



BRILL

Writer and Exile

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‘Abd al-Rahman Munif (1933–2004) is one of the most acclaimed Arab novelists and public intellectuals, remembered as “an Arabian master” (Hafez 2006) and as the “Arab citizen par excellence” (Anis 2004). Yet, he remains largely mis- or unread in English translation (Mejcher-Atassi 2018). Of his many novels, only two have been translated into English: *al-Nihayat* (1977) was translated by Roger Allen as *Endings* (1988) and the first three volumes of his quintet *Mudun al-milh* (1984–88) were translated by Peter Theroux as *Cities of Salt*, *The Trench* and *Variations of Day and Night* (1989–94). In addition, his autobiographical account of Amman, *Sirat madina* (1994), was translated by Samira Kawar as *Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman* (1998). His novel *Sharq al-mutawassit* (East of the Mediterranean, 1977), a centrepiece in the body of Arabic prison narratives, his three-volume *Ard al-sawad* (Land of Plenty, 1999), “a historical novel of epic structure” (Ghazoul 2007) about Iraq’s struggle against British colonial rule, and his other works of fiction remain outside of Western circuits of world literature. His non-fiction writing on politics and culture has not been translated at all. It includes books on Iraq’s modern history, the role of memory for the future, political commitment to democracy and literary and art criticism.

Munif’s essay “al-Katib wal-manfa”, translated here as “Writer and Exile”, is taken from his book of the same title published in Beirut in 1992. Munif was familiar with the nomadic movement of ancient tribes in the region, but also exposed to modern conditions of exile himself, as he was deprived of his Saudi citizenship due to his political engagement in the early days of the Ba’th party. Born to a father from Najd in today’s Saudi Arabia and a mother from Baghdad, Munif’s life trajectory spans from Amman to Baghdad, Cairo, Bucharest, Dam-

ascus, Beirut and Paris. Munif came to literature relatively late in life, after a successful career in the petroleum industry, finding in writing a tool for change. "Writer and Exile" compares nicely with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's "The Palestinian Exile as Writer" (1978) and Edward Said's "Reflections on Exile" (2001). Whereas both Jabra and Said paradoxically consider exile, despite the severity of loss, an enrichment of vision, which for Said is at the basis of contrapuntal reading, Munif is concerned with exile as "a harsh, lonely place." He distinguishes between exile within the Arab world and exile abroad. Exile, he argues, leaves its imprint not only on the exiled individual, but also on his family, acquaintances and society. He opens his essay with the words that "to be exiled means that, from the beginning, you stand accused." The situation increases in complexity when the exile is a writer, he says, as then questions of language and culture come into play. He relates exile to political oppression, authoritarian regimes, the colonial legacy, Orientalist perceptions, and last but not least the discovery and exploitation of oil, which has not only shaped geopolitical realities but also impacted Arab cultural fields. Given the topic's urgency, the increase of exile in and from the Arab world due to war and authoritarian rule, Munif's essay remains highly relevant today, and it is time to make it accessible in English translation and give it a place in the body of writings on exile.



To be exiled means that, from the beginning, you stand accused. What kind of accusation does not matter, nor does it matter where the accusation comes from, because the accusation is inevitable, multifaceted, and contradictory. What is most important is that you have acquired a status, even if undefined or undeclared, entailing a set of ambiguous characteristics. These characteristics are not exclusive to the exile, but extend to his family, children, friends, and acquaintances. Most of them are exiles, too; or they are curious and were driven by coincidence or necessity (and maybe for other reasons, too) to establish a relationship of some sort with the exile.

Merely by setting foot in the new land, the exile is assigned his identity and, from that very moment on, acts in accordance with this identity. Fueled by a set of ideas, dreams, and imaginings, the exile, at least in his own eyes, turns into an ambassador for a cause and a people, even if no one assigned such a role to him. He unconsciously succumbs to this role until he embodies it completely. In exceptional cases, the opposite happens: the exile moves on and renounces his identity in an attempt to take on a new and different existence, a more desirable role, albeit one that can hardly be reached.

