

**Individuation and the Shaping of Personal Identity**  
**A comparative study of the modern novel**

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**Abstract**

This study endeavours to contribute to the sociology of literature through its analysis of the process of individuation in three distinct literatures, one western and two Arabic.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to link the process of individuation to the literary genre of the novel, and demonstrate how one can probe certain aspects of individuation through the study of the novel. This particular approach facilitates a significant dialogical interaction between the process of individuation and the genre of the novel. By contextualising each writer in his specific literary field of production one is able to identify the specificity of his literary contribution, in the process of shaping personal identity.

The introduction outlines the theoretical framework and argues that literary texts are immersed in a complex social network of power relations relevant to perceptions of identity, the process of individuation and the psychology of the individual, by linking them to the complex process of modernity. The study grounds its investigation in the most sophisticated theories in the sociology of cultures, identity and literary theory through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Stuart Hall, Anthony Giddens, René Girard, and Mikhail Bakhtin. By doing so it avoids the normative and simplistic understanding of the process of individuation, and the genre of the novel. It views the modern novel as immersed in a complex social network of power relations (Bourdieu), relevant to perceptions of identity (Hall), and the process of individuation and the psychology of the individual (Girard), interwoven into the fabric of the complex process of modernity (Giddens) and articulated in the modern novel due to its polyphony of voices (Bakhtin).

For my father



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At last I absolve everyone but myself from any responsibility for the errors, contradictions and opinions in my work.

London, September 2005

**Transliteration note**

Since this is a study of comparative literature this thesis will not use standard transliteration with the diacritical marks. This position is adopted throughout to avoid confusion and to be systematic. All the books are read in the English translation and all quotes, title of books and articles, names of authors, characters and places will be given in the way in which they appear in the translations throughout.

## INTRODUCTION

The question of individuation and the pursuit of meaning has preoccupied scholars of literature, the social sciences, and philosophy, as well as artists and writers, since the late nineteenth century. The range of approaches to understanding how and why this new interest in existential experiences came about in diverse societies has varied in terms of different perceptions. These approaches range from those that consider this quest for meaning to be a spiritual one, or a socially sanctioned and constrained one, an internal process, or a result of a self-imposed solitude or an existential crisis generated by the increasing socio-political pluralism in modern societies.

The overarching aim of this study is to link the process of individuation to the novel as a distinct literary genre. In order to identify and locate the shaping of identity that is articulated within the novel, three writers have been selected: Knut Hamsun from Norway, Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt and Tayeb Salih from the Sudan. A further aim of this study is to contextualise each writer and to identify the specificity of his literary contribution to make the later comparison meaningful. I will apply modern critical literary theory in an attempt to answer the crucial question of how and why this new type of literature emerged in various cultures and out of diverse literary traditions at a specific time, and to understand the genesis of individuation and the pursuit of meaning as it developed in all three contexts. Furthermore, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the social consciousness of the individual, and the shift from collective consciousness to individualism in the three different countries, Norway, Egypt and the Sudan. The latter two countries were chosen for this study because individuation is not a fully achieved or socially accepted idea in the Arab world today. Such an approach facilitates a comprehension of the pursuit of meaning, and whether this individuation is a self-imposed isolation and/or an existential crisis, and how a shift from a strong sense of unity to socio-political pluralism influenced these writers, as well as whether there is any parallel between their lives and writing, in other words, autobiographical elements.

The three literary traditions and authors have been selected for several reasons. Firstly, because the authors' works represent a significant break with the literary traditions in which they exist, and should be seen as contributing to the birth of modernist narrative in

their local context.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the books selected for this study are published at a time when the respective local societies were experiencing a rapid social and political transformation related to the emergence of modernism.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, they articulate specifically how this new literary character perceives the world around him,<sup>3</sup> not what he sees, but how he sees it, alienated and ridden by anxiety as he is. Fourthly, they all represent a milestone in their respective literatures.

This study further undertakes to test the validity of western approaches to individuation in western and non-western literatures and see how these approaches could be applied to both, or if not found to be applicable, what changes and modifications need to be made in the case of Arabic literature. Such an approach gives rise to several questions, and this study endeavours to provide sufficient material to question already existing theory and material:

Is the process of individuation as reflected in Arabic literature imported due to the fact that the West and western literature has been viewed as a model for imitation, or has it emerged from a process of internal social, cultural and political change over time? Furthermore what are the specific dynamics of Arab societies that might represent an obstacle to individuation? To what extent can critical literary theory enable us to read the different layers in the texts selected for this study, and investigate how the genre of the novel transcends cultural peculiarities? Is this quest a spiritual one or is it socially sanctioned or constrained as an internal process? Is there a specific goal and if so, what does this goal look like and does it cease to exist. Does individuation result from a self-imposed isolation or an existential crisis on the personal level due to increasing socio-political pluralism, and can we really isolate these socio-political issues in society from the literature itself and its development within its context?

The comparative nature of this study aims at endeavouring to compare and contrast the open societies in the West, in this case Norway, and the closed and less democratic

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<sup>1</sup> Hamsun is recognised to be representative of modernist narrative together with Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Eliot and Beckett. Mahfouz and Salih occupy the same positions in their own traditions.

<sup>2</sup> I will outline this in the parts elaborating on the *Question of Cultural Identity*, and *The Consequences of Modernity*.

<sup>3</sup> Especially in Hamsun's *Hunger* (but also in all the other novels selected for this study) the protagonist is more concerned about subjective matters and how he perceives the world around him than what he actually sees.

societies in the Arab world, in this study that is Egypt and the Sudan. Chapter one analyses the process of individuation in Norwegian literature through the work of Knut Hamsun and in particular his novels, *Hunger*, *Mysteries*, and *Pan*. Chapter two studies the Arabic-Egyptian literature of Naguib Mahfouz and the novels *The Beggar* and *Respected Sir*. Chapter three investigates the work of the Arabic-Sudanese novelist Tayeb Salih in his *Season of Migration to the North*, and *The wedding of Zein*. The conclusion brings together the result of the analysis and relates the process of individuation and the shaping of personal identity to the genre of the novel, evaluating the selected novels and highlighting their individual specificity as well as emphasising their similarities. However, before attempting to answer or even elaborate on these questions it is necessary to establish a sound theoretical basis. Therefore, the theories selected will be discussed and outlined in detail.

### **The field of cultural production**

With the advent of modernism in western literature there arose a need to grasp, understand and analyse this new literature, its style, and its mode. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century a new interest in the writer and artist as a type *per se* changed the entire cultural universe. According to Pierre Bourdieu this is the result of a “collective enterprise which is inseparable from (1) the constitution of an autonomous literary field, independent of or even opposite to the economic field (e.g. bohemian vs. bourgeois), and (2) the constitution of a tactical position within the field (e.g. artist vs. bohemian).”<sup>4</sup>

In the first decades of the twentieth century modern literary criticism, as we know it today, was established. From about the thirties<sup>5</sup> onwards until the sixties the leading approach was that inspired by the *Russian Formalists* and *Anglo American New Critics*, focusing on the *formalist* and *structuralist* nature of language and *literary* understanding

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<sup>4</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production, Essays on Art and Literature*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 1993), p. 162.

<sup>5</sup> The very first attempt in this fashion was as early as 1914 with Victor Shklovsky's *The resurrection of the word*.



of literature.<sup>6</sup> These people were primarily concerned with, and believed that a work of art in general, and a literary text in particular, could be understood and read solely on the basis of the text itself.<sup>7</sup>

The problem, however, with such an approach is that it relies exclusively on internal analysis, *explication de texts*, that it carries within itself the main obstacle: "it looks for the final explanation of texts either within the texts themselves (the object of analysis, in other words, is its own explanation) or within some sort of a historical 'essence' rather than in the complex network of social relations that makes the very existence of the texts possible."<sup>8</sup> It also does not take into account the creator/writer of the literary work himself or his relation to other producers and their literary practice: nor does it consider the value - that is the symbolic capital an author or a literary work might possess - of the work at a given historical moment.<sup>9</sup> Another problem that "tautegorical" reading suffers from is that it ignores the fact that "what makes a given work a literary work" is a complex social and institutional framework which authorizes and sustains literature and literary practice.<sup>10</sup> This idea, that the only purpose of a literary text is the text itself as a structure of significations that is self-sufficient,<sup>11</sup> and that "they take for granted but fail to take account of the social-historical conditions within which the object of analysis is produced, constructed and received,"<sup>12</sup> prompted Bourdieu to (re)introduce the terms *Field (Champ)* and *Habitus* and thereby contribute to the field of the sociology of literature.

In general, "a field is a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning"<sup>13</sup> that is regulated by its own time and space, explicit rules and specific logic. At the same

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<sup>6</sup> Such methods replaced the biographical method most common at the beginning of the twentieth century.

<sup>7</sup> For an introduction to Russian Formalism and Anglo-American New Criticism see Ann Jefferson and David Robey, (eds.), *Modern Literary Theory, A Comparative Introduction*, (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd, 1982), Chapters 1 and 3.

<sup>8</sup> Randal Johnson, in introduction to Pierre Bourdieu *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> This type of symbolic capital might change considerably over time as the field of cultural production changes, in other words, a work can either lose or gain credibility in accordance to the established and existing canon.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Examples of this are espoused by critics such as John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, and Allan Tate, as well as the Chicago Critics.

<sup>12</sup> John B. Thompson, in introduction to Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 28-29.

<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 162.

time, it is also “a space in which a *game* takes place [*espace de jeu*] a field of objective relations between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake.”<sup>14</sup> What distinguishes Bourdieu in this sense is that he does not, in locating and inventing the writer as such, distinguish between the writer himself and the field (literary) within which he operates, the position he occupies, or his struggle for a position, in other words, the particular social game in which he participates willingly or not, just by being an author. This happens in the literary field, a field that is being constituted at the same time as its autonomy is being established. Bourdieu acknowledges that there exist many different types of fields (literary, economic, political, etc.) that are related to each other within the social space, but he underlines that each field enjoys its own rules on how the game is to be played. To be able to take part in a field’s *game* and be acknowledged as a legitimate player, the *agent* has to possess a minimum of skill, talent and knowledge about the field and how its mechanism functions. Consequently, in any field the ultimate aim is to achieve maximum power and to dominate it, since every field can be seen as a battlefield in which all *agents* seek to position themselves in such a way as to acquire the most power possible in order to award or withdraw legitimacy from other agents in the game of the field.<sup>15</sup> The agents possessing the most legitimacy are the ones who have acquired the most time- and space-specific *symbolic capital* existing within the field. For the purpose of this study to understand field is:

To recall that literary works are produced in a particular social universe endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws. And yet this observation runs counter to both the tradition of internal reading, which considers works in themselves independently from the historical conditions in which they were produced, and the tradition of external explication, which one normally associates with sociology and which relates the works directly to the economic and social conditions of the moment.<sup>16</sup>

In order to locate an author within the field of literary production it is necessary to bear in mind that the field operates as a “veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations

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<sup>14</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de Sociologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1984), p. 197, quoted in Toril Moi, “Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociology of Culture” in *New Literary History*, 1991, 22, p. 1021.

<sup>15</sup> In the literary field this means authors, publishers, critics, editors, etc.

<sup>16</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 163.

of force of a particular type are exerted.”<sup>17</sup> Within this particular universe and the specific struggle taking place, the crucial task is deciding, and knowing, who is regarded as part of the universe, who is considered a real writer, and who is not. Bourdieu suggests that “all critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it...they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of a work of art.”<sup>18</sup>

Employing such a method, Bourdieu manages to recognize yet another level in which literature has to be targeted to fully comprehend how the structures of the literary field functions. He thus avoids the simplistic approach of Marxist literary theory<sup>19</sup> which revolves around the analysis of literature as a mere reflection of social reality; more specifically, the *superstructure* (cultural activities) develops from the *base* (the economic system) and demonstrates the nature of the base and how it functions.<sup>20</sup> Such a one-dimensional view of the social world is antithetical to Bourdieu’s approach;<sup>21</sup> hence his division of the social world into multi-dimensional spaces distinguished as autonomous fields, and not just into class, gender, or race. In this sense he views literary production, not as a reflection of classes in society, but as a refraction, in other words, literature ensures that outside influences that enter the literary field, change their impact, and direction.<sup>22</sup> Another difficulty with Marxist analysis is its tendency to confuse theoretical classes with real social groups, and hence it misconstrues a whole series of questions

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> For an introduction to Marxism and literary theory see Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1989), especially chapters 1 and 2, as well as Terry Eagleton, and Drew Milae (eds.), *Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), chapter 1.

