the target of politics is the governance of populations? Foucault’s well-known argument on political modernity treats the expansion of power targeting populations, which is channeled through the state and other societal institutions. Foucault’s definition of biopower in *Security, Territory, Population* as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species become the object of a political strategy” (1) re-defines the social contract model of citizenship in the modern nation-state by reading political subjectivity not as a transcendence of nature, filial ties, and the body, but as their politicization and inclusion in political

¹⁷ In *The Human Condition* Arendt associates modernity with a collapse of the public and private spheres. For her, the rise of the social realm means that matters that were formally of private significance and excluded from the political, such as economics and health, become public – and political – concerns. She thus equates modernity with “the rise of society” or “the rise of housekeeping” (48) and argues that one of the effects of blurring the ancient distinction between the public and private is that the realm of political action becomes more difficult to discern.

strategy. With the re-constellation of sovereignty that took place with political modernity and the birth of the nation state, sovereignty, theoretically vested in a body of citizens, he argues, and the traditional power of the sovereign over death, or rather, the power to “let live and make die” is transformed into the power to strategically manage the biological life of the nation through, for example, regulation of the population’s fertility and death rates, economic productivity, etc. This population management, he argues, follows a biological logic.

Biopower works by producing fractures between lives that are valued and lives that are deemed dispensable. In *Society Must Be Defended* Michel Foucault discusses a pattern of modern racism, “state racism,” that emerged at the end of the 19th century and is defined by the logic of biopolitics. The management of entire populations here is effected through the power to “‘make’ live and ‘let’ die” (241). From the sovereign’s traditional power to “let live and make die,” the function of racism, as inscribed in biopolitical terms, is to fragment populations into groups whose lives are either tended to or neglected, differentiating between those who are allowed to live and those who are allowed to die (253-254). In other words some people become political subjects or citizens and some are marginalized. Those who are marginalized in this this model, he argues, become re-conceived not only as enemies, but as threats to a societal body.

State racism, according to Foucault, follows the logic of power that the “death” (both in its literal meaning and as social and political death as a result of exclusion and marginalization) of one group allows for another group to live; the “death” of a marginalized groups is understood to usher in greater health and

purity for the dominant group. Those who are excluded from the social fabric are constituted not as enemies in the traditional political or military sense; rather, this kind of racism promotes the idea that their continued exclusion – either at the borders of Europe or within the borders of the nation - are necessary to the health of the nation’s social fabric.

Giorgio Agamben continues Arendt’s and Foucault’s inquiries into the challenge of locating the political in modernity by examining how sovereignty and laws can work to produce exclusion. Beginning with Aristotle’s formulation of the political life of the citizen,¹⁸ which requires a transcendence of “bare life,” Agamben argues that the relationship between political life and biological life is not one of mutual exclusion, but what he calls an “inclusive exclusion.” Whereas political life excludes bare life, it includes it as the basis of political community. Sovereignty, and the way that it is enacted through laws, resides in the power to distinguish between those who form part of a political community and those who are excluded, conceived of as bare bodies. Sovereignty and laws, then, have the power to differentiate between the political lives – citizens – and “bare life,” producing humans who are deprived of rights. This is the work of biopolitics, to regulate the moving thresholds between the political and bare life.

The biopolitics of belonging and exclusion, then, have become pressing concerns at this historical juncture and there are significant overlaps between the literary representations of migration as an encounter with wilderness and as a

¹⁸ Like Arendt, Agamben revisits the classical distinction between public and private realms by turning to Aristotle’s distinction between the biological life of the body associated with reproduction and the private sphere (*zōē*) and the political life of the citizen (*bios*). While all humans are born into biological life, they can transform it into political life through the state.

reduction to the body and the crises in political subjectivity that are engendered by post-Cold War models of migration. Far from the theme of distinct Eastern and Western civilizations, Arabic literary representations of Europe invoke wilderness to explore how the biopolitics of belonging produces exclusions within and among nations.

How do literary depictions of migration stage Europe in lieu of these realities? In *Means without Ends* (2000) Agamben reflects on Arendt's 1943 article "We Refugees" where she contemplates the lucidity of detachment that comes with statelessness. He argues for the continued relevance of Arendt's reflections, which were born of the urgency of World War II.

One ought to reflect on the meaning of this analysis, which after fifty years has lost none of its relevance. It is not only the case that the problem presents itself inside and outside of Europe with just as much urgency as then. It is also the case that, given the by now unstoppable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional political-judicial categories, the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today – at least until the process of dissolution of the nation-state and of its sovereignty has achieved full completion – the forms and limits of a coming political community. It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee. (90-91)

Such reflections are theoretically compelling, but utopian. I would suggest that the richness of literary renderings of migration – Europe from the perspective of refugees and other forced migrants – lies partially in the way they re-imagine Europe within legal categories that label and manage migrants and which migrants, in turn, must navigate. If biopolitics is a moving threshold between

belonging and exclusion, then how do you depict such a threshold? How can it be re-imagined through literature? I will suggest that part of the creative impetus in Arabic post-Cold War literature of migration is the way that it draws on and transforms previous literary renderings of Europe.

Conclusion

The following three chapters discuss Arabic literary narratives of migration from the last two decades. They show how Arabic migration literature transforms established tropes of writing Europe in ways that highlight the biopolitical. When, for example, Ibrahim Ahmad's short story "The Arctic Refugee" explores an imaginary space outside the laws that govern asylum, when Mahmoud al-Bayaty's novel *Dancing on Water* re-imagines what it means to be a Swedish citizen after a divestment in political Marxism, or when harraga novels such as Youssef Fadel's *Hashish* explore clandestine migration to southern Europe through tropes of liminality and wilderness, they draw attention to biopolitical and creatively render the thresholds between belonging and exclusion in their post-Cold war migratory contexts.

Chapter Two:

Revised Materialism and the Transcendence of East and West in *Dancing on Water* by Mahmoud al-Bayat

In 2006, when the Iraqi writer Mahmoud al-Bayat published *Dancing on Water: Difficult Dreams (Raqs 'ala al-Ma': Ahlam Wa'ira)* it was the first novel to ever be set in Hammarkullen Sweden. An outer-ring suburb of Göteborg, Sweden, Hammarkullen is alternately publicized as a site of social and racial exclusion, as in the popular 1997 television series *Hammarkullen*, or as a space of vibrant multiculturalism, as in the yearly summer carnival *Hammarkullekarnivalen*. Although the novel is not autobiographical, the broad strokes of its setting are drawn from al-Bayat's life; Al-Bayat arrived in Hammarkullen and Sweden in 1991 after a two decade-long residence in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and a brief sojourn in the then crumbling Soviet Union. He had originally left his native Iraq following the 1964 coup against president Abd al-Karim Qasim and, through his ties to the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), acquired a student visa for the then Eastern Bloc nation. Although he returned to Iraq after two years, he was forced to flee again in 1974, this time commencing a longer stay in Prague.

Like many other Iraqi writers of his generation, Al-Bayat's personal trajectory intersects with the broader scope of Cold War politics; Iraq's shifting alliances from the Soviet to the Western camp in the mid-1970s meant a mass exile of the Iraqi Left during this period. His many years in Prague coincided with a flourishing internationalism framed by Marxism, but when he arrived in Sweden

following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a sense of personal divestment in Marxist politics had already set in. Indeed, a recurring theme in his burgeoning literary publications immediately following *Dancing on Water*, in publications such as the 2008 short story collection *Waiting for the Stranger (Fi Intidhar al-Gharib)* and the 2009 collection of prose poems *Talk: Love, Existence, and Revolution (Kalam: Al-Hubb, Al-Wujud, wa al-Thawra)* is precisely this distancing from orthodox Marxism.

The loss of a Marxist framing of exile has important implications for the novel's narrative structure and its thematic treatment of the Arab exilic disappointment with the Left. Jacques Derrida suggests in his 1994 *Specters of Marx* that the death of institutionalized Marxism at the end of the Cold War ushers in a *spirit* of Marx, an inheritance or gift (*don*) understood as a task and a process rather than a fixed given. Indeed, *Dancing on Water* enacts this dynamic of bereavement, on the one hand and the task of re-creating a meaningful exilic home, on the other. In addition, the novel chronicles a revision of the generic concerns of post-1967 Arabic exile writing. While most critical readings of *Dancing on Water* to date focus on the ways that the novel conjures the painful loss of homeland experienced by a community of exiles,¹⁹ I would like to suggest that it is not only the loss of homeland that is central to the novel but also a loss that pertains to exile itself.

¹⁹ For most critics who have written on the novel, the image of the narrator's beloved mother slipping out of his embrace from the distance of his exilic home encapsulates the pain of losing a homeland. For example, Iraqi novelist 'Aliya Mamdouh's article "Dancing on Water: A Novel Filled With Those Who Are Absent" ("Raqs 'ala al-Ma': Riwāya 'Āmīra bil-Ghā'ibīn") treats the novel's poetic reflection on absences as emblematic of the author's distance to Iraq.

In *Dancing on Water*, the narrator's second exile in Sweden is initially plagued by a crisis in relationality, the absence of a binding idea that would link him to his new surroundings. However, his accidental stumbling upon an unidentified wallet in his favorite café in central Göteborg, Café Jaffa, instigates a search that runs parallel to a search for new formulations of self and place. The two interrelated goals of the ensuing search; to find "Alfons," the presumed owner of the wallet, and to decide what to do with the money; give direction to the novel's narration of the everyday. Indeed, the search for the wallet becomes a search for a different form of relationality to frame the narrator's exile and the process of becoming a Swedish citizen. As a challenge to this novelistic plot of "becoming," the obstacles as it were, are the narrator's anxieties over the precarious position of refugees and migrants in Sweden and Europe, concerns that draw attention to the biopolitical dimension of "managed migration," segregated cities, and the threat of what Agamben calls "bare life," the negative referent of citizenship. As much as the narrator's search represents an attempt to overcome these anxieties, it is also a quest for a new relationality that could define his future self as a Swedish and European citizen.

The first part of this chapter situates Arabic exile writing from the Eastern Bloc within the broader literary genre of writing Europe. A brief comparison with *Spring and Autumn (al-Rabi' wa al-Kharif)*, Hanna Mina's 1983 novel on exile in 1960s socialist Hungary, highlights the kinds of tropes that *Dancing on Water*, in its post-Cold War context, strategically re-formulates. Furthermore, this section compares *Dancing on Water* to other Arabic literary narratives that stage an exilic

disappointment with the Left in the post-Cold War period. After this discussion, I analyze how the displaced materialism in *Dancing on Water*, which is explored through the metaphor of a lost wallet, brings to light the biopolitical fragmentation of populations and discourses of threat. The novel's search narrative, which is initially framed by discourses of civilizational conflict and threat, performs the act of abandoning the East-West divide. In the last section, I theorize the way in which the novel re-claims a model of political community that requires a transcendence of filial ties.

A Marxist Relationality in Crisis

Since the earliest encounters with modern Europe the genre of writing on encounters with Europe has formulated various relational identities. In this sense, discourses on Europe, whether hostile, ambivalent, or desirous, have historically been deeply embedded in power relations between the two regions and in the model that Europe represented in the various stages of national development in the Arab World. The dual face of Europe as a force of economic and political exploitation and as providing a promise of progress and human rights is inscribed into the genre. However, the dominant trend of writing Europe in Arabic literature has spoken to the latter face rather than the former. Indeed, the genre of writing on Europe (in its Nahda and post-1967 articulations) tended to use European spaces as a foil for the intellectual and his or her eventual contributions to a home nation, establishing a relationality that tied into promises and disappointments of nation building.

Most Arabic literature on Europe since the Nahda period has taken the capitalist (and colonialist) Western Europe as its focus and foil. However, some writers, especially those who traveled and lived in the USSR and its satellite states as state emissaries, students, or political exiles with leftist affiliations, made travel to and residence in the Eastern Bloc the subject of their writing. Despite the specific circumstances treated in literature of travel and exile to the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, the literature from this context maintains important links and shared generic markers with the broader genre of writing on the West, such as representing the encounter with the “West” through a romantic relationship and representing Europe as an abstraction or ideal. In the case of writing on the Eastern Bloc, relationality was often framed through Marxist political and social models and the state-citizen relationships they engendered. In *Eastern Bloc Exile Literature* the modes of idealization so common in the post-1967 period are translated into an idealization of Marxist societal frameworks.

Dancing on Water parodies the idealization of exilic space in Eastern Bloc exile literature by referencing its tropes and themes and showing how they are incongruous with the post-Cold War context of migration. For example, far from the kinds of sexual relationships depicted in many earlier narratives of travel to Europe, the two women with whom the narrator engages with intimately have equally complicated relationships to Sweden. Sarah, a Polish-Norwegian Jewish woman and Ghada, a Palestinian woman who left her former husband in Russia both perform other lineages of individual and collective loss.

A comparison of some of the scenes in *Dancing on Water* and one of the most iconic novels of Eastern Bloc exile, *Spring and Autumn* by Syrian writer Hanna Mina, should begin to put into relief some of the important literary and political shifts rendered in Bayaty's novel and the kind of relationality it mourns. While *Spring and Autumn* take place in socialist Hungary of the mid-1960s, the Iraqi narrator of *Dancing on Water*, like the novel's author, has recently arrived in Sweden following a long exile in Prague. Whereas both Cold War ideological rivalries and the post-1967 spirit of self-criticism provide the subtext for *Spring and Autumn's* celebration of a socialist society, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of institutionalized Marxism underpin the narrative of *Dancing on Water*. The literary models of a politically committed exile have ceased to function and it is from this starting point of loss that *Dancing on Water* begins to re-write the genre and re-imagine a northern European exilic setting. Its reassessment of a Marxist political and literary history and its representation of the narrator's relationship to Sweden and Europe can perhaps best be elucidated through an intertextual reading that attends to the narrative models and tropes of a longer history of writing on Europe in Arabic letters.

But first, let us consider the context of *Spring and Autumn* and where it fits in Hanna Mina's work. A prominent Syrian novelist, Mina has written extensively on class conflict and change in Syria. Most of his work is socialist realist in style and approach. His 1984 exile novel *Spring and Autumn* is set in communist Hungary in the 1960s and the broad contours of the narrative are semi-autobiographical. Like the protagonist of *Spring and Autumn*, Karam al-

Mujahidi, Mina lived in exile in China and Hungary. Mina fled his country during the Communist purges of 1959 when Syria was unified with Egypt under Nasser's United Arab Republic. He returned to Syria following the war of 1967. The novel, which treats the duration of Karam's stay in Budapest, has a very clearly articulated ideological framework at its center that defines political commitment relationally and in Marxist terms. The title of his novel *Spring and Autumn* hearkens back to Tayeb Salih's postcolonial novel of travel and return, *Season of Migration*. However, even as the seasons invoked in Mina's novel refer to Karam's two lovers – one who is young and another who is mature – they also strongly suggest the re-birth and decay ascribed to the political models so explicitly treated in the novel. Furthermore, the name of the protagonist “Karam” (generosity) and “Mujahidi” (fighter / activist) reinforces the idea of political commitment at the center of the novel.

In contrast, *Dancing on Water* both references and establishes a critical distance to an ethics of exile defined by leftist affiliations, partially through intertextuality. In *Dancing on Water*, the parodic rendering of concepts and themes that appear in *Spring and Autumn* allows a rich re-imagining of a link to Europe at a time when the narrator is transitioning from a politically defined exile to one in which he, as a refugee, has embarked upon a path toward Swedish citizenship. By referencing and re-writing a literary model of political commitment that has been foreclosed at the time of the novel's writing, the novel is poised to mark a critical distance from a previous model and re-define an ethics of exile that pertains to the post-Cold War period.

In this comparative reading, where better to start than the environment that in Arabic literature is most associated with the exiled intellectual: the café? As a social space endowed with meaning, the café maintains a privileged place in both novels; *Dancing on Water* and *Spring and Fall* both begin with the protagonist / narrator contemplating his city of exile from the vantage point of the café. Indeed, the way in which *Dancing on Water* re-conceives the café as a privileged exilic space calls attention to the way that the novel in general charts a course away from politically committed Left and instead grapples with the complex and often hostile discourses on citizenship and belonging of post-Cold War Europe.

Dancing on Water opens with characteristically unembellished prose and thus introduces the enigmatic wallet that becomes the central metaphor of the novel. “I saw a wallet on the floor. I placed it in the most prominent spot on my small table in the corner and lit a cigarette” (11). The unnamed narrator’s favorite haunt, café Jaffa in central Göteborg, Sweden, appears initially as a quintessentially exilic setting, complete with cigarettes, international newspapers, and an intellectual cohort. However, the early café scenes of the novel soon unravel some of the reader’s expectations, creating dissonances that illustrate some of the important shifts that have taken place in Arabic literary renderings of Europe in the 1990s and 2000s. Unable to maintain a poise of detachment from his surroundings – Göteborg of the mid-1990s - the narrator of *Dancing on Water* is soon assailed by anxieties over the presence of the wallet on his table and a sense that he is under surveillance in public spaces. He pushes away the notion that the Swedish Candid Camera is filming him, “the Arab poet.” Telling himself

that he will find the wallet's rightful owner and resist the temptation to keep it, he brings the wallet home, but is consumed once again by the fear of being exposed on national television as "a professional thief in front of millions of viewers (15).

While *Dancing on Water* opens with the narrator's anxieties over being under surveillance and constituted as a criminal in his new home in Sweden, the opening lines of *Spring and Autumn* feature the protagonist Karam, also at a café, gazing outward onto an idealized socialist Hungary: "He sat down at the M.K. café on Lenin Street in Budapest. He was alone, a stranger, observing the people and things around him with interest" (7). At the café, Karam's modernist, detached gaze is coupled with a desire (and ability) to gain more intimate access to Hungarian society. Indeed, it is at café M.K. that Karam "finds" his young lover Perushka, an "artifact" of Hungarian society who becomes an intimate expression of *al-mujtam' al-jāhiz* (the "mature society"), a mature socialism, which Karam dreams of implementing in Syria.

From Karam's found "artifact," (with whom intimacy becomes a means to express a shared political vision) and commitment to revolutionary transformation of Syria, we thus move to the enigma of the found wallet in *Dancing on Water* and the narrator's ensuing and parallel quests to find the wallet's owner and a sense of belonging in Sweden. But in contrast to Karam's "find" at café M.K., the found wallet in *Dancing on Water* does not signify any ready-made political solutions. Rather, in the wake of the loss of an explicitly Marxist political framing of exile, it instigates a search where the narrator's relationship to the social space of Sweden is at stake. From Karam's position of privileged detachment, nostalgia

for home, and political commitment, we move to *Dancing on Water's* narrator's recurring fear of public exposure and surveillance in public spaces. His gaze, which is turned on the self, is attuned to a biopolitical differentiation of populations, which figure him as a threat to Sweden, and more broadly, to Europe. In *Dancing on Water's* representation of exile in northern Europe, the social death of exclusion – “what must die” - is interwoven with the crisis of a leftist model of exile.

In contrast, exile, in *Spring and Autumn* is a space of desire and intimacy that is framed by common political affiliations. In his privileged position as a university professor of Arabic in Budapest, Karam is treated with a respect verging on reverence in his host society. As an extension of the common trend in writing on the West and the metaphorical weight of romantic relationships, the parallel discourse on politics and intimacy in the novel's construction of a moral universe is striking. On the one hand, the novel elaborates a notion of prostitution that refers both to the ways in which the Arab students take advantage of the Hungarian state's generous stipends (while making profits from the black market) and to sexual relations that are based on coercion (250). On the other hand, the novel develops a moral vocabulary that is applied both to its depiction of idealized state-citizen relations in socialist Hungary and to sexual relations between Karam and his lovers. Adherence to the socialist project is equated with voluntary association and solidarity; sexual relations are equated with mutual respect and the free and consensual exchange of bodies. Ethics, in the novel, are

defined as maintaining the ideal of *voluntary* association and maintaining a passionate commitment to the home nation

It is a strong sense of political commitment to Syria that keeps Karam from succumbing to the temptation of perpetual exile in Hungary. Even with the politically inflected intimacy he experiences with Perushka and Erjika, he continues to long for an imaginary “moon genie” (195), an impossibly beautiful woman who resides in the moon. He feels that he can commit to her in ways he finds impossible with his Hungarian lovers. Indeed, his love for the moon genie comes to symbolize his uncompromised loyalty to Syria and his commitment qua activist (*munādhil*), to its revolutionary transformation. In a telling scene at the end of the novel, Karam dreams that he is sailing on a stormy ocean surrounded by strange sea creatures and humans who disappear, one by one, into the deep. Once alone, his beloved moon genie appears. Approaching her, Karam finds that he is able to walk on water. The symbolism of this important (yet melodramatic) passage is not lost on the reader. His love for the elusive moon genie clearly references his undying loyalty and commitment to Syria. In the dream, Karam has messianic qualities; in waking life, Karam understands himself to be part of an intellectual class, *al-muthaqqafūn*. In a Romantic spirit, the intellectual is portrayed as capable of (and called to) tapping into a *zeitgeist*, enacting a quasi-prophetic role. He knows that he will only be able to write upon his return to Syria, where he will be united with the spirit of the nation and inspire and lead through his writing.

I mention this passage in particular because it cuts to the heart of the novel, but also because the messianic quality of walking on water is brought up again in *Dancing on Water* where it takes on a very different meaning. In one of the narrator's dreams at the end of the novel, Karl Marx faces an impromptu trial in the spirit of "The Grand Inquisitor," with Jesus charging him with the crime of leading humanity away from religion. The stakes of this judgment of Marx are not only his eternal reward or punishment qua individual but also the question of the legacy he has left the world. Although Jesus and Marx reconcile over their shared injunctions of distributing money to eliminate poverty, a new conflict soon arises. The Karl Marx of the narrator's dream jokingly claims in front of Jesus and Moses that not only can he *walk* on water but he can run, even *dance* on water - on *frozen* water. On the one hand, his joke seems to refer to the cold climate of Scandinavia furnishing the conditions for a distributive and equitable economy. On the other, when read intertextually, the statement also references a debate about the nature of the intellectual and as a distancing from the Romanticized version of the intellectual rendered in Karam's dream.

History Didn't Return Her Greeting

Dancing on Water is not the only Arabic novel to treat this loss of relationality with exilic space associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Iraqi author Haifa Zangana addresses this issue in the preface of the 2006 English translation of her 2001 novel *Women on a Journey* (*Nisa' 'ala Safar*), a novel depicting the intertwining lives of a group of Iraqi women in London. She writes,

The most important issue that has faced Iraqi writers in exile has been political involvement. The majority of them were either members of or ideologically allied to the Communist Party, and were involved in direct political action. They had spent their youth as communists, living and breathing the party; their friends were comrades; and their writing reflected the party line. Understandably, their sense of loss after the collapse of the Soviet Union was enormous, and leaving their country doubles their feelings of isolation. All of a sudden they found themselves in a complete ideological and social void (xiv).