It can be difficult to determine why a person chooses exile or to become exiled, for the motives are multiple, interconnected, ever-increasing, and to some extent innumerable, at least for people from the Third World. However, some of the main reasons for exile are political oppression and economic strife. What is most important here is that we are dealing with a widespread phenomenon that, in some cases, extends to populations or large groups of people. Specifically in the Arab region, it is reminiscent of the migration of ancient tribes throughout history up to the middle of the last century. These nomadic tribes searched for grass and water or sought more freedom because their former homelands were no longer capable or desirous of providing reasonable, humane conditions for a decent living and long-term sustenance.

The nomadic movement of ancient tribes not only comprised physical displacement, but also preserved tribal civilization, language, and traditions deemed strong and capable of confronting the other, the host country. If the host country proved stronger, larger, or more civilized, it gradually encompassed and imposed changes on the tribes that, after a while, became obliged to resemble either wholly or partially the host country's civilization and to give up some of their customs and traditions in order to acquire those of the new place, including its religion and, in some cases, its language. The tribes, in their attempt to fit in, then become a part of the general state of the other civilization.

Exile, no matter where, is a harsh and lonely place, at least for a specific, sometimes extensive period. However, it is not essentially or necessarily so, but only because it is a foreign place that the newcomer, the exile, is incapable of adapting himself to, especially because he considers his stay in it to be temporary. Also, the host country's citizens deem the exile's presence superfluous, burdensome, and questionable. Despite the simplicity of the question behind the exile's state, many do not bother to seek an answer to it, whether through their own thinking or through interaction and dialogue. Therefore, the exile remains incomprehensible with no justification for his existence or survival. And because his presence is antithetical to others' desires and exceeds their tolerance threshold, they strive to eliminate, ignore, or repudiate his existence altogether. An unbridgeable distance then develops between them and the exile, like a hidden punishment for the latter.

Thus begins a complex "game" between two unequal parties under extremely difficult conditions for the exile. If what pushes the exile to his state of exile is his interest in public causes or his presence in a zone of conflict or tension, though he might not even belong to a political movement that opposes the existing regime, he is considered an opponent of the country that expelled him and a ready, maybe temporary ally of the host country. Yet, in both cases,

the exile loses his human significance and becomes an object, a number, and a tool subject to negotiation and pressure. However, the exile's political inclination that placed him in such positions is unstable and is not a fundamental part of his character, which is liable to continuous reshaping and alteration.

The regime that ousts the exile perceives him as someone who should be deprived of the right to political action or political affiliation; it does not admit that exile often happens for political reasons because it believes that it is the only entity authorized to engage in politics. Also, even if the reasons for exile were territorial or political, the host country perceives exile only in its current and temporary status without the need to engage with the exile's real identity; it perceives this identity, even if temporarily, under the lens of exile, which in many cases impedes the ability to reach humane solutions.

If the exile belongs to an oppositional party, even if his opposition consists merely in stating a different opinion, he is subject to direct modes of punishment including imprisonment, deprivation of employment, denial of travel, and other coercive means that affect his family members, too; this is especially so after the state has become, as in most countries of the Third World, the major if not the only ruling entity in the workplace, a fact that pushes the exile into exile.

The legal axiom that asserts that a person is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and has the right to a public and fair trial that guarantees the legitimate right of self-defense is unacknowledged and almost non-existent. Indeed, from the very beginning, the citizens of oppressive countries are accused until proven innocent. And any presumed innocence is impermanent, temporal, and subject to revocation if the exile fails to confirm it by showing allegiance, submitting to the system, or seeking refuge under the protection of the institutions of the state.

The discussion about what populations face while living under the rule of oppressive regimes could extend and take different directions, but there is no space to expand on it here; however, it is important to point out that almost all regimes that boast about their democratic rule are partners of oppressive regimes. This complicity, which has recently started gaining attention, is multifaceted and multilayered, and in all cases, its victim is the exile.

Perhaps relationships among governments and shared interests among countries have not yet provided reasons for sending exiles back to their countries. However, the restrictions imposed by the host country and the conditions it provides for the exile are a form of imprisonment or hostage-taking. Lacking international laws that protect exiles, the relationships among countries are motivated by self-interest rather than moral and humanitarian standards. Even

countries that gained moral and historical significance for their embracement of political refugees are no longer how they used to be.