<sup>20</sup> It cannot be denied, though, that Bourdieu was strongly influenced by western traditions of Marxism, due to his theoretical interest in social classes, and how economic capital functions in the social space, as well as French ethnology and sociology. However, he did not divide social classes by their positions of means of production, but regarded them as agents that desire more or less the same kind and quantities of money, dispositions, possibilities, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> In the literary field money, political power, etc. will not have a huge say in your impact in and on the field, compared to most other fields, since the symbolic capital determines who has the right and the power to consecrate an author or his work. This is clearly seen, especially the more autonomous a sector of the field of cultural production becomes, where agents produce for other producers, the economy of practices is based on “loser wins”, that is, the economic world reversed, where an inversion of the essential principles of traditional economics exist, like business, power and cultural authority. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, especially part one, chapter 1, and part two, chapter 5.

concerning the ways in which agents mobilize themselves through representation.<sup>23</sup> What constitutes the main concern for Bourdieu is not to create a theory of a series of representations, but rather an instrument to comprehend the symbolic mechanisms that produce these effects. In so doing he will be able to discover the structure of the work, not just its social function, in other words, to express the interests and groups it serves. It was against this form of reduction (*short circuit* effect) that he developed the theory of the field.<sup>24</sup>

As we have seen the field of power is a field of forces, which exist latently and have a lot of potential, and it will play upon any particle, which may venture into it. It is also a battlefield which can be seen as a game. In this game, “the trump cards are the *habitus*, that is to say, the acquirements, the embodied, assimilated properties, such as elegance, ease of manner, beauty and so forth, and capital as such, that is, the inherited assets which define the possibilities inherent in the field.”<sup>25</sup> These trump cards determine the nature of the game, firstly in deciding who will succeed or fail, and secondly in what style the game will be played. All *agents* have a history of their life, to be precise, their trajectory, which is “determined by the interaction between the forces of the field and his own inertia, that is, the *habitus* as the remanence of a trajectory which tends to orient future trajectory.”<sup>26</sup> As in most other games, which also take place within their specific field of power, power itself is what the *agents* are battling for, the stake which has to be won and controlled. In addition to the *agents* involved in the game, two distinctions have to be made in order to comprehend their actions and positions within the field. The first is in regard to what “trump cards” or inheritance they possess. Secondly, what their attitude and approach is towards this inheritance, particularly whether they possess the essential dimension of the *habitus*. Thirdly, what means they have and whether they hold the requisite determination to succeed. For Bourdieu it becomes more interesting to ask “not how a writer comes to be what he is, in a sort of genetic psycho-sociology, but rather how

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<sup>23</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>24</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 181.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 148-150.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

the position or 'post' he occupies - that of a writer of particular type - became constituted."<sup>27</sup>

Bourdieu's aim, by introducing the Aristotelian notion of *hexis*, converted by scholastic tradition into *habitus*, was to emphasise the role of the *agent* and his particularity in the field of cultural production; he explains:

I wanted to react against structuralism and its strange philosophy of action which, implicitly in the Levi-Straussian notion of the unconscious and avowedly among the Althusserians, made the agent disappear by reducing it to the role of supporter or bearer (*Träger*) of the structure....I wanted to demonstrate the active, inventive and 'creative' capacities of the *habitus* and the agent....I intended to indicate that this generative power is not that of a universal nature or of reason...(the *habitus* the word says it - is acquired and it is also a possession which may, in certain cases, function as a form of capital), nor is it that of a transcendental subject in the idealist tradition.<sup>28</sup>

The *habitus* is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways, and John B. Thompson, argues in his introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* that the *habitus* is constituted by different types of dispositions, that are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and transposable.<sup>29</sup> We acquire our dispositions, especially in our early childhood, through a process of inculcation. This is done through several ordinary, everyday happenings that train and teach us how to perceive our surroundings and determine our social behaviour. In this sense, we acquire a specific pattern of thought and behaviour that shapes both our mind and body and becomes second nature. We then structure these dispositions so that they reflect our social background and the social conditions within which they were acquired.<sup>30</sup> This means that the *habitus* will reflect the differences and resemblances characterised by the social conditions the individuals inhabit. These will to a large extent be homogeneous among individuals from similar social and cultural backgrounds. Structured dispositions are also durable; they are so deeply ingrained that they endure through the life history of the individual, operating in a way that is pre-conscious and hence not readily amenable to conscious reflection and modification.<sup>31</sup> Finally, our dispositions "are *generative* and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art, Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 179.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

*transposable* in the sense that they are capable of generating a multiplicity of practices and perceptions in fields other than those in which they were originally acquired. As a durably installed set of dispositions, the habitus tends to generate practices and perceptions, works and appreciations, which concur with the conditions of existence of which the habitus is itself the product.<sup>32</sup> The *habitus* endows the *agents* with some kind of awareness that determines their attitude and response to the world around them - a feeling for how to play the *game*. This 'practical sense' (*Le sens pratique*) is more a state of the mind than of body, and it directs what is suitable and accepted within the *field's* rules, and regulate the *agents'* conduct, and behaviour, in other words, it 'orients' their actions and inclinations without strictly determining them.<sup>33</sup> Any *habitus* or disposition, though, has to be fulfilled through, and is defined in its relation and response to, the structure of opportunities that its occupant's position, and position-takings, open up, as well as to the position occupied in the field that presides over how these opportunities are appreciated and perceived within the field.<sup>34</sup> Such an approach explains the absurdity of trying to link, for example, a literary genre to a specific social group, even if the majority of its defenders, representatives or inventors belong to and come from it. Bourdieu argues that:

The interaction between positions and dispositions is clearly reciprocal. Any habitus, as a system of dispositions, is only effectively realized in relation to a determinate structure of socially marked positions (marked among other things by the social properties of its occupants, through which it allows itself to be perceived); but, conversely, it is through dispositions, which are themselves more or less completely adjusted to those positions, that one or another potentiality lying inscribed in the positions is realized.<sup>35</sup>

To grasp and utilise the potential of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* for our study here, and for a reading in practice, one must understand and regard *habitus* as "the basis of the social structuration of temporal existence, of all the anticipations and the presuppositions through which we practically construct the sense of the world - its signification, but also, inseparably, its orientation towards the still-to-come."<sup>36</sup> As for the greater picture, and an understanding of the dynamics between *habitus* and *field*, it is

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 265.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

important to bear in mind that “it is in the relationship between the habituses and the fields to which they are adjusted to a greater or lesser degree that the foundation of all the scales of utility is generated.”<sup>37</sup>

One of the most significant ways of distinguishing oneself and one’s *habitus* is through language, and utilising language in an effort to gain a position within the literary field is something all the selected authors have done to some extent.<sup>38</sup> Bourdieu also made language a main determinant in the battles for power that take place in society, especially symbolic power.

### **Language as symbolic power**

Bourdieu’s notion of *field* and *habitus* has helped us recognize the many facets of literary production within the field of cultural production. This becomes of crucial importance when locating and relating the process of individuation and the pursuit of meaning to the literary genre of the novel, and is essential to locating the authors and their positions in the field of literary production. Language, however, is another way of distinguishing and positioning oneself stylistically from previous or even existing narrative discourse within one’s field of power. Thus, in relation to the novel as a genre a distinct language is important. As Hamsun, Mahfouz and Salih all had to make their names in their respective literary fields they needed to create their individual and authentic novelistic voice, and as Bakhtin suggests:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech type (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary its own emphases)-this internal stratification present in every

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Hamsun used language to distinguish himself from other contemporary writers, both through writing articles, and creating an innovative and new language for his characters, especially the hero of *Hunger*. Mahfouz was an active writer of articles, and he took every chance to distinguish himself from the established writers, as well as dramatically transforming his language in the modern novels of the sixties, after having fulfilled the language of realism in *The Trilogy*. Salih’s use of language to distinguish himself was primarily in his novels, and it is especially his grotesque and direct descriptions of the violence that takes place in *Season* that signifies this.

language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre.<sup>39</sup>

Hence, the selected authors' attention to language, because language is how we structure power in society. We use language more to be understood, liked, have/take control, or accept others' control over us, than, as Roman Jacobsen would argue, just to give a message. In other words, language structures power in the symbolic form. This is done in different ways, and in daily life this power is not exercised as an explicit physical force but is endowed with legitimacy through its transmutation into various symbolic forms. For this process to be successful the *agents* in the specific fields have to recognise (*reconnaissance*) and misrecognise (*méconnaissance*) that the exercise of power is dependent on a shared belief among the *agents*, that even those who least benefit will participate in their own subjection by the fact that they are part of the game and play by the rules of the field. The dominated *agents* are not passive individuals to which this symbolic power is applied, but the nature of symbolic power though needs an active complicity from its participants, and that they believe both in the legitimacy of power, as well as the legitimacy of those who exercise it. Applying this to the field of literary production Bourdieu suggests that:

In order fully to understand the structure of this field and, in particular, the existence, within the field of linguistic production, of a sub-field of restricted production which derives its fundamental properties from the fact that the producers within it produce first and foremost for other producers, it is necessary to distinguish between the capital necessary for the simple production of more or less legitimate ordinary speech, on the one hand, and the capital of instruments of expression (presupposing appropriation of the resources deposited in objectified form in libraries - books, and in particular in the 'classics', grammars and dictionaries) which is needed to produce a written discourse worthy of being published, that is to say, made official, on the other.<sup>40</sup>

Production in the 'sub-field of restricted production' is then not aimed at a large-scale market, but at other producers, that is people within the *field* possessing the necessary cultural and symbolic capital. It is also here that a work of art can have meaning, since the receivers acquire the essential cultural competence and aesthetic dispositions to read the code into which this work has been encoded. For this to function, the cultivated

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<sup>39</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 262-263.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1994), p. 57.



*habitus* and the artistic *field* that ground each other mutually, have, as aspects of the same historical institution, to utilize this harmony that exists between the two of them. In other words, both the work of art and the consecrator of the work are a result of a long collective history that facilitates their existence. In this sense “the struggles among writers over the legitimate art of writing contribute, through their very existence, to producing both the legitimate language, defined by its distance from the ‘common’ language, and belief in its legitimacy.”<sup>41</sup>

### **The rules of art**

As has already been noted there are certain rules that the *agents* have to recognize in order to be able to play the game in their field, and these rules may differ depending on an *agent's* symbolic capital in the field of power. This is particularly clear when analysing how, and in what way, authors in general, and in particular the ones selected for this study, enter the field. In the late nineteenth century the structure of the literary field, as we know it today, was established. Consequently, it is during this period that “the opposition between art and money, which structures the field of power, is reproduced in the literary field in the form of the opposition between ‘pure’ art, symbolically dominant but economically dominated.”<sup>42</sup> Poetry, the incarnation of ‘pure’ art *par excellence*, is not possible to sell outside the field, that is, other poets, production for other producers, and commercial art, existing mainly in two forms, the boulevard theatre, and industrial art. The theatre generates huge economic profits and bourgeois consecration through the academy, while popular art, that is *vaudeville*, the popular or serialized novel *feuilleton*, journalism and cabaret, does not generate as much income. According to Bourdieu “there is thus a chiasmatic structure, homologous with the structure of the field of power, in which, as we know, the intellectuals, rich in cultural capital and relatively poor in economic capital, and the owners of industry and business, rich in economic capital and relatively poor in cultural capital, are in opposition.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 185.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

Avant-garde<sup>44</sup> authors hoping to enter the literary field will do so with no economic or symbolic capital and will have to gradually gain symbolic capital, and in time, they may also gain some economic capital without losing their symbolic capital. If they do start to lose some symbolic capital for economic capital, they are drifting towards the other part of the existing dualist structure within the field, that is to say, from serious to popular literature. It is thus possible to win in the symbolic area and at the same time lose in the economic area, and vice versa - in short, the economic world reversed. In this way, there is a temporal gap between supply and demand, especially in the field of restricted production which can be said to be economically dominated but symbolically dominant. The struggle for positions and position-takings within the literary field is often done by referring to other producers within the field. In this sense the field converts into a battlefield, where the avant-garde challenges the values of the establishment. Such a challenge materialises in two ways; either criticising the establishment for being too old fashioned, or arguing for restoring the old values, they, the establishment, have left behind. The struggle of a newcomer to make his name (*faire date*) literally involves seeking discontinuity, rupture, difference, and revolution, as opposed to the established figures who desire continuity, identity, and reproduction.<sup>45</sup> To arrest the movement of time is contrary to the aim of the avant-garde, which is to produce time. To emphasize this shift from, and break with, the past, naming and branding oneself differently is essential in the struggle for recognition and distinction,<sup>46</sup> both for the artists themselves and the critics. By effecting a rupture in the continuity, or even continuity in the rupture - both of which are important in determining the evolution of a field on its way towards reaching autonomy - one has to bring into play the experience of the field's history as one endeavours to revolutionize it, and this is the trademark of all great heretics.

The object of the science of cultural works is the correspondence of the structure of the works like form, structure and genre, and the structure of the literary field. Thus "the impetus for change in cultural works - language, art, literature, science, etc. - resides in

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<sup>44</sup> For a detailed discussion about the avant-garde see Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968).

<sup>45</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 106.

<sup>46</sup> In the history of literature and art there are numerous examples of this, e.g. all the various -isms, as well as types of art, like pop art, land art, body art, etc.

the struggles that take place in the corresponding fields of production. These struggles, whose goal is the preservation or transformation of the established power relationships in the field of production, obviously have as their effect the preservation or transformation of the structure of the field of works, which are the tools and stakes in these struggles.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore it is important to highlight that for all the involved *agents* in the field - writers, critics, publishers, directors, etc. - there is only one legitimate way of accumulating capital, be it symbolic, cultural or economic, and it consists of making a name for oneself, a name that has authority, recognition and is known, in other words, “the capital of consecration - implying a power to consecrate objects (this is the effect of a signature or trademark) or people (by publication, exhibition, etc.), and hence of giving them value, and of making profits from this operation.”<sup>48</sup> This is done “among artists, obviously, with group exhibitions or prefaces by which consecrated authors consecrate the younger ones, who consecrate them in return as masters or heads of schools; between artists and patrons or collectors; between artists and critics, and in particular avant-garde critics, who consecrate themselves by obtaining the consecration of the artists they champion or by rediscovering or re-evaluating minor artists and thus activating and giving proof of their power of consecration, and so forth.”<sup>49</sup>

If one aims at understanding the field of cultural production, how it functions, and what may be produced in it, one cannot “separate the expressive drive (which has its source in the very functioning of the field and in the fundamental *illusio* which makes it possible) from the specific logic of the field, pregnant with objective potentialities, and from everything which will simultaneously constrain and authorize the expressive drive to convert itself into a *specific solution*.”<sup>50</sup> Knowledge of the rules of this model allow us to comprehend to what extent a writer or a reader, in other words the *agents*, of a text may occupy a position within the field, and possess the dispositions, *habitus*, they do, or in other words, do what they do and be what they are. Accordingly, Bourdieu argues that:

All positions depend, in their very existence, and in the determinations they impose in their occupants, on their actual and potential situation in the structure of the field - that is to say, in the structure and distribution of those kinds of capital (or of power) whose possession governs

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<sup>47</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 183.