Beyond the experience of Iraqi exiles, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant an existential crisis for the Arab Left both inside and outside the Arab world. The collapse left “a vacuum” in meaning (Abu-Rab’ 3) where Marxism had represented both a principle of political organization and a conceptual framework for international solidarity that gave meaning to exile. The “ideological and social void” or “vacuum” has become an important starting point of Arabic literary renderings of Europe in the post-Cold War period. Consider, for example, Duna Ghali’s 2006 novel, which interweaves a series narratives from a community of Iraqi migrants in Denmark *When the Scent Awakens* (*‘Indama Tastayqaz al-Ra’iha*). In her novel, one of the narrators likens his dual displacement from Iraq and the ICP to being orphaned, a loss that he is unable to overcome.

The loss of a Marxist framing of exile is a central theme in Iqbal Qazwini’s 2005 novel *Mamarrat al-Sukun* (translated into English and published as *Zubaida’s Window: A Novel of Iraqi Exile* in 2008). The novel stages a melancholy existence of a middle-aged Iraqi woman in eastern Berlin after German reunification. A debut novel for Qazwini, an Iraqi journalist who has lived in Berlin since the late 1970s, *Zubaida’s Window* takes place during the 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq. The 2003 invasion marks the novel’s

present, but frequent flashbacks to her long exile in Eastern Germany as the Iraqi delegate to the Women's International Democratic Federation continuously intrude. Her claustrophobic present is characterized by a surreal tone; televised images of the Iraq war refuse to be confined to the television, impeding directly on her narratives of the present and past. Her thought, "They are bombing my memory" (6), suggests the traumatic effect that the invasion has on Zubaida's conception of her past and present selves.

An important component of the narrative is Zubaida's changed relationship to Berlin following German unification. Despite her relief that the repressive regime of the GDR has fallen, Zubaida's life post-unification has only become increasingly unmoored from a sense of purpose and place. In a pivotal scene, she recalls the celebrations accompanying the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Alone in a sea of jubilation, Zubaida spots "history" leaning against an old building amidst of a crowd of celebrating Germans. But, conspicuously, when she greets him he no longer takes notice of her. As history turns a deaf ear toward her, a new exilic landscape spreads out before her.

When evening fell, she grew weary. It had become apparent that she could not truly share in the joy that all of these people felt, no matter how hard she tried. The shared history that had united her with them had come to an end and her vain attempts to be part of this strange celebration did not succeed. No matter how much she wanted to participate, her joy would remain marginal. No matter how hard she tried, she would not be able to penetrate a history to which she was not connected. Who said that forty years of socialism and artificial borders would eliminate the nationalist sentiment that was buried in chained souls? This pent-up emotion of a people that she had judged cold and unemotional outlined the borders of her new exile. (34)

Zubaida understands her exclusion in post-unification Germany as inevitable, a by-product of the forces of history that caused the regimes of the Eastern Bloc to collapse. Her repeated invocations of “no matter how hard she...” (*mahma...*) signal her thwarted intentions to participate in a highly symbolic moment for Germany and the seeming inevitability of her exclusion. History becomes a stranger: *tārīkh la šila laha bihi* (a history with which she has no link) (34). From the socialist ideals of international justice and solidarity, however unrealized in the lived reality of the GDR, Zubaida instead transitions into a “new exile” whose “contours” consist of weekly visits to the unemployment office and an atomized existence in her apartment whose “windows” – the television and the balcony – only serve to increase the claustrophobic feel of the narrative. The sense of being closed in by her inability to return to Iraq and by the pervasive sense that Germany lacks a space for her in the post-unification era combines with a heightened sense of outsidership and surveillance in public space.

Both narratives of a second European exile, *Dancing on Water* and *Zubaida’s Window* focus on the transition from a Marxist-framed exile in Eastern Europe to an ambivalent exile in post-Cold War Europe. However, whereas Bayaty’s novel enacts an active striving for new frameworks and new links that weave a relational understanding of self and other, Arab and European, in Qazwini’s narrative, Zubaida is unable to re-create a link to Berlin following the passing of a shared history. She is irremediably cut off from Germany society. The narrative comes to a close when Zubaida suffers what is presumed to be a heart attack in her apartment. When the ambulance crew arrives, there is nobody

at home in her apartment building to open the main door. She is, she reflects, the only unemployed person and the only foreigner in the building. To borrow from Foucault's definition of the biopolitical fragmentation of populations, to "make live" and "let die," she is allowed to die when the ambulance crew decides to leave and the narrative comes to a close. She is a casualty, it seems, of the forces of history that have shaped her narrative. While Zubaida is unable to overcome all the forms of loss that have shaped her life in exile, the narrator of *Dancing on Water* embarks upon a search for new forms of relationality to define his relationship to his new home in Sweden.

A Displaced Materialism

We return to the beginning of *Dancing on Water*. After returning home from café Jaffa, the narrator finds himself alone with the wallet for the first time. He is surprised to discover the large sum of money in the wallet, and he goes on to make an inventory of the rest of its contents: money, bus pass, and a small piece of plastic with the letter 13. There is no name or address to lead him to the wallet's rightful owner. However, the wallet has the name "Alfons" printed prominently on both sides.

I read the wallet vis-à-vis the various subtexts of the novel. These include the crisis of the Swedish welfare state, the collapse of institutionalized Marxism that instigates the narrator's the move from Prague to Göteborg, and the narrator's implicit divestment in Marxist politics. I read this central metaphor of the novel in at least two ways. First it poses the question of the inheritance of Marxism, the

don (Derrida) that awaits investment with new meaning. Secondly, the anxiety that it induces in the narrator appears at moments in the narrative when social exclusion becomes manifest. Furthermore, if the lost wallet serves as a free-floating metaphor of an exile with new contours that the narrator attempts to endow with meaning, it is also accompanied by images of haunting and loss. In the narrator's quest to find the owner of the wallet and decide what to do with the money it – the search that re-theorizes his own relationship to Sweden and Europe – he is continually confronting images of emptiness and loss in his surroundings.

For example, at almost every visit to café Jaffa the narrator observes the silent circulation of an unidentified young man looking for somebody or something that is not there. This scene repeats itself frequently in the narrative, almost word for word.

The young man with the dreamy demeanor and slouchy posture entered the café and circled (*tāf*) the tables as if he were looking for somebody. He stopped by my table, mumbled “I’m sorry,” and then sat down. As usual, he did not drink anything, nor did he smoke or talk (97).

Although the verb *tāf* – to walk, circle, or rove – and the noun *tayf* – specter – are not from the same root (ط - و - ف vs. ط - ي - ف) their etymological connection and the repetition of the verb *tāf* at every appearance of the anonymous young man silently and repetitively circling the café recalls the *tayf*.

The repetitive nature of these scenes and the very ghostly qualities of this anonymous character (he refuses to consume food and beverages in the café, for example) further strengthen the sense that the café is haunted. The young man, like the narrator, is searching for something or somebody who is missing, or no longer readily apparent. The unnamed young man, an ambiguous counter-ego,

calls attention both to an absence and to the spectral; his silent sharing of the café with the narrator suggests their parallel trajectories. Moreover, the parallelism that is established between the young man's futile circling around the café and the narrator's search for Alfons, the presumed owner of the wallet, calls attention to a lacking center in his exilic existence and the search that will lead him to a new understanding of his exilic self.

Searching for Alfons

A range of different motives lie behind the narrator's decision to not return the wallet to the café or the police, but to instead embark upon a search for Alfons, the presumed owner of the wallet, by himself. For example, his sense of obligation to turn in the money to the proper authorities is interrupted by his apprehension of dealing with the police; his chronic back pain is a constant reminder of a police beating in Baghdad and he fears being treated with suspicion by the Swedish police. Furthermore, he finds himself increasingly curious about who Alfons might be. Moreover, the desire to act in the spirit of chivalry (*murū'a*) (22) and find the owner himself initially takes precedence over turning in the wallet to the authorities. The questions of an ethics of exile, that is, questions about what the narrator – a refugee and a future Swedish citizen – should strive for in this context concern both a relational understanding of self and place and an ethics of distributing resources (in this case, the money in the wallet). In the wake of the loss of an established political and literary models of relationality (and the

idea of the intellectual as a vanguard) the search for Alfons, the presumed owner of the wallet, brings about a transition in the narrator's understanding of exile.

One of the first decisions that the narrator makes after finding the wallet is deciding on an ethical approach to the search. The initial compromise between his conflicting desires and motives is reached when he resolves to act with chivalry, literally with *murū'a*. Alone in his apartment with the newly found wallet he chides the part of himself that resists relinquishing his find: "What would it really take for you to turn in the wallet? Why haven't you given it to the café owner? Would you return it if it contained more money?" Addressing an alter ego, he thus produces the response that marks a turning point in the novel: "Why do you want to spoil the pleasure of acting with chivalry" (22)? In this scene, the narrator's solitude and internal dialogue emphasize a private intersubjectivity anchored in the concept of chivalry.

From the root م-ر-أ, *murū'a* can translate as "generosity" or "chivalry." Specifically, the term implies an ethics of generosity and chivalry that is grounded in performance and being a valued member of community. Extending these ideas to the found wallet, the narrator desires forms of social validation that do not become available to him in the narrative. Nevertheless, the search for the wallet enact a form of psychic integration into community.²⁰

As it turns out, the resulting search is largely textually based. The narrator assembles a bibliography akin to that of a research paper on the history of Euro-Arab and Christian - Muslim relations. The search, at this stage, becomes a

²⁰ Another valence of the terms is the way in which it shares a root with *mar'*, the human. In contrast to other terms that depict male and female humanity, it is a root that both man – *mar'* – and woman – *mar'a* / *imra'a* – share.

critical, academic endeavor. The narrator's frequent trips to the public library in central Göteborg yield a reading list that includes the likes of Alexei Zhuravski's *Christianity and Islam*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Joseph Schacht's *The Legacy of Islam: The impact of Islamic culture on the West*, Adonis's *al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwal*, and articles from *al-Hayat*. In the absence of a unifying political or relational ideology that would bind the narrator to his new home, the search for Alfons becomes a way to create meaning and relationality where it is lacking.

The narrator first encounters a potential Alfons while reading a Hayat article on the founding of Israel. Here, he learns that "Alfons" was the presumed code name of Baruch Goldstein, the perpetrator of the 1994 Cave of the Patriarchs Massacre. Unable to sleep, he continues to read, this time from the book *Islam and Christianity* by the Russian Orientalist Aleksei Zhuravsky. He comes across a section on the Jewish born scholar Petrus Alfonsi, a Jewish convert to Christianity who wrote the polemic *Dialogi contra iudaeos*. This Alfons becomes the first in a series of "Alfonses" to invoke the complicated and contested social terrain of al-Andalus that governed inter-religions relations. Later, continuing his readings in *The Islamic Heritage* the seminal edited volume by Joseph Schacht that explores the impact of Islamic civilization on Europe, he comes across another Pedro Alfons again in the context of the influence of the Arabic translation and commentaries on Greek texts in the European Renaissance. Significantly, Maxine Rodinson's introduction to the volume mentions a Pedro Alfons, who wrote the first commentary of historical value on the Prophet Mohamed. The narrator's next reading session in *The Islamic Heritage* unearths yet another Andalusian Alfons

when the author mentions that the height of Muslim civilization in Spain was achieved in the court of “Alfons the Wise,” Alfonso X of Castile (1221-1224), a king and scholar who oversaw the translation of Arabic books and scientific texts into Castilian.

These historical Alfonses inhabit the contested social space of Al-Andalus, a space that was nurtured by Islamic civilization and during the Reconquista, characterized by both fertile intellectual exchange and conflict between the three major religious communities including translations, commentaries and polemical treatises. The term *convivencia* that is often applied to the very fluid and open relations between the three religious, as demonstrated by historian Jonathan Ray, has historically been interpreted through the lens of contemporary perceptions and conflicts pertaining to East, West, and these three religious communities. In *Dancing on Water*, Andalusia finds its way into an Iraqi refugee’s apartment on the ninth floor of a concrete Hammarkullen building.

The narrator’s discovery of these historical Alfonses and his reflections on *convivencia* become ways to interpret the categories of East and West in his own life in Sweden. Importantly, all of these Alfonses are characters that inhabit an unquestionably shared history, a shared cultural heritage of the Muslim world and Europe that the narrator himself inhabits. The interlinked character of this history challenges a discourse of difference that is often applied to Muslim communities in Europe. Certainly, the narrator finds comfort in the ways in which many of his discovered “Alfonses” serve as reminders of Muslim contributions to medieval Europe and of the historical precedents to the kind of mixing and exchange

between the Arab World and Europe taking place in Sweden under different terms than *convivencia*. However, the religious and ethnic framework, while a salutary reminder of intertwined histories in the face of discourses of separateness and conflict, he finds, is a starting point, but inadequate in itself. After all, it is precisely as a Muslim and Arab that he is singled out for exclusion.

Thus, in the effort to imagine a different link to European exile, the search for Alfons brings Arab-European history to the fore through the theme of interreligious relations between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This in itself represents a distancing from the “Clash of Civilizations” thesis,²¹ which was propagated in the early post-Cold War period. However, the narrator eventually finds that he must abandon this ethnically inflected framework of exile altogether. While Huntington portends a heightened civilizational strife following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of institutional Marxism, the narrator, like Zubaida in Iqbal Qazwini’s novel, experiences exclusion based on racial, ethnic, and cultural terms following the rupture of a politically defined link.

Urban Geography, Difficult Dreams

Throughout the narrator’s search for Alfons, his waking life is interrupted by difficult dreams. Even though the driving force of the novel is this high-stakes search for Alfons and, by extension, the narrator’s search for belonging in Sweden, there is an anxiety ridden underside to this search that mainly emerges in

²¹ Samuel Huntington’s 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, posits the idea that the end of the ideological rivalries of the Cold War would usher in a new global paradigm where conflicts revolve around cultural and religious values, especially in the fault lines between the Islamic and Western civilizations.

the narrator's dreams and pertains to structures of exclusions and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Both dynamics – the narrator's active re-imagining of the link between self and his new exile on the one hand, and the structures of exclusions that he faces, on the other, can be analyzed through the language of biopolitics.

If the initial scenes in which the narrator senses a societal surveillance recalls Foucault's writing on the panopticon – the disciplinary power of surveillance - the narrative is highly attuned to the differentiating properties of power. In other words, the narrator lives with a heightened awareness of being excluded from an imagined community and being constructed as a threat in Swedish society even as he is in the process of becoming legally integrated as a citizen. The narrator is thus preoccupied with his position in Swedish society with regard to contemporary forms of population management. This concern is brought to the fore by the narrative's attention to migration into a changing welfare state, the spatial and racial segregation of the city, hostile discourses on immigration, and the comparative neglect of his neighborhood vis-à-vis the better-endowed city center.

In European cities, disenfranchised suburban peripheries are often figured as threats to urban centers. This dynamic parallels the so called "Eurabia" discourse in which Europe is perceived to be under siege by various Arab and Muslim populations. Furthermore, the project of managed migration discussed in Chapter One often works in tandem with such xeno-nationalist discourses that seek to restrict what can properly belong to the nation, that is, defining the nation in terms of common ethnic, religious, and cultural bonds. It is not surprising then,

that the narrator's search for Alfons is framed by fixed notions of heritage and culture as a basis for identity, even as he searches for intersecting Euro-Arab histories. However, while his search is underway, he is frequently assailed by "difficult dreams" that highlight the production of exclusion in terms of ethnic identity and urban geography.

The neighborhood of Hammarkullen and its relationship to the city center is a case in point. The changes in the neighborhood, from the utopian spirit of its inception to the segregation and unemployment that characterize it in the novel, are emblematic of the forms of social exclusion that have become endemic in post-Cold War, indeed post-welfare, Sweden. As in other contemporary European countries, exclusion increasingly cuts along racial lines. But what is perhaps more significant to the narrative is the way in which such exclusion has been rationalized as an *effect* of culture, race, and ethnicity (Schierup, Hansen, & Castles 2). The spatial isolation of *Hammarkullen* and the lack of cultural and commercial services in the neighborhood are what instigate narrator's frequent trips to central Göteborg to patronize the libraries, cafes, and other public and commercial spaces that are lacking in Hammarkullen. In such public spaces in central Göteborg, systemic divisions are readily apparent, thus awakening the anxieties that are then processed in the narrator's dreams.

The difficult dreams that are the namesake of *Dancing on Water* tend to feature the narrator in various situations in which he is wrongly accused and exposed as a threat to society. As recalled from the novel's initial scenes, the narrator's first anxiety-ridden fantasy has him captured on camera while scooping

up a found wallet. Here, he occupies two positions: one as a part of the national public viewing a popular television show and one as the unsuspecting thief whose crime is plainly revealed on camera. The subsequent anxiety dreams that intersperse the novel replicate this dual positioning as an observer through the eyes of a presumed (and judging) Swedish audience and the self as standing accused as an unwitting criminal. The re-imagining of community and relationality in the novel takes place in direct conversation with these anxiety dreams.

In *Dancing on Water*, the narrator's troubled dreams tend to occur during his tram-rides as he drowsily traverses the racial and class divides that separate the city-center and his home in the suburban periphery of Hammarkullen. His dreams recast mundane events of the bygone day while magnifying his feelings of being under surveillance and rendered visible for public accusation. Through this itinerant space of the tram-rides, the narrative calls attention to the parallels between urban geography and the narrator's encounter with public space where the marginal is often constituted as a threat to the dominant.

One such tram-induced slumber occurs as the narrator returns home after being refused entry into the nightclub "Tango," ostensibly because of his non-compliance with the club's dress code. "The son-of-a bitch knew I was Muslim and Arab" (69), he thinks before drifting off to sleep. The dream weaves an alternate ending to the nightclub event as the narrator goes to increasingly absurd extremes to gain entry. He purchases flashy clothes, dyes his hair blond and purple, and changes his age even as the bouncer continues to redefine the dress code and rules of entry. When a wallet falls out of the pocket of a customer who,

conspicuously, sails by the bouncer, and the narrator bends down to pick it up, he is loudly denounced as *the* wallet thief and taken off to be incarcerated. The kinds of anxieties that fuel the narrator's dreams, here and elsewhere, relate to the fear of being cast as an economic and cultural threat while trying to gain access to public space in which a mutual recognition and shared community could be performed.

While the narrator's search for Alfons is initially framed in terms of reconciling distinct yet intertwined civilizations, his frequent anxiety dreams interrupt and disrupt this culturalist narrative. Instead, the anxiety in the dream draws the search to the stakes in the narrator's contemporary setting toward the idea that his initial framework of theorizing exilic identity in Europe must be abandoned.

East and West Displaced

The narrator's search for Alfons and eventual disavowal of the East-West premises of the search resonates with one of the central humanistic questions of the novel: what is the meaning of citizenship? Is it the model of political community that sees citizenship as a transcendence of familial and ethnic ties? That is, a model that is centred on rights and duties to the nation? Or, on the other hand, does citizenship derive from membership in a culturally and ethnically defined nation? In *The World, The Text, The Critic* (1983) Edward Said differentiates between the terms "filiation" and "affiliation" as varying modes of understanding both literature and identity. He defines filiation as the ties of

“nature and life” and affiliation as and the voluntary bonds of “culture and society” (Said 20). It is with this demarcation between the given and biological categories of identity - filiation - and forms of voluntary association that transcend family, religion, and ethnicity – affiliation - that we can read the way in which the novel deals with the loss of one form of community based on political affiliation and the models of community that may replace it.

The tension between filiation and affiliation is dramatically staged in an episode of the novel where the narrator receives a phone call from his sister Fatima in Baghdad. She informs him of his mother’s heart attack and the imminent need for an operation to save her. Overcome by grief, he vows that he will send the largest possible amount of money from Sweden even if it means acquiring it illegally. The answer to this moral quandary comes immediately in the form of a dream where the narrator’s grandfather appears and states that his daughter shall not be saved by forbidden (*haram*) (57) money. The idea of sending the money to his family in Iraq, to his mother, is ruled out at this moment of grandfatherly rejection in the dream. Furthermore, the search, which takes place on the road to Swedish citizenship, highlights the centrality of affiliation rather than filiation as a framework for citizenship.

When the narrator finally finds Alfons’s secret identity he loses the filial and concerns for a shared heritage as a primary foundation for theorizing his place in Sweden. On a routine visit to the public library he is informed that the Alfons on the found wallet is simply the main character in a well-known Swedish children’s book series, “Alfons Åberg.” “Am I racist?” he asks. “It is apparent in

the unfair way in which I have been treating Sara. And maybe in my selective reading of history” (100). Finding Alfons instigates a moment of self-doubt and transformation and serves to deflate the significance of civilizational tensions – and the idea of civilization as a unit of culture - in the narrator’s understanding of self. The implicit conclusion is that his queries into a long history of Arab-European, Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations have everything to do with his own preoccupations and his own position in Sweden and the racism that is directed toward him and others. After making this discovery, he promptly decides to return to the money to the nearest police station. The decision to relinquish his initial stance based on the chivalry of *murū’a* - an ethics of modesty and individual responsibility - and instead choose to make use of the institutional solution that he initially feared is significant. He makes an active choice of anonymous and affiliative community over the filial. Thus, in accordance with a rejection of the reading of history as civilizational conflict and an individual ethics of generosity and chivalry, he chooses the anonymous ethics of affiliation.

In compliance with Swedish law, half of the money is returned to the narrator after three months when the wallet remains unclaimed at the police station. He distributes the returned money between The Red Cross and two other aid organizations, one benefitting Iraqi children suffering from the effects of the UN sanctions and one aiding the families of Palestinians killed during the (first) Intifada. Finally, he puts aside a small sum of money to spend on a night on the town with his friends Julio and Sara. The way in which the money is distributed indicates an active choice of anonymous and structural, indeed, affiliative aid,

over the private transaction that sending money directly to his family would represent. He thus distances himself from the initial strategy based on chivalry and private ethics. While he chooses to support organizations that prioritize “Arab causes” the fact that they are aid organizations and not, for example, resistance organizations is indicative of the novel’s context.

The narrator’s decision to end the search for Alfons by turning in the wallet to the police may appear anticlimactic. However, it enacts a transformation in the narrator’s relationship to Sweden, an endpoint in the novel’s treatment of character growth. The narrative structure of *Dancing on Water*, which follows a search that eventually leads to a resolution, is one that evokes the becoming-mode of the Bildungsroman. From a generic point of view, it is not a coming-of-age story in the traditional sense; the narrator is in his 30s and attempting to forge relationship with a third home, not the society of his birth, nor the society of his first exile. However, like the Bildungsroman, the dual processes of quest and character growth drive the narrative. As an exile novel, it stages the process of searching for new modes of relationality when a previous one has been lost, and highlights the process of becoming a Swedish citizen who aims to abide by and trust in national institutions. In this sense, the narrative generates some highly political questions concerning the dynamics of social and political inclusion at an important historical juncture.