In addition, oppressive regimes, built upon material means and possibilities, have become more capable of imposing conditions on and blackmailing the exiles' host country by various methods: exerting financial and economic pressures, withdrawing deposits, restricting trade and exchange, annoying the citizens of the host country, and plotting the abduction or arrest of exiles; they also have various ways of causing trouble inside the host countries, sometimes entailing violence.

All this is done to reach a compromise between the two parties over an undeclared issue. Yet, the issue is known: it is primarily the cause of the exiles; examples and testimonials supporting this conclusion are uncountable.

The problem of exiles, which is increasing and becoming more complicated year by year, deserves a study of its own, since it is one of the most prominent phenomena of our time, especially since concern for human rights and cross-cultural interactions have increased and distances between countries and civilizations have decreased due to the communication and transportation revolutions. The world has become the proverbial global village. Accordingly, the oppressed have also realized that they deserve a less miserable life, if not a happy one. Several communities in the Third World pin the blame on colonialism, on the exploitative and abusive measures of the governments of so-called democratic countries. This indicates that there are debts that need to be settled by testing the two communities' loyalty to their historical and cultural relationship, on one hand, and to democracy, on the other.

There is no doubt that this rhetoric underlies many illusions, at least among exiles who have expressed themselves with bitterness and hostility either while living in exile or after returning to their countries, no matter if their return was motivated by victory or despair.

If we move beyond exile in general to focus on a specific sector of exiles, writers and artists, and try to delve into the difficulties and problems they suffer from and the challenges they face, we see that exile is a more complex issue. If writing and art are a difficult job in general, in any place, in exile they become risky professions coupled with new technical complications. Writing in exile becomes a dangerous occupation, similar to that of war correspondents, because exiles are the opponent's usual target. Any opposition to the opponent results in the pen meeting the bullet and the camera meeting the shell, especially when the media play a major role in this battle. Murdering exiles, kidnapping them, or targeting them with deliberate car accidents prove that the exile is easy prey at a time when he might think that he finally has had the chance to escape his home country – his prison!

Tracking and hunting down exiles, especially the most prominent among them, is thus a consistent and ongoing policy that oppressive regimes practice on a large scale by taking advantage of the many problematic voids that the state of exile generates or by collaborating with members of the security forces of the host country.

Political leaders tend to be more cautious and more aware of the presence of exiles; they often surround themselves with guards. Moreover, because political confrontation is not intense all the time, oppressive regimes opt for subtle mechanisms like bribing, buying, or eliminating exiled intellectuals, writers, and artists, who have no experience in developing strategies based on deception and underhandedness; they regard their strength as lying in the power of communication and contribution to the public sphere, which makes them easy and available targets.

The second method that oppressive regimes resort to is “the purchase of exiles.” In former times, the exile used to choose his place of exile and to change it if inconvenient. There used to be multiple places of exile deemed second homelands. In these homelands, many political systems developed and several literary and artistic works emerged and contributed to the welfare of both parties. Many writers and artists gained recognition in exile and came back to their home countries stronger than before.

This is how exile and the exiled used to be in the past. However, in the current dark times, besides the limitation of the places of exile and the exile's lack of choice, the psychological and legal restrictions imposed on the exile make exile a harsh, lonely place; they also transform the exile into a remnant of a human being and an utter, hopeless failure for the future and subject him to multiple forms of exploitation and blackmail.

Since places of exile have diminished in number and choice, in self-interest most countries stopped welcoming these “troublemakers” to avoid provoking the exile's home country and to ensure peace by getting rid of one more “problem.” The restrictions imposed on the exile in the host country make him prefer yielding to his jailor to facing humiliation and blackmail in exile. Due to these constraints, exile becomes an imaginary place where there is no freedom to act and speak. This is in addition to the secret collaborations among state bodies that, in certain cases, lead to the end of safe shelters and to the arrest of exiles on trumped-up charges or to disregarding the decision to eliminate them.