<sup>48</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 148.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

the obtaining of specific profits (such as literary prestige) put into play in the field. To different positions (which, in a universe as little institutionalized as the literary or artistic field, can only be apprehended through the properties of their occupants) correspond homologous position-takings, including literary or artistic works, obviously, but also political acts and discourses, manifestos or polemics, etc. and this obliges us to challenge the alternative between an internal reading of the work and an explanation based on the social conditions of its production or consumption...In the phase of equilibrium, the space of positions tends to govern the space of position-takings. It is to the specific 'interests' associated with different positions in the literary field that one must look for the principle of literary (etc.) position-takings, and even the political position-takings outside the field.<sup>51</sup>

It is also important to consider Stanley Fish's notion of 'the informed reader,'<sup>52</sup> a person to whom analysis is of paramount importance; a theoretician and a cultivated reader that takes for the object his own experience: "He does not need to push empirical observation very far to discover that the reader called for by pure works is the product of exceptional social conditions which reproduce (*mutatis mutandis*) the social conditions of their production (in this sense, the author and legitimate reader are interchangeable)."<sup>53</sup> This outlines the historical genesis of the pure aesthetic and helps us understand and establish, in the literary field, the conditions for pure reading. As Bourdieu points out:

This once again means that the break with intuitionism and the narcissistic complacency of the hermeneutic tradition can only be achieved in and through a reappropriation of the whole history of the field of production which has produced the producers, the consumers and the products, and hence produced the analysts themselves - that is, in and through a historical and sociological labour which constitutes the only effective form of knowledge of self. It is in this sense, diametrically opposed to that offered by the 'hermeneutic' tradition, that one may assert that 'in the end, all understanding is an understanding of oneself'.<sup>54</sup>

### **The question of cultural Identity & The consequences of modernity**

The understanding of the self and the perception of the individual has changed dramatically with the emergence of modernism. Anthony Giddens argues in his book, *The Consequences of Modernity*, that the *nation-state* and a *systematic capitalist production* are of particular significance for the development of modernity, and that they have now, in close conjunction with one another, swept across the world because of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>52</sup> See Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader, Affective Stylistics", in *New Literary History*, Volume II, Number 1, Autumn 1970, pp. 123-62.

<sup>53</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 302.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

power they have generated.<sup>55</sup> He also identifies what he suggests are the three great forces of modernity, “the separation of time and space, disembedding mechanisms and institutional reflexivity.”<sup>56</sup> This is of particular interest for the purpose of this study, since part of its aim is to test the validity of western approaches to individuation in western and non-western literatures and to see whether, and in what way, they could be applicable to Arabic literatures, and if not, what changes and modifications have to be made to these approaches. However, it is important and necessary to limit the scope to individuation. In other words, describing the process, the concept and the establishment of individuation in society and its inherent cultural production, cultural reformation and its quest for a new life. It is also crucial to delineate the dynamics of modernity with an emphasis on the period from The Reformation until now, stressing the revolutionary concepts of the centrality of man and of humanism, regarded as the characteristic attitude of the Renaissance in Western Europe.

The novels selected for this study all deal with the protagonist’s search for meaning in his own life in particular and in society in general; in other words “here we find the figure of the isolated, exiled or estranged individual, framed against the background of the anonymous and impersonal crowd or metropolis.”<sup>57</sup> For the purposes of this study, however, it is essential to find out in what way the political, social, and cultural changes are articulated in the various traditions, and by the different authors, and how comparable changes have had an impact on the featured authors’ styles of writing. Stuart Hall argues that:

The old identities which stabilized the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject. This so-called 'crisis of identity' is seen as part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world.<sup>58</sup>

In the late twentieth century a distinctive type of structural change transformed modern societies. Through the fragmenting of the cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality,

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<sup>55</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 174.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108. For a detailed discussion see *The Consequences of Modernity*, especially chapter 1.

<sup>57</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity” in *Modernity and its Futures*, Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds.), (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd and The Open University, 1992), p. 285.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

ethnicity, race and nationality, our personal identities changed, and our sense of ourselves as integrated subjects was undermined.<sup>59</sup> Hall claims that “This loss of a stable 'sense of self' is sometimes called the dislocation or de-centring of the subject. This set of double displacements – de-centring individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves – constitutes a 'crisis of identity' for the individual.”<sup>60</sup> Hall suggests that “It is now a commonplace that the modern age gave rise to a new and decisive form of *individualism*, at the centre of which stood a new conception of the individual subject and its identity. This does not mean that people were not individuals in pre-modern times, but that individuality was both 'lived', 'experienced' and 'conceptualized' differently.”<sup>61</sup> Due to all the changes that were brought about by modernity, the individual was now torn away and liberated from his stable moorings in society's traditions and structures. In general, one can argue that the 'sovereign individual' was born between the Renaissance humanism of the sixteenth century and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, something which represented a momentous break with the past, and that this was the engine which set the whole social system of modernity in motion.<sup>62</sup> Hall distinguishes between three different concepts of identity: the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the post-modern subject.<sup>63</sup> Raymond Williams supports this view and argues that:

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 274-275.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 274-275.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 281-282.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 281-282.

<sup>63</sup> The Enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human being as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born and unfolded with it while remaining essentially the same – continuous or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence.

The notion of the sociological subject reflected the growing complexity of the modern world and the awareness that this inner core of the subject was not autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to 'significant others', who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabited. I.e. identity is formed in the 'interaction' between self and society. It also bridges the gap between the 'inside' and the 'outside' – between the personal and the public worlds. We project 'ourselves' into these cultural identities, at the same time internalizing their meanings and values, making them 'part of us'. The subject, previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities

This produces the post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Quoted from Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity”, pp. 275-277.

The emergence of notions of **individuality**, in the modern sense, can be related to the break-up of the medieval social, economic and religious order. In the general movement against feudalism there was a new stress on a man's personal existence over and above his place or function in a rigid hierarchical society. There was a related stress...the modern sense of **individual** is then a result of the development of a certain phase of scientific thought and of a phase of political and economic thought.<sup>64</sup>

This new *Homo Individucas*<sup>65</sup> suffers from what Hall identified as a 'de-centring' of modern identities; that is, a dislocated or fragmented identity.<sup>66</sup> Hall mentions five major de-centrings of the modern Cartesian subject,<sup>67</sup> and he has mapped out some shifts of conceptual character that the 'subject' of the Enlightenment, with an identity that was fixed and stable, went through in order to become the de-centred post-modern subject that is identified as more open, contradictory, unresolved and fragmented.

From a general perspective, the Marxist notion will fit both Mahfouz and Salih better than Hamsun, while Hamsun will suit the Freudian de-centring concept. Saussure's concept of de-centring is applicable to all three authors in relation to their use of language to produce meaning, albeit in a new mode and style. Foucault can be considered

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<sup>64</sup> Williams Raymond *Keywords, A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press Harper Collins Publishers, 1988), pp. 163-164.

<sup>65</sup> I created this term/definition inspired by Pierre Bourdieu and his desire to name everything *Homo...*, and his book *Homo Academicus*.

<sup>66</sup> Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity", p. 274.

<sup>67</sup> The first major de-centring is based upon the traditions of Marxist thinking, especially through the ways in which Marx's work was recovered and re-read in the 1960s. It was in the light of Marx's argument that 'men (sic) make history, but only on the basis of conditions which are not of their own making.' Secondly, it is based on Freud's theory that our identities, our sexuality, and the structure of our desires are formed on the basis of the psychic and symbolic processes of the unconscious, which function according to a 'logic' very different from that of Reason, playing havoc with the concept of the knowing and rational subject with a fixed and unified identity. It does not grow naturally from inside the core of the infant's being, but is formed in relation to others; especially in the complex unconscious psychic negotiations in early childhood between the child and the powerful fantasies which it has of its parental figures. Thus, rather than speaking of identity as resolved, we should speak of identification, and see it as an on-going process. Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from a lack of wholeness which is 'filled' from outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others. Thirdly, Ferdinand de Saussure argued that we are not in any absolute sense the 'authors' of the statements we make or of the meanings we express in language. We can only use language to produce meanings by positioning ourselves within the rules of language and the systems of meaning of our culture. Language is a social, not an individual system. It pre-exists us. We cannot in any simple sense be its authors. Fourthly, Michel Foucault argued that disciplinary power is concerned with the regulation, surveillance and government of, first, the human species or whole populations, and secondly, the individual and the body. Its sites are those new institutions which developed throughout the nineteenth century and which 'police' and discipline modern populations. This is done through *collective* institutions of late modernity and its techniques involve an application of power and knowledge which further 'individualizes' the subject and bears down more intensely on his/her body. Finally, there is the fifth de-centring which proponents of this position cite is the impact of feminism, both as theoretical critique and as a social movement. For a detailed outline see Stuart Hall, op. cit. pp. 285-291.

functional to an understanding of Mahfouz's heroes, and their struggle to break free from the disciplinary power exercised by the state-run bureaucracy that constrains them in their personal pursuit of meaning and the process of individuation.

Before determining how the identity of the *Homo Individucas* is related to the respective novels, it is important to take a look at what role globalisation played in modernity's expansion throughout the world, and to what degree it transformed society not only on a global, but on a local level. Anthony Giddens defines globalisation as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa."<sup>68</sup> Thus we can argue that in the modern era, the distancing, in time-space relations, is greater than ever before, and all types of relations between events and social formations, local and distant, are stretched correspondingly further from each other. "Globalisation refers essentially to that stretching process, in so far as the modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole."<sup>69</sup> This can be said to be a dialectical process due to the possibility of local happenings moving in an obverse direction from the very distanced relations that shape them.<sup>70</sup> Giddens concludes that "at the same time as social relations become laterally stretched and as part of the same process, we see the strengthening of pressures for local autonomy and regional cultural identity."<sup>71</sup>

However, all these developments are part of the disembedding mechanisms that Giddens argues are of significant importance in the expansion of modernity. "The disembedding mechanisms lift social relations and the exchange of information out of specific time-space contexts, but at the same time provide new opportunities for their reinsertion."<sup>72</sup> All disembedding mechanisms depend on trust, which Giddens defines as "a form of "faith" in which the confidence vested in probable outcome expresses a commitment to something rather than just a cognitive understanding."<sup>73</sup> The crucial thing to note however is that "if basic trust is not developed or its inherent ambivalence not

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<sup>68</sup> Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 64.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.



contained, the outcome is persistent existential anxiety. In its most profound sense, the antithesis of trust is thus a state of mind which could best be summed up as existential *angst* or *dread*.”<sup>74</sup> As we shall see in the following chapters, this type of angst, which all our “heroes” struggle with in one way or another, is a direct result of rapid socio-political and cultural transformations. This thesis will argue that the process of individuation, and the pursuit of meaning, is a direct consequence of modernity.

### **Self, other and identity in literary structure**

How then, does this new type of identity relate to the aim and scope of this thesis? The main argument of this study is that the social, economic, political and cultural transformations caused by modernity necessitated a new literary, aesthetic response, which has hitherto not been linked to the literary genre of the novel when analysing the process of individuation and the individual’s pursuit of meaning. More precisely, this thesis proposes to discern how this literary aesthetic response and new type of identity relates to the works selected, and in what way it has been expressed and articulated. The French literary critic René Girard has interestingly revealed the relationship between novelistic characters on a socio-psychological level, arguing that desire is the major determinant in mapping and shaping the characters’ personality and for understanding the reason behind their behaviour on an intra-literary level.

First of all, it is essential not to confuse this desire with animalistic, sexually determined and single-minded desire; Girard’s desire is more complex. Girard starts out by arguing that in novelistic and romantic<sup>75</sup> works of literature the characters pursue objects which are determined for them, or at least seem to be determined for them, by the model of all chivalry, and he calls this model the mediator of desire.<sup>76</sup> Girard argues:

When the "nature" of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject. Either his "psychology" is examined or his "liberty" invoked. But desire is always spontaneous. It can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object....The mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object. The spatial metaphor which expresses this triple relationship is

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 100. See also pp. 100-111.