Joseph Slaughter’s extensive writing on the Bildungsroman as a vehicle for narrating the incorporation of the individual into normative rights bearing personhood can help inform the dual moments of conceiving integration that

follow the narrator's visit to the police station and his distribution of the wallet's contents among aid organizations. In his 2007 book *Human Rights Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* Slaughter offers critical insights into the parallels between the Bildungsroman's narrative structure of becoming and normative human rights law. He suggests that the tension between natural law and positive law that is made manifest in the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] designates a plot of *becoming*; as prescriptive law, international human rights law aims to legislate rights that, according to enlightenment philosophy and human rights law, we are already endowed with by nature. In the classic Bildungsroman, the protagonist becomes what he or she is already *is* by being incorporated into the public sphere of his or her society of birth through socialization; In *Dancing on Water* the narrator imagines what it means to become what he *isn't* by birth. This is not accomplished through socialization per se, but rather by claiming a political subjectivity with rights and responsibilities toward an anonymous community.

As Slaughter shows, even though the narrative form of the Bildungsroman emerged from a European and male perspective, it has become a dominant vehicle for narrating the ideal of legal and social incorporation in world literature. In the earlier literary representations of encounters with Europe, the concept of *Bildung* has played a central role, especially the question of what role Europe should play in the *Bildung* of a national elite. In the Nahda novels on travel to Europe, education and coming of age takes place in Europe and the intellectual is reintegrated into the national community upon return; in the post-Nahda crisis of

nation-building and the corresponding Bildung narrative, novels of travel to Europe explore a desire for political models that are absent at home. In contrast, the newer literature of immigration often asks questions about who has the right to be a full-fledged citizen. *Dancing on Water* seems to ask, who can be imagined as part of the Swedish national community?

It may be useful to briefly contrast *Dancing on Water* to what Slaughter defines as a “dissensual” Bildungsroman. In contrast to the classical Bildungsroman, which narrates a process of incorporation into society’s norms and legal structures, a dissensual Bildungsroman calls upon the generic conventions of incorporation to highlight the structures that *prevent* the individual from accessing society. “Typically,” writes Slaughter, “the dissensual Bildungsroman narrates the frustration of incorporation to publicize the social, political, cultural, and economic assumptions about normativity that determine the constituency of the historical public sphere and that underpin, and are perpetuated by, the traditional conventions of the affirmative *Bildungsroman*” (182). For sure, *Dancing on Water* does explore the many structures of exclusion that face Arab and Muslim migrants in particular. However, it nevertheless proceeds to offer two versions of incorporation at the end of the novel that relate back to the questions that have been posed in the novel about the legacy of Marxism and regeneration of affiliative ties through an imagining of citizenship.

The ideals of a citizenship based on affiliation are both declared and performed in the two separate resolutions that take place at the end of the novel, one of them in waking life and the other, in an elaborate dream. The de-

marginalization that the novel imagines in these two moments of integration has everything to do with the narrator's becoming a citizen. These two arrivals represent two parallel ways of staging the sense of integration that concludes the novel. Even though these resolutions appear incomplete when compared to the classic Bildungsroman or the early novels of travel to Europe, especially because they are enacted on such an individual level, they nevertheless represent an important reformulation of an ethics of exile.

By re-writing previous exilic literary paradigms to fit the political and social stakes of post-Cold War Europe, *Dancing on Water* re-claims a relationality based on the social and civic dimensions of citizenship. Out with his friends in central Göteborg, the narrator declares: "I am Muslim by birth, Arab on my father's side, Kurdish on my mother's side, secular in my beliefs, universalist by logic, and I will become a Swedish citizen in three years" (116). The progression of his statement, from paternal origins and toward future Swedish citizenship, parallels a progression from filial ties to the ties of affiliation. The trajectory of the novel, likewise, is to transcend filial ties in the process of imagining community. The narrative refuses to validate ethnic or religious ties as a replacement for lost political community but rather seeks out other ways to imagine community based on affiliation.

The first sense of resolution takes place in an outing in central Göteborg made possible by the returned money when the narrator and his friends go to the kinds of spaces that have previously provoked anxiety in the novel. Shortly after the narrator and his friends take a seat at the bar *Gretas*, a drunken, muscular man

sits down next to them. Interrupting their conversation on Richard Wagner's music with a blunt: "You are enjoying the fruits of a civilization that belongs solely to us (109)," he seems to articulate all of the narrator's anxious assumptions about a Swedish public that has placed him under surveillance and would exclude him from any version of a Swedish or European community, framed here through a notion of "Western civilization." When the man finds out that the narrator is Arab, a heated exchange ensues which references a model of civilizational conflict that would place the West under siege by Muslim forces in the form of immigration and asylum applications, a stance that is summed up in his statement: "The barbarians invaded Rome through the power of their weaponry; you are modern-day barbarians but you have invaded Sweden by using peaceful means. Or rather, by using our laws as weapons, laws that grant asylum with no conditions attached (119). The "Eurabia" discourse of a victim-Europe overwhelmed by colonizing Muslim was provoked the narrator's previous anxiety dreams.

Schooled by his search for Alfons, the narrator argues spiritedly for the shared and dialogic nature of civilization. When the exchange becomes heated, the small cohort leaves the bar. A sense of coming-together is staged in the promenade around the city that follows the argument at the bar; many of the novel's characters appear on the street at random, and a sense of ease and relief descends on the setting. The narrator even spots the silent young man from café Jaffa circling the streets of Göteborg and catches the trace of a smile from his unnamed alter ego. The small group moves on to an intimate jazz club where they

find Petra; an employee of the Red Cross and friend of the narrator; and Zagros, a young Kurdish man, who is the sole survivor of a capsized boat of refugees seeking to access the shores of Greece from Turkey. In the gathering at the jazz club, a feast-like atmosphere reigns. The celebration, enhanced with wine and poetry provides a sense of arrival after a quasi-Bildung. However, Zagros's lengthy testimony placed at this moment of narrative resolution casts the shadow of "bare life" in the gathering and its festive atmosphere.

Zagros explains in detail to the gathering how he emerged as the only survivor when two boats departing from Turkey and heading toward Greece and filled with would-be asylum seekers capsized and sank. Outside of a rights framework and subject to the "state of exception" that characterizes the borders of "fortress Europe" for migrants attempting to cross, Zagros's testimony serves as a reminder of the stakes of legal incorporation and rights. The subject of *Dancing on Water* is not exactly that traumatic exposure to this "state of exception" that is central to some literary representations of forced migration; however in *Dancing on Water*'s reformulation of political subjectivity, "bare life" is always present as a reminder of the alternative to legal integration into the nation-state. The festive gathering at the jazz club re-emphasizes the institutional role (here in the form of the Red Cross employee but more generally in the idea of in escaping transcending culturalist assumptions about political community such as those anchored in notions of "East" and "West." In Agamben's writing on bare life, the condition signifies disenfranchisement and dehumanization. On the other hand, as discussed by Judith Butler in *Precarious Life* and Emmanuel Levinas in

Humanism of the Other an attention to suffering, of being reduced to our most basic human ties, can also be read as injunction to face ethical responsibility to anonymous others. In this spirit, the feast is a celebration of the affiliative ties of institutions and citizenship as a possibility to overcome the brutal subjection to power that is “bare life.”

The second arrival point of the narrative takes place in a dream following the narrator’s night on the town where the first version of integration is staged. A dose of painkillers washed down with some house wine combine to create a vivid dream that re-enacts the East-West and Arab-Europe discourses of the novel. In contrast to the anxiety dreams that intersperse the whole novel, the extended dream provides an additional commentary on citizenship, ethnic identities, and the legacy of Marxism in the post-Cold War period.

In the dream, the narrator presides over a lavishly Orientalized Haroun Al-Rashid style court as king Shahrayar of the *1,001 Nights*. Just like in the previous evening, when characters from the novel appeared in the streets of Göteborg and later at a feast-like setting at a jazz club, the characters from the novel appear as courtiers and guests in a court abounding in incense, delectable foods, and servants. Ghada enters in the role of Shahrazad, reciting Omar Khayyam’s poetry. Several musical groups provide entertainment, the members of which are the various characters from the novel. Barbro and Elizabeth, two women from Jehovah’s Witnesses who the narrator invited into his apartment, belly dance to the music. The chorus of characters that come together to share in the dance and

music in the dream are drawn both from the diverse ranks of Hammarkullen and world history.

In the carnivalesque dream, identities – if stereotyped – are unhinged and interchangeable. As in Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque, the dream features a space where social hierarchies are overturned and flattened as characters from the novel take on identities from an orientalized East. Likewise, the profane and the sacred mingle freely in ways that have a direct bearing on the narrator’s imagining of citizenship in Sweden. In the dream, a number of characters dressed as Sumerian and Babylonian gods perform for a small delegation of Swedish politicians, who respond exuberantly. The audience includes the late Prime Minister Olof Palme, symbol of the Swedish welfare state, whose assassination in 1986 has come to mark the end of an era in Sweden. Palme’s and the other politicians’ enthusiasm for the performance suggests a tacit desire for a contract between the state and the vision of citizenship that the search for Alfons produced. The politicians’ approval of the carnivalesque interchange of identities and histories in the narrator’s court infers not only the insertion of Arab and Eastern histories into the Swedish state, but also a desire for a citizen-state contract that privileges affiliation. By unhinging the filial bonds of heritage and making them readily available for appropriation (and celebration) they lose their determinative role in shaping the individual’s legal integration as a citizen.

In another instance of the overturning of the sacred and the profane, Karl Marx appears in chains, waiting to be judged for posterity by Jesus. The question of the *legacy* of Marxism that is at stake in the dream has, of course, been a

central crux in the narrator's effort to re-conceive of a framework for his new exile and reformulate the relational center of a history of travel and exile writing on Europe. For *Dancing on Water's* narrator, "his" Europe is not so much a foil for the self / intellectual as a home to be reinvented. This reinvention takes into account the structural elements of exclusion and population management as new communities are imagined from the ruins of previous affiliations. When a jovial Marx reconciles with Jesus over the general sense that ties of community should be rooted in solidarity and an ethical relation to the other, again, a sense of relief and ease seems to descend on the setting of this second arrival in the narrative.

The return of the spirit of Marx in the narrator's dream echoes some of the question of inheritance discussed in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. The fact that Marx's legacy is settled in a dream reflects the fact that the narrator's sense of integration in this *Bildung-like* trajectory takes place on a psychic plane rather than in a marked structural change in his everyday existence. However, the psychological change that the novel maps in the course of the narrator's search represents an important reimagining of both self and a post-Cold War European setting. Both the emphasis on the shared histories that constitute individuals, communities, nations, and regions as well as the affiliative model of citizenship that the novel offers combine to create a sense of community rooted both in solidarity and multi-culturalism.

In the end, it is Alfons who finds the narrator. The telephone rings one morning in the narrator's Hammarkullen apartment as he is taking a nap. In his dream, he picks up the crescent moon in the night sky to begin the telephone

conversation. When he suddenly finds himself in his own room with the telephone receiver in his hand, it is not clear whether he is awake or still dreaming. On the crackling line with words that are hard to discern, he hears a faint voice coming from abroad.

“Have I reached 65 21 331?”

Yes, yes. Who’s calling?”

“Alfons.”

“Who?!”

Even though, at the end of the novel, Alfons re-appears in all of his ambiguity, the search has already enacted a shift in the narrator’s reading of exile and citizenship. The search, in the end, converges around him, just like the novel has worked to re-imagine the link that binds him to his new home in Europe.

Conclusion

A striking aspect of many post-Cold War Arabic literary representations of migration to Europe is the loss of a link to new homes. While the loss of a literary and extra-literary relationality is grieved, it is also from this void that a community can be re-imagined. For some narratives of migration, especially literature that treats the loss of a Marxist framework for exile, the link that has gone missing is political.

In my analysis of *Dancing on Water* I have shown how the novel parodies literary representations of exile in the Eastern Bloc and calls attention to the incongruity of the novel’s present and past aesthetic models of writing Europe. The central metaphor of the novel, the mysterious wallet, comes to signify both a displaced materialism in need of new life and the changing models of citizenship

and migration in post-Cold War Europe. In order to reconcile with this new setting – as a refugee in northern Europe on his way to becoming a Swedish citizen – the narrators must abandon the idea of civilizational conflict and fixed notions of “East” and “West.”

It is important to note, however, that the transformation that takes place at the end of the novel when the narrator re-theorizes citizenship is largely a psychic transformation. The extravagant dreams of reconciliation that come at the end of the novel are, in the end, just dreams. Furthermore, perhaps their carnivalesque extravagance suggests precisely that unsettling dimension of the carnivalesque, where, although identities and hierarchies can be temporarily overturned, they revert back to old forms.

The novel is mainly concerned with how the narrator re-imagines an exilic relationality. The *Bildung* or transformation enacted in the novel amounts to a shift in the narrator’s relationship to his new home rather than any changes in his local community, in Swedish society, or in European migration policies, for example. However, it is significant that the novel’s theorization of citizenship takes place in dialogue with existing societal institutions and modes of citizenship.

If it is the process of re-imagining political community on the ruins of an Eastern Bloc exile that is foregrounded in *Dancing on Water*, an undertaking where “bare life” appears as a threatening alternative, the following chapters focus on literary discourses of migration that highlight the spaces that are located outside of political community. The next chapter analyzes imaginative renderings

of migration where, in the absence of the kinds of institutional solution that are presented in *Dancing on Water*, community is re-imagined in spaces of wilderness.

Chapter Three:

Fantasies of Refuge in the "Hostipital" Wilderness of Europe in Ibrahim Ahmad's "The Arctic Refugee," Faruq Youssef's *Nothing and Nobody*, and Hamid Skif's *The Geography of Danger*

This chapter analyzes three literary narratives of forced migration that represent an encounter with Europe through metaphorical landscapes of wilderness. It reads Ibrahim Ahmad's 1994 "The Arctic Refugee" ("Lāji' 'ind al-Iskīmū"); a short story about an Iraqi who is deported from several European countries and seeks refuge in the Arctic; Farouq Youssef's 2007 travel diary *Nothing and Nobody: A Diary in Northern Europe (La Shay La Ahad: Yawmiyat fi al-Shamal al-Urubi)*, which explores the concept of hospitality and healing through the Swedish forests; and Hamid Skif's 2006 novel *The Geography of Danger (La géographie du danger)* in which a clandestine migrant hides in an unnamed European city-turned- hunting ground. The narratives draw on different migratory contexts; "The Arctic Refugee" and *Nothing and Nobody* stage refuge and (in)hospitality in Northern Europe through wilderness and *The Geography of Danger*, a francophone novel, treats clandestine migration to southern Europe from North Africa. Despite their differing literary and migratory contexts, the narratives converge around the way that wilderness is produced for migrants as they enter territories outside of citizenship and legal belonging. Bridging harraga literature of clandestine migration and refugee literature, these narratives of forced migration represent wilderness as a space from which the contours of political community become legible and re-imaginable.

As discussed earlier, in Arabic (as in many other languages), the concept wilderness or the wild can signify a host of spaces outside the realm of human community, whether defined through moral, social, or political parameters. Words that derive from the root wa-ḥa-sha (و - ح - ش), such as *wahshī* (wild), *tawahhush* (savagery and violence) and *wahsha* (alienation and loneliness) designate various states of being placed outside of community. As a signifier of the outside of political community and citizenship, wilderness connects to the biopolitical fragmentation of populations where the distribution of hospitality across populations and space is at play.

The narratives analyzed in this chapter offer imaginative renderings of how the biopolitical is produced spatially, that is, how hospitality and the possibility to enter new communities through migration are distributed among populations and across space. That is, intensified globalization has meant a reconfiguration of the way that spaces are rendered open and hospitable for some, who enjoy unrestricted mobility, and inhospitable to others, who are barred from legally crossing national boundaries.

To be sure, inhospitable space plays a central role in the narratives analyzed in this chapter; it appears with barred movement and entries such as rejected asylum applications, deportations, or in the landscapes lived by clandestine migrants. Wilderness, as imagined in these narratives, is produced as a way to render spaces outside of community even as it gestures beyond exclusion and toward a sense of belonging

Mapping Hospitality and Wilderness through the Biopolitical

As I argued in Chapter One, representations of wilderness in Arabic literature of migration intersect with the biopolitical. In contrast to the Enlightenment model of citizenship, which conceptualizes the formation of political community as transcendence of the body and of nature, theorists of the biopolitical note that modern citizenship does not transcend, but rather politicizes these elements. The rights based model of citizenship that is at stake in the post-Cold War era and the intensification of the biopolitical are arguably most palpable in the realm of migration. It is in this context that I am situating the emergence of wilderness as a central metaphor in Arabic migration literature; that is, there is an overlap between literary representations of wilderness and the crises in political subjectivity associated broadly with a neo-liberal model of globalization but more specifically, with forced migration.

Although the right to seek asylum as figured in international law is based on criteria established in the 1951 Geneva Convention, the realities of migration are increasingly being distanced from a rights-defined discourse and practice. The process of harmonizing of EU migration policy that began in the 1990s and the EU's embrace of "managed migration" at the turn of the millennium; which emphasizes the right of European states to filter, select, and prevent migration; have both undermined the rights-based approach to refugee migration that was codified in the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol.

In this context, it is useful to reflect on Jacques Derrida's concept of "hostipitality;" His reading of the contradictions that are inherent to the concept of

hospitality resonates with the way that the literary narratives analyzed in this chapter navigate the tension between laying claims to rights frameworks for migration, on the one hand, and re-theorizing political community through the biopolitical (or projecting hospitality onto its outside spaces of wilderness), on the other.

Producing some of the most compelling philosophical responses to the shifts in the way that citizenship and migration have been conceived in the post-Cold War era, Jacques Derrida published a series of reflections on hospitality during the same period that the harmonization of European migration policy and the embrace of managed migration were underway. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001),²² “Hostipitality (2000),” and *Of Hospitality* (2000) pivot on the idea that even as hospitality signifies generosity and ethics (centering as it does on the question of how we relate to ourselves and to others), it also harbors its own contradictions – violence and hostility.

Derrida’s essay “Hostipitality” likens hospitality to the threshold of a house; the very door that welcomes the guest must also be capable of excluding her. The identity and power of the host, indeed the existence of the house, depends on it.

As a reaffirmation of mastery and being oneself in one’s own home, from the outset hospitality limits itself at its very beginning, it remains forever on the threshold of itself [*l’hospitalité se limite dès le seuil sur le seuil d’elle-même, elle reste toujours au seuil d’elle-même*], it governs the threshold – and hence it forbids in some way even what it seems to allow to cross the threshold to pass across it. It becomes the threshold. This is why we do not know what it is, and why we cannot know. Once we know it, we no longer know it, what it properly is, what the threshold of its

²² Derrida’s *On Cosmopolitanism* was first addressed to the International Parliament of Writers in 1996.

identity is.

To take up the figure of the door, for there to be hospitality, there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality. There is no hospitable house. There is no house without doors and windows. But as soon as there is a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality. There must be a threshold. But if there is a threshold, there is no longer hospitality. (14)

“Hostipitality,” in other words, recognizes the tension between a conditional hospitality that reaffirms the identity of the host and his or her power to include or exclude, on the one hand, and an unconditional hospitality that would welcome anybody at any time, on the other. Despite being opposed, each is dependent on the other. This means that all hospitality is conditional when put into practice.

In his work *On Hospitality*, Derrida argues that as soon as hospitality is made a right or a law, it relies on mastery, sovereignty, and the power to filter and exclude (55). In receiving a stranger, he asks, “How can we distinguish between a guest and a parasite?” (61)

In principle, the difference is straightforward, but for that you need a law; hospitality, reception, the welcome offered has to be submitted to a basic and limiting jurisdiction. Not all new arrivals are received as guests if they don't have the right to hospitality or the right of asylum, etc. Without this right, a new arrival can only be introduced "in my home," as a parasite, a guest who is wrong, illegitimate, clandestine, liable to expulsion or arrest. (61)

Such a disparity between the conditional and unconditional is addressed in *On Cosmopolitanism*,²³ which makes a case for a *politics* of hospitality, conceived of as a negotiation between conditional hospitality and an ideal of absolute welcoming. Although enacted hospitality will always be conditional, he argues,

²³ On *Cosmopolitanism* is based on a speech given to the international parliament of writers in 1996, soon after the passing of the Debret laws, which would make it a crime to harbor illegal immigrants in your home and gave free reign to the police to expel clandestine migrants.

the *ideal* of an all-welcoming space should actively shape the practice of hospitality.²⁴

While the ideals of a horizontal rights-based national and international community that were articulated in the conventions, protocols, and declarations of the post-WWII era were always far from being realized, they do place refugee and asylum policies in relation to a standard, which itself is conditional, not absolute. Though conditional, such a “politics of hospitality” collapses under the kinds of migration management strategies that seek to discard with a rights-based foundation of migration. If there is, as Agamben suggests, a new kind of politics, which can be built upon the biopolitical, it is still far out of reach from those who find themselves most vulnerable in a climate characterized by movement and displacement but with few guarantees.

If migration management intensifies the biopolitical and discards political foundations in favor of an economic logic, then the ideal of a politics of hospitality continue to shape literary representations of migration. In the literary narratives of migration analyzed in this chapter, wilderness, both natural and urban, take center stage in creating complex reflections on hospitality. Landscapes threaten to discard and expel, but also, in the realm of fantasy, welcome. How, then, are they implicated in a politics of hospitality? If an ideal of unconditional hospitality acting on codes of conditional hospitality is conspicuously absent in the shaping of managed migration, which emphasizes states’ rights to filter and

²⁴ In this regard, Derrida’s argument reads as an extension of Levinas’s conception of ethics as infinite responsibility toward others developed in his 1972 *Humanism of the Other*.

exclude, the literature sometimes poetically recasts such an ideal onto landscapes as fantasy and sometimes draws on fantasy as a protective fiction from exclusion.

Fantasy plays a significant role in the way that the narratives explored in this chapter imagine (in)hospitable settings through wilderness. I am relying on a notion of fantasy that does not focus only on the individual, but also connects to overarching societal anxieties. As Jacqueline Rose argues in her 1996 book *States of Fantasy*, fantasy is not confined to the psychic fulfillment of individual (and sometimes illicit) desires that the world denies us, but is central to the collective desires and denials that define political projects. “[F]antasy,” she writes, “is always heading for the world it only appears to have left behind” (3). To be sure, the fantasy landscape of wilderness that we see in “The Arctic Refugee,” *Nothing and Nobody*, and *The Geography of Danger* can be read as a “protective fiction” (5) that shields from a traumatic experiences of forced migration. However, the depictions of wilderness as outside of political community are profoundly shaped by the realities of post-Cold War forced migration and its management that the literary narratives treat. Rose suggests, “fantasy is also a way of re-elaborating and therefore partially recognizing the memory which is struggling, against the psychic odds, to be heard” (5). Not simply escapism, the way that the narratives construct a politics of hospitality through wilderness or simply in the depiction of migration as a kind of wilderness connects to broader anxiety about the decoupling of migration policy from its rights foundations as exemplified by the Geneva Refugee Convention.