This ever-increasing phenomenon is not only a violation of fundamental human rights and freedom, but also entails material and moral damage to the conscience and dignity of the exile, who is constantly subject to deception and exploitation. The exile, who is motivated by noble ideas and ambitions and who

fled persecution not only to save himself but to also carry the message of the oppressed to the outside world, which he hopes will be understanding and supportive, in some instances finds himself escaping intense heat through fire, as the ancient Arabic proverb describes the person who escapes a bad situation by putting himself in a worse one.

If we consider the Arab exile as a model of the exile's suffering when he leaves home for another Arab country, we will find that exploitation, deception, and conspiracy, as well as the lack of standards, are the most prominent phenomena for Arab exiles. These aspects characterize Arab exile and turn it into dangerous traps that put the exile in a state of ruin, despair, and humiliation, especially if he trusts or collaborates with the host country, even with good intentions, for the sake of better working conditions.

It should be noted here that Arab conflicts that lead from time to time to large-scale migrations from one country to another do not result in a conclusive division among Arab countries, despite their intensity, seriousness, and the dreams and illusions they elicit. These conflicts do not prevent Arab countries from collaborating and uniting in certain domains, especially in those related to security, since the most prominent goals of Arab regimes are fighting the opposition, subduing opponents, and protecting the regime. These goals that reflect common interests and characteristics are the reason Arab Ministers of Interior Affairs meet periodically and agree on principal matters, despite their conflicts.

Collaboration and harmony among security forces are not usually affected by other policies, from information exchange to crackdowns on dissidents and the consequent transformation of exile to a "reformation place" where the ideas and the dreams of exiled troublemakers are tamed, given that their governments failed to tame them.

What applies to exiles in general crystallizes as a trend and a synthesis among the elite of writers and artists because the logic of the tribe still prevails in current Arab life, including the use of literature and art to praise, to mock, and to serve immediate ends. The writer and artist suffer more painfully than others because repressive regimes want supporters more than opponents and tamed thought more than critical thought. This is why the first rivalry or possibility of conflict in exile is usually between the host country and the exiled foreign writers and artists. This makes exile begin, and perhaps end, with literature and art, which makes exile a more difficult place for those who practice these professions.

Although Arab exiles are characterized by ruin and its negative consequences, what makes them more compassionate are common worries and causes. The Arab citizen, regardless of the country he lives in, is a prisoner or a

candidate for imprisonment, and he is in any case a hostage. Exile is personal and public at the same time. The worries that led to exile are the same worries in exile. The time is ripe to replace one's worries with other worries, especially since the dictionary and all its vocabulary are the same, with a slight difference: the name of the ruler. What makes consolidation easier in this "game" is that the common causes are the same, including language, thought, literature, and art. In addition, a number of political organizations do not recognize geographical boundaries, but extend into multiple countries.

The Arab exile harbors a rich and important literary space, and this is what I will focus on now. Through it, it is possible to present dramatic paintings unlike any others, especially when the exile is filled with a certain kind of nostalgia, then discovers its falseness and emptiness, and realizes that most of the things he pursued were but an illusion. Presenting such paintings may be better than talking about them, so I turn to the other face of exile: exile abroad.

We have already referred to some features of foreign exile, but the strangest thing the exile faces is that he does not get to know his homeland well except in exile.

He begins to discover and know things he did not previously pay attention to, even though he was confronted with them on a daily basis; and questions that seemed unimportant in his homeland turn, in exile, into the most pressing and important questions. This applies to the ordinary exile who explains to himself and to others what home is. For the exile who is a writer, a huge amount of knowledge is necessary:

What is the homeland like? Why is it like this? When did it become like this and why? Dozens of other questions did not occur to the exile before. Temperatures in summer and winter, which he did not pay attention to before, turn into questions. Rates of rainfall, the seasons of migratory birds, harvest and fruit-picking times, the lengths of the homeland's land and sea borders, fish species and fishing seasons ... and he will be surprised that he did not think of all this when he was there, in his homeland. If there are questions about history and archeology, epochs, sites, and distances, he discovers that he has been more ignorant than he thought or imagined. If the person who asks is experienced in agriculture, the writer must answer. This requires him to know the types of crops and the times of cultivation and harvest, and to know that the fruits of the homeland, when they receive enough sun, are not only more tasty but also have other characteristics.