<sup>75</sup> René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* translated into English by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), p. 17.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

obviously the triangle. The object changes with each adventure but the triangle remains....The triangle is no *Gestalt*. The real structures are intersubjective. They cannot be localized anywhere; the triangle has no reality whatever; it is a systematic metaphor, systematically pursued.<sup>77</sup>

Within the triangle, desire is controlled by the mediator, which can, but does not have to be imaginary, contrary to the mediation that cannot be imaginary. "Chivalric passion defines a desire *according to Another*, opposed to the desire *according to Oneself* that most of us pride ourselves on enjoying."<sup>78</sup> This suggests that novelistic desire, or our own for that matter is not genuine, but is always borrowed from, and dependent on, others. This is a disposition the *vaniteux*, or vain person, has to struggle with. For the subject, the real objective is to reach the mediator, using the object as a means, and "the desire is aimed at the mediator's *being*."<sup>79</sup> In other words, the hero attempts to rob and strip his mediator of his chivalric persona, to absorb and assimilate his total essence, in order to become the other whilst remaining himself. This turns out to be impossible as long as the subject does not manage to control his impulse to desire what others desire, that is, the desires of others. Girard suggests:

Not only does the Other and only the Other set desire in motion....At its birth, in other words at the very source of the subjectivity, one always finds a victorious Other. It is true that the source of the "transfiguration" is within us, but the spring gushes forth only when the mediator strikes the rock with his magic wand. Never does the narrator simply wish to play, to read a book, to contemplate a work of art; it is always a pleasure he reads on the faces of the players, a conversation, or a first reading which releases the work of the imagination and provokes desire.<sup>80</sup>

Another significant feature of desire is that its intensity varies according to the position of the mediator; the closer the mediator gets the more intense the desire becomes. Similarly, the object's role decreases as the mediator's increases. However, it is important to be aware that "it is not physical space that measures the gap between mediator and the desiring subject. Although geographical separation might be one factor, the distance between mediator and subject is primarily spiritual,"<sup>81</sup> thus supporting Girard's notion of the mediator as imaginary. The mediation can therefore take place on two different strata,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

depending on the relationship within the triangle of desire: "We shall speak of *external mediation* when the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of *possibilities* of which the mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers. We shall speak of *internal mediation* when this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly."<sup>82</sup> The unity between external and internal mediation is constituted through the transfiguration of the desired object. "The hero's imagination is the mother of the illusion but the child must still have a father: the mediator."<sup>83</sup>

In all types of relationships desire prevails and sets the agenda for the emotional life. No novelistic character, with a very few exceptions, manages to escape imitated desire, and is able to enter relationships and find love without experiencing jealousy, friendship without envy, and attraction without repulsion. Thus the desiring subject suffers feelings of unease and of not being in control of his/her own - that is the others - desire, which can lead to depression, angst, anger and hatred. This is because the hero condemns himself, and equally because the society does not turn him into an untouchable. The hero, in his aim to be vain, sets himself an impossibly high standard, which he then fails to reach, provoking feelings of self-loathing. In this sense the demands are impossible to satisfy, and "cannot originate in the self. An exigency arises from the self and bearing on the self must be capable of being satisfied by the self."<sup>84</sup> In other words, the subject has placed his faith in an outside promise that proves to be false. In this sense "the surge of pride breaks against the humanity of the mediator, and the result of this conflict is hatred."<sup>85</sup>

Girard claims:

That it is always his own desire that the subject condemns in the Other without knowing it...The subject's indignant knowledge of the Other returns in a circle to strike him when he least expects it. This psychological circle is inscribed in the triangle of desire. Most of our ethical judgments are rooted in hatred of the mediator, a rival whom we copy.<sup>86</sup>

To grasp and comprehend the metaphysical meaning of desire, a study of the individual cases is not sufficient, and a search beyond is required to understand its full implications.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

According to Girard “all the heroes surrender their most fundamental individual prerogative, that of choosing their own desire; we cannot attribute this unanimous abandonment to the always different qualities of the heroes. For a single phenomenon a single cause must be found. All heroes of the novel hate themselves on a more essential level than that of “qualities”.”<sup>87</sup>

Accordingly, any analysis that sets out to disclose the psychological is in reality an analysis of vanity, a revelation of triangular desire. When the hero reveals his psychological circle and exposes his obsession with the object as the mediator comes nearer, “the obsessed man astounds us with his clear understanding of those like himself- in other words, his rivals-and his complete inability to see himself. This lucidity and blindness both increase as the mediator becomes nearer.”<sup>88</sup> One interesting feature is that the object is emptied of its concrete value<sup>89</sup> when the mediator is close by and the passion increases in intensity. The revered object can seem as if it is within reach of the hand, except that one obstacle separates the subject from the object; the mediator. This thwarted desire increases in intensity with the mediator’s presence and approach, and in some cases, as we shall see, turns into such violence that it leads to murder. This is particularly prominent at the stages in a relationships when the ‘physical’ part of desire is dominant, overshadowing the ‘metaphysical’.” The “physical” and “metaphysical” in desire always come to the fore at the expense of the other. This law has numerous aspects; it explains, for example, the progressive disappearance of sexual pleasure in the most advanced stages of ontological sickness; in other words, the quest for meaning which every individual who is faced with a pursuit of meaning has to suffer from and deal with. “The mediator’s “virtue” acts on the senses like a poison which constantly spreads and slowly paralyses the hero.”<sup>90</sup> No matter how much the hero tries or wishes, the physical qualities of the object are of subordinate character and are neither able to awaken nor revive metaphysical desire, nor protract it. Furthermore this deficiency of physical enjoyment makes the hero disappointed when he finally possesses his desired object. Girard explains:

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

The disappointment is entirely metaphysical. The subject discovers that possession of the object has not changed his being—the expected metamorphosis has not taken place. The greater the apparent “virtue” of the object the more terrible is the disappointment, thus disappointment deepens as the mediator draws closer to the hero....The moment the hero takes hold of the desired object its “virtue” disappears like gas from a burst balloon. The object has been suddenly desecrated by possession and reduced to its objective qualities.<sup>91</sup>

This demonstrates the absurdity of triangular desire, and the disappointment is its proof. The hero is now left with no choice but to submit to the substantiation, feeling abject and humiliated, deceived by his desire and stripped of the future fulfilment that the very same desire had appeared to promise him, but somehow concealed behind a mask.

### **Dialogism, heteroglossia and transparent minds in the novel**

This thesis is aware of the difficult task of distinguishing between the crisis the heroes suffers because of their subjectivity, and the anguish of the self which is set apart from or against external forces. The thesis will endeavor to show that this is achieved in the modern novel, which is why it is crucial to understand the role played by desire: “it is in internal mediation that the profoundest meaning of the *modern* is found.”<sup>92</sup> Moreover, internal mediation only takes place in the novel, as Bakhtin points out, differentiating between the epic and the novel:

The epic was never a poem about the present, about its own time....The epic...has been from the beginning a poem about the past, and the authorial position immanent in the epic and constitutive for it...is the environment of a man speaking about a past that is to him inaccessible, the reverent point of view of a descendent. In its style, tone and manner of expression, epic discourse is infinitely far removed from discourse of a contemporary about a contemporary addressed to contemporaries.<sup>93</sup>

The novel was born and nourished in a new era of world history<sup>94</sup> hence its infusion to deal with and articulate the sentiments arising with modernity. Bakhtin argues that:

The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process. The novel has become the leading hero in the drama of literary development in our time precisely because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the making; it is, after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. In many respects the novel has anticipated, and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

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

<sup>93</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

continues to anticipate, the future development of literature as a whole. In the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel sparks the renovation of all other genres; it infects them with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness. It draws them ineluctably into its orbit precisely because this orbit coincides with the basic direction of the development of literature as a whole. In this lies the exceptional importance of the novel, as an object of study for the theory as well as the history of literature.<sup>95</sup>

In his analysis of the novel Bakhtin develops two new concepts, upon which his importance and success as a literary theorist rely. The first is dialogism/polyphony, which is closely related to heteroglossia.<sup>96</sup> The second is carnivalisation explored through what he calls chronotope.<sup>97</sup> Predominantly it is dialogism and polyphony in heteroglossia that is essential for relating the process of individuation and the shaping of identity to the novel as a genre, because of its close relationship to socio-political, cultural and economic transformation in and of society. Hence language, that is, any communication system employing signs that are ordered in a particular manner, “live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia. Therefore they are all able to enter into the unitary plane of the novel...[and] they may all be drawn into the novelist for the orchestration of his themes and for the refracted (indirect) expression of his intention and values.”<sup>98</sup> Literary language, both spoken and written, is therefore for any

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> “Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and in what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world, relates to any of its current inhabitants and ensures that there can be no actual monologue. One may, like a primitive tribe that knows only its own limits, be deluded into thinking there is one language, or one may, as grammarians, certain political figures and normative framers of “literary languages” do, seek in a sophisticated way to achieve a unitary language. In both cases the unitariness is relative to the overpowering force of heteroglossia, and thus dialogism. Heteroglossia is “the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which ensures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress.” Quoted from Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 426, 428.

<sup>97</sup> We should understand chronotope to be “literary, “time-space.” A unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented. The distinctiveness of this concept as opposed to most other uses of time and space in literary analysis lies in the fact that neither category is privileged; they are utterly independent. The chronotope is an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring.” Quoted from Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 425-426.

<sup>98</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 292.

individual consciousness living in it, “not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.”<sup>99</sup> Bakhtin suggests that “as a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies in the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.”<sup>100</sup> It is this form of dialogue that take place between various speakers, or even the polyphony of voices within one speaker’s mind, upon which Bakhtin builds his theory of the novel. The language we use everyday is shaped and appropriates its meaning in a multiplicity of settings, but it is the heteroglossia, that is, in relations to others, property of groups, political parties and organizations, social movements, professions, regions, generations and class, but to mention a few, that determines the meaning of our utterances, not our individual intentions, hence our speech genres are created in spheres of activity.

The novel’s distinctive project draws such speech genres into a dialogue within the text. Its themes orchestrate diverse speech genres, bringing them into dialogic relations with one at different levels of the novel’s organization. The diversity of voices in dialogue is not only in the representation of different voices as speakers in the text, and in reported speech, but in hybrid sentences in which the author’s voice draws in and subdues another’s speech, in irony where the author’s voice reflects on others, in movement between one voice and another in narrative sequences so that one reflects on (is in dialogue with) another.<sup>101</sup>

The modern novel as a literary genre is a result of a rupture in the history of European civilisation, emerging from a socially isolated semi-patriarchal society that was culturally deaf, and later entering into international and interlingual contact and relationships

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>101</sup> Dorothy E. Smith, “Bakhtin and the Dialogic of Sociology: An Investigation” in Michael Mayerfeld Bell, and Michael Gardiner, (eds.) *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1998), p. 65.

involving a multitude of various languages and cultures.<sup>102</sup> As the dialogism and interaction between these languages resulted in a polyglot world, in which the new cultural and creative consciousness lives, they threw light on each other. Completely new relationships were established between the language and its object, resulting in a mutation from the old literary genres that had been created during eras of closed and deaf monoglossia.<sup>103</sup> “The novel could therefore assume a leadership in the process of developing and renewing literature in its linguistic and stylistic dimension.”<sup>104</sup> The novel is able to do so just because it is not, as other genres,

Constituted by a set of formal fixtures for fixing language that pre-exist any specific utterance within the genre. Language, in other words, is assimilated to form. The novel by contrast seeks to shape its form to languages; it has a completely different relationship to languages from other genres since it constantly experiments with new shapes in order to display the variety and immediacy of speech diversity.<sup>105</sup>

For Bakhtin this could be done because the novel as a genre, and its form, is a result of, and exists in a society, that produce miscellaneous forms of utterances, be it spoken or written. It is these voices, their polyphony, and society’s dialogism that the authors draw upon when creating a novel. The author relies on these voices and “their dialogic forms and relations (tensions, conflicts hierarchies) are at the author’s disposal to be given determinate thematic value in the text created. The text creates a new dialogic ordering among the speech genres of the society.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore one might think that Bakhtin places the emphasis on each individual author; however, this is not the case, since it is the actual speaker that is enmeshed in relations of communication with others. Hence the focus for Bakhtin is not on the individual author, “but on the way that many speakers realize speech genres in the context of their everyday relationships and interactions. Texts are always contextualized in the concrete situations that agents find themselves in and utterances are composed by the way the person uses speech genres to give expression of their social positioning.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>105</sup> Michael Holquist, introduction to Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. xxix.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>107</sup> Ian Burkitt, “The Death and Rebirth of the Author: The Bakhtin Circle and Bourdieu on Individuality, Language and Revolution” in Bell and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.



How then is the process of individuation and the pursuit of meaning convincingly put forward in the novel as a genre? “Because the heteroglot novel is more open to difference, it could more easily absorb the increasing tide of self-consciousness. In other words, the heteroglot novel was able to accommodate more of the self because it is more sensitive to otherness.”<sup>108</sup> Individuals are not positioned in relations to discourse as such, rather we use utterances actively to navigate and orient ourselves in our relationships and interactions with other beings. “As we engage in the world as embodied beings, our ability to attribute meaning and significance solely through our own thoughts, deeds and perceptions is subject to certain limitations, particularly with respect to the ‘authoring’ of our own selfhood.”<sup>109</sup> Thus Bakhtin’s emphasise on the phenomenon of *transgression*, a state that lies outside and transcends our immediate subjective existence and cognitive activity, which necessarily partakes of ‘otherness’.<sup>110</sup> The central argument for Bakhtin in relation to shaping of identity is that:

Just as we are impelled to attribute meaning to the object-world around us, we need to envisage *ourselves* as coherent and meaningful entities. But from our own vantage-point (the ‘I-for-myself’), we are manifestly incapable of envisioning our outward appearance, and of comprehending our place within the ‘plastic-pictorial world’ (that is the lived environment of objects, events and other selves). To be able to conceptualise ourselves as cohesive meaningful wholes, which is fundamental to the process of individuation and self-understanding, we require an additional, external perspective. Hence, the other exists in a relation of externality or ‘exotopy’ *vis-à-vis* ourselves, in a manner that transcends, or is ‘transgressive’ with respect to, our own perceptual and existential horizon.<sup>111</sup>

Bakhtin welcomed the novel as a genre, because the novel, unlike the epic, was able to convincingly portray the modern man and his new consciousness of his self. “The epic disintegrates when the search begins for a new point of view on one’s own self...and thus the individual is portrayed as a fully finished and complete being.”<sup>112</sup> The hero of the epic has already, in the text, fulfilled his potential and could not become more than he has already become. “He is entirely externalized in the most elementary, almost literal sense: everything in him is exposed and loudly expressed: his internal world and all his external

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<sup>108</sup> Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 293.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Gardiner, “The Incomparable Monster of Solipsism: Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty” in Bell and Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>112</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 34.

characteristics, his appearance and his actions all lie on a single plane. His view of himself coincides completely with others' views of him."<sup>113</sup>