To return to some of the earlier reflections on wilderness, which links Arabic root wa-ḥa-sha (و-ح-ش) to different ways of conceiving of the outside of community, it is also important to note the ways that longing is incorporated into its etymological fold. In addition to the range of psychic, spatial, and moral forms of separation that are encompassed by different meanings of the wild and wilderness, the noun *wahsha*, which refers to a state of separation, loneliness, or alienation from others, focuses on the psychic dimension of separation, which implicates wilderness as a starting place for longing. In Arabic, yearning as a form of wildness, is most commonly expressed in dialectal expressions, such as the Egyptian *wahashtani*, “you made me wild” (in our separation), the Syrian “*ilak wahsha*,” “for you I have loneliness,” or the North African “*tawahshatak*” “I became wild” (in our separation). In various ways, the outside spaces of wilderness that are explored in the literature both build on the intensification of the biopolitical and create a yearning beyond it.

Fantasies of a Northern Wilderness

Ibrahim Ahmad’s very short story “The Arctic Refugee” (1994) and Farouq Yousef’s travel diary *Nothing and Nobody: A Diary in Northern Europe* (2007) are literary renderings of migration to Sweden by Iraqi authors. From a generic and formal standpoint, these two literary narratives are quite different; however, they both respond to a historical continuum of Iraqi migration to Sweden. Ahmad, like many other exiles from the Iraqi Left of his generation, came to Sweden in the early 1990s following an exile in then Eastern Bloc Hungary. Yusuf arrived directly from Iraq shortly before the 2003 American-led

invasion, which would cause a large-scale Iraqi refugee crisis. While the plot of Ahmad's story "The Arctic Refugee," published in 1994, projects forward in history toward the implementation of EU-harmonization of refugee policy, which was being legislated in the 1990s, Yusuf's diary was written in the mid-2000s, a period when many Iraqis were finding refuge in Sweden but when Sweden was rapidly aligning its migration policies with the rest of the EU. Despite such differences, Ahmad and Yusuf both treat questions of hospitality and refuge through metaphors of wilderness. In these two literary narratives, hospitality is projected onto a wilderness that functions as a way to explore the outside of community. While hospitality, in these narratives, is displaced onto wilderness, its capacity to function as a protective fiction is repeatedly undermined by anxieties that relate back to the challenges to migration posed by shifts in migration policies in a globalized era.

Ibrahim Ahmad's short story "The Arctic Refugee" is about an Iraqi deportee who suddenly finds himself in the Arctic after being deported from a series of countries that refuse to process his asylum claim because of his previous passage through a country that is signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention. In many ways, the story reads as an early commentary on the correlation between the harmonization of European refugee policy, which began in the 1990s and intensified around the turn of the millennium, and a restricting politics of asylum.²⁵ Turned away in Europe, the narrator of the story seeks hospitality

²⁵ The 1990 Dublin Convention, which was implemented in 1997, established a policy for determining the European state responsible for processing asylum claims that fall under the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. The Dublin convention aimed to prevent asylum seekers from

elsewhere, at the “icy edge” (192) of the world – the Arctic - a snowy wilderness unbound by European Union migration policies, which in the story, functions as a fantasy of the north, a space that is outside political community conventionally defined.

Ibrahim Ahmad, a pioneer in the genre of the very short story in Arabic, began publishing his stories in Iraq in the mid-1970s. Like many in the Iraqi Left, he went into exile in the late 1970s when the Baath regime was consolidating its power. The short story collection in which “The Arctic Refugee” is featured, the 1994 *After the Bird's Arrival: Exile Stories (Ba'd Maji' al-Tayr: Qisas al-Manfa)*,²⁶ reflects multiple kinds of movement and displacement. Its stories are written in Hungary, Algeria, and Sweden, an intersection both of Ahmad's own experiences with migration and the geopolitical shifts of the 1980s and 1990s. Like Mahmoud al-Bayaty's *Dancing on Water*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, Ahmad's writing abandons previous models of writing exile, especially those anchored in a politically committed Left. “The Arctic Refugee” retells the processing of an asylum claim through fantasy in a context where the foundations of asylum are eroding.

The opening image of “The Arctic Refugee” features a weary narrator peering out of an igloo, gazing upon the “universal abyss” of the Arctic spreading out before him. The Arctic may be figured as a snowy wilderness that, unbound by the laws that govern refugee reception and the 1951 Geneva Convention, can

lodging claims in several member states by stipulating that the first country of entry would process a given asylum claim.

²⁶ *Ba'd Maji' al-Tayr* was simultaneously published in Hungary and Sweden.

offer him hospitality and protection. However, in the story, the Arctic is the space beyond the dead-end that the narrator's political subjectivity has reached in a series of deportations and failed attempts to apply for political asylum.

The narrator, who has previously been forced out of Iraq, is pushed toward Europe's northern edge due to a series of further expulsions, first from Libya, where his work contract expires, and then from a series of European countries, which refuse to process his asylum application. Recalling his recent migratory past, he muses: "Countries kicked me around the way we played with a rag ball in our muddy alley back home, but, fortunately, they did not hand me over to the Iraqi authorities" (153). The verb "to be kicked around" - *taqādhafa* - also carries within it the sense of being discarded, expelled, or evicted. In the narrator's encounter with Europe, even conditional hospitality is precluded. He is unable to apply for entry into a conventionally confined political community through the asylum process and is left to imagine its outside.

When I arrived at the Stockholm airport, the police interrogated me for hours and denied me asylum. I told them that I had come from Libya after the Libyans had terminated my work contract. They told me that Libya was a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and that I should have applied for asylum there. I was too embarrassed to tell them that I had tried in vain with the Arab brothers to let me stay in their warm and vast country. I even reminded them of our blood ties, which they used to say were thicker than the ink of conventions. My truthfulness and naiveté had always plagued my life...I was expelled from Germany because I arrived there from Sweden, also a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, and then from Denmark because Germany is a signatory of the Convention. Then I was expelled from Norway, a signatory of the Convention like the others. I began to wonder whether this Geneva Convention was written in ink or in mercury, on paper in elegant offices or on my grandmother's gravestone. (153)

The multiple displacements that the narrator endures, first from Iraq, then from Libya, and finally from a series of European countries eventually force him out of the asylum system altogether to “the edge of the world” – the Arctic. Instead of performing the work of hospitality, the Geneva Convention is invoked to prevent the processing of the narrator’s application for asylum. Furthermore, the hospitality that he encounters in Libya, where he worked prior to seeking asylum in Europe, is also highly contingent. Here too, a discourse of brotherhood fails to mitigate his treatment as an expendable economic asset.

What is the nature of this Refugee Convention, he seems to ask, if it is continually used as a pretext for expulsion rather than hospitality? His musings on the substance of the convention, whether it hails from elegant offices in the UN or whether it ties into the filial links of family return to the question of blood ties. Specifically, they seem to reveal an anxiety about the gap between the universalist language of human rights and refugee protection that is featured in the 1951 Refugee Convention, on the one hand, and the way in which it is used to protect national communities against migrants, on the other; instead of the universalizing premises of the Geneva Convention the narrator finds himself in what he calls a “universal abyss” (152).

In contrast to the European asylum circuits, the Arctic is figured as a snowy wilderness unbound by the laws that – at least on paper – provide the framework for refugee policy. In the story, the social contract is undone and he is now expelled into a state of nature. The Arctic, in this story functions as a non-space. It is a northern expulsion over the edge situated outside of rights-endowed

subjectivity. Much like the concept of *wahsha*, which can refer to the loneliness and alienation of being placed outside of human community, the Arctic space signals a separation from a rights-based political subjectivity.

In many ways, “The Arctic Refuge” is a story about the “traditional” political refugee. But even as a political refugee who falls within the framework of the Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol, the narrator problematizes the relationship between the Geneva Convention and asylum for those who fit its limited criteria of individualized state persecution. Instead, “The Arctic Refugee” comments on the direction of refugee protection in the European Union in the post-Cold War period.

At the time of Ahmad’s story’s publication in 1994, the process of harmonizing European refugee policy was still in its early stages. Situated in this history, “The Arctic Refugee” looks ahead to the effects of European integration on migration policy. The dynamic of opening borders for some populations and closing them for others, a biopolitical fragmentation of populations according to a logic of access and non-access, becomes inscribed into the narrator’s very self. In the story, a kindly old man on a sled drawn by a team of dogs finds the narrator in the wilderness and offers to escort him to the land of the Eskimo. As suggested in their introductions, the narrator’s name – misunderstood as *Ki* – becomes an unstable signifier of opening and closing, thus mirroring a dynamic of migration and the narrator’s expulsion into the Arctic.

The old man opened a bottle and said, “Let’s mix our names with alcohol.” I pronounced my name, but it froze in the cold air. His came out fine, but my frozen head didn’t get it. He started calling me “Ki,” perhaps

the part he heard from “Iraqi.” He smiled and said, “In our language, “Ki” means “lock,” and I think it means “key” in English. (154-155)
“What does it mean in your language?”
“Lock and key and belly dancing,” I said.

In this lighthearted exchange between the narrator and the old man in which the narrator (at least for a moment) becomes *Ki*, simultaneously Iraqi and a signifier of opening and closing, reflects Derrida’s reading of conditional hospitality as a door that both includes and excludes.

On this last frontier of arctic wilderness, the landscape and the narrator are rendered exotic to one another. On the one hand, the narrator invokes belly dancing (*raqş hazz al-baṭn*,) as a humorous but orientalized signifier of home and self. On the other, the Arctic is equally stereotyped in the image of the old man trading skins for alcohol and round-faced Eskimos living in igloos. But the ‘exotic,’ understood as that which is “drawn from outside; extrinsic” (OED) also signifies the idea that the arctic wilderness is a space that is external to the asylum system governed by an integrated EU-refugee policy. Much like *wahsha*, the wilderness of being separated or outside of community, the arctic exotic signals a separation from the legal guidelines that govern hospitality. In the story, the expulsion into wilderness – a reversal of the Eden trope – carries with it a strong sense that the international system has failed. Thus the story proceeds to articulate an alternate fiction of hospitality.

If “The Arctic Refugee” is shaped by the context of harmonization and restriction of refugee policy in Europe, it also maintains a fictive space in which refuge is available. When the hospitality of nation states has failed, the possibility of seeking asylum is projected onto a fantasy of the North. The setting is non-

specific; the old man's references to trading his skins in Oslo would suggest that it takes place in northern Scandinavia. Though inaccurate, the story's inclusion of the "Eskimo," a broad designation for a range of circumpolar native peoples distinct from the indigenous Sami peoples of northern Scandinavia, has the effect of conjuring a generic arctic elsewhere, a non-space that is outside of political community. The fiction of the extreme North resides precisely in its exoticized and fantastical depiction. It is as a protective fiction that the arctic setting becomes a vehicle for imagining an alternate hospitality.

In the end, the story performs and re-inscribes the Enlightenment understanding of political community as a transcendence of blood ties and the body. Thrown into a space of wilderness, the alternate asylum process in the Arctic re-fashions a form of conditional hospitality. Summoning the narrator to his council, the Eskimo chief begins to ask him questions about how animals are treated in Iraq. When asked how dogs are treated in his country the narrator responds, "We treat them with the utmost respect," [...] "We give them the highest positions. They tear our flesh apart, but we worship them" (156). Having established an image of a predatory political leadership, he answers the chief's next question about how fish are treated in Iraq. Here, seemingly in reference to the Iran-Iraq war, he renders political oppression as a form of human sacrifice: "Very generously, sir. We feed them the flesh of our enemy soldiers and that of our own" (156). When the chief's decision to grant the narrator asylum is announced, it is precisely the question of cannibalism that is cited. "Do not ask him to return to his country before you know that his people have stopped eating

the flesh of their own in the fish that they eat” (156). In this way, the narrator’s fantastic incorporation into the Eskimo community relies on the idea of transcending blood ties forged by a predatory political oppression described as a mediated form of cannibalism. Hospitality and refuge, after a series of failures, are thus re-inscribed in this story, but only as a protective fiction. The story’s fantasy-like setting and fairytale ending (a beautiful woman arrives at the narrator’s igloo door to declare her love) emphasize the idea that hospitality has been *displaced*, displaced onto the extreme north and onto fantasy.

Nothing and Nobody: A Diary in Northern Europe is a travelogue-diary written by the Iraqi poet and art critic Farouq Yousef during the early stages of the 2003 Iraq invasion, ten months after his arrival in Sweden. When the book was published in 2007, the Iraqi refugee crisis was at its height. In contrast to Ibrahim Ahmad’s story “The Arctic Refuge” *Nothing and Nobody* avoids an explicit discussion of migration and migration policies. The text’s commentary on the 2003 invasion and the ensuing refugee crisis is equally implicit.²⁷ *Nothing and Nobody* reflects on an arrival and encounter with Sweden, or *al-shamāl al-ūrūbī / al-quṭub al-shamālī* (northern Europe / the north pole), through poetic meditations on Swedish forests and other spaces of wilderness. In the text’s aestheticization of wilderness, however, there is an undercurrent of violence, trauma, and anxiety about refuge. The narrative transposes the *wahsha* of separation onto the Swedish wilderness; the forest appears empty and lonely, a space without things or people (*Nothing and Nobody*), but it also serves as a

²⁷ There are few specific references to the American-led invasion of Iraq in the book. However, one exception includes the April 4, 2003 entry beginning “America, drink our oil...,” a poem that contemplates the future cycles of violence and hatred that war will engender.

refuge from the traumas of migration. In the context of a large-scale Iraqi refugee crisis post-2003 and the European context of managed migration, I argue, *Nothing and Nobody's* portrayal of wilderness responds to the biopolitical dimensions of migration and its management.

Although categorized as a diary, *Nothing and Nobody* pushes the generic boundaries of the diary in form, themes, and in its construction of a literary *I* that interweaves with wilderness. When *Nothing and Nobody* won the 2006 Ibn Battuta travel writing award in the category “diary” prior to its publication, the award committee cited the narrative’s creative intermingling of self and geography in response to a dual trauma of departure and arrival.

A diary written in Sweden, it reflects the feelings of a person who is fleeing both from the harsh realities of European exile and from the hell-on-earth of his place of birth toward the world of the self where inside and outside intersect. (7)

In *Nothing and Nobody*, this world of intersecting inside and outside is a space where the self resonates in nature. Written from the perspective of displacement from Iraq, it frames the encounter with Sweden as a withdrawal from towns and settled areas to find meaning in the forest.

It is worth mentioning that *Nothing and Nobody's* innovative narration and approach to questions of migration and diaspora is featured extensively in Yousef’s larger oeuvre. *Nothing and Nobody* is the first book in Yousef’s larger corpus of texts that explore displacement, exile and the Iraqi diaspora through experimental narrative-styles. In a series of books published after his arrival in Sweden, Yousef has developed a distinct literary voice that infuses travel narrative with poetry, art criticism, and societal commentary. Since the 2007

publication of *Nothing and Nobody*, Yousef's writing has continued to reflect on migration from various perspectives. In 2007 he published *A Refugee Followed by Disappearing Lands (Laji' Tatba'ahu Bilad Takhtafi)*, a book that discusses the Iraqi diaspora. He published *A Feast of Air: A Diary and Reflections on Exile (Ma'ida min Hawa': Yawmiyat wa Ta'amulat fi al-Manfa)* in 2008. Like *Nothing and Nobody*, *A Feast of Air* focuses more intently on the narrator's interaction with Sweden. In 2011 he published *Silent Fruit (Fakiha Samita)*, which comments on exile and nostalgia by figuring Iraq as a woman for whom the exile longs. *Sleeping Paradise (Firdaws Na'im)* was published the same year. As the titles of these books suggest, Yousef's writing on Sweden often plays on the idea that his exilic home, sometimes exoticized as the North Pole (*al-quṭub al-shamālī*), is a site of emptiness, silence, and isolation.

In addition to the way that the books in this series intermingle and depart from established literary forms such as poetry collections, diary, and sociological analyses, they also complicate Philippe Lejeune's "autobiographical contract," which would authenticate the connection between writer and the literary *I* in first-person writing on exile and migration. Yousef addresses this latter question of authenticity in the introduction to his book of *A Feast of Air*. Referencing the well-known maxim on untranslatability "*traduttore, traditore*" he writes:

Writing a diary is like translation; you run the risk of being accused of treachery ... I wrote about a life that I haven't lived yet... I hope that there is a reader out there who will accept what I have written and search for a life that hasn't been lived by anybody except one, a man who resembles me and whom I see trailing my footsteps in the forest like a ghost.

If Yousef likens the literary *I* of the diary to a ghost trailing him in the wilderness, the presence / non-presence of the literary *I* mimics the relationship between reality and fantasy in *Nothing and Nobody* as well. An innovative approach to self-writing, *Nothing and Nobody* translates the realities of migration and arrival into a fantasy of wilderness.

Structurally, *Nothing and Nobody* is divided into three sections. The first and longest section of the book is narrated in poetic prose and presents a series of reflections on the forests of Småland, a rural region in southeastern Sweden. The second section takes the form of a diary where short passages are dated and chronologically ordered, from March 9 to April 25, 2003. However, this section also departs from the genre of the diary associated with personal reflections on the events of a day. Instead, the entries consist of poems that, like the earlier prose section, touch on themes of nature, trauma, and hospitality. The final part of the book is a collection of undated poems, many of them dedicated to artists and writers who live in Arab diasporas in Europe, such as ‘Aliya Mamdouh and Hoda Barakat.

Even without a plot or a chronology of events, there is a narrative logic to *Nothing and Nobody*. In the absence of chronicling, the text represents an ongoing process of depicting wilderness as space of refuge and healing against an undercurrent of threat, which is figured as expulsion. If there is a narrative arc to the series of reflections contained in *Nothing and Nobody*, it represents a desire to endure the *wahsha* of separation by embracing the spaces that are separate from human community, that is, wilderness. The writing, then, represents an effort to

transform the trauma of displacement into an ideal, if impossible, space of refuge. In doing so, the diary-travelogue creates an intersubjectivity between a literary *I*, plagued by the psychic trauma of dislocation and a memory of violence, and the Swedish forests.²⁸

In the very first passage of *Nothing and Nobody* the narrator links the idea of writing and survival, thus setting the tone of the text as a quest toward healing: “With a line of smoke, I trace an imaginary picture on the page of the sky, a picture that assures me that I am still alive... I have survived. In the worst of circumstances I can still say: ‘I survived’” (21). Survival is immediately linked to writing and the possibilities for healing that it holds. He continues,

The lands in which I have arrived are like islands floating in the ocean. If I were to view these lands from the air I would see that they appear as a labyrinth. This idea fills me with calm and assurance because I look upon these lands as if they were a mirror to my soul. (21)

The image of his new home as a series of islands floating in the sea transforms his local topography in Småland, which is composed of interlinked lakes and streams. But the image of Sweden as a series of islands also imagines arrival as a form of shipwreck – he is alive, but stripped of all belongings and companions. Indeed, the title *Nothing and Nobody* points to the material and human dispossession of the lone Crusoe-like shipwreck survivor who is confronted with an ambiguous hospitality. In the wake of arrival /survival, the forest is depicted as a refuge. However, it is always haunted by the threat of a second expulsion, especially in its relationship to its other: the city.

²⁸ Yousef’s application of art criticism onto the wilderness provides yet another venue of endowing nature with a meaningful aesthetics.

The text creates a dialectic between wilderness and inhabited space that pivots on a fantasy of unconditional hospitality in the wilderness and trauma and expulsion in towns and cities. In reference to Derrida's discussion of hospitality, wilderness – a psychic space as much as a physical location – offers hospitality that is unconditional, but impossible because the infinite welcome of the forest in this text entails a dissolution of selfhood. Conversely, hospitality in the town and the city is conditional and haunted by the threat of expulsion. The threat of a second expulsion appears both in the text's depiction of the town but also on the continued insistence on unconditional refuge in nature.

In *Nothing and Nobody*, nature, unlike cities, offers unconditional hospitality. "One can feel that one has all of nature to oneself," states the narrator, "that nobody has the right to expel you or drive you far away" (21-22). In a later section, and here we return to Derrida's figure of the door, nature is invoked as the impossible ideal of infinite hospitality and possibilities:

Nature is mother. There is nothing in nature that expels. He who knocks on nature's door will find himself unable to count the number of doors that open up before him: Doors to the senses and doors to the imagination. Doors that lead the human to life and doors that separate him from the outside world. Doors that lead him closer to his soul and doors that lead him far away. Doors to forgetting and doors that enliven memories... (42)

The infinite hospitality of nature is figured as a source of healing:

Nature's generosity returns humanity to its nature (*fitra*)... It reminds us of those elements in life which represent hidden possibilities of harmony, an idea that is often forgotten in the midst of the zeal of conflicts where humanity finds the possibility of returning to a wild state (*tawahhush*) and diminishing itself. It seems that nature has wings that gives it the capability to soar far away from scenes of wretchedness and suffering of our hell-on-earth. (42)

On the one hand, nature is figured as a space that does not exile or expel those who seek refuge in it; the unconditional hospitality of nature stands in sharp contrast to the biopolitically inflected efforts to manage migration, fill deportation quotas, prevent migration, and render asylum policies more restrictive. On the other hand, contact with nature can produce insights into an ideal of harmony and hospitality when conflicts and violence threaten to return humans to a “wild state.” Simply put, Yousef’s text seems to suggest that an immersion in wilderness (the forest, in this case) can counter the excesses of human “wildness,” at least on a psychic level. And furthermore, the hospitality that is projected onto nature is precisely what seems to be lacking in human community, as it is figured in his narrative.