It is required of the exile, especially if he is a writer, that he have answers to these questions. If he does not give an answer or gives the wrong answers, his worthiness and value for the homeland or the cause he defends is dimin-

ished or ended, and he is not capable of confronting others or continuing. If he is requested to present his homeland to others, then his responsibility is multiplied many times. He is not only requested to answer the questions posed to him, but also to answer hypothetical questions, questions he himself poses, and therefore he must restore the homeland in all its aspects.

Moreover, writing in exile, he not only responds to strangers' questions; he has to persuade his compatriots, too, there, in the homeland, and to make them feel that he is still close and that he draws inspiration from the same well they drink from. This means that he remains close, that he did not leave them, but continues to live among them. He might exaggerate and, at times, remind them of things, names, and places that have started to fade as they started to forget them.

Having mastered the alphabet of the homeland and passed the test by confronting himself and then confronting others, the exiled writer begins to face questions of another kind: language and culture.

What is asked of him is not to know the daily language of the host country, but to enter into its depths and learn the secrets and shadows that distinguish this language. This is the first stage. In the second stage, he has to deal with the logic and specificities of the host country language, not for expression, understanding, or even recognition, but for interaction and access to the internal structure of language. This means that he adopts a one-way approach most of the time, namely the language of the other.

Few writers enter the foreign language. Language is like a magnetic field; he who enters its field cannot easily escape it. The Algerian novelist Rachid Aboutjadra is an exception. After starting to write in French, he returned to his mother tongue, with the same efficiency. Other writers have remained prisoners of the host country's language. Malik Haddad, who wrote in French alone, considered this language his harsh exile, especially since his kind of writing was directed at the Algerian reader, and not the French reader. Because he could not deliver his message directly and as efficiently as he wished in his mother tongue, he remained captive to a situation he could not free himself from. Malik Haddad is one example. He stands for many, as the situation repeats itself in English, French, and Spanish in the same way because behind these colonial countries are languages, traditions, and values, a magnetic field.

The issue of the other language goes through two stages: first coercion and necessity, when man cannot master his own national language and thus has only the language of the colonizer as a means to understand and communicate with the other; and second, the stage of the language of the exile, when the writer aims not only at communication and influence, but also wants recognition and influence.

Because the exile wants recognition, first of his existence, then of his mastery and excellence in language, he must play according to the rules of the other: the other as former opponent most often, then as competitor and other civilization, and finally as value or scale. We see an increasing number of exiles trying to distinguish themselves and seek recognition. Language is not only a means of communication, but also has an intellectual structure that defines how one thinks, interacts, and exerts influence. Each language has its own structure, roots, shadows, and philosophy. Up to now, merging languages has not produced or led to interaction beyond the former roots to acquire the best of both.

To be acceptable in the language of exile, new qualities stand out, among them strangeness and uniqueness. This explains the great amount of writing, especially in French, produced by expatriates or those in exile.

Language is one of the traps of exile; it appears as salvation or the illusion of salvation because, in the new situation, it becomes more than a language, more than merely a bridge between two cultures and two civilizations. Having intended to convey a message intended to be clear and limited, it becomes the basis of the other's recognition of merit within his context. This is what turns many writers, not into representatives of linguistic and cultural double-mindedness, but into inverted and distorted references to the interaction of cultures and civilizations. This is the situation of a number of exile writers: they are neither an extension of their original culture, nor a representation of the culture of exile and the age in which they live. In his attempt to enter the market, the exiled writer may find himself subjected to various pressures, especially to the mechanism of supply and demand, which requires him to be new and different, but not with respect to what he was or what he should reach for; rather, he must engage his memory with the wondrous and the marvelous within the specifications of a consumer market that has its own rules and mechanism. Perhaps this explains the great number of trivial topics addressed, not as the most important or the first to be analyzed, but for their ability to surprise the other with charm and strangeness.