Bakhtin argues that no given word relates to an object in a singular way, and in addition to the word the characters chooses, there exist several other words describing the same object or theme. It is in the environment and living interaction, namely heteroglossia, in which the word is used and becomes individualised. Thus "the essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent, and...if one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills take place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded."<sup>114</sup> The essence of polyphony is the nature of what happens between various consciousnesses, explicitly their interaction and interdependence. In the modern novel the hero becomes especially important from a "*particular point of view on the world and on oneself*, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality."<sup>115</sup> The crucial thing is not how the hero appears in the world, but how the world appears to the hero, and how the hero appears to himself. To comprehend what happens to the hero's consciousness of himself is one of the most significant aspects of the modern novel. Polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia are some of the literary devices utilised by the novel to grasp not the specific existence of the hero, or his fixed image, but the "*sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero's final word on himself and on his world.*"<sup>116</sup> Therefore, it is not features of reality from which the hero's image is composed, but features of himself or his everyday surroundings. It is "rather the *significance* of these features for the *hero himself*, for his self-consciousness."<sup>117</sup> At this point the author does not retain for his own exclusive field of vision any further information about the hero, all of which is now in the hero's own field of vision, so that what is left for the author's field of vision is pure self-consciousness. According to Bakhtin:

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>114</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 21.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

All the stable and objective qualities of the hero—his social position, the degree to which he is sociologically or characterologically typical, his habitus, his spiritual profile and even his very physical appearance—that is, everything that usually serves an author in creating a fixed and stable image of the hero, “who he is,” becomes...the object of the hero’s own introspection, the subject of his self-consciousness; and the subject of the author’s visualization and representation turns out to be in fact a *function* of this self-consciousness. At a time when the self-consciousness of a character was usually seen merely as an element of his reality, as merely one of the features of his integrated image, here, on the contrary, all of reality becomes an element of the character’s self-consciousness.<sup>118</sup>

The advent of polyphony in the novel meant getting beneath the surface of the characters as they revealed their inner thoughts and feelings. No hero discloses himself voluntarily, however, and the authors must confront their hero with some kind of moral dilemma before they reveal those ultimate words of self-consciousness. Only if the author manages to create within the narrative a complex situation for the hero, one that compels him to reveal and express himself dialogically, and to grasp in others’ consciousness essential aspects of himself, allowing him to create loopholes in which to escape, and thereby prolonging and laying bare his own final word as it interacts intensely with other consciousnesses.<sup>119</sup> The period following the emergence of dialogism in the novel dramatically changed the artistic position of the author, and Bakhtin argues that it is a:

*Fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not “he” and not “I” but a fully valid “thou,” that is, another and other autonomous “I” (“thou art”). The hero is the subject of a deeply serious, real dialogic mode of address, not the subject of a rhetorically performed or conventionally literary one. And this dialogue—the “great dialogue” of the novel as a whole—takes place not in the past, but right now, that is in the real present of the creative process.<sup>120</sup>*

Everything the hero sees, hears and observes in the novel is projected onto him and dialogically reflected in him, and all his possible evaluations and points of view are extended to his consciousness and addressed to him in dialogue with himself and the other characters in the text. For the process of individuation and the shaping of identity these dialogues take place within Girard’s triangle of desire. Inside the triangle it is the presence of the mediator that determines the essence of the dialogue, since he and his manifestation, physically or not, determine the intensity and scope of the desire, and

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 54. It is within such circumstances that the “hero”/protagonist can reach his desired process of individuation.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

further regulate the amount of force and pressure the hero is subjected to, in order to benefit from his internal dialogue with his self-consciousness and to reach individuation. A distinguishing factor of the modern novel, regardless of tradition, is the use of interior monologue, more commonly known as stream-of-consciousness. It is a mistake however to think that all interior monologue embodies the psychological evolution of an idea within a single consciousness. On the contrary, the consciousness of a solitary hero, be it Nagel,<sup>121</sup> Omar al-Hamzawi<sup>122</sup> or Mustafa Sa'eed,<sup>123</sup> becomes a battlefield for the voices of others, and daily events, thoughts, feelings reflected in the hero's own consciousness. In fact it is an intense dialogue with the absent characters' voices; through this dialogue the hero is battling to straighten and clarify his thoughts, emotions and desires.

Dorrit Cohn by a similar token sets out to capture and encapsulate how narrative fiction: "is the only literary genre, as well as the only kind of narrative, in which the unspoken thoughts, feelings, perceptions of a person other than the speaker can be portrayed."<sup>124</sup> Cohn draws upon Käte Hamburger that argues that: "epic fiction is the sole epistemological instance where the I-originary (or subjectivity) of a third person qua third-person can be portrayed."<sup>125</sup> Cohn explains how, for Hamburger:

The representation of characters' inner lives is the touchstone that simultaneously sets fiction apart from reality and builds the semblance (*Schein*) of another, non-real reality. She argues this thesis and explores its causes and results in two successive stages: 1) starting out from the Aristotelian mimesis, (understood as representation, not as imitation), she arrives at a theoretical differentiation between the language of fiction and the statement-language of reality; and 2) starting out from textual observations, she demonstrates that certain language patterns are unique to fiction, and dependent on the presence of fictional minds within the text. These language patterns are primarily the conveyors or signals of mental activity: verbs of consciousness, interior and narrated monologues, temporal and spatial adverbs referring to the characters' here and now.<sup>126</sup>

Cohn elucidates her study by identifying three types of presentation of consciousness in third-person narration. In short they are "1. psycho-narration: the narrator's discourse about a character's consciousness; 2. quoted monologue: a character's mental discourse;

<sup>121</sup> Nagel is the hero in Hamsun's *Mysteries*.

<sup>122</sup> Omar al-Hamzawi is the protagonist in Mahfuz's *The Beggar*.

<sup>123</sup> Mustafa Sa'eed is one of the characters in Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*.

<sup>124</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds, Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature* translated by Marilyn J. Rose (Indiana University Press, Bloomington London, 1973), p. 83.

<sup>126</sup> Cohn, op. cit., p. 7.

3. narrated monologue: a character's mental discourse in the guise of the narrator's discourse."<sup>127</sup>

The novel speculates about what is unknown, employing the surplus knowledge of the author of which the hero is ignorant. The novel utilises this surplus externally and manipulates the narrative, or to complete the image of an individual. To sum up, one might conclude that: "the condition of our existence is heteroglossia, a conflicting multiplicity of languages; dialogism is the necessary mode of knowledge in such a world, a relationship among the languages. Consciousness is always language and thus unavoidable ideological, and the linked process of perception and interaction with the human world are always dialogical."<sup>128</sup> Further, language today and in all its historical existence "is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying "languages"."<sup>129</sup> These languages take the form of a new mode of writing, articulated in the novels selected, as the authors encounter modernity and their heroes get in touch with their inner polyphonic voices that enable them to express the emotions and desires that shape the identity of modern man.

All the theories outlined above play a crucial role in the quest for disclosure of the process of individuation - the shaping of individual identity and the pursuit of meaning - linking this process to the literary genre of the novel. Moreover, to contextualise each writer and to identify the specificity of his literary contribution to make a comparison meaningful, to answer and understand the crucial question of how and why this new type of literature emerged in the various cultures and traditions at the specific time, and through this theory understand the genesis of individuation and the pursuit of meaning as it developed in all three contexts.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>128</sup> R.B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin & Popular Literature, Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 16.

<sup>129</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 291.

## CHAPTER I

**Knut Hamsun**

**Hunger**

**Mysteries**

**Pan**

I didn't want to write for Norwegians....I wanted to write for *human beings* wherever they found themselves.

Knut Hamsun<sup>130</sup>

Come in! Yes, just come in! As You can see, all of rubies. Ylajali! Ylajali! The red, fluffy silk divan! How heavily she's breathing! Kiss me, my love—again, again. Your arms are like amber, your lips are flaming red... Waiter, I ordered a steak.

Hero of *Hunger*.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Knut Hamsun, *Sult*, translated from the Norwegian into *Hunger* by Sverre Lyngstad (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), p. xvi. English edition cited.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72

### The early years

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1859 in Garmo, a remote Norwegian village in the mountains close to a lake called Vågå, a boy later named Knud Pedersen was born. Nearly ninety-three years later, the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1952, Knut Hamsun died at his country estate Nørholm, just outside Grimstad. Hamsun was born as one of seven siblings to a poor family which struggled to survive on the earnings of Hamsun's father working as a tailor, as well as on the produce from the family farm. During his first years, the family experienced hardship, with poor harvest and famine, and just before Knut was three years old the whole family moved to the little hamlet Hamsund above the arctic circle in northern Norway. Financially the situation did not improve much, but at least the family had a house to stay in and a small piece of land to cultivate, and could also help out on the farm of Hans Olsen, Knut's uncle. At the age of nine Hamsun permanently moved to stay with his uncle Hans, a strict man who forced the young Hamsun to work hard for little food, and imposed pious and austere regulations and limitations on Hamsun's leisure time. Hamsun was a very gifted young man who learned the craft of reading and writing at a very young age, despite only attending school four weeks a year. Whenever Hamsun complained about what he perceived as injustice he was threatened, beaten, and forced to go to sleep without any food. Olsen's treatment radicalized Hamsun who several times tried to injure himself, and escape from his uncle's house to find peace of mind.<sup>132</sup> During the six years at his uncle's place Hamsun took advantage of every little opportunity to write for himself: as if he already from his early childhood felt an internal yearning, and imperative necessity for writing. In other words, Hamsun had a vocation for letters. Finally, at the age of fourteen, he was able to get away from his uncle and travel to his village of birth to stand as a confirmand. In the following years he traveled around in northern Norway, taking several minor jobs, still pursuing his writing and in 1877 he had written his first work *Den Gaadefulde* and the year after *Et Gjensyn* and *Bjørger*. Already at this early stage in his life Hamsun longed for a wide recognition and he decided to travel to Copenhagen and pursue his literary career further. As many young aspiring writers he had started to experiment with his name, and the result was in the end taking

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<sup>132</sup> Ingar Sletten Kolloen, *Hamsun svermeren* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2003), pp. 30-31.

the name of his uncle's farm; Knud Pedersen Hamsund.<sup>133</sup> Just twenty years old Hamsun left Hamsund for Copenhagen after having been given an enormous grant from a local businessman that felt the need to support the young and aspiring writer. His time in Copenhagen became short and unsuccessful, and he returned to Kristiania as a refused and poor writer, only to be refused several times more.<sup>134</sup> After a couple of years fighting to be accepted in the literary field in Kristiania he, in early 1882, left for the first of two periods in America. During the second spell, around 1886, he used to lecture about Norwegian literature, especially the works of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Henrik Ibsen, Alexander Kielland and Jonas Lie as well as Arne Garborg and August Strindberg. At this time he praised their work, but within a couple of years he fiercely criticised them for writing literature that dealt with social, political and cultural problems.

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1888, he again returned to Copenhagen, still determined to prove that his new literature engrossed in the inner cravings of the human psyche, was worthy of literary recognition. Hamsun sold his raincoat and spent five of his six kroner on hiring a small room, resolute to finish what later that autumn was the first fragment of *Hunger*, the book that changed his literary path and world literature forever. Whilst writing the first draft of *Hunger*, he started socialising with both the new, avant-garde and more radical young literates associated with the journal *Ny Jord*,<sup>135</sup> and its editor, Carl Behrens, as well as the establishment like the Brandes brothers. During the early autumn he increasingly became an intellectual to reckon with, and he argued fiercely for what he regarded the two main aspects of literature; namely language and a focus on describing the inner human psyche.<sup>136</sup> Surrounded by the literary elite in Scandinavia he is soon introduced to the most important persons in the literary field, and through *Ny Jord* he is also allowed to attack the former literary generation, as his style corresponds with the journal's aim to be "revolutionary".<sup>137</sup> Later in November 1888, the first fragment of

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 57. Later he also experimented with Hamsunn, but in early 1885 he again changed his name, this time to Hamsun, and which he has used ever since.

<sup>134</sup> The reason to these refusals was simply that by living in northern Norway he was left decades behind the literary "spirit" at the time, due to his lack of access to contemporary literary journals, books, as well as being part of the dominant and fashionable literary field.

<sup>135</sup> It was in this journal that the first draft of *Hunger* was published in

<sup>136</sup> Kolloen, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 114.



*Hunger* was published anonymously<sup>138</sup> as part of Hamsun's scheme to release the book in four fragments, and not reveal himself as the author of the work until the book was complete. However, it did not take long before everyone was talking about *Hunger*, and as the immense interest in learning the identity of the author behind this radical new piece of literature increased, Hamsun started to enjoy that he finally had achieved the recognition he, for such a long time, had yearned for. Having now made a name for himself and finally entered the literary field by being recognised by leading individuals, he was more determined than ever to transform world literature. But first he needed to establish himself as a leading intellectual.

### The new novel

Hamsun, however, still at times uncertain of his qualities as an author, found himself in a similar dire predicament as the protagonist of *Hunger* in the late eighties; not only starving in the physical sense, he also had a desperate desire for social acceptance and education<sup>139</sup> which continued throughout his lifetime until his late artistic breakthrough,<sup>140</sup> or rather the moment he was accepted by the established literary field in both Kristiania and Copenhagen. At the time of writing *Hunger*, Hamsun stood in opposition to the established literary field in Norway and Denmark. Bourdieu argues that:

The ageing of authors, works or schools is something quite different from the product of mechanical slippage into the past. It is the continuous creation of the battle between those who have made their names (*fait date*) and are struggling to stay in view and those who cannot make their own names without relegating to the past the established figures, whose interest lies in freezing the movement of time, fixing the present state of the field for ever. On one side are the dominant figures who want continuity, identity, reproduction; on the other the newcomers who seek discontinuity, rupture, difference, revolution. To 'make one's name' (*faire date*) means making one's mark, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one's *difference* from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; at the same time it means *creating a new position* beyond the positions presently occupied, *ahead* of them, in the *avant-garde*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> It must be noted that Hamsun also wanted to be anonymous because he did not want people to know or think of him as suffering the same predicament and horrible life as the protagonist.