In *Nothing and Nobody*, the city, just like the forest, exists relationally with the self. Cities, the narrator suggests, are “creations of the imagination” (31). Yousef ponders a series of authors whose oeuvre focuses on recreating the cities that reside in their memories. The Italian novelist Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* (1972) and the Alexandria-born Greek writer Constantine Cavafy’s poetry on Alexandria, he writes, are examples of how cities can inhabit our imaginations and leaving a mark on the psyche. This creative process of writing the cities one has resided in is understood as a form of hospitality, but one that is always overshadowed by the possibility of expulsion. “Cities,” he ponders, “do not always lead her lost children to themselves, but sometimes can be the immediate cause of their flight. Isn’t it true that there are cities that expel?” (31)

In contrast to wilderness, understood as physical and psychic separation, the narrative defines the forest in opposition to the town, which, though a space of community, offers only conditional and precarious hospitality. In the book's depiction of Småland, the forest often seems to be on the verge of overwhelming the town. In a diary entry titled 2004 /02/14, the narrator reflects:

There is great tyranny in the figurative use of language, maybe because of the risk of misinterpretations. Some would protest: "The world is not a forest." And I would respond; "If only it were so." The greater part of my daily amblings takes place in the forest. That is because the town that I reside in is nothing but a small interruption between two forests. I have taken on the temperament of the forest. The forest has triumphed over the town. (150)

Earlier on in the narrative, in a "snapshot" depiction of his surroundings, the narrator observes the inhabitants of his town departing for their summer cottages and the slow encroachment of nature on the city center, which he describes as an "erasing" (74) of the town. Devoid of its former signs of life, he parodically situates the abandoned town center in relation to *al-aṭlāl*, the proverbial ruins of the abandoned encampment.

Now it resembles ruins (*aṭlāl*). I do not mean the ruins (*kharā'ib*) before which the ancient Arab poet composed his poems in anguish because they reminded him of the people who used to live there. Today's ruins (*aṭlāl*) are suitable for habitation and for strolling around, but the absence of humans returns them to their original state: gesturing toward a tolerable life. (74)

Although the forest appears to overwhelm the town, the threat appears benign, even salutary. If the text presents an ongoing rumination on the binary of forest /town, it reverses the expected hierarchy by making the forest the privileged term. But much like Derrida's dialectic of conditional and unconditional hospitality merging into a *politics* of hospitality, so does *Nothing and Nobody* suggest that

the forest's encroachment on the town, indeed the synthesis of town and forest, can create a more hospitable space.

If the synthesis of forest and town (wilderness and community) “gestures toward a more tolerable life,” the kind of healing that the forest can offer is one where the self is erased. In the beauty that he finds in nature, he writes, “I found a remedy that did not promise anything except for forgetfulness” (18). To walk in the forest is to begin to learn the language of nature, a language that is one of deletion (*hadhf*) and alienation (*wahsha*) (26). The kind of healing that the forest can offer is a form of self-annihilation that is consonant with forgetting; confronted with infinite hospitality, the self is erased.

The forgetfulness and self-annihilation that the wilderness promises are linked to the concept of the forest. The Arabic word for forest, *ghāba*, is derived from the root ب – ي – غ, from which a range of concepts pertaining to doubts or those truths that are concealed to the eyes (*ghayb*, pl. *ghuyūb*), including the verb to be absent (*ghāba ‘an*) and abandonment (*mughība*, of a woman who is abandoned by her husband). The term *ghāba* comes from the idea that thick foliage conceals the people and things that are within it (*Lisān al- ‘Arab*). In *Nothing and Nobody* the forest is a healing space because it can induce forgetting by concealing or covering up traumatic memories. However, this kind of forgetting is also a form of self-annihilation.

On the one hand, the representation of the Swedish forests as a site of infinite hospitality responds to a trauma of displacement where arrival and meanderings into wilderness offer spaces of healing. On the other hand, the text

locates hospitality in a wilderness that is explicitly depicted as the outside of human community – a non-space of fantasy shaped by anxieties about migration in a globalized era. Hospitality is clearly situated outside of the city and outside of the kinds of ties that bind human community (legal, social, or otherwise). Furthermore, it is ultimately impossible in the kind of self-annihilation that the forest offers in the narrative.

In both “The Arctic Refugee” and *Nothing and Nobody*, wilderness functions as a metaphor of that which is external to a contemporary geopolitics of migration. In their historical contexts of the harmonization of the EU’s migration policy and in the context of managed migration, the wilderness provides an alternate space of hospitality – as a re-reading of the Geneva Convention in “the Arctic Refugee” and as a re-inscription of an unconditional hospitality that appears to play little role in managed migration in *Nothing and Nobody*. However, the alternate forms of hospitality that are transposed onto the wilderness in these two pieces reveal an undercurrent of anxiety about being pushed out, discarded, and expelled.

Inhospitable Space and the Urban Jungle in Hamid Skif’s *The Geography of Danger*

Hamid Skif’s 2006 novel *The Geography of Danger* reads as a diary of an unnamed North African clandestine migrant. Hidden away in a small maid’s chamber in an unspecified European city, the narrator recounts his past life in his country of birth, the dangerous passage to Europe through the Pyrenees mountains, and a period trying to survive through work before going into hiding.

In the cramped space of the maid's chamber, rented by the geography student Michel Delbin, "a sympathizer of lost causes" (17), he observes the outside world through a small window. Outside, the round-ups and arrests of clandestine immigrants intensify with each chapter. As the narrator waits for Michel to arrive with food and news he invents fantasy worlds about his neighbors and individuals implicated in human trafficking, characters that begin to inhabit his past and his present. The blend of fantasy and stark realism in *La géographie* produces a multilayered text about an urban space where inhospitality is taken to its extremes. In Skif's own description of the book he states:

In this book I have attempted to take the consequences of fear and confinement to their limits by describing what would happen if the cities of the west were to become the scene of a gigantic hunt for human beings (...) This is not a delusion, it is foreseeable reality. (Moussaoui)

La géographie is a novel about inhospitable urban space narrated from the perspective of a clandestine migrant. The "geography" of the novel is presented in a twofold manner. On the one hand, public space becomes a "geography of danger" where heightened state and media rhetoric on security and threat fuels a massive roundup of clandestine migrants. On the other, the narrator's small hideout, which functions as an extension of his psychic space, is rendered as a "geography of fear." Although the novel is about urban space, like "The Arctic Refugee" and *Nothing and Nobody*, it resorts to metaphors of wilderness to treat the central question of (in)hospitality.

In the novel, public space of the city, or the "geography of danger," is figured as a forest-like hunting ground where clandestine migrants are legitimate targets. It is a space that pushes *out*, intent on expelling all outsiders. In contrast,

the narrator describes his own condition in the “geography of fear” as a kind of “Metamorphosis” into rodent and insect life. The “geography of fear” pushes the migrant *in*, that is, into the hidden crevices of the city. The novel’s presentation of urban space as wilderness links it intertextually to the literature of migration and refuge discussed earlier in this chapter. However, rather than weaving a protective fiction of the forest as hospitality as in “The Arctic Refugee” and *Nothing and Nobody*, the urban wilderness in *The Geography of Danger* functions as a test-case of the limits of inhospitality: the city-turned-hunting-ground. Furthermore, the repeated likening of self to insects and rodents links the novel to other novels of clandestine migration, such as Mahi Binebine’s *Cannibales*, where a trafficker warns his would-be migrants that as clandestine residents of European cities, they must learn to act like cockroaches (66) or the Canadian-Lebanese 2009 novel *Cockroach* by Rawi Hage, where the narrator’s marginalization in the city of Québec and his descent into mental illness also becomes a case of imagining an insect persona. These discourses on wilderness conjure a setting that is shaped by the geopolitical realities of managed migration.

Hamid Skif (1951-2011) had a long career as a writer in Algeria²⁹ before the 1990s civil war, when he left for Germany. After several assassination attempts on his own person in a climate where intellectuals were increasingly becoming targets of violence, Skif relocated to Hamburg in 1994 with the help of PEN International’s “Writers in Exile” program and the “Hamburg Foundation for

²⁹ In the late 1960s, he worked with Kateb Yacine’s traveling street theater troupe “Action culturelle des Travailleurs.” Later, he would build a career as a journalist and writer, maintaining a tenuous relationship with the Algerian state. He was an employee of the Algerian press agency during the 1970s and 1980s. He founded the Association of Algerian Journalists in 1992.

Victims of Political Persecution.” Formed in 1921 as “Poets, Essayists, and Novelists,” the 1948 PEN charter is aligned with the ideals of the UDHR and the Geneva Refuge Convention. Specifically, the organization works for the protection of writers, but also “literature,” defined as a “common currency among people in spite of political or international upheavals” (Article One of the 1948 PEN charter). Skif’s own experience of migration was thus shaped by an international consortium of organizations aiming to protect writers and intellectuals.

As for the narrator of *The Geography of Danger*, he refuses to categorize himself as a political refugee, even though his imprisonment and torture in his own country (which remains unspecified) for organizing a union of unemployed university graduates speaks to the blurring of lines between economic and political migration, precisely the point that Stephen Castles and Mark Miller make about the overlapping political, social, and economic forces that constitute the “migration-asylum nexus.” On a generic level, the novel bridges both the harraga literature of clandestine immigration to Europe, discussed in the next chapter, and shares many of the themes of refuge and hospitality with literature that renders the asylum process, discussed above. As in the previous narratives explored in this chapter, in *The Geography of Danger*, genre and space are intimately linked.

Although a novel of clandestine migration, its focus on urban space in a European city sets it apart from most harraga novels, which tend to render clandestine journeys to Europe. Whereas the narrative arc in novels such as *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* hinges on the fantasy of Europe as paradise, a

fantasy that crumbles in the course of the novels to reveal a biopolitical fracturing of the citizen / bare life, the narrative arc of *The Geography of Danger* is established from the beginning of the novel. Deportation is inevitable and only a question of time. The cityscape bears no traces of a paradise lure; rather, it is a site of extreme inhospitality.

As such, *The Geography of Danger* probes the relationship between clandestine status and urban space, figuring the narrator as a haunting presence in inhospitable surroundings. To conceive of the relationship between self and urban space that is developed in *The Geography of Danger*, illegality is not only about the citizen / bare life divide that is analyzed in Chapter Four, but also about representing clandestine status as a relegation to haunting the city. Always on the verge of being pushed out even as he is pushed into the crevices of the city, the narrator's clandestine status relegates him to a space of non-recognition. The narrator's early account of the city plays both on his own anonymity and the city's inhospitality.

Now I keep my head low. Once night falls, I go underground. I refuse all contact with others, avoid everything that signals my existence in the geography of danger: train stations, immigrant ghettos, metro stations, red-light districts, bars, the exits of department store, stadiums, and shady clubs. I don't exist for my successive employers; they never ask for my identity or try to find out anything else about me. We are both complicit in this mutual non-recognition. I no longer have a family name, nor a first name. Nothing but pseudonyms. The ancestry that I attribute to myself varies by employer. I am a Turk, Arab, Berber, Iranian, Kurdish, Gypsy, Cuban, Bosnian, Albanian, Rumanian, Chechen, Mexican, Brazilian or Chilean, depending on circumstances. I reside in the spaces of my metamorphosis. Languages don't matter much. It suffices to know the words that can be found in the dictionary of slaves: work, no work, carry, wash, shred, empty, load, unload, cut, break, lift, clean, dismantle, paint, hammer, remove, rest, eat, pay, silence, hide, be quiet, leave, arrive, finish, do not return again, how much? (15)

He haunts the city, first as anonymous laborer and then as an equally anonymous body, figured as a security threat. Both the “geography of danger” and the “geography of fear” dehumanize, render him anonymous, and push him outside of the bounds of the city’s human community. Here, he encounters a space of wilderness that evokes inhospitality as much as it conjures separation and longing.

Even in his confinement to the maid’s chamber, the narrator is privy to the news and radio reports of the ongoing effort to capture and deport *sans papiers*. The city is in the process of pushing its undocumented inhabitants out, a process that appears as a joint effort between the media, the security apparatus, and the populace. Reports on the efforts to round up and expel punctuate the narrative. “Thousands of clandestine migrants have been locked up in the hangars adjoining the airports. The radio is telling people to assist the police, whose numbers have been swelling due to the reinforcement of reserve soldiers” (49). With the escalating discourse of threat and appeals to the population for solidarity with the state’s policing efforts, the narrator begins to imagine the outside world through a military. In his observations of his neighbors, he periodically presumes their complicity in this collective effort. “The little old woman has reappeared at her window. It appears that she is standing guard” (49). Likewise, the old lady on the ground floor becomes a “sentinel” (61) when she steps outside to walk her dog.

The language of security translates into what appears as a military intervention. “Roadblocks have been put up everywhere, including the country roads. Haggard and starving, the clandestine migrants are letting themselves be rounded up in greater and greater numbers by the mobile brigades that are

appearing everywhere (116). The idea of letting oneself be rounded up *se faire cueillir* signals resignation rather than resistance. Indeed the narrator holds no illusions that his own fate will be different.

I am at the end of my rope. I needn't do more than stick my nose outside (this great snout with its proliferation of little black spots) to be gathered up. The evening news has transformed itself into a sordid hunting scene. They have stopped keeping track of how many have fallen into the trap. The convoys are bursting at the seams. The laws that prohibit raids before sunrise have been rendered void. They are cleaning the city with a pressure washer.³⁰
Soon, I will be part of one of those convoys. (123)

The image of the media as a “tableau de chasse,” or hunting scene, suggests the media’s implication in stirring up the frenzied hunt for illegal immigrants. Furthermore, the metaphor of the urban space as a hunting ground invokes wilderness as a form of separation, dehumanization, and transformation into an anonymous threat.

Unlike Ahmad and Yusuf’s narratives, refuge and hospitality is not constructed through metaphors of wilderness in *The Geography of Danger*. Rather, the urban landscape in the novel becomes “an urban jungle” where the state and its citizens are incited to join in the hunt for clandestine migrants. The metaphor of the city as a hunting ground runs in parallel to the narrator’s description of his passage through the Pyrenees. Here too, the migrants, following the trafficker’s command to stay silent, are figured as possible targets for border guards and rogue hunters (13). As the novel progresses and the search for

³⁰ Although the novel gives no name to the city nor the narrator, this particular reference comes from one of Nicolas Sarkozy’s statements during the June 2009 riots in suburban Paris: “On va nettoyer au Karcher la cité.” (“We will clean the city with a pressure washer.”)

clandestine migrants in the city intensifies, the urban space grows more and more similar to this forest.

If, in public space, the narrator exists as a threat that must be expelled, in the private / psychic space of the maid's chamber, he lives in fear. Indeed this tiny space inhabits his body and his mode of being:

I have now internalized this place, grafted it onto my skin. The way that I move has changed. If I already had the habit of whispering before, now my body itself has changed. I measure my steps, tiptoe, and avoid any abrupt movements. I am constantly on my guard. If I hear a noise I automatically try to decipher it. A new way of speaking, of moving, of sitting. This is what prison is. Many times, I have dreamed of writing a script about a mischievous rodent whose mind is filled to the brim with cunning tricks, a rat that would survive an apocalypse. But who would make a film about a rat? (134)

The forces that will push him *out* when the inevitable deportation occurs and *into* the crevices of the city create in the literary text a depiction of self-annihilation and a poetics of haunting. The narrator is present yet absent. With no legal claims to the urban space and living as if he does not exist, he is a contemporary *Invisible Man*. In the hidden crevices of the city, he identifies himself with those other unwanted creatures of the city that also specialize in the art of provisional survival, figuring himself as a cockroach (122) or a rat (134).

Nevertheless, the narrator maintains a fantasy life that functions both as protective fiction and as a virulent critique of the causes of migration and his own predicament. Public space, the “geography of danger,” and private space, the “geography of fear” are supplemented and reshaped by a third space: fantasy.

In a 2008 article, Russell West-Pavlov likens the intertwining of fantasy and reality in *The Geography of Danger* to what Gaston Bachelard calls “à la fois

une réalité du virtuel et une virtualité du réel” (22), showing how "collective fantasy can pose as reality, and on the other hand, collective desire can pose as reality” (170). On both shores of the Mediterranean, he argues, dreams and fantasy are stand-ins for the realities of migration. In Europe, a collective panic over immigration as an imminent security threat fuels draconian measures against migrants. South of the Mediterranean, the collective fantasy of Europe as a paradise continues to lure new migrants even as it disguises the precariousness of clandestine migration. Collective fantasy is constitutive of that which is believed to be “real,” whether this means seeing migrants as a security threat or imagining a better life in Europe.

Indeed, fantasy plays a very complex and multilayered role in the novel. When the narrator observes neighbors through his small window, his invention of story worlds serves as “protective fiction” (Rose 173), a way to build an imaginary community. As an outsider, indeed an outlaw, he gazes into this imaginary community (or, as it were, he gazes out from the interior “geography of fear”). The wilderness in both geographies reflects a longing that is endemic in his separation and outsider-ness.

The desire to relieve his solitude and approach his neighbors is most vividly expressed in his observations of a middle-aged neighbor who spends her days typing. He calls her “Madame Taplamachine,” Mrs. Type-on-the-machine. Observing her daily life and work, the frequentations and absences of her lover, he longs to intervene in her life, textually – by slipping his writing under her door for her to read, and sexually – by entering the apartment in the brusque manner of

her lover. The *wahsha* of the kinds of alienation that he experiences in both public and private space also carries within it a component of longing. The narrator's longing to end the separation – the wilderness - that characterizes his clandestine life can also be read in relation to the way it calls into question the rigid divides between Africa and Europe. As West-Pavlov concludes his article on the intermingling of realities and fiction in *The Geography of Danger* and Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel on clandestine migration *Leaving Tangiers* (2006):

Ben Jelloun's and Skif's novels of clandestine migration are positioned uneasily between the imperative to document reality and the desire to pay tribute to dreams which resist that reality, between the impulse to construct narratives which puncture the dreams of ideology and the need to grapple with their own fictive status [...] The novels weave complex relationships between fantasy and the reality of stubborn but all too often disappointed dreams. They weave them back and forth just as they weave Africa and Europe back together. (177-178)

If the novels discursively undermine the policed boundary between the two continents, in *The Geography of Danger* fantasy also plays a role in critically addressing the forces that perpetuate clandestine migration and its policing. Although collective fantasies of threat on the one side of the Mediterranean and paradise on the other obscure the histories that link the two shores, and although the narrator constructs imaginary worlds as protective fictions of based on longing, so does fantasy become an important means to grapple with the underlying causes of the narrator's predicament: biopolitically inflected managed migration.

Told through a series of italicized episodes in the novel, the narrator's notebooks contain a series of first-person accounts of characters implicated human trafficking between North Africa and Europe. In his notebooks, he

fictionalizes the lives of “Kamel la Braguette,” a migrant who has resorted to prostitution to stay alive, the policeman who tortured him in his own country for founding a league of unemployed university graduates, and the trafficker who brought him to Europe. The act of narrating these lives represents recuperation of agency. For example, by introducing the torturer’s section, he reflects: I am going to make him tell me about his life, just as he made me repeat mine with the aid of a baton” (65). In his first-person account, he describes how he became a trafficker and how he conducted the investigation of the narrator, and arrested him on the charge of suggesting that the money for creating jobs had been siphoned off by the “barons” (72).

Importantly, the narrator’s notebooks grapple with the ways that human trafficking, on the clandestine side, and managed migration, on the official side, are both complicit in shaping his and other migrants’ predicaments. In another section of the notebook, he writes in the voice of a trafficker in Tangiers who reflects cynically on the profitable collaboration between the authorities and the traffickers. The trafficker or “slave trader” (*négrier*) plays a cynical game with the municipality of Tangiers; the city gets rich on death, profiteering both from the desperation that pushes people to attempt the journey to Europe and from the EU funding to police and prevent migration. In the voice of the trafficker, he writes,

Having concluded the affair, I turn to honoring our contract. The city makes a pretty sum by stealing the final breaths of the steady influx of migrants arriving at its gates. It is now necessary to obtain a visa and pay exorbitant fees to enter Tangiers. And what’s more, the city receives a heap of money from the European states, which are panic-stricken at the

idea that an entire continent may dock at their feeding troughs, carrying a drum in hand and a machete on the hip. (36)³¹

The trafficker of the narrator's notebooks reflects on the distribution of death, policing, and deportation on a population of migrants. The biopolitical management of populations, that is, the management of migrants, is figured as a sorting that simply staggers deaths while traffickers and states collect profits.

In addition to the fare, the passengers – and this is the only term we ever use – pay a prayer tax for the freeloaders who will be cast off in the middle of the Straight. Those who can swim will remain on the water's surface for a few minutes, enough time to hear the prayer and then softly slip into the boat's current. Those who are less fortunate will sink immediately as they try to grab onto the fragments of sky above them. It's pity to see, but one has to make a living. What's more, one has to focus on those who will make it to the end of the journey. Once they leave the boat they will be chased by special units. Most of them will be caught and returned home in cargo planes. Those who escape from this chase (the action-packed events can be viewed under the spotlights) will melt into the clandestine population that haunts the city's basements and attics before being plucked by the metallic arm of a giant crane and, in turn, be thrown into the baggage compartments of the charter planes. (36-37)

The narrator, a member of the last category - those who haunt Europe - bides his time before an inevitable deportation.

The end of the novel offers a small respite of intimacy before the moment of departure; discovered by an elderly couple in his building, the narrator meets and falls in love with Nicole, the wife of their deceased son. They live together briefly before Michel, in a bout of jealousy for the intimacy that the narrator denies him, denounces them to the police. The intimacy of this short episode seems to serve as a balm, rather than being constitutive of the encounter with Europe, as was the case in a previous tradition of representing travel to Europe in

³¹ In the novel, the narrator's notebooks are set apart from the narrative through the use of italics.

Arabic literature. That is, it suggests the possibility of a different form of encounter given different historical and geo-political circumstance.

In contrast to the resigned stance that the narrator maintains for most of the novel, when the day of his inevitable arrest and deportation arrives he calls upon the kind of resistance that has so far only been part of his fictionalized notebooks, which focus on exposing a system of migration management that benefits states and trafficking networks while scapegoating migrants. He denounces the European states for their complicity in backing repressive regimes and appropriates the discourse of security that is usually deployed against migrants.

Our army is on the other shore, and we are not afraid. Every night, we will deploy one of our units and you will exhaust yourself in your efforts to count, identify, and bury our dead and in your attempts to repel us. Soon, our second unit will be deployed, and then our third, and so on until you are completely overwhelmed. This is because you prefer to support those who suck our blood instead of helping us bring down their tyranny....you are murderers' accomplices. (152-153)

Although the narrator has resorted to fantasy as a means of survival throughout the narrative, the novel's ending takes the form of an indictment. Stepping outside the "geography of danger" and the "geography of fear" that have defined his relationship to Europe and which have been represented through tropes of wilderness, he threatens and accuses Europe for perpetuating the causes of migration and constructing barriers against it. Though hostile, his final declarations express a longing to end the wilderness on the other side of the biopolitical threshold between belonging and exclusion when he states, "On niquera tous les murs" (152).

Conclusion

As explored in this chapter, in addition to the spirit of modernist detachment in 20th travel literature and exile literature, we can speak about a spirit of *separation* in post-Cold War Arabic literature of migration. In the case of post-Cold War Arabic migration to Europe, there is a recurring aestheticization of forced migration through tropes of wilderness anchored in the migratory context.