In this dangerous game, we move from language to culture. After dealing with language and culture individually, we deal with language and culture together, and differently from before. After language was the means of communication for recognition, it acquired additional characteristics and requirements: the exile's language must be superior in vocabulary and composition and new in the cultural dimension of its subject matter. This brings us to the question of culture, after language was its gatekeeper. This is the second issue to be noted.

The game of culture, as attractive and motivating as it is, is very dangerous because the comparison of two civilizations under unequal conditions must

lead to wrong conclusions. The stronger culture will impose itself on the weaker culture and subject it to its logic, conditions, and climate. There is no doubt that the ancient heritage and the relationship between cultures, especially those stained with the impurities of history, wars, and conflicting interests, show only the negative side of the weak civilization.

This rule applies specifically to the relationship between Arab culture and European culture, despite the diversity of European culture, multilingualism, and different historical stages. The European wants to see the other culture through the lens of his own historical heritage, with all its negative aspects; he sees the other culture in its state of silence, which emphasizes the superiority and distinction of his own culture.

One of the conditions for recognition of the writer in exile is that he exists within the framework of the other language and its culture, not as an organic part of this culture or as an expression of its diversity and multiplicity, but as an exception and a sign of vitality, demonstrating once again the superiority of the culture of the host country and the ability of this culture to produce what it needs and lacks. This prompts an increasing number of exile writers to abandon the subjects of interest to their own people and their communities and to assimilate instead into a strange situation that excites the other's appetites, pleases and affirms his superiority, and eases his conscience, considering that his attitude toward people, culture, and civilization, despite his bias and racism, does not necessitate a reproach, revision, or different position.

Some writers in exile do not present their culture and cause as they are in reality, but as the other, the European, likes to see them, as they are revealed to him, especially within certain specifications. Here, it must be noted that Western analytical and reading skills are more advanced, which makes Westerners assume they are more experienced in knowledge of backward societies and hence capable of reading them.

This assumption – an illusion that both the host country and the exile are pushed toward – turns the nation and national culture into a one-sided reading only within a specific approach, knowing that the read societies are rich, diverse, and highly complex. Therefore, a one-sided or partial reading can result in error, a kind of error that is widespread and that generates rules of understanding or dealing with the other culture.

Departure from this rule results in consequences that the exiled writer may not be able to bear, because if the first stage, that is the homeland, means the removal of one of the exile's lungs, then effacement and lack of recognition means the removal of his second lung. The exile then loses the justification for his existence and consequently his justification to remain an exile. He therefore resorts to one of two ways to break this siege: restoring the home-

land in writing to the point of mania, or setting it aside to the to the point of forgetfulness.

These two cases constantly recur in exiles' writings. The homeland that is written about and that the exile wants to see restored means the restoration of a dream or past and not the restoration of the actual homeland, the homeland as it exists today in reality, because the exile knows the homeland that was and that remains alive in his memory and heart. He gradually grows ignorant of his existing homeland with growing temporal and geographical distance, which gradually turns into a form of self-distance or imagined closeness, especially since both sides of the relationship evolve and change within different systems.

Because it is in a state of continuous transformation, the homeland no longer resembles the picture the exile had of it at a given time. However, the exile refuses to recognize or deal with the changing picture. In an attempt to confirm his "truth," the exiled writer exaggerates when reconstructing the details of the homeland as he used to know and live it, and this means restoring not only the childhood of the exile, but also the childhood of the homeland, or at least one of its stages.

The Iraqi writer Gha'ib Ta'mah Farman, who was absent from his homeland Iraq for thirty years and died in exile, was not able to imagine Baghdad except as he knew it and as he left it. This is why, throughout the years of his exile, he kept restoring this Baghdad, knowing that the Baghdad he used to know, the past, no longer existed and that another Baghdad had taken its place; it is not important that it is larger and more beautiful, but it is different.

There is no other Iraqi writer who was able to recover and recall to memory the Baghdad of the nineteen-fifties as Gha'ib did; and if it were possible for this Baghdad to return, any visitor to the city, even if not one of its children, would have been able to walk around in its neighborhoods at night without having to fear getting lost. But this Baghdad no longer exists. The Baghdad that returns to life again, with its features, people, and smells, is not the real or contemporary Baghdad, but a desired city recovered in the imagination from the past.