<sup>139</sup> This is similar to Bourdieu's notion about *habitus*.

<sup>140</sup> Walter Baumgartner, *Den Modernistiske Hamsun: medrivende og frastøtende* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1998), p 21.

<sup>141</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p 106.

In the decades before the publication of *Hunger*, Scandinavian society favoured the idea of a socially engaged critical realism, and it is in this period that we witness progressive social reforms and the struggle for liberalism. Literature became an important forum in which to debate various social problems: "Literature was to advance social progress by furthering rational and critical discussion, to educate citizens about social issues and to promote a liberal political agenda. The underlying premise of this literature was that humans are rational beings, capable of mastering their uncertainties and confusions, and thus responsible for their actions. This belief, central to the development of modernity since the Enlightenment, also prompted objectivity in rendering facts in accordance with recent development of scientific positivism."<sup>142</sup>

From the mid eighties onwards the Norwegian literary scene split in two. On the one hand there developed a more deterministic naturalism, and on the other, literature that focused on the individual's psyche and on symbolism.<sup>143</sup> It is the latter that this study is concerned with and Hamsun is considered one its most important proponents because he rejects "the idea of literature based on utilitarian reason and scientific objectivity."<sup>144</sup> Hamsun writes and lectures on this topic as well, especially in his *Dikterliv, Fra det ubevidste sjæleliv* and *Paa Turnè*, in which he attacks those who argue that literature should deal with, or try to solve problems of a political, social or educational nature, rather than exist for the sake of itself.<sup>145</sup> This accords with Bourdieu's contention that:

When the newcomers are not disposed to enter the cycle of simple reproduction, based on recognition of the 'old' by the 'young' - homage, celebration, etc.- and recognition of the 'young' by the 'old' - prefaces, co-optation, consecration etc.-but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without the help of external changes. These may be political breaks, such as revolutionary crises, which change the power relations within the field...or deep-seated changes in the audience of consumers who, because of their affinity with the new producers, ensure the success of their products.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Martin Humpál, *The roots of Modernist Narrative: Knut Hamsun's novels Hunger, Mysteries and Pan* (Oslo: Solum, 1998), p. 38.

<sup>143</sup> Interestingly this happens as Hamsun's contemporary Edvard Munch creates his international reputation within the field of painting as a major representative of both expressionism and symbolism. Munch's most famous work *The Scream* was painted in the early 1890's, and portrays the anxiety ridden man confronting what Stuart Hall called the Metropolis.

<sup>144</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>145</sup> Mainly the work of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Henrik Ibsen, Alexander Kielland, and Jonas Lie, known as the great four in Norwegian literature.

<sup>146</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, pp. 57-58.

At this stage the point of departure for Hamsun in his critique of contemporary literature is that the “human being is primarily an individual mind and a social creature... secondly the human mind is an inexplicable mystery governed by irrational force of the unconscious,”<sup>147</sup> therefore literature must focus on the individual(s’) psyche and its complex structure, not on science, truth, reason, morality, and so forth. Decisive for Hamsun was his understanding of modern man as a phenomenon of nerves. Literature should be filled with *life*; in other words, the irrational in the human mind must be given priority, and the focus should shift to that part of that human mind that is not controlled by reason.<sup>148</sup> Hamsun’s literary and artistic ambitions were present long before the publication of *Hunger*; however, it was with the changes in the field of cultural production at the turn of the century that he was provided with the impetus to express his new literary ideas. Thus he created an innovative technique in order to be able to articulate the consciousness of the individual contrary to just a social analysis of society.<sup>149</sup>

Atle Kittang argues that the continuity in Hamsun’s work suggests more than a longing for nature: “writing, for Hamsun, is something qualitatively different than transmission of ideological values and norms. It is an exploration of elementary human relationships and a restless experimenting with the foundation the art of writing has in our ability (and our need) to create fantasies, fictions, illusions. It is these illusions the ideology leaps out from.”<sup>150</sup> Rolf Nyboe Nettum points out that:

There is an intimate relation between Hamsun’s fight to capture an original, exclusive style and his anti-democratic tendencies and his love for a refined- “aristocratic”- spiritual life. It lays an individual desire for self-assertion behind. The young Hamsun’s uproar points after the mid 1880s more against *the masses* than towards single persons- is it towards “individuals” his agitation is grounded in that they are “mass-humans” This is psychologically founded in his nature, in his fight to find himself, in his reservation related to himself in his own subjective understanding of the world.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>148</sup> Rolf Nyboe Nettum, *Hovedtemaer i Knut Hamsuns forfatterskap 1890-1912* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1970), pp. 53-54.

<sup>149</sup> For detailed analysis see Dorrit Cohn, op. cit. especially part II ch.4.

<sup>150</sup> Atle Kittang, *Hamsun’s desillusjonsromaner frå Sult til Ringen Sluttet* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1996), p. 20. Translations mine.

<sup>151</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 47. Translations mine.

For Hamsun it now becomes necessary to create a literature for the few instead of a literature aimed at the masses, at the lowest common denominator, as it were.<sup>152</sup> To conceive this literature he needs to establish an individual style, which is important not only from an artistic point of view, but from a personal one; it has become a problem of his personal existence, that is, his individuality needs to assert itself. Hamsun, in the period before he wrote and published *Hunger*, was what Stuart Hall describes as the individual framed against the metropolis, an orphaned individual torn out of his secure surroundings. As we shall see, the protagonist of *Hunger* must confront the same feelings of alienation.

As the beast of modernity takes hold of society, it leaves the individual stranded in unfamiliar surroundings, their perceptions of everyday-life transformed, and the self de-centred. Thus literature must respond to modern man's experience of isolation and estrangement in an altered universe. The novel's aesthetic response to this transformation of reality allowed a new type of protagonist to emerge, whose anxieties and concerns dominate the narrative.<sup>153</sup> We must, therefore, bring together the ideas of Hall on the sociological self and Girard's notion of triangular desire, as the driving forces behind the literary response. In other words, when the cultures and literatures selected for this study encounter modernity the mediation becomes internal, because the individual's mind is atomized, and the individual turns inwards and starts asking himself questions about his own existence. The individual must create a new language in order to be able to reveal his inner thoughts:

For the individual, the *public world* is a psychological configuration representing the forces of bourgeois modernity; being aware that s/he is supposed to play a social role', the individual perceives his/her existence in the public world as inauthentic. The individual's essentially private experience, or the *private world*, involves anxieties, dreams, and fantasies that are normally not revealed in front of other people; while authentic existence seems impossible without such forms of subjectivity, the public world suppresses them as inappropriate. Yet this genuinely private is precisely what most modernists perceive as the essentially human.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>153</sup> For a detailed outline of the of these changes in the Arabic novel see Sabry Hafez "The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, (London: School of Oriental and African Studies 1994), pp. 93-112.

<sup>154</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 21.

As demonstrated by Bourdieu, modernist writers want access to the field of cultural production and attempt to assert their uniqueness in order to gain individuality and establish a reputation for themselves through an assertion of difference. From an author's point of view it now becomes crucial to acquaint themselves with and understand the rules of the game, as it were, because "the probable future of a field is inscribed, at each moment, in the structure of the field, but each agent makes his own future – thereby helping to make the future of the field – by realizing the objective potentialities which are determined in the relation between his powers and the possibles objectively inscribed in the field."<sup>155</sup>

## HUNGER

Knut Hamsun published *Hunger* in 1890. It was one of the first times the modern, alienated and anxiety-ridden hero appeared in literature and it afforded the reader new insights into the human psyche and laid the foundation of our cognition. The protagonist of *Hunger*, is not only formed by the city, but also by its harsh citizens in his pursuit of meaning and in the process of individuation.

### Hunger for literary recognition

Hamsun was convinced that his literary response was a timely one: "The human nature transforms, therefore literature has to change. Literature should give the modern, in other words, a times spirit."<sup>156</sup> This new narrative style must be able to articulate and adequately express the emotions of the protagonists and, above all, explore the irrationality of the human psyche, as all subjectivism relates to expressionism. Hamsun breaks with the idea of the utilitarianism of literature. He also breaks with "character-psychology" and attacks the social novel for only dealing with external social realities.<sup>157</sup> Hamsun describes *Hunger*, in which he reaches maturation as a writer, as an anti-novel, just to underline the importance of the break that he has made with the establishment in

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<sup>155</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 272.

<sup>156</sup> Knut Hamsun, *Paa Turné, Tre foredrag om Litteratur*, (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1960), pp. 80-82. Translations mine.

<sup>157</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 56-57.

order to enter into the literary field as a new player.<sup>158</sup> It is at the moment when bitter experience melts together with a new mode of expression and new objectives that the poet Hamsun finally matures as a writer.

The protagonist-hero, who is not given a name, spends most of his time wandering around in the streets of Kristiania in search for something to eat, but as Atle Kittang points out his hunger is “a consequence of his behaviour, not the reason for it.”<sup>159</sup> The hero’s pursuit of meaning and process of individuation is closely linked with his relations with the people who frequent the city,<sup>160</sup> the editors of the newspaper in general, and the “commander” in particular, as well as his beloved Ylajali. Within all these relations the intrapersonal interaction takes place inside Girard’s triangle of desire, and the hunger that haunts the hero is not only physical desire for food, but is also a yearning for success in the literary field. Throughout the book<sup>161</sup> the hero struggles to write a piece that will be good enough to be published in one of the city newspapers, and he only succeeds once. Moreover, his hunger for literary recognition leads him to engage in an endless struggle with words, stories, philosophical analysis, plays, or whatever writing he may be trying to produce at the time. As Bourdieu has pointed out, any writer who struggles for a position within the literary field, needs to first of all be recognised by an established participant, if he is not to rely on external events and changes. In the case of our hero his desire in the end proves to be someone else’s desire, and as this desire is imitated, Girard’s theory of how triangular desire and the role of the mediator influence the thought, emotions and decisions of the hero will explain why he questions his own right to existence.

All summer I had haunted the cemeteries and Palace Park, where I would sit and prepare articles for the newspapers, column after column about all sorts of things – strange whimsies, moods, caprices of my restless brain. In my desperation I had often chosen the most far-fetched subjects, which cost me hours and hours of effort and were never accepted. When a piece was finished I began a fresh one, and I wasn’t very often discouraged by the editor’s no; I kept telling myself that, some day, I was bound to succeed. And indeed, when I was lucky and it turned out well, I would occasionally get five kroner for an afternoon’s work.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Already in some of Hamsun’s earlier work, *Den Gaadefulle*, and *Bjørger*, we might be able to detect some of the same ideas, related to the individual in boarder situations like the intellectual master vs. the community, but not with the same mastery found in *Hunger*.

<sup>159</sup> Kittang, op. cit., p. 35. Translations mine.

<sup>160</sup> Kittang also acknowledges this point. See Kittang, op. cit. especially p. 64.

<sup>161</sup> As Hamsun called it himself since he was careful not to call it a novel as he wanted to break with the established literary field.

<sup>162</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 5.



I might start an article this very day about the crimes of the future or the freedom of the will, anything whatever, something worth reading, something I would get at least ten kroner for...And at the thought of this article I instantly felt an onrush of desire to begin right away, tapping my chockfull brain.<sup>163</sup>

Quite instinctively, I had gotten paper and pencil into my hands, and I sat and wrote mechanically the date 1848 in every corner of the page. If only a single scintillating thought would come, grip me utterly and put words in my mouth! It had happened before after all, it had really happened that such moments came over me, so that I could write a long piece without effort and get it wonderfully right.<sup>164</sup>

Even with the pawnbroker he desperately feels the need to put on another mask, the mask of the successful writer just to get his pencil back that he forgot in a vest he had recently handed in:

It would never occur to me, I said, to come such a long way for just any pencil; but with this one it was a different matter, there was a special reason. However insignificant it might look, this stump of pencil had simply made me what I was in this world, had put me to my right place in life, so to speak... With this pencil, I continued coolly, I had written my monograph about philosophical cognition in three volumes. Hadn't he heard of it? And the man thought that, sure enough he had heard the name, the title. Well I said, that one was by me, you bet! So he should not be at all surprised that I wanted to get this tiny stub of a pencil back; it was far too precious to me, it seemed almost like a little person.<sup>165</sup>

The hero finally starts to believe his own exaggerations and lies and they shape his process of individuation. Finally one or two good sentences occur to him, nice linguistic flukes that he had never experienced before, and he writes as he if possessed, filling one page after the other, full of his subject as if every single word that he writes was just put into his mouth. When he has some fifteen to twenty pages written, he jumps out of bed feeling saved and cannot wait to see the editor, telling himself that this piece will be sure to earn him ten kroner. However, having written his piece early in the morning he has to kill some time before the editor gets in, and he starts his usual wandering around the city, too poor to even drink a coffee. At about ten o'clock he heads to the newspaper, but it is only the assistant "Scissors" who is in and he hands him the manuscript making sure he understands that it must be given the utmost priority and handed personally to the editor on his arrival. He leaves promising to return later the same day. Our hero once again has

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

plenty of time to kill so he sets out walking again. Resting for a moment close to the cemetery he is suddenly struck by anxiety:

Could I be absolutely certain that my story was truly inspired, a little artistic masterpiece? God knows it might have some faults here and there. Everything considered, it didn't even have to get accepted-no, that was it not even accepted! What if it was quite mediocre or perhaps downright bad; what guarantee did I have that it hadn't already ended in the wastepaper basket?... My feeling of contentment had been shaken, I jumped up and stormed out of the cemetery.<sup>166</sup>

Plunged into self-doubt, he starts walking around aimlessly until he becomes hot and tired, and feeling depressed, heads back towards the centre. Here he meets a man who informs him it is already past four o'clock! Terrified that the editor might now have gone home he rushes to the paper as fast as he can, and anxious that he might now have to wait until tomorrow, he knocks on the door and receiving no answer:

I think, He's gone! He's gone! I try the door, it's open. I knock once more and step in. The editor is sitting at his desk, his face turned toward the window, pen in hand poised to write. When he hears my breathless greeting he turns half around, looks at me for a moment, shakes his head and says, "I haven't had time to read your sketch yet." I feel so glad that at least he hasn't yet scrapped it that I answer, "Goodness, no, I quite understand. There's no great hurry. In a couple of days maybe, or...?" "Well, we'll see. Anyway, I have your address." I forgot to inform him that I no longer had an address. The audience is over, I step back, bowing, and leave. My hopes are fired up again, nothing was lost yet—on the contrary, I could still win everything, for that matter. And my brain began to fantasize about a great council in heaven where it had just been decided that I should win, win capitally ten kroner for a story...<sup>167</sup>

After finishing his article, he had decided that such a simple small room was unsuitable for an intellectual giant like himself and he gave up his apartment, leaving a note for his landlady. Yet it is this small room that he sneaks back to late at night hoping it is still vacant. In the room he finds a letter addressed to him; expecting it to be from the landlady, warning him not to set his foot in the room again, he decides to leave straight away. Outside he slowly opens the letter:

A stream of light seems to surge through my breast, and I hear myself giving a little cry, a meaningless sound of joy: the letter was from the editor, my story was accepted, it had gone directly to the composing room! "A few minor changes...corrected a few slips of the pen...promising work...to be printed tomorrow...ten kroner. Laughing and crying, I leaped up and raced down the street, stopped to slap my thighs and flung a solemn oath into space for no particular reason. And time passed.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., pp. 35-36.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 37.