The tropes of wilderness and wildness that arise in this context perform various modes of separation. Importantly, it is not only the displacement of exile that such metaphors treat; rather, it is the European landscapes that the migrant encounters and imagines that are tinged with the “wild.” In the literary narratives of migration explored in this chapter, wilderness functions alternately as a fantasy of hospitality that helps recreate the kind of “politics of hospitality” theorized by Derrida, alternately as a metaphor for inhospitality taken to its extreme limits. Deployed in a variety of ways, the idea of wilderness as both separation and longing helps shape the literature’s search for protective fictions of hospitality. If European landscapes are transformed into wilderness in these literary renderings, and if a component of longing is “to be made wild” by separation, literary narratives search not only for the alternate realities of fantasy, but also for alternate hospitalities.

The following chapter explores “harraga” literature of clandestine migration from North Africa to Europe. In these literary narratives, the wilderness through which clandestine encounters with Europe is represented is infused with the kind of bodily brutality and vulnerability seen in *The Geography of Danger*.

Although literary tropes of wilderness continue to function as ways to explore the outside of political community, it does not serve as a space where ideals of hospitality can be projected. Instead, the wilderness encountered by clandestine literary migrants more closely resembles *tawahhush*, a violent transgression of the body. This following chapter reads literary representations of harraga migration in relation to the idea of a biopolitically inflected “state of exception” which shapes these clandestine encounter with Europe.

Chapter Four:

Harraga Writing and the Legal Liminal in Mahi Binebine's *Welcome to Paradise* and Youssef Fadel's *Hashish*

They went far away, away from their father and mother.
They left in a boat tossed by the waves
And with each wave my heart beats and I am blinded,
with the sea underneath me and above me the clouds and the dark night.
They've left behind broken hearts and people have no news.
A mother worries if her child has eaten or not,
and doesn't know that her son is now between life and death,
if he has touched the ground or if he'll be eaten by the fish.

- "Mchaou" ("They Left") by Tunisian rap artist Balti and singer Samir Loussif (2010)³²

This chapter closely attends to the tropes and narrative structure of harraga writing through an analysis of two Moroccan novels: the 1999 francophone novel *Welcome to Paradise* (Originally published as *Cannibales*) by Mahi Binebine and the 2000 Arabic novel *Hashish* by Youssef Fadel. The North African Arabic word "harraga" signifies "those who burn" and refers to the burning of citizenship papers that some migrants undertake as a part of their clandestine passage from North Africa to Europe or alternately, the idea of "burning frontiers" (*ḥarq al-ḥudūd*) or burning pasts that clandestine migration entails.³³ Although the practices of clandestine migration and human trafficking are complex and varied,

³² The English translation is from the blog entry "Music and Harraga Special: Mchaou on: *Fortress Europe*: <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.com/2011/12/music-and-harraga-special-mchaou.html>

³³ The burning of identity and citizenship papers makes identification and thus deportation more difficult if detained in Europe. In addition to the term *harraga* there are other local appellations such as *ḥawāla* and *akbāsh* <http://yazamistories.maktoobblog.com/1588504>) but *harraga* the term that has gained precedence in the literary taxonomy alongside the more formal *al-hijra al-sirriyya* (clandestine migration).

the idea of burning citizenship documents or figuratively, burning the closed frontiers of Europe, has resonated so widely in the popular imagination that “harraga” has become a favored term for designating clandestine migration to Europe from North Africa and, correspondingly, for defining a subgenre of migration literature. Signifying multiply, the term “harraga” strongly evokes a liminal position, where the liminal is understood as a departure from normative legal frameworks of rights and citizenship. The literature explores this “spectral condition” (Pireddu 29), where the absence of re-inclusion into a new community leaves the migrant suspended between two literal and figurative shores.

This chapter begins by presenting the perspective that the construction of a European polity in the post-Cold War period has created “states of exception” which are complicit in forming the liminal subject position of clandestine migrants. The emergence of harraga literature in the 1990s and 2000s, alongside films and popular music that treat clandestine migration from North Africa to Europe, represents an effort to document and mourn such painful societal phenomenon in literary forms. However, beyond the mimetic capacity of novels to depict social phenomena, the recurring tropes and narrative structure of harraga novels also perform a critical rupture with previous modes of imagining the nation, on the one hand, and representing Europe through literature, on the other. Focusing on *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*, this chapter analyzes the novels’ performance of a rupture with the past, citizenship, and previous modes of relationality even as the novels’ present fails to proceed into a desired future. The novel’s depictions of clandestine migration as a form of perpetual liminality and

as an encounter with a ruthless wilderness, then, offer a powerful commentary on the biopolitical production of belonging and exclusion along the southern borders of Europe in the post-Cold War period.

Harraga Migration and the State of Exception

Harraga migration lays bare the “contradictions of globalization;” while globalization has heralded increased mobility and circulation of capital and information, it has also seen an intensification of states’ efforts to manage, prevent, and police migration.

Every year for the last two decades, thousands of migrants from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Senegal, Mauretania, and other countries in the region have attempted to cross the Mediterranean in small boats, many of which are unseaworthy rafts or small boats made of rubber.³⁴ Any attempts to keep statistics on the number of migrants who die every year while trying to migrate to Europe in this manner is bound to be plagued by inaccuracies since both deaths and migrants often remain undocumented. However, according to Gabriele Del Grande’s blog “Fortress Europe,” which compiles media reports of deaths along the most common clandestine sea-routes to Europe,³⁵

18,244 people have died since 1988 along the european [sic] borders. Among them 8,479 were reported to be missing in the sea. The majority of

³⁴ The boats used by the harraga are sometimes referred to as *pateras* (small, shallow boats) in Spanish and, more luridly, *tawāriq al-mawt* (death boats) in Arabic.

³⁵ The three most common entry points for clandestine migrants are in Italy; with migrants departing from Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia; Spain (including the Canary Islands), where migrants are coming from Morocco, Algeria, and Mauretania and Greece with migrants departing from Turkey. (Fortress Europe) Harraga migration generally refers to clandestine migration from Western North Africa to Spain.

them, 13,417 people, lost their life trying to cross the Mediterranean sea and the Atlantic Ocean towards Europe. And 2011 was the worst year ever, considering that during the year at least 2,352 people have died at the gates of Europe. These figures are based on the news found in the international press and are updated to the 17th of March 2012 (Fortress Europe)

In addition to the life-threatening conditions of the crossing, migrants are subject to legal penalties on both shores. In contrast to the stipulations of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol, which state that refugees should not be penalized for illegally entering other territories,³⁶ in the 1990s and 2000s irregular migration to Europe has increasingly become defined as a criminal act, making migrants subject to incarceration, fines, and forced deportations. In the name of combating smuggling, many European states have also criminalized the act of employing, housing, and providing medical treatment to clandestine migrants or those who have become “irregular” due to overstaying visas (Council of Europe). At the same time, bilateral agreements have made development aid to sending countries dependent on their ability to prevent the migration of their own citizens.

Harraga literature does not simply attempt to depict the realities that face clandestine migrants, that is, make “the subaltern speak.” In addition to and beyond such concerns about representation, harraga literature provides an artistic and intellection space where the biopolitical production of illegality and the

³⁶ Article 31 of the Geneva Refugee convention states, “states shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened...enter or are present in their territory without authorization.” Part of what is at stake here, of course, is the question of what constitutes a refugee. While the Geneva Convention’s definition of a refugee emphasizes individualized political persecution, it does not encompass the systemic political oppression and endemic poverty that drives clandestine migration.

outside of citizenship can be explored and re-imagined. These clandestine conditions are shaped by what Giorgio Agamben calls “states of exception.”

In *Homo Sacer* Agamben argues that the biopolitical logic of exclusion from political life – from citizenship – reaches its most extreme proportions in the “state of exception,” conceived of not as the absence of law, but what is made possible when the law is suspended.³⁷

The rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it. The state of exception is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension. In this sense, the exception is truly, according to its etymological root, *taken outside (ex-capere)*, and not simply excluded. (18)

Historical examples of states of exception, whether encompassing entire nations, such as the emergency laws in place during the Third Reich and in Egypt in 1967-2012, or appearing in more delimited spaces, such as the Guantánamo Bay detention camp or the *zones d’attente* in European airports, show that the suspension of the rule of law allows sovereign powers to act with fewer checks while individual rights associated with citizenship are radically diminished. Agamben argues that the suspension of law that characterizes the state of exception produces the jurido-political structure of the camp, a space where normal juridical protection and rights no longer apply and in which individuals can be stripped of rights. In the absence of recognized rights, individuals become

³⁷ He thus rejects the two prevailing school of thought regarding the state of exception: on the one hand, the school that sees the state of exception as *internal* to the legal order (as legislated in international law and constitutions, states may decree temporary states of exception) and the one that sees it as *external* to the legal order (the state of exception exists prior to and outside of the law). Instead, he argues that the state of exception is a liminal space “In truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other.” (23)

particularly vulnerable to policing. “[W]hether or not atrocities are committed in this space depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily acts as sovereign” (174). The state of exception produces spaces where people may be “abandoned” to forms of violence or neglect that are outside of a normative legal system (90).

The act of burning in “harraga” signifies a rupture with the home nation and initiates the migrant into a liminal and precarious state that is outside of the legal protection of citizenship. A “state of exception” reigns at the external borders of Europe and at the internal borders that separate citizens from *sans papiers* or those who lack citizenship or residency papers where the suspension of law in the name of security diminishes individual rights and protections. In this case, the migrants’ civil and political rights are suspended as they broach the borders of Europe.

Although policies that criminalize migration routinely contradict international law, they are supported by a logic that Europe needs to be protected from clandestine migration, which is equated to a security threat.³⁸ The European Union’s embrace of “managed migration” around the turn of the millennium and its more longstanding efforts to prevent the irregular entry of migrants has legitimized the fortification of the Mediterranean border and the forms of policing enlisted in its protection. The policing of the southern borders of Europe, which often entails a suspension of the law, creates states of exception.

Claire Rodier, the president of Migreurop, an umbrella group for European

³⁸ For example, Frontex, the European agency for external border security, couches its mission in a language of security. Irregular migration is defined as a “risk” and its operations target the crime of human smuggling, which encompasses irregular entry.

human rights organizations that focus on migration issues, writes in a 2006 article in *Libération* that:

In reality, European and African governments are in the process of imposing a concept that has no legal basis, with the sole purpose of combating illegal immigration. What is most worrying, is this expected regression towards a system that makes the exclusion of undesirable people wholesale, by resorting to their detention, more or less everywhere: on one side there is the rich countries' sanctuary, and on the other, an area from which it will be illegal to leave, and which will increasingly look like a vast detention camp. Finally, Europe is being built by producing increasing amounts of violence at its margins.

Rodier suggests that the post-Cold War construction of Europe, especially the criminalization of migration and the turn toward managed migration, is constitutive of the violence at its borders and at the margins of its societies.

Another assessment comes from a 2008 article by Italian anthropologist and migration scholar Roberto Beneduce. His article "Undocumented Bodies, Burned Identities: Refugees, Sans Papiers, Harraga - When Things Fall Apart" focuses on the precariousness of the marginal spaces at the borders of Europe and specifically, the consonance between exclusion and the act of burning citizenship papers. He notes that the act of burning papers is more than a tactic to avoid or delay deportation, that it also represents an initiation into a condition of perpetual outsidership vis-à-vis the home nation and destination and, importantly into an existence outside of normative legal citizenship. He argues that through the act of burning identity documents, "illegal immigrants build up a new space for their existences, while shattering the concept of citizenship, which is at the very basis of the modern state" (513-4).

But what kind of a new space is constructed outside of the normative

space of citizenship, that is, in a space defined by illegality? This, I would argue, is the central question that animates many of the literary renderings of harraga migration, which creatively and incisively probe the question of clandestine migration in relation to citizenship. How are such states of exception transformed in literary stagings of migration?

Harraga Literature

In the wake of the emergence of clandestine migration from North Africa to Europe as a large-scale societal phenomenon, artistic representations of harraga migration have become a formidable presence in North African literature, film, and music, especially in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. From the 1990s and onward, the literary sphere has seen the appearance of dozens of novels devoted to portraying and explicating this complex and painful societal phenomenon.³⁹ Although each novel depicts migration in a unique manner, an important generic component of harraga writing is the creative navigation of the tension between fiction and testimony. One facet of artistic representations of the hopes, tragedies, and violence engendered by clandestine migration, harraga novels offer extended

³⁹ Other than *Cannibales* and *Hashish*, literary representations of clandestine migration include the novels *Ayyuha al-Ra'i* (1990) by Muhammad Tazi (That Opinion), *Amwaj al-Ruh* (1998) by Mustafa Sha'ban (The Waves of the Soul), *Yawmiyat Muhajir Sirri* (1999) by Rashid Nini (Diary of a Clandestine Migrant), *Jannat al-Tawariq* (2000) by Idris al-Yazami (Heaven for Boats), *Akhta' La Taqtul* (2001) by Muhammad 'Ataf (Mistakes that Don't Kill), *Les Clandestins* (2001) by Youssouf Elalamy (The Clandestines), *Haqiqa Mukhtabi'a* by Warid al-Musawi (A Hidden Truth), *Les Sans-Destin* (2004) by Kamal Bouayed (Those Without a Destiny), *Harraga* (2005) by Sansal Boualem (The Harraga), *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) by Laila Lalami, *Partir* (2006) by Tahar Ben Jelloun (Leaving Tangier), and *Harraguas: Les Brûleurs de Frontières* (2011) by Saloua Ben Abda (Harragas: Those Who Burn Borders). Filmic representations include the film *Harragas* by Merzak Allouache (2010) and the documentary *Harraga* (2008) by Eva Patricia Fernández and Mario de la Torre. Harraga migration also is also a significant reference point in North African popular music, especially in rap music.

reflections on a liminal condition that begins with separation and alienation from family and state and extends through the encounter with Europe. This thematization of clandestine migration traverses the Arabic and francophone articulations of the genre. A brief summary of the two novels that are analyzed in this chapter will be followed by a discussion of some of the common tropes and themes that shape the genre.

The frame story of *Welcome to Paradise* unfolds on a beach in Tangiers. A group of seven would-be migrants from Morocco, Algeria, and Mali huddle on the shore overlooking the Strait of Gibraltar, their destination – Spain – seductively close despite the life-threatening journey that separate them. Aziz, the young narrator, who, having received his schooling in a French Catholic mission seeks to be reunited with his teachers in France, recounts the stories of how his companions came to the decision to migrate. Among them are the Algerian Kacem Judi, who was a school teacher before his family was killed in the 1994 Blida massacre;⁴⁰ Nuara, a young woman with a baby who hopes to find her estranged husband in France; Yussef, a teenager who has lost his entire family when his father stole what appeared to be high quality corn to feed his family, but turned out to be rat poison; Reda, Aziz's hapless cousin who departed from his home village with his brother after their mother's suicide and, before joining

⁴⁰ The massacre that took place in 1994 in the city of Blida (Arabic: *Bulayda*) was one of many mass killings that took place during the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s. Beginning with the cancellation of the 1992 elections when the Islamist group *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS) was projected to take a majority of parliamentary seats, the Algerian Civil War was an extended and often murky conflict between the state security forces and the armed wing of the FIS, the GIA, *Groupe Islamiste Armé*. The civil war was characterized by a systematic terrorization of the Algerian population through targeted assassination and massacres perpetrated by both the GIA and state security forces.

Aziz, leaves his brother in a beggar's conglomerate in Marrakech; Pafadnam, a Malian who has fled drought and crossed several national borders before joining the group; and Yarcé who worked as a masseur for a wealthy British expat in Marrakech before the death of his patron.

All of the migrants harbor painful memories. Alienated from both state and family, they place their hopes in a high stakes gamble for a better future – a search for paradise through clandestine migration. When the boat departs at the end of the novel, Aziz and his cousin Reda abandon it at the very last moment. While the two cousins “live to tell the story” and to contemplate the possibility of “burning” again, their co-migrants and the trafficker perish in the journey.

Unlike *Welcome to Paradise*, which weaves together a range of different life-stories, *Hashish* focuses on one would-be migrant while rendering anonymous the countless others who are present in the unnamed coastal town set somewhere between the Spanish enclave of Ceuta and the Moroccan city of Tangiers. The title *Hashish* conjures the illegal cross-border smuggling of drugs and goods that fuels the town's economy and, more luridly, the trafficking in humans that shapes the setting. The washing up of the bodies of drowned migrants on the shore punctuates the narrative as does the laments of relatives arriving from all corners of Morocco searching for their missing kin. Fittingly, the use of hash defines many of the public settings frequented by the three brothers Hassan, “the Hajj,” and “the philosopher.” Drug-induced or otherwise, the quarrels between the three brothers return to their competing pursuits of Miriam, the young woman whose arrival in the town marks the beginning of the plot.

Miriam's desperate attempts to migrate to Spain, even as the three brothers and an elderly customs official each attempt to lure her to stay, directs the novel's energies toward the northern shores onto which, like a mirage, or a hash-induced hallucination, she projects her fantasies of paradise. Her encounter with Europe by proxy of the Spanish coast guard on her third attempt to leave Morocco effectively crumbles her dreams of migration to reveal, instead, a liminal space that is depicted as "wildness." When she is raped by the Spanish men and sent off to sea to die, she becomes just one of the countless unidentified bodies to reach the shores of the town.

My choice to focus on the two novels *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* (among the many harraga novels published in the same period) is based partially on an interest in showing the thematic overlap between a francophone and Arabic novel treating clandestine migration. In the case of harraga writing, the categorization of North African literature into francophone or Arabic spheres may be overstated since it pertains more to publishing, audience, and critical scholarly attention than to literary content. Most previous scholarly attention to harraga writing has focused on francophone novels, which also tend to have the widest circulation internationally. For example, *Welcome to Paradise*, which was originally published in Paris in 1999, has been translated into Spanish, Dutch, German, and English and gone through several editions. This market success in several European countries is at least partially testament to the critical questions and challenges that clandestine migration poses to a European polity, where it is alternately figured as a threat, or as the gauge by which to measure commitment

to human rights. However, it is notable that the Arabic language harraga novels, *Hashish* included, have remained relatively unknown outside of their countries of origin. Beyond these issues of circulation and translation, I chose to analyze these two novels because they so articulately foreground the biopolitical construction of belonging and exclusion in their thematization of migration as an encounter with a wild space outside of citizenship.

Critic Nicoletta Pireddu touches on the issue of representing clandestine migrants' motives, dreams, and suffering when, in her 2009 article on Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel *Partir*, she laments the tendency in harraga writing to serialize the stories of migrants and ascribe motives to their lives. She argues that this mode of representation reveals an ethnographic and paternalist approach to literature.

While it is evident that harraga writing elicits some of the concerns of testimonial literature, specifically the unresolved tension between truth-telling and representation, there are a number of other ways to read the novelization of migrants' stories in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*. For one, there is an elegiac quality to the life-stories in the novels where each story can be read as an elegy to the lost ideal of full citizenship and organic community at home.

Secondly, the migrants' life stories in both novels emphasizes the narrative disconnect between their pasts and the futures where it appears as if pasts have to be discarded / burned and lives transformed through migration in order to proceed into the future.

While both *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* narrate migration in ways that elicit identification and empathy with their migrant protagonists, there are

structural elements and recurring tropes that go beyond character exposition and representation that merit theorization. The narrative arc of *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*, which recurs frequently in other harraga narratives, is created by a tension between fantasy and reality. While the novels portray migrants who dream of a transformative entry into paradise, the realities of clandestine migration are evoked through tropes of wildness, such as cannibalism and other forms of bodily violence. The novels thus narrate the passage from a fantasy of transformation to an encounter with an extended liminal state, thus foregrounding the biopolitical production of belonging and exclusion.

Literary Ruptures

The idealization of Europe that is so common in post-1967 Arabic literature on Europe becomes completely subverted in harraga writing. In contrast to the relational aspect that has defined Arabic literature on Europe since the inception of the genre in the Nahda, which often treated the intellectual and the nation, the subject positions depicted in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* are teetering perilously at the edge of the citizen-state contract.

But it must also be mentioned that North African literature also engages with postcolonial literary precedents that are often distinct from the modern Arabic literary canon. As literary narratives, the disavowal of citizenship papers and the past in service of imagining a future elsewhere as a form of re-birth is accompanied by performative rupture with an earlier Algerian and Moroccan

postcolonial literary canon that would place the quest for the nation and an independent national culture at its center (Kelly; Fanon).

The reader of North African literature may find some aspects of *Hashish* particularly uncanny. One way that this novel enacts a narrative disconnect with the literary models most closely associated with the questions of national identity and independence is its parody of the canonical 1956 Algerian novel *Nedjma*, by Kateb Yacine.

While the complexity and non-linearity of the *Nedjma* defies easy classification, an important element of its modernist fragmentation of narrative is the way in which the events of the novel, which follow the perambulations of the four characters Morad, Rachid, Lakhdar, and Mustapha, are shaped by the desire for a young woman who remains largely absent: Nedjma. Whether or not it was Youssef Fadel's conscious intent, his novel *Hashish* re-writes the quest-structure of *Nedjma* and transposes it onto the theme of migration in contemporary North African context.

The center of gravity in *Nedjma* is a woman whose heritage, though always uncertain, is entwined with the nation's African, Berber, and European past. A contemporary of Yacine, critic Maurice Nadeau once described *Nedjma* through a celestial metaphor. He writes, "[Kateb Yacine] has constructed a stellar universe. In its center he has placed a sun: Nedjma, around which a number of small and large stars gravitate, which themselves are endowed with satellites." The four men's pursuit of Nedjma, the woman and the novel's center of gravity, indexes the quest for an independent Algeria in the throes of French

colonialism.⁴¹ This structure can equally be applied to *Hashish*. Like *Nedjma*, the narrative of *Hashish* is fragmented by different narrators, perspectives, and elisions. And similarly, the narrative logic of *Hashish* is organized around four men's pursuit of an elusive woman: Miriam. The three brothers "the Hajj," "the philosopher," and Hassan become alternately enamored and obsessed with possessing Miriam and preventing her from migrating. A local custom's officer, who represents an older generation of defunct and corrupt government officials, also falls in love with and pursues Miriam. The winding intrigues between the three brothers, whose lives circle around bars, hashish dens, and smuggling, focus on a large sum of money with which they might use to lure Miriam away from her plans to emigrate.