Why did Gha'ib Farman write like this?

Most probably because he was not able to leave his homeland, and therefore he carried his country with him and began his long journey in exile, then embraced the image of that homeland when he closed his eyes and died.

Many do not discover their homeland in its true and sometimes burning sense until they are deprived of it or forced to leave it. This is what lends the homeland an additional image that it did not have before or that was not so clearly visible, because in many cases man sees his country with this love, longing, and appreciation of beauty only when there is a distance, just as one cannot see the forest when walking among its trees.

Hemingway said that, when he wanted to write about the American West, he used to see it more clearly in Paris.

Through which eyes do we see the homeland? Do we see it through the eyes of childhood, as it was, or through the eyes of the future, as we would like it to be? The exiled writer faces this challenging question; and rarely do we find the real, contemporary homeland represented, because this homeland is temporary, inessential. We see the past only and the dream of the future.

In the previous paragraphs, we have represented Arab and foreign exiles. To complete the picture, we need to make additional observations:

If the vast majority of Arab exiles migrate to nearby and available areas for reasons that need no clarification or justification, the Arab migrations in recent decades have gained in intensity and diversity to a degree that requires careful study, because through this phenomenon we can read the Arab reality and predicament in all its contradictions and manifestations, but also in its possibilities, especially since the cause of this migration is primarily political and secondarily economic, although the causes overlap and affect each other. The cultural manifestation of the phenomenon of migration is highly diverse, on the one hand, and not fixed, on the other.

We need to turn our attention to the role of oil in these migrations. Oil has imposed formulas and paths, on the one hand, and generated new contexts, on the other. In addition, it has created factors of attraction and repulsion for certain sectors and professions. Indeed, the qualified and professional sector, including the cultural field, was subject to severe influences.

Deriving from these influences and clearly visible is what we can call the culture of oil in its various forms: journalism, publishing houses, and television. It has specific patterns and contents: triviality, lack of seriousness, consumerism, the promotion of superstition and conspiracy theories, the restoration of heritage in its backward forms, the fight against rationality, democracy, modernity, and scientific reason, as well as the promotion of conditions of employment different from those that prevailed in the region, as a formula to undermine culture and corrupt intellectuals.

This phenomenon has not been limited to the oil-producing countries, but extended to other countries and to many sectors, including the exiles. In the atmosphere of growing tribal migrations and differences, in addition to the material hardship suffered by the majority of exiles, the culture of oil has affected some fundamental structures; it has also affected the symbolic figures in the intellectual and cultural field, spreading the thought and culture of decline and generated a myriad of problems in the sphere of culture and intellectuals. This serious phenomenon continues to affect wide areas.

Another observation must be noted: the West's Orientalist memory sketches us Arabs with its bias, hatred, one-sided reading, abundant hostility, and contradiction of interests within the framework of history and the relationship between two civilizations and two cultures. As regards the image oil has currently produced of us, we are, in summary, a group of wealthy, lazy, and ruthless sheikhs. By chance, we found a huge fortune under our feet: oil. This resource, which is of interest to the whole world, cannot be left in the hands of these greedy villains, and therefore it must be liberated, especially since those who possess it cannot deal with it or benefit from it. To justify this, the representation of these people must be highlighted, and this is how a distorted image full of mistakes was born and spread. This desired Western representation was produced, and it is the worry of the Arab intellectuals because the intellectuals fall between the anvil of these regimes and the hammer of the West, which does not see anything in the region and its people but the ancient past and a folklore remnant, and therefore it is not reasonable for these peoples to have their cultures, concerns, and aspirations. This is what produces our represented traits in the memory of the other.

What our region suffers from and what exiles complain about is the absence of justice, reason, and objective measures, as well as the absence of any formula for the modern state, including its constitution, institutions, and human relations. This is the trade of the West; it is what brought about or produced these regimes. It protects them and is their accomplice. Although the voices of the exiles are still faint and collide with dozens of barriers, they will succeed, because even if the truth is reduced to silence, it will come to light one day, and if conscience falls asleep one day, it must awaken the next. Many will discover how deceived they were.

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