All night long, till daybreak, I went yodelling about the streets dazed with joy, repeating: promising work, meaning a little masterpiece, a stroke of genius. And ten kroner.<sup>168</sup>

What the hero is experiencing here is imitated desire with an imaginary mediator; however, the mediation is not imaginary, and forces the hero into desperate and ill-considered actions: "from the moment the mediator's influence is felt, the sense of reality is lost and judgment paralyzed."<sup>169</sup> From this point of view the hero's actions seem to make sense, and it is in this manner that he continues his pursuit of meaning - his attempt to enter and become an accepted part of the literary field. With this new belief in his talents as a writer he becomes a familiar face at the newspaper. One day he decides to drop by the editor's office:

I stopped outside the door to the office to check if my pages were in the right order; I smoothed them carefully out, stuck them back in my pocket and knocked. My heart beat audibly as I entered.

Scissors is there as usual. I ask timidly for the editor. No answer. The man sits there with a pair of long scissors digging up small news items in the out-of-town papers.

I repeat my question and step closer.

"The editor hasn't come in yet," Scissors said finally, without looking up.

When would he be there?

Couldn't say, couldn't say at all.

How late would the office be open?

To this I got no answer, and I had to leave. Scissors hadn't glanced at me throughout; he had heard my voice and recognised me by that. This is how unwelcome you are here, I thought, they don't even bother to answer you. I wonder if it is by order of the editor. True enough, from the very moment my famous story at ten kroner was accepted, I had flooded him with manuscripts, pestering him almost every day with useless things he'd had to read and return to me. Perhaps he wanted to put an end to it, take his precautions.<sup>170</sup>

Several days pass and the hero decides to return to the newspaper. On the way he renames himself Tangen after a respected journalist and thinks over his bright idea of selling the buttons on his jacket, persuading himself that he doesn't actually need buttons as he always wears his jacket open. On the stairs he is brought back to reality when he encounters "scissors" and hastily slips his buttons into his pocket. "Scissors", apparently busy with cleaning his fingernails does not even answer his greeting, so the hero stops him and asks about the editor:

"He is not in."

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>169</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>170</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, pp. 72-73.

“You’re lying!” I said. And with a nerve which made me wonder at myself, I continued, “I must talk to him, it’s urgent. I have something to report from the Prime Minister’s.”

“Why can’t you tell it to me?”

“To you?” I said, giving Scissors the once-over.

It helped. He came straight back upstairs with me and opened the door. My heart was in my mouth. I clenched my teeth hard to bolster my courage, knocked and stepped into the editor’s private office.

“Oh, hello! It’s you?” he said cordially. “Sit down.”

If he had shown me the door on the spot, it would have been more welcome. I was ready to cry and said, “I beg your pardon—”

“Sit down,” he repeated.

So I sat down and explained that I had another article it was important for me to get into his paper. I had taken such pains with it, it had cost me much effort.

“I’ll read it,” he said, taking it. “Everything you write probably costs you some effort; but you are much too high-strung. If you could just be a little more level-headed! There’s always too much fever. However, I’ll read it.” And he turned back to his desk again...

“Is there anything else?” he asked.

“No,” I said, making my voice firm. “When may I drop in again?”

“Oh, any time you pass by,” he answered. “In a couple of days or so.”

I couldn’t make my request pass my lips. This man’s friendliness seemed to be boundless, and I would know how to appreciate it. Sooner starve to death. And I left.<sup>171</sup>

The hero’s work is continually turned down; this proves devastating to his ego, convinced as he is that his writing is unique. According to Girard: “pride can survive only with the help of the lie, and the lie is sustained by the triangle of desire.”<sup>172</sup> However, his desire to be original, to stand out in the field, means that his ideas have no wide appeal. Fortunately he meets someone who helps him out of his crisis and, for a week at least, he has something to eat. His sorrows are turned to joy and his confidence increases as he has more and more irons in the fire, working on three or four monographs, picking his poor brain clean of every spark, every thought that comes to it. He feels his life is going better than before, even if his last article, that had given rise to so much hope, had been returned; he had destroyed it immediately, feeling angry and insulted, and he decided to try another newspaper to expand his opportunities. Nothing seems more natural than for the ambitious hero to approach the personification of symbolic power, in Kristiania’s literary field, the “commander”. Yet when he is given audience he is suddenly struck by fear:

So this was how he looked close up, this man whose name I had already heard in my first youth and whose paper had had the greatest influence on me throughout the years. His hair is

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-80.

<sup>172</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 58.

curly, his fine brown eyes a bit restless; he has a habit of snorting slightly every once in a while. A Scottish parson couldn't look more gentle than this dangerous writer, whose words had always left bloody stripes wherever they struck. I am stirred by a curious feeling of fear and admiration vis-à-vis this person; on the verge of tears, I cannot help advancing a step to tell him how sincerely I loved him for all he had taught me and to ask him not to hurt me—I was only a poor devil who had a hard enough time of it as it was.<sup>173</sup>

The hero has prepared himself carefully for his first visit to the “commander”: “toiled at my work day after day...went up to the “commander's”. He is asked to sit down and finally when the commander has finished some paperwork he attends to the hero. As he is giving the commander his short profile of Correggio he excuses himself: “I'm afraid it may not be written in such a way that-”<sup>174</sup> and he becomes quiet as the commander starts reading it. He continues helping to make it easy for the “commander” to refuse him by saying, “Oh well, you can't use it, of course,”<sup>175</sup> smiling to pretend he takes the refusal lightly. His small sketch, an art critique, is refused on the basis that it would not appeal to the kind of reading public they have, and is requested to make it easier for people to understand.

The interesting thing to note besides this refusal is that the “commander” offers him payment in advance, for what he might later produce: “I would be glad to give you a small advance. You can always write for it.”<sup>176</sup> Suddenly the hero's confidence in himself, which is in inverse proportion to his pride, plummets and he refuses, believing the “commander” has decided he is not a good writer, and is making the offer out of compassion for him. He leaves feeling humiliated.

The majority of studies on *Hunger* have in common the contention that from the very beginning it all goes downhill for our hero as an author.<sup>177</sup> What actually happens, without the hero's realising it, is that by offering him a small payment in advance the “commander in chief” of the literary field has taken the first step towards consecrating

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<sup>173</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>177</sup> See Jørgen E. Tiemroth *Illusjonens vei. Knut Hamsuns forfatterskap*, (København: 1974). Peter Kiekegaard *Knut Hamsun som Modernist* (København: 1975). Trygve Braatøy *Livets Cirkel, Et bidrag til analyse av Knut Hamsuns diktning* (Oslo: 1979). Aasmund Brynhildsen, *Svermeren og hans demon. Fire Essays om Knut Hamsun*, (Oslo: 1973).

him.<sup>178</sup> Moreover this is not *art for arts sake*, not actually writing just to make a living; he is not as Kittang<sup>179</sup> suggests, writing for an audience. The hero writes, and only writes to become accepted, and to gain a position within the field, so he also can be part of the field's game, and its struggle for power, and through that process of individuation, he can accumulate the needed *habitus* to take on the other major influence in his process of individuation, that is Ylajali, as we will return to later. The hero actually has no choice other than to accept the judgment of those exercising the symbolic power and to understand how the power relations work if he wants to take part in the game of the literary field, unwillingly or not by just being an author as he cannot rely on external forces such as for instance revolution.<sup>180</sup> The hero returns home from "the commander" determined to write a masterpiece that will take him by surprise, and with no light in his small room, and too poor to even buy a candle, he takes his papers outside under the streetlamps:

There was nothing to disturb me, I pulled my coat collar up around my ears and started thinking with all my might. It would be a wonderful help to me if I were lucky enough to come up with the conclusion to this little monograph. I was at a rather difficult point right now, to be followed by a quite imperceptible transition to something new, and then a muted gliding finale, a long-drawn-out rumble which would finally end in a climax as bold, as shocking, as a shot or the sound of a cracking rock. Period...But the words wouldn't come. I read through the entire piece from the beginning, read each sentence aloud, but I just couldn't collect my thoughts for this crashing climax... The following morning I sat up in bed as soon as it was light and set to work on my article once more. I sat there like that until noon, by which time I had managed to write ten to twenty lines. And I still hadn't reached the finale.<sup>181</sup>

All these painful and troubled times where he struggled to come up with something useful at all, is somehow rewarded by his process of individuation:

A few brief sentences got done with great effort, a dozen or two miserable words that I forced out at all my cost simply to make some progress. Then I stopped—my head was empty and I didn't have the strength to go on. When I just couldn't get any further, I began staring with wide-open eyes at those last words, that unfinished sheet of paper, peering at the strange,

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<sup>178</sup> He realises this in the end as he is determined to write for the money he got later, and therefore leaves on the ship to gather mental and physical strength for when he will be back.

<sup>179</sup> See Kittang, *op. cit.* especially page 50. See also page 58 where Kittang contradicts himself and claims he wants acceptance.

<sup>180</sup> This is also probably the reason why the hero strives with philosophical and literary themes, as was the norm at that time, however totally contradictory to the views of Hamsun himself at the time, but before the hero can express his own views he has to be in a position within the field and have the symbolic power to change it. It is not as Kittang suggests a question of the "commander" being a father figure, see Kittang *op. cit.* p. 58.

<sup>181</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, pp. 107-108.

trembling letters which stared up at me from the paper like small unkempt figures, and at the end I understood nothing at all and didn't have a thought in my head.<sup>182</sup>

Later as he is still hungry he decides to try to get a candle rather than buying some food as he decides it is more important to finish an article he is working on before the "commander" forgets him.<sup>183</sup> One evening when he is wandering around down by the harbour, he is surprised to suddenly come across the "commander". With casual audacity, I even move a step away from the wall to make him aware of me. I don't do it to awaken his compassion but to mock myself, make myself an object of derision. I could have thrown myself in the gutter and asked the "commander" to walk over me, to trample on my face. I don't even say good evening to him.

The "Commander" may have sensed there was something wrong with me; he slowed down a little, and to make him stop I said, "I should have brought you something but I haven't gotten around to it yet."

"Yes?" he answers, inquiringly. "So you haven't finished it?"

"No, I haven't managed to finish it."

But now, with the "Commander's" friendliness, my eyes are suddenly watering, and I hawk and cough furiously to toughen myself. The "Commander" gives a snort; he stands looking at me.

"And do you have anything to live on in the meantime?" he says.

"No," I answer, "I guess I don't. I haven't had anything to eat yet today, but—"

"God help us, man, that won't do; you just can't let yourself starve to death!" And he reaches for his pocket right away.

At this, my sense of shame awakens, I stagger up to the wall again and hold on to it. I watch the "Commander" rummaging in his purse but don't say anything. He hands me a ten-krone bill. He doesn't make a big fuss about it, he simply gives me ten kroner. At the same time he repeats that it wouldn't do for me to starve to death.

I stammered an objection and didn't accept the bill right away—I ought to feel ashamed...besides, it was far too much...

"Hurry up," he says, looking at his watch. "I've been waiting for the train and now I hear it coming."

I took the money. Paralyzed with joy, I didn't say another word, even forgetting to thank him.

"There's no need to feel embarrassed about it," the "Commander" says at last. "You can always write for it you know."<sup>184</sup>

This incident only confirms Girard's argument that "as the mediator draws nearer, passion becomes more intense and the object is emptied of its concrete value."<sup>185</sup> The

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-111.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-141.

<sup>185</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 85.

“commander”, however, once again demonstrates his belief in the hero as a writer, and that he has not forgotten about him.

Early on in part four the hero, now living in a small room within a tavern and eating regularly, has resumed his writing, but is struggling to find inspiration. Even if he is working hard, he always has in mind the “commander” and his own desire to prove to him that he was worth the ten kroner he was given in advance:

I had started a piece for which I had high expectations, an allegory about a fire in a bookstore, a profound idea that I would take the utmost pains to work out and bring to the “Commander” as an instalment on my debt. Then the “Commander” would realize he had helped a real talent this time; I had no doubt he would realize that, I just had to wait for the inspiration to come. And why shouldn’t the inspiration come, even very soon?<sup>186</sup>

We are not told whether he manages to do so, as this last encounter with the “commander” turns out to be his final one before he takes work on a ship, and leaves Kristiania for a period, or just says “goodbye for now.”<sup>187</sup> This is evidence of his determination to return to Kristiania not only to pay back the “commander” but to play his part in the game of the literary field at his return.

Throughout *Hunger* the hero is left with no other choice than to write to make a living, as he is turned down when he applies to be a fire fighter, an accountant etc, even though these half-hearted attempts are just a result of his confusion and desperation after being rejected by the various editors. It is not even a response to his miserable situation as his only desire is to become a successful and accepted writer. On two occasions he also claims to be journalist Anders Tangen from the acknowledged newspaper *Morgenbladet*. Having lost his keys one rainy night, he asks at the police station if they could open his gate but they cannot, so as he has no money for a hotel he has to report himself as homeless. It is when he is asked his name and occupation that, driven by desired desire, he claims to be a journalist. This turns out to be a foolish move in the long run. The officer treats him with the respect due to his position, and he is offered a place in the reserved section. During the night he has several strange dreams and his madness makes him feel exhausted and terrified. When he awakens the next morning feeling fine he talks to himself as if he is a homeless cabinet minister: “I amused myself by acting the cabinet

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<sup>186</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 160

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

minister, calling myself Von Tangen and affecting a bureaucratic style. My fantasies had not ceased, I was only much less nervous.”<sup>188</sup> These incidents must not be seen as some kind of innocent lies, because they are not. They are part of his defence mechanism, evoked by his imitated desire as a result of mediation. According to Girard:

Falsification of experience is not carried out consciously, as in a simple lie: rather the process begins in advance of any conscious experience at the point at which representations and feelings about value are first elaborated. The “organic falsehood” functions every time someone wishes to *see* only that which serves his “interests” or some other disposition of his instinctive attention, whose object is thus modified even in memory. The man who deludes himself in this way no longer needs to lie.<sup>189</sup>

The hero’s imitated desire, to be a successful journalist, prevents him from having the much desired food coupon all the other homeless get. Having claimed to be a famous person in the literary field with a lot of prestige he is not given such things as it is assumed he has food at home.

As has been demonstrated it is actually the hunger for literary acceptance that drives the story forward and justifies its existence. This hunger shapes the hero’s conscious understanding of the world around him, as he continually and desperately struggles in his pursuit of meaning. In other words, becoming an accepted writer is the major determinant of his process of individuation and his actions. On a personal level it also justifies his right and struggle to exist.

The hero’s lack of a routine such as regularly gathering with friends and his unstable personal life is due to his continuing pursuit of meaning. Moreover, it is crucial to relate the lack of routine in the hero’s life and his anxiety to the process of modernity. As Anthony Giddens demonstrates: “the predictability of the (apparently) minor routines of day-to-day life is deeply involved with a sense of psychological security. When such routines are shattered—for whatever reason—anxieties come flooding in, and even very firmly founded aspects of the personality of the individual may become stripped away and altered.”<sup>190</sup> In this sense the hero is the perfect example of the new figure Stuart Hall argues emerged from the aesthetic and intellectual movements associated with the rise of modernism. He is representative of the unique experience of modernity, and the isolated,

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>189</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>190</sup> Giddens, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

exiled or estranged individual that it produces, framed against the background of the anonymous and impersonal crowd or metropolis.<sup>191</sup> The hero desperately tries to combat the persistent feeling that everything he does is meaningless, a feeling derived from the reflexivity of modernity as applied to the self, as he surrenders himself to another's desire. This time he is to experience the metaphysical form of desire as his mediator is Ylajali.

### Ylajali

Early on in *Hunger* the hero meets the woman who will occupy his time and thoughts and stir his desire at three different levels throughout the narrative. Ylajali as he calls her appears as "dream woman" in the first two parts of the book. In the third part she becomes "woman as fellow human being" before being transformed into "prostitute" in the last part.<sup>192</sup> The hero is on his way to the pawnbroker to claim back his *pencil special*, when he passes and accidentally brushes the sleeve of a young lady out walking with a companion. She suddenly blushes and becomes beautiful, the hero can only guess why, but as he stands thinking it over his thoughts take an odd direction.

I'm seized by a strange desire to frighten this lady, to follow her and hurt her in some way. I overtake her once more and walk past her, then abruptly turn around and meet her face to face to observe her...once she is close enough to me, I straighten up and say urgently, "Miss, you're loosing your book."<sup>193</sup>

The hero's malice keeps on increasing as he follows her, and he deliberately takes on the role as the mad prankster, his confused state engendering more and more crazy ideas. Having walked past them a second time standing waiting for them he once again steps out saying, "Miss, you're loosing your book."<sup>194</sup> He gloats cruelly over her confusion, and is thrilled by the bewilderment in her eyes as she desperately starts searching for her lost book. Such sadistic and later on masochistic behaviour is an illustration of the hero's predicament now that he is locked inside the triangle of desire; Ylajali becomes his mediator, the one who inspires him in his imitated desire. His sadistic behaviour reveals the immense prestige of the mediator; he, like the sadist, persecutes her because he feels

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<sup>191</sup> Hall, op. cit., p. 285.

<sup>192</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>193</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 11-12.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



he is being persecuted. Thus the sadistic hero struggles to realise his illusion of *being* the mediator without transforming his victim into a replica of himself.<sup>195</sup> As Girard explains “one cannot be a sadist unless the key to the enchanted garden appears to be in the hands of a tormentor.”<sup>196</sup> And Ylajali is the perfect “gardener”. As he continues to chase the two young ladies Ylajali reveals her curiosity about this stranger that keeps pursuing them. Suddenly they arrive at a building and the girls enter, and the hero listens to their disappearing footsteps. He is surprised then to see her open a window and fix her two queer-looking eyes upon him, wondering why she does not call for help or throw some flowerpots down on him:

We stand looking each other straight in the face without moving; a minute goes by; thoughts dart back and fourth between the window and the street, but not a word is spoken. She turns around- I felt a jolt, a light shock, go through me; I see a shoulder turning, a back disappearing into the room. This unhurried stepping away from the window, the inflection of the movement of her shoulder, was like a nod to me; my blood perceived this subtle greeting and I felt wonderfully happy all at once.<sup>197</sup>

The second and third time we meet Ylajali she is described by the hero as his princess as he dreams of them embracing and kissing each other.<sup>198</sup> This is a clear example of how imagined desire turns from being external to internal, and as we shall later see, is further transformed into metaphysical desire. This happens when the hero has left Ylajali a little behind, but is drawn into the triangle of desire once more. He realises he can't imitate her and slowly turns into a masochist. Ylajali suffers from imagined desire and she is curious about who this mad man really is. On several occasions she waits outside his gate, and the fourth time the hero sees her he invites her for a glass of wine but she turns him down. When she says she would be glad if he could walk her home he suddenly understands that it is Ylajali that has come to look for him. Entering the second phase of their relationship, they are both beset by anxiety about revealing their true identities. They mistrust each other, and whilst the hero has a strong desire for human understanding, he persists in regarding her as a stranger, a fact that serves only to fuel his feelings of self-contempt. At this point it is essential to be aware of the impact of

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<sup>195</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>197</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 14.

<sup>198</sup> See *Hunger*, pp. 58 and 72.

modernity upon relationships of trust. Giddens argue that: "Relationships are ties based upon trust, where trust is not pre-given but worked upon, and where the work involved means *a mutual process of self-disclosure*."<sup>199</sup> Consequently the lack of trust leads the hero to question his own worth as a human being. He is afraid that his poverty and poor state of mind will frighten her off. When she asks him, "Good heavens, aren't you cold without an overcoat?,"<sup>200</sup> the hero is faced with a dilemma: "Should I tell her why I wasn't wearing an overcoat? Let her know my situation right away and frighten her off, now just as well as later? How delightful it was, though, to walk here at her side keep her in the dark a little while longer. I lied and answered, "No, not at all."<sup>201</sup>

This is interesting on two levels, primarily because the way he will scare her is not from his sadistic point of view as earlier, but from a masochistic one: "we are masochists when we no longer choose our mediator because of the admiration which he inspires in us but because of the disgust we seem to inspire in him."<sup>202</sup> Secondly the hero's diversions divulge that his social shame has been triggered and has now become self-contempt: "But as we stood there by the door, all my misery again bore down upon me...here I stood before a young woman, dirty, tattered, disfigured by hunger, unwashed, only half-dressed—it was enough to make you sink into the ground."<sup>203</sup> As the hero is not made an untouchable by society he condemns himself, since he has placed his faith in a promise from the outside that proved to be false. Girard underlines this and adds that, "the more deeply it is engraved in our hearts the more violent is the contrast between this marvellous promise and the brutal disappointment inflicted by experience."<sup>204</sup> The hero manages however, to keep up the good faith, clinging to her small flirtatious signs and she agrees to meet him again. When they meet the second time she more or less deliberately invites the hero up to her flat, by saying both her mother and the maid are away, and the hero uses this chance to be alone with her:

"Can we go up to your place than?" I say. "I'll sit by the door the whole time if you want me to...."

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<sup>199</sup> Giddens, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>200</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 118.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>202</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>203</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 122.

<sup>204</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 56.

But the next moment I was trembling with emotion, full of remorse for having been too brash. What if she became offended and walked away? Oh, that wretched suit I was wearing! I waited desperately for her answer.

“You certainly won’t sit by the door,” she says.  
We went up.<sup>205</sup>

At this point their relationship is on the verge of reaching its climax. He chases her around the table, until he falls over as his foot is hurt after being run over. They sit together and chat, he kisses her and they get a little more intimate, he starts undressing her, she helps him undo the corset and a couple of difficult buttons, and winds her arm around his neck, slowly and tenderly. Then she suddenly becomes aware of him loosing a lot of hair, suddenly regrets her behaviour and pulls herself a little away from him, feeling a little disgusted by his presence, both physically and psychologically, and turning into a terrified girl begging him to have mercy upon her.

“You drink too much, of course, and perhaps...Phew, I won’t even say it! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I wouldn’t have believed it of you, no, never! To think that you, who are so young, should already be losing your hair!...Now, you’d better tell me straight out what sort of life you’re leading. I’m sure it is awful!”<sup>206</sup>

The hero confesses and tells her of his real state of mind, honestly and frankly, not even exaggerating it in order to provoke her compassion. She listens aghast and pale, and becomes more and more frightened, while the hero’s poor attempt to put it right again just makes things even worse, and she is unable to believe him when he says it is all over now and he is saved. He continues to joke about it and says to himself that it is only a matter of pushing on; he is determined to win her over, and tries once more as he continues his somehow desperate enticing game:

“No!...What do you want?” she said.

“What I want?”

“No!...Why, no...!”

“Oh yes, oh yes!”

“No, d’you hear!” she cried. And she added these cutting words, “Why, I believe you’re Crazy!”

Startled into leaving of for a moment, I said, “You don’t mean that!”

“Oh yes, you look so queer! And that morning when you were following me—so you weren’t really drunk that time?”

“No, but I wasn’t hungry either then, you know; I had just eaten.”

“So much the worse.”

“Would you rather I had been drunk?”

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<sup>205</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 144.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

“Yes... Oh I’m so scared of you! Good God, can’t you let go of me!”<sup>207</sup>

Reluctant to let it go he thinks to himself that all this is just bashfulness from her side, so he continues his battle with her while she resists vigorously. In the end he knocks a candle over so it goes out, a symbolic detail of the state their relationship is in, and he stops immediately as she whimpers “No, not that, not that! If you want to, I’d let you kiss my bosom instead. Please. Please!”<sup>208</sup> He now transforms himself into the masochist, inspiring contempt in her; his distinctiveness that made him exciting in the beginning has now made him miserable. He managed to make an impression on her, but not in the way he had hoped, and he becomes the victim of what Anthony Giddens calls a modern type of intimacy:

In relations of intimacy of the modern type, trust is always ambivalent, and the possibility of severance is more or less ever present. Personal ties can be ruptured, and ties of intimacy returned to the sphere of impersonal contacts—in the broken love affair, the intimate suddenly becomes again the stranger. The demand of “opening oneself up” to the other which personal trust relations now presume, that injunction to hide nothing from the other, mix reassurance and deep anxiety<sup>209</sup>

For Ylajali the turning point was at the moment when she understood that he was not even drunk or playing a mad prank, but actually happened to be this crazy. The hero now understands he himself is the reason for this misery, and he is filled with conflicting emotions towards her, and resentment towards himself. Desperately he tries to come up with something smart to say, that can move her emotionally and impress her at the same time, needing to heal the wounds from his humiliation as his desire for revenge and self-assertion grows:

I felt humiliated and confused and looked at her without speaking. Oh, what a mess I’d made! It didn’t seem to affect her that I stood there ready to go; all at once she was completely lost to me, and I searched for something to say to her for goodbye, some deep, weighty word that would cut into her and maybe impress her a little. But in the teeth of my firm resolve, hurt, uneasy and offended instead of proud and cold, I just started talking about trifles. The cutting word didn’t come, I behaved very thoughtlessly. It ended up being claptrap and rhetoric again.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pp. 150-151.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>209</sup> Giddens, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>210</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 152.

The hero at this point plays the double masochist, making her dislike him even more because he fills her with disgust, and accepting the humiliation. Ylajali is still an admired mediator, and at first it also might appear to us that the hero desires shame, suffering, humiliation, and pain. This is not however the case, since no literary character has desired such treatment, self-imposed or not. It is indeed as Girard describes that:

Every victim of metaphysical desire, including the masochist, covets his mediator's divinity, and for this divinity he will accept if