Unlike *Nedjma*, through whom Yacine evokes Algeria's diverse heritage, Miriam's gaze is turned resolutely toward the southern shores of Europe, all her energies directed toward becoming one of the many harraga filling the town. While Yacine's novel looks to the past, Miriam dreams of "throwing her past overboard" (35) in order to undertake the dangerous voyage to Spain. In contrast to *Nedjma*'s concern with searching for origins and re-thinking questions of heritage, which are embedded in a historical moment when Algeria was struggling to achieve independence and ascertain a national identity with roots in the pre-

⁴¹ In some ways, then, *Nedjma* takes on some of the traits of the "national romance," defined by Elliott Colla as a novel that "tells a certain kind of social allegory that is clear to its readers, in which the libidinal competition between men for the affection of a woman stands in for class, race, and regional competition in the nation (174). Critic Mildred Mortimer has suggested that the four men who pursue her represent the four conquerors of Algeria (The Turks, the Romans, the Arabs, and the French) each remaining incapable of truly possessing her. Alternatively, Jean Déjeux has suggested that the four suitors represent the various nationalist ideologies vying for hegemony in the struggle for independence.

colonial past, *Hashish* portrays characters for whom the past is a burden and citizenship something that can be burned and discarded.

Finally, *Nedjma* and *Hashish* foreground very different roles for history in shaping the future. Though the stories that are told in the respective novels about Nedjma's and Miriam's pasts have dubious truth-value, ambiguity signifies differently in the two novels. If Nedjma's uncertain filial origins call upon the multiplicity of Algeria's history, the uncertainty about Miriam's past and origins relates to questions of truth and fiction. For Miriam, history is something that must be discarded, tossed overboard, as it were. She tells contradictory versions of her own origins to the three brothers' family. In the course of several storytelling sessions she turns to a mythical 1,001 Nights setting to invent her own past where she is alternately the daughter of an enraged king, and the only surviving child in a family whose children have died in their attempts to cross the strait of Gibraltar. On the one hand, while her individual lineage remains ambiguous her imagined origins can be read as a collective history of the countless bodies that wash up on the shores in the novel's setting. As such, she is emblematic of a segment of society whose eyes are turned northward. Seeing no future at home, she places her hopes of redemption in the dangerous journey north.

The Liminal in Harraga Literature

In their exploration of the legal liminality of harraga migration, *Hashish* and *Welcome to Paradise* reference – and undermine – the tripartite pattern of

transformation first analyzed by Arnold Van Gennep in *Les rites de passage* (190). Gennep conceives of the rite of passage as occurring in three stages: separation, liminality, and incorporation. The migrants in the novels enter into a liminal state by separating themselves from family and home and by their resolution to burn the papers that link them their nation. As such, the dominant settings of the novel – the beach in *Welcome to Paradise* and the unnamed border town in *Hashish* where the migrants await departure – are liminal sites. From this vantage point, the arrival in Europe is imagined as a transformation that would mean the end of a liminal state, or in Gennep’s terms, “incorporation.” However, while arrival in Europe is imagined as a transformation, or an entry into paradise, the liminal stage extends to encompass the passage across the sea and, correspondingly, shapes and ultimately overwhelms the encounter with Europe. Arrival in Europe does not herald the promised transformation but rather reveals itself as a precarious and prolonged state of being outside of the realm of rights and legal protection.

But, as argued by Victor Turner’s late career writings, such as the 1995 *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, the liminal state offers a wealth of performative possibilities. His analysis diverges from Gennep’s and others’ structural functionalist focus on reintegration and continuity in anthropological theory. Instead, he argues that the liminal state, “the ‘subjunctive mood’ of sociocultural action” (84), is unpredictable in nature, offering a multitude of possible outcomes, many of which defy reintegration and, in fact, can be quite disintegrative. From a different context, but with similar implications, I would

like to invoke Suzanne Stetkevych's study of pre-Islamic *sa' lūk* poetry (Arabic brigand poetry) where the poetic performance of liminality, what she terms "rite de passage manqué" signify the loud absence of reconciliation with the social milieu that defines the poetic genre. While referencing the tripartite structure of the generic form of the Arabic qasida (*nasīb – raḥīl– fakhr*) which itself invokes the liminality of travel (*raḥīl*) as a precursor to transformation (achieved in the praise of the patron - *fakhr*), she argues that in *sa' lūk* poetry "the hardships and perils of the liminal state are realized and become a permanent way of life instead of a temporary transitional stage" (662). Though in a narrative form and in a vastly different context, *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* both evoke a mode of separation and liminality where the awaited transformation remains elusive and the liminal becomes a prolonged and precarious state.

Both novels begin by poetically conjuring a mood that invokes the liminal and permeates the setting before introducing their thematic take on migration. The short paragraph that opens *Welcome to Paradise* introduces a space - the sea – through fantastical figurations that foreshadow the characters' encounter with it.

Back in the village, the old people were always telling us about the sea, and each time in a different way. Some said it was like a vast sky, a sky of water foaming across infinite, impenetrable forests where ghosts and ferocious monsters lived. Others maintained that it stretched further than all the rivers, lakes, ponds and streams on earth put together. As for the wise old boys in the square, who spoke as one on the matter, they swore that God was storing up the water for Judgment day, when it would wash the earth clean of its sinners. (1)

Drawing on magical realist narrative techniques, the novel begins by presenting the sea through the stories that circulate among the village elders as a repository

of wildness, wilderness, and divine wrath. Later on in the novel, as characters come in contact with the sea and with Europe, these figurative renderings of the sea take on a new life in the framework of biopolitics and migration.

In *Hashish* the opening chapter immediately acquaints the reader with a setting defined by a pervasive - and shared - condition of frustrated renewal.

Without yet introducing the main character Miriam, the short chapter poetically invokes her liminal condition by describing a brief spring that fails to deliver catharsis to a collective longing for rebirth.

All of a sudden, spring arrived and even the trash heaps blossomed. Small white flowers to which nobody paid any heed spread through the cracks in the walls and under the wheels of the broken-down cars. The spring did not last for more than a few days, as if it had been carried on a passing breeze for no other reason than to put on an unexpected performance. Or perhaps it just came to announce to the people that it was not the spring they had been waiting for, the spring that was supposed to come, were it not been for those little flowers, orphaned and few, scattered here and there. (5)

Instead of a promised renewal, a yearly re-birth that offers hope, the fleeting spring launches the novel's setting into its long, ruthless summer. The little flowers that briefly adorn the trash heaps, crumbling walls, and stalled cars of the small town conjure an image of decay that cannot be revived. The spring does, however, herald the arrival of a male dog that becomes the momentary companion of the town's stray female dog. Their brief courtship ends abruptly. When the dogs mate, the young children of the village pelt them with stones from their rooftops, and they scurry away. "Blazing days would follow, days whose flames would spread across the skin and through the veins, as if they were a small piece of hell that had broken loose" (7). Serving as a poetic prelude to the rest of the

novel and foreshadowing migration as burning, the first chapter infuses the novel's setting with signs of decomposition, thwarted re-birth, and unconsummated encounters. Such a condition shapes the novel in general and Miriam's fantasies of migration and transformation in particular.

These opening images of wildness and frustrated renewal frame the subject matter of the novels – harraga migration – and lead into the novels' construction of plot around the lives of migrants. The migrants depicted in the novel, however, cling to the idea of overcoming the liminal, seeing migration as transformation, a rite of passage, an entry into paradise.

Miriam's frequent and extended interior monologues stand in contrast to the silence and anonymity that the novel bestows on the many migrants who fill the unnamed Moroccan town. Unlike Miriam's, their presence is mostly made known through the reports of anonymous bodies washing up on the shore and the mourning relatives arriving in the town. At the same time, her interior monologues evoke the liminal condition that is at the heart of the novel's commentary on clandestine migration. Her desire to migrate to Spain rests on the idea that re-birth and renewal are only possible post-passage, in the form of the burning of identities that would take place en route to Spain. Having left her family and former life behind, Miriam already experiences her life as a liminal state and is awaiting a re-birth. "I am twenty years old. And during these years I have not known any of those things that make life sweet. I am now walking the ledge between life and death, between a death that I inspect, that I carry, and a life that I await like a resurrection" (7). Between her past life that she plans to throw

overboard – figured as a burden and already dead - and her future life – conceived of as a resurrection - she dwells in the liminal space of the border town searching for the boat that will transport her away from her former life, a boat that seems to herald both death and rebirth. “*Bghīt nkūn farḥāna ḥatā ana.*” Introducing her desire to be happy in Moroccan dialect (“I too want to be happy”) she continues,

I have everything that is necessary for being happy. An intellect that allows me to see, the senses that allow me to touch the objects and people around me. I have this heart that seems to beat in the wrong place. I have everything that is necessary to be unhappy. I have this past that I must carry with me and that I am waiting to throw overboard as soon as I am on the boat. (35)

If Miriam’s dreams of resurrection are in a symbiotic relationship with the liminal condition described the first chapter of the novel, there is already a prescience to her musings, a sense that the rebirth that she awaits may be destined to remain absent, a short, counterfeit spring that fails to deliver.

Similarly, in *Welcome to Paradise*, the decision to burn identity papers and place one’s fate in one of the many *qawārib al-mawt* is framed as a re-birth. To be re-born *elsewhere* after declaring the past dead. This is the shared desire of the Moroccan, Algerian, and Malian migrants whose destinies are united by the human trafficking depicted in *Welcome to Paradise*. The narrator Aziz describes the moments preceding the boat’s departure in very similar terms to Miriam:

One hour left before throwing ourselves blindly into the great adventure, quietly slipping into a new life, donning its clothes, embracing its hours and days, so we could be born again somewhere else, change our skin, our air, our world, start everything again from scratch. One more hour and we could shrug off our cake-mud memories, drive the adobe hovels out of our minds, forget the barren fields, the life of struggle, poverty and distress. One hour, Lord, just one little hour, and, eyes closed, we’d be carried away on the tides of this forbidden dream. (108)

As in *Hashish*, Morocco is represented through the invocation of images of sterility and stagnation from which migration can be imagined as a re-birth. The life stories of the seven migrants who await the boat's departure each in turn evoke a collective solidarity in the sense that the past cannot continue into an imagined future save for migration, figured as re-birth.

Aiming for Paradise

The characters in both novels invoke the concept of paradise (*paradis / fardūs*) in speaking about their desire to migrate to Europe. When Aziz's cousin Reda in *Welcome to Paradise* mistakes the roaming lights of the Spanish coastguard for the Spanish coastline, the Algerian Kacem Judi jokes "If paradise were that close, son,' [...] 'I'd have swum there by now" (17). The irony in Kacem's remark is the way in which the state of exception that governs the sea is replicated in the novel's depiction of Paris, thus equalizing the two spaces that are here set in contrast. In *Hashish* it is the Arabic word *fardūs* (paradise), or *fardūs arḍī* (earthly paradise) (158) that Miriam uses rather than the more religiously inflected *janna* (heaven) when imagining a life in Spain.⁴² In fact, Miriam invokes her desire to go to Spain, her earthly paradise, in direct defiance of the idea that she should wait for *al-ākhirah* (the afterlife) to be happy. Like the migrants in *Welcome to Paradise*, her fantasy of paradise relies on the idea of re-birth on this earth, on the other side of a geopolitical border.

⁴² The religious term for the afterlife is, however invoked in Idris al-Yazami's 2000 novel *Jannat al-Tawariq*.

In both *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* the fantasy of paradise relies on binaries of south and north, such as death / life, poverty / wealth, earthly drudgery / earthly bliss, sterility / possibilities. In this construction of paradise, to migrate is not only to be transported into a different territory; it is also to move from one end of these binaries to the other. As a fantasy of transformation, the paradise trope relies on the idea of paradise as a space with fortified enclosures, the crossing of which would enact a radical transformation. This conception of paradise is in concordance with its etymological lineage and historico-religious connotations. From the original conception of paradise, *paradayadam*, in ancient Persia, the term *pairidaēza* in Avestan Persia was constructed from two concepts: *Pairi* signified “encircling” or “closing off” and *daēza* to shape or mold (Ramsey-Kurz & Ganapathy-Doré viii).⁴³ The idea of paradise that has shaped the Abrahamic religions’ understanding of an afterlife is shaped by this ancient concept of a space that is cordoned off and available only to the elect and deserving. Indeed, this etymology finds resonance in the construction of Europe as an earthly paradise in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*. For example, in Miriam’s many meditations on her desired destination of Spain, her naive construction of Spain as a space of continuous bliss – an earthly paradise – relies on the idea that it is cordoned off and available only to the elect: “The women in Spain are happy.”

⁴³ As discussed by Helga Ramsey-Kurz and Geetha Ganapathy, the original meanings of the terms “paradise” have been preserved when the concept spread from ancient Persia. For example, Xenophon’s biography of the Persian ruler Cyrus the Great *The Education of Cyrus* recounts the young Cyrus’s dissatisfaction with hunting in his grandfather’s – the king’s - enclosed garden (paradise) when the wilderness outside offers better game, thus prompting him to leave the enclosed space. The story appears to be a prototype of the Biblical Garden of Eden and Fall. Indeed, the idea of paradise as a space of cultivation and domination over nature has run through the monotheistic intellectual history. (xiii-xi)

She reflects, “All the women are happy because they are in Spain. Because of the sea. Because they are on the other side of the sea. It is over there, Spain. Now and forever [...] Yet we don’t reach it. As if we don’t deserve to reach it, so we die along the way” (36). For Miriam, the treacherous and policed border that is the sea is necessary for the construction of Spain as paradise. As she says, there has to be a sea between us for it to be Spain. Paradise needs its enclosures.

If the paradise trope is invoked in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* as a way to emphasize the cordoned off status of Europe, elusive even in its proximity, and providing the possibility of radical transformation and re-birth, it is also situated in a rich historical discourse on wildness and civilization⁴⁴ in European colonial and postcolonial texts. Sharae Deckard’s 2010 book *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization*⁴⁵ brings together the range of uses that paradise discourse served to justify material and discursive domination in colonial and postcolonial settings. By navigating these colonial histories, Deckard illustrates how paradise myths, though flexible and multiple, show continuity in the way that they have been invoked to both “imagine and dominate Others” (7).

By reversing of this discourse and imagining Europe as a paradise-turned-wild space both *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* perform an act of “writing back” that critiques the effect of biopolitical management of fracturing

⁴⁵ Her book shows how European myths of the colonies as versions of paradise evolved with colonial history and continue into the postcolonial and neo-imperial era. In the Age of Discovery, for example, the idea of a terrestrial paradise elsewhere motivated the exploration and colonization of the Americas; in the post-Enlightenment 19th century, paradise discourse was applied to the idea that “savage” lands and peoples were open to cultivation and that such a “civilizing mission” had the potential to create an earthly paradise; in our late capitalist age, the paradise myth as it is projected onto the developing world lives on in the “third world exotic,” the idea of paradise as tourist destination.

populations on the very border that delineates the global south from the global north. In this regard, harraga literature is part of a broader trend in postcolonial writing. The resurgence of paradise discourse in postcolonial literature in the past few decades constitute efforts to draw upon, revise, and parody the kinds of paradise myths that emerged from European colonialism (Deckard; Woods) and which function discursively to replicate geopolitical boundaries. By mapping wildness onto Europe *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* perform the biopolitical construction of citizenship and its exclusionary processes even as they burn the boundaries (*ḥarq al-ḥudūd*) of a discourse that demarcates the Global North from the Global South.

Europe as Cannibal

In *Welcome to Paradise*, as the moment of crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar draws near, the trafficker summons the group of migrants and announces:

“All your papers. Passports, identity cards, birth certificates, address books: any document that could identify you. Got to be as good as naked there, on the other side.”

‘Welcome to the harragas!’ said Kacem Judi.

‘What’s that mean?’ Reda asked me.

‘That by burning our identity papers, we’re joining the ranks of the stateless.’

‘Like Momo,’ said Reda. (166)

When the trafficker calls on the migrants to rid themselves of any identifying papers, the papers that tie them to a legal regime of citizenship, he insists that they need to be *naked* upon arrival and, by extension, upon departure. This injunction resonates with Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “bare life,” life stripped of its

political dimension and stripped of rights. As Aziz notes earlier in the novel, to learn how to be a refugee is to “learn to keep in the background, to be nobody: another shadow, a stray dog, a lowly earthworm, or even a cockroach. That’s it, yes, learn to be a cockroach” (66). His reference to Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* casts their future clandestine status as a dehumanizing transformation - much in contrast to the kind of transformation that is desired.

One of the most striking features of harraga writing is perhaps the way in which this (il)legal space that begins on the shores of North Africa and continues into Europe shapes the encounter with Europe. As the migrants of the novels assume a spectral condition vis-à-vis the two shores, their liminal position becomes less about being *in-between* legal regimes but rather occupying a position outside of legal protections that is subject to heavy surveillance and policing. From the precarious legal subjectivity of *les brûleurs de route*, Europe is imagined as a form of wilderness, a space that the migrants encounter through the bare facts of the body. In depicting Europe as a space that the migrant enters naked, reduced to the body, or conceived of as insect life, the literature foregrounds the biopolitical production of citizenship and exclusion, bespeaking a subject position that can be injured with impunity. In their depiction of Europe, therefore, *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* evoke the position of the illegal migrant as the negative referent to citizenship. In so doing, they position themselves within a discourse of citizenship even as they critique its foundations. The following readings treat the extended liminal state that, in the place of incorporation or paradise, is revealed in the encounter with Europe. The

metaphors of wildness and “bare life” that appear in both novels perform the particular vulnerability that results from the suspension of the individual rights associated with citizenship.

In *Welcome to Paradise*, Morad, or “Momo,” serves an important role in the trafficking chain that brings the characters of the novel together. Thrice deported from France and having earned the ironic honorary title “European Deportee,” he recruits would-be migrants from his table in *Café France* in Marrakech’s historic square *jam’ al-fna’* through stories of his exploits in France. Surrounded by his intent listeners, they form a veritable *halqa* of their own. But unlike the public storytelling circles in the adjacent square, which are celebrated and curated as authentic popular heritage, Morad’s *halqa*, like the café in which it takes place, gazes outward.

The “Madeleine” that sparks Aziz’s memory of Momo’s recurring Parisian nightmare is none other than the sight of Nuara’s blood-stained mouth after she has gnawed off the paw of a stray dog that appeared to threaten her and her baby as they hid under the boat. “The blood around Nuara’s mouth reminded me of Morad’s dream. Dream? Nightmare, more like!” (93) Emblematic of a bodily struggle for survival outside of the confines of society, Nuara’s blood-stained lips serve as a narrative link to the metaphor of cannibalism, a metaphor that renders the encounter with Europe as a prolonged liminality figured as a reduction to bare life.

When living clandestinely in France, working eleven-hour days at the restaurant *Chez José*, an identical nightmare repeats itself every night. In Momo’s

dream, his encounter with Europe is reduced to a few, bare essentials. The dream begins with Momo and his boss José driving down an empty Champs-Élysées in a red convertible. Above them, the sky is as eerily empty; beside them, the streets are empty and abandoned. Momo and José sit down at a deserted street side café to drink some almond liqueur. As José chatters incessantly, Momo begins to take note of the disturbing yet seductive nature of their exchange.

Mr. José talks and talks. Momo can't hear him, all he can see is his outsize, open mouth where, instead of teeth, there's an infinite number of forks. The glittering, grinding stainless steel thrashes out a cascade of muddled words whose vague echo Momo begins to catch, just about; the voice is metallic yet soft, harsh and bewitching, irresistible. Momo lets himself be swept along, opens his heart, swallows the words, absorbs their sense and inevitably, agrees with them. (96)

In the excerpt above, the mouth's linguistic capacities are superseded by its propensity to devour. The scene is one of relationality through incorporation and digestion, not interaction or dialogue. José's terrifying yet sensual fork-filled mouth creates an atmosphere of seductive violence. At the same time as José's cannibalistic desire to consume Momo's flesh is elicited, Momo is swallowing, incorporating José's words. Bodily incorporation – of José's language for Momo, and of Momo's flesh for José – defines the scene.

The curious agreement that José and Momo make is emblematic of Momo's clandestine encounter with Europe. Here, as in the rest of the dream-sequence, the brutal encounter is driven by desire on both sides. But the initially seductive dimension of the exchange – a desirous cannibalism – eventually gives way to its reductive properties. If only Momo will cede him a toe, a finger: “Anyway, a finger, what's that? A little bit of nothing, a pathetic scrap of flesh

and bone that sooner or later will end up food for worms, a complete waste” (97). Momo’s upward mobility – a cynical rendering of a social contract – will be based on giving up body parts in exchange for a sense of security and belonging. With each body part that Momo cedes to his boss’s delectation he moves up in the restaurant hierarchy. For two little toes he moves from dishwasher to server and the rest of his toes, his thumbs, and a part of his buttocks buy him ameliorated living condition. A salary increase costs an arm. Maybe he will even be able to get his papers in order with another bodily sacrifice. Finally, all that remains of Momo is his head.

Momo’s reduction to the status of flesh that may be pillaged reflects the “inclusive exclusion” that structures Agamben’s account of the exception. Included, indeed incorporated and devoured, into his Parisian setting through his body, he is excluded as a political being. The ironic rendering of a social contract in which Momo relinquishes flesh in exchange for gradual recognition of personhood and small steps toward citizenship – first in the setting of the restaurant where he is allowed to emerge from the dish room and appear in public and then through the promise of legal regularization – serves to highlight the social and political exclusion at work.

Momo’s clandestine encounter with Europe, as rendered in his dream, is shaped by state of exception. The working class restaurant owner José acts temporarily as sovereign and Momo becomes reduced to bare life, a body available for plunder and deprived of legal protections. However, one way in

which Momo's dream departs from Agamben's rendering of the camp⁴⁶ is that Momo's vulnerable position as a clandestine migrant constitutes a condition more than an a space or zone. Furthermore, the way in which his bare life is produced in the novel is racially inflected. As Judith Butler notes in *Precarious Life* Agamben's writing often fails to account for way in which the biopolitical differentiation between bare life and political life works along racial and ethnic lines. Indeed, the production of bare life in Momo's dream showcases the racial underpinnings of the cannibalism in his nightmare.

The one time Momo allows himself to experience the dream until its conclusion – the day night before his arrest and deportation – he is devoured until there is nothing left of him save a smiling head, which is transported back and forth between its designated spot in the restaurant, where it greets customers, and its perch on the windowsill in its new two-bedroom apartment overlooking la Rue Mazarine. This is where the dream normally ends. However, on the eve of Momo's arrest in waking life, the dream is revealed in its entirety. Perched on his pillow overlooking the streets, Momo's head observes a garbage truck operated by two black men. "Momo told himself that they obviously hadn't found anybody to snack on them, otherwise they'd be comfortably settled in the warmth on a pillow like him" (102). The racial dimension of his peculiar and precarious social contract is made explicit just as it is about to come to an end. José appears behind him and whispers in his ear: "I don't like heads. Calves' heads. Pigs' heads. None

⁴⁶ The examples that Agamben gives are spatial in nature. An important contemporary example that relates to this study are the *zones d'attente* in European airports where foreigners applying for refugee status may be held until they can access judicial authority.

of them” (102). When Momo pleads with him to just finish him off, he opens the window and, finding a garbage man urinating on the doorway to his restaurant, screams a host of racial epithets as he hurls Momo’s severed head into the jaws of the garbage truck. Momo is excluded as a political being with rights and included only through the consumption of his body. Finally, the racially inflected discarding is a harbinger of his deportation in waking life. In her reading of this cannibalistic encounter in *Welcome to Paradise* Sharae Deckard suggests that Momo’s nightmare is an allegorical rendering of the first world devouring the third world (203). While Momo’s illegal existence in Paris and his subsequent arrest and deportation is certainly produced by the material relations that govern the boundaries between the “developed” and “developing” worlds, I would add that it is specifically Momo’s (and by extension the other migrants in the novel) liminal legal position that gives rise to such an encounter. Furthermore, with its invocation of cannibalism, the novel draws a parallel between Momo’s precarious position in Paris and the fate of the migrants who drown in their attempt at crossing the Strait of Gibraltar; both Europe and the sea are rendered as devourers of bodies.

The metaphor of cannibalism is also central to the depiction of the sea as a state of exception in *Hashish*. In Miriam’s second attempt to migrate to Spain she, like Reda and Aziz in *Welcome to Paradise*, finds herself abandoning the boat at the very last moment out of fear of the journey. On land she, together with the boat’s owner Riki, becomes a spectator to the boat’s departure. Riki’s prescient remark “The sea is anxious tonight. Too many people have entered it” (160)

prefigures the continued personification of the sea, which is soon portrayed as a beast with arbitrary power over life and death. In the following scene, where the boat crashes against the rocks and sinks, the sea becomes a wild creature ready to devour the bodies that have entered it.

Then they heard the first sound of wood cracking. The boat had not traveled out any further; it hadn't traveled at all. It was rocking back and forth, but staying in place. Anchored to the water, it began to rotate and with it, so did the chanting of prayers. The water grew hands and fingers. The water grew nails. At times, the fore of the boat rose up as if it wanted to set sail but it would be grabbed and pulled down with a bestial strength by the water's ravenous nails. From the boat one could hear a sharp whistling sound. The chanting stopped when the wooden boards of the boat began to fly up into the air. One whirlpool to grind everyone: wood, water, and clay. Clay wailing, water laughing into a deep pit fashioned by the clawed fingers of the water. The moon beams that spread out across the water increased the moon's luster. The boat became shreds. And for a short moment, the people, like feathers, were suspended in the air. Solemnly, the wooden boards crashed against the cliff one by one, striking the rock repeatedly as if they were seeking refuge in it. The two who had not attempted the crossing stood at the edge of the cliff peering down. The bodies, like children, were rocking on the water's surface. Sleeping children soothed by their dreams. The water rocked them as the moon guarded their small but impossible dreams. Then the surface of the water went blank; there was no trace of the boat, nor of the people. Riki stated: "The sea has gone back to sleep now. The animal has eaten its fill and now it has gone back to sleep." Then he descended to the shore. A light breeze ruffled the face of the water. And from below the rock a new boat emerged filled with more humans, who, in turn, were filled with more dreams of the same seductive slipperiness. After a moment Riki returned. He sat down next to Miriam and looked out upon the calm sea. Dusting off his clothes, he said: "Tomorrow, the sea will spit out its drowned." (161-162)

Like José in Momo's dream, it is through the metaphor of devouring that the migrants become subject to the violence of the state of exception; the bodily vulnerability portrayed in the literature highlights a legal position where rights are suspended. Once filled with hope, curiosity, and a desire for better circumstances,

the harraga in this scene are reduced to bodies to be lustily devoured by a watery cannibal.

The last section of *Hashish* features Miriam's final attempt to cross the Strait of Gibraltar, this time with the aid of the elderly customs official who, having overcome his obsession with her, furnishes her with a boat that she will ride alone. The conclusion of the novel completes the narrative arc in which the crushing of the fantasy of Europe as paradise reveals an extended liminal position, rendered as a wild space. Miriam's encounter with the sea and, later, with the Spanish coast guard is shaped by the "lawless" violence of the state of exception. The following extended quote highlights the process whereby Miriam, taking her leave, imagines, one last time, her arrival at the northern shore as a transformative end to her liminal condition.

No, there was no reason for failure this time. All at once, the dark days had vanished. She stood at the stern and bade the dry land farewell. Without a trace of sadness nor regret she saw it fade away in the distance, out of her sight and out of her thoughts, shrinking in the distance. Soon, it would be all gone, not even a trace of its touch could be felt on her fingertips, no lingering image in her eyes, no ringing sound in her ears. Mustering all her senses, she prepared herself for the arrival of a new music. As for that piece of land to which she had said her farewells, it would remain where it was, introverted. Its people would continue to destroy each other. The big would continue to eat the small; the strong would continue to rapaciously devour the weak. People butcher (*yanhar*) each other under all flags.

Is this the end? Is this the beginning?

She had gotten used to this kind of wavering, this going back and forth, this state of being suspended between freedom and slavery, imprisonment and release. The hours of the day were changing now; they were no longer the same as before. The sun no longer shone with its former intensity. Soon, the rays of hope from the other shore would reach her. A procession of small, white clouds slid across the sky. Perhaps they were driven by the same desire for migration and escape? (292)

The trope of cannibalism to describe her liminal position in Morocco recurs here even as she imagines her immanent arrival in Spain as a complete release from this condition, a fantasy of arrival as complete transformation, a transition from dark “the dark days” to light “rays of hope.” Nevertheless, if the novel resorts to a vocabulary of wildness to describe liminality and precarious subject positions, Miriam’s final voyage reinforces the very liminal position that she hopes to escape.

Before describing the subsequent scene, it is worth noting the way in which this particular scene echoes and parodies the well-known final scene of Tayeb Salih’s 1966 *Season of Migration to the North*. At the end of the novel, as the narrator descends into the Nile in a desperate attempt to either take his life or grasp at meaning, his identity crisis is figured through a liminal moment; he is suspended between the two shores of the river, between night and day, between life and death. Whereas the ending of *Season* performs the postcolonial hybridity that plagues the narrator – a crisis of the intersection of his status as a European-educated intellectual and the needs of a newly independent Sudan, Miriam’s liminal state of being suspended between two shores, life and death, relates to her precarious legal position between the Global South and North. While arrival is imagined as a release from liminality, depicted in part as an endemic cannibalism at home, her body becomes the site of a violent encounter in the novel’s final episode, when she is captured, raped, and sent to her death by three members of the Spanish coast guard.

The violence done to Miriam by the three Spanish coast guard officers must be read in the context of how the novel imagines her liminal subject position as bare life. The paradise that she dreamed of becomes a hell. Here, she is reduced to animal proportions, a bodily offering to those who can act as sovereigns in the murky legal territory of her illegal crossing. Foreshadowing the ultimate loss of voice that this encounter entails, in the subsequent chapter the narration shifts from Miriam's interior monologue to third person narration. Miriam wakes up in a daze to see three Spanish men from the coast guard in a boat next to hers. They help her over to their boat and though confused, Miriam assumes good intentions. When she is led to a bedroom, she notes that it will be a nice resting place. However, what follows is a violent episode in which she is raped and beaten by the three men. Miriam and the Spanish men come to occupy subject positions akin to bare life and sovereign.

Like in *Welcome to Paradise* Miriam's reduction to bare life takes on an orientalized / racialized character. After the first assault, the men have her sprint naked to the stern and perform an oriental dance for them.⁴⁷ The complete bodily violation that defines Miriam's encounter with the Spanish coast guard reduces her to a bare life. The narration turns to this question of dehumanization at this moment of violence: "Miriam is not an insect. *I am human, I am human*. She screams at them, but no sound comes out" (295). The line between the bare body figured as a violated human and that of a preyed-upon animal figured as an insect

⁴⁷ The orientalized / racialized and gendered claim to bare life is repeated in another *harraga* novel. In *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, one of the protagonists, a young woman, avoids deportation by submitting sexually to a border guard and then, turns to prostitution for her livelihood in Spain, confronting fantasies about the Oriental harem.

is at stake. Indeed, the three young men, empowered by wildness of a lawless sea are equally dehumanized in their sovereign subject positions. When the boat, containing her dead body washes up the next morning on the shore, she becomes simply another anonymous body to return to the town in this manner.

The exception as a suspension of the rule, that is, an exclusion that maintains a relationship to the rule, comes to characterize the biopolitical logic in the construction of a European polity in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*. The crumbling of the paradise fantasy to reveal the spaces of violence that are produced at the margins of Europe produces a number of subversions. In their depiction of migration as a liminal condition that fails to resemble dreams of paradise and transformation, the novels subvert the fantasies that are an important component of harraga migration. But the fact that the hell that appears in the place of paradise is rendered in a vocabulary of wildness is also significant as it conjures and subverts a European colonial and postcolonial textual history of mode of demarcating boundaries.

Conclusion

As argued in this chapter, the narrative arc of *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish* puts in relief the tension between the fantasy of migration and its realities. The *dénouement* that takes place when the migrants of the novels encounter Europe, or the heavily policed sea that separates them from their destination, reveals an extended liminality, a *passage manqué* that is depicted through tropes of wildness. Paradise – once figured though a fantasy of

transformation and re-birth – becomes a space of wildness and liminality.

Although many of the brutal realities of harraga migration take center stage in these novels - drowning, robbery by traffickers, and the mourning of family members for those who die at sea, for example, the novels are not simply portraying the tragic fate that many clandestine migrants face. While there is significant overlap between harraga migration and harraga writing, the literariness of the novels contributes to a creative rendering of the migrants' liminal condition through their dialogue with the biopolitical production of citizenship and exclusion and their intellectual precedents through intertextuality.

If the migrants' encounter with Europe entails the crumbling of a fantasy, their "paradise lost" conjures another "lost paradise" (*al-fardūs al-mafqūd*) of Andalusia, and especially, the loss of the idea of *convivencia*. Whether understood in terms of civilizational continuity and tolerance or as an Islamic golden era, the idea of Andalusia functions in contrast to the rigid boundaries and violence that has come to mark the construction of Europe. In their use of parody, then, the novels remind us of the historical contingency of the violence produced by a geopolitical border.

In one of the most compelling images in *Hashish*, Miriam stands on the beach next to a statue of Tarek Ibn Ziyad, the general who led the Muslim conquest of Spain in 711. She discovers the striking yet forlorn rendering of the celebrated general on the beach next to her lodgings the night of her third and fatal attempt to leave Morocco for Spain. Looking out at the Strait of Gibraltar (a place name derived from *Jabal Tāriq* – "Tarek's Mountain") neither the general

nor his horse display any signs of self-assurance. Instead, much in contrast to the impending culmination of Miriam's obsession with reaching Spain, the statue exudes an implicit hesitance to set out north. The dark humor in this excerpt consists of its ironic reading of movement from south to north as a biopolitical threat:

The boats are asleep and the lights from the sidewalk lend their shadows a certain dignity. The sea gulls circle around them like butterflies (...)
Beside me towers a statue of Tarek Ibn Ziyad, who is wrapped in his green cape. As usual, he is on his horse, but instead of a spear in his hand, he carries a broom. And the horse is facing the north, its head bare, and something seems to be preventing it from jumping. The rider encourages him, rather unconvincingly. The horse pretends like it is going to jump, but doesn't. The man, as if in a pleasant dream, holds onto the reins and prepares himself to violate Andalusia again with his ancient broom. (290)

The statue distinguishes itself from a tradition of mourning the loss of Andalusia by invoking a moment prior to the conquest of Spain. The figure of Tarek Ibn Ziyad on the shore preparing to yet again broach the Mediterranean divide with an old broom subverts the post-Cold War discourse that figures migration from Africa and the Arab world as a threat to the sanctity of European territory and sovereignty. The parodic juxtaposition of this historic moment and Tarek Ibn Ziyad's hesitancy and unexpected domesticity calls attention to its disjuncture with the discourse of migration to Europe as a form of war-like conquest. The lackluster Ziyad, carrying his old broom, conjures up the irregular labor that awaits many of the migrants who, unlike Miriam, survive the crossing. By displaying the broom, an artifact that is both domestic and a sign of undocumented labor, the statue alludes, much like the portrayal of the wild encounter with Europe described in *Welcome to Paradise* and *Hashish*, to the

kinds of fractures created by biopolitics both at the internal and the external borders of Europe. Even as the migrants' liminality come full circle with the rupture and un-imagining of ties, both to the home nation and in relation to Europe, the novels continually remind us of the historical contingency of the way that Europe has been constructed discursively and through migration policies in the post-Cold War period, calling our attention to the changing meanings of a border.

Conclusion

This dissertation links shifts in Arabic literary representations of Europe to changing patterns of migration and migration policies between the Arab world and Europe. Since post-Cold War Arabic literature of migration to Europe engages different realities than those explored in 20th century Arabic travel and exile literature it calls for different ways to imagine the encounter with Europe. In the previous chapters, I have argued that post-Cold War Arabic migration literature is shaped by a dual loss. On the one hand, the aesthetic and political models inherited from the Nahda, which were continuously re-shaped in 20th century Arabic literature on Europe, have ceased to function well for rendering forced migration in a globalized era. On the other, the weakening of rights-centered approaches to migration in the post-Cold War period has made the question of political subjectivity rather fraught. With this loss of previous aesthetic and political models of writing Europe, new kinds of imaginative renderings have emerged which creatively foreground the ways that inclusion and exclusion in political community are produced.

Thresholds of belonging and exclusion loom large in Arabic literature of forced migration to Europe, which has come of age in an era of managed migration. I have chosen to read the literary narratives featured in this dissertation in dialogue with Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben's theorizations of the biopolitical, which focus on the production of a moving threshold between inclusion and exclusion in modern political community. In migration literature, realities of forced migration and policies aiming to manage

and prevent migration preclude an uncomplicated projection of ideals of rights and citizenship onto Europe. There is, I have argued, a tension inherent to Arabic literature of migration between laying claims to a rights-based framework of migration and citizenship on the one hand, and re-imagining community through the biopolitical, on the other. My readings suggest that one of the compelling aspects of literary narratives of migration is the way that they navigate this tension.

The comparative framework of this study, that is, the way it reads Arabic migration literature across regions, types of forced migration, and national origins, helps bring thematic similarities into focus. For example, I have shown that the idea of wilderness plays an important role in shaping Arabic literary imaginings of Europe in the post-Cold War period. While different literary articulations of wilderness through spaces such as forests, cannibalism, and empty, snowy spaces signify specific local and temporal concerns, they also tend to depict spaces that are outside community. In other words, spaces of wilderness appear as a way to write about rejected asylum claims, clandestine status, and threatening alternatives to citizenship as migrant characters approach the threshold between inclusion and exclusion.

Although the literary renderings of migration to Europe explored in this dissertation are steeped in the European context and the challenges of globalization in the post-Cold War era, they remain in dialogue with an Arabic literary heritage. My aim in this dissertation has been to remain attuned to both current political and literary challenges of globalization and migration on the one

hand, and to the history of writing Europe in Arabic literature, on the other. In my readings of migration literature, I have tried to emphasize moments of intertextuality, parody, and performative breaks with previous renderings of Europe in Arabic literature. In addition, in regards to the often-emphasized divides between the Maghreb and Mashreq (especially between francophone and Arabic literature) I have called attention to thematic overlap while remaining attuned to difference.

Chapter One situated post-Cold War literature of migration within the Arabic literary context and the European project of managing migration. It showed how, with the loss of both aesthetic and political models of writing Europe, the migrant finds him or herself in a wilderness, which is then translated into the literary. Chapter Two focused on Mahmoud al-Bayaty's 2006 novel *Dancing on Water: Difficult Dreams*, which is about an Iraqi writer's transition from exile in Prague to becoming a refugee in Sweden. It showed how the novel's theorization of citizenship in the globalized post-Cold War era is informed by the crisis of the politically committed Arab Left in the post-Cold War period and earlier modes of writing in exile. Chapter Three analyzed three literary narratives of migration ("The Arctic Refugee" by Ibrahim Ahmad, *Nothing and Nobody* by Farouq Yousef, and *The Geography of Danger* by Hamid Skif) that depict spaces of precarious European refuge as an encounter with wilderness. Wilderness in these narratives functions as a space of exclusion onto which a fantasy of hospitality can be projected. However, in these narratives, such protective fictions are continuously being undermined by anxieties about refuge and entry into a new

polity. Chapter Four analyzed two Moroccan “harraga” novels of clandestine migration, *Welcome to Paradise* by Mahi Binebine and *Hashish* by Youssef Fadel. It centered on the argument that wilderness and the idea of being reduced to the body represents a state of legal liminality, a “state of exception” that is intensified rather than resolved by migration. Together, these readings highlight new generic modes of rendering migration that are shaped by forced migration.

These chapters highlight different kinds of migratory contexts and literary moorings between the Arab world and Europe, but they also follow a narrative arc of their own. From the first chapter, which provides a theoretical and historical framing for the subsequent chapters, the readings featured in Chapter Two to Chapter Four move gradually further away from the realm of citizenship and closer to rendering its outside. Where the novel *Dancing on Water* discussed in Chapter Two re-theorizes citizenship as a community based on affiliation, the literary narratives discussed in Chapter Three imaginatively project an ideal of hospitality onto a wilderness that exists outside of the boundaries of legal inclusion. Finally, in Chapter Four, the harraga narratives represent clandestine migration to Europe as an encounter with a brutal wilderness. While this narrative arc, which progresses from a re-theorization of citizenship to broaching clandestine encounters with Europe, pertains to the ordering of this particular study, it also suggests a generic literary space for migration literature where anxieties about migration, legal belonging, the biopolitical, and the intrusion of older narratives are negotiated.

Literature and Citizenship in a Globalized Era

Postcolonial literary studies have long asserted the creative impetus that comes with displacement, movement, and exile. From “hybridity” (Bhabha), “transculturation” (Hall) to the concept of *errance* (Glissant), postcolonial literary studies have countered notions of fixity in defining identity and emphasized the insight that comes from the margins and the constructedness of identity and narrative. In many ways, the perspectives that are put forth in Arabic literature of migration resonate with such concepts.

Arabic post-Cold War literary migration narratives often continue to deploy the term *manfa* (exile) and the idea that displacement engenders particular forms of creativity. For instance, the preface of Mahmoud al-Bayaty’s *Dancing on Water: Difficult Dreams* features Edward Said’s posthumously published article, “To See the World as an Assortment of Foreign Lands” which was published in *al-Hayat* in 2003. Said’s article emphasizes the role of exiles, immigrants, and refugees in fashioning what is understood as “Western” culture and underscores the important insights into individual and collective identities that have been brought about by displacement, movement, and marginalization. By proposing an intimate link between the creative work of exiles and the loss of a homeland⁴⁸ Said, (and Bayaty, by implication) highlight the creative impetus of exile and loss.

Literary critic John McLeod notes in *Beginning Postcolonialism* that the trend in postcolonial studies to emphasize the creativity and insight of exilic and

⁴⁸ Said writes, “The exile spends his life seeking to compensate for a bewildering loss by creating a new world whose dominion encompasses him...and it makes sense that the exile’s new world is unnatural, resembling the irreality of the world of stories and imagination” (quoted in Bayaty).

diasporic perspectives lends itself to a blurring between the concepts “postcolonial,” “diaspora,” and “migrant” (207). He suggests that although postcolonial studies, especially in the 1990s, has tended to hail diasporic perspectives as a remedy to prejudice and divisive thinking, it is important to remain attuned to the often difficult and complex realities facing diasporic communities, which include human rights violations, fraught encounters with state institutions, and the representation of such communities through discourses of threat (208). An emphasis on the creativity and the incisive perspectives brought about by displacement, however, need not be equivalent to an idealization of the exilic condition.

Although Arabic literature of migration mines the creative potentialities of displacement, it shifts away from the kinds of idealizations of exile seen in earlier Arabic literary renderings of Europe. In depicting the transcendence and/or violation of national boundaries that forced migration can entail, literature of migration foregrounds the constructedness of legal boundaries of belonging and exclusion. In doing so, it transforms Arabic literary representations of Europe by negotiating the complex realities of migration, migration management, citizenship, and exclusion in a globalizing era. If one of the dominant modes of recent postcolonial literary studies has been an emphasis on the fluidity of identity, migration narratives emphasize the ways that legal belonging, exclusion, hospitality, and borders are produced in the context of forced migration. Furthermore, migration literature re-imagines such thresholds within literary modes.

The opening up of national borders and national canons associated with globalization has enacted transformations in Arabic literary representations of Europe. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, Arabic literature of migration is a hybrid genre, intersecting with both European and Arab literary spheres. In contrast to exile literature, which often takes a modernist stance of detachment (Malkki, Kaplan, Said) and in contrast to European migrant literature, which tends to be situated within the parameters of local literary spheres, literature of migration traverses literary spaces and national boundaries even as it foregrounds their legal construction. However, like European migrant literature, literature of migration unseats the kinds of national canons that were constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries that would equate language, identity, and citizenship with literary canons.

Despite such ruptures, it must be said that even as the idea of the national canon is being unraveled, literature remains an important vehicle for reflecting on the idea of citizenship. It is no longer sustainable to conceive of citizenship through the natural equivalence between place of birth, national belonging, and literary canons. Literature of migration performs many of the anxieties about citizenship associated with globalizing shifts. The trends toward global markets that transcend national borders and the corresponding processes of de-nationalization have created anxieties about the continued relevance of political subjectivity anchored in the rights- and nation-centered confines of modern citizenship. And furthermore, as Saskia Sassen notes in *Territory, Authority, Rights* (2008), the complex processes of re-making the national within the global

has produced other trends, including the closing and reaffirmation of borders. In addition to the kinds of policing and management of migration discussed earlier in this dissertation there is the rise of far-right cultural nationalisms, which emphasize national identities. The “Eurabia” discourses, which depict Arab and Muslim immigration to Europe as a threat, often expressed in biopolitical terms, represent some of the more extreme forms of discursive exclusion. In this, the experience of the biopolitical is intensified as migrants face intra-state efforts to manage migration and migrant populations with precarious and tenuous claims on receiving states.

Like the arguments made by postcolonial studies about the insights that can come from reading society and culture from the margins, so do migrant perspectives offer important vantage points on the production of inclusion and exclusion. It is in this sense that migration literature and more broadly, reflections on experiences of migration, represents an important vehicle for thinking about citizenship in a globalized era. The readings featured in this dissertation have highlighted some of the ways that the legal and rights-component of citizenship and its outside are represented and re-imagined in Arabic literature of migration to Europe. These texts, I have argued, engage with a biopolitical component of modernity that has become intensified for forced migrants in a globalized era. However, instead of theorizing the biopolitical as a substitution for the rights-based definitions of citizenship (as in Giorgio Agamben’s *Beyond Human Rights*) they portray it as an element that exists in tension with a conventionally defined political community. It is in their negotiation with and through the biopolitical

that these literary narratives of migration become imaginative sites of transformation.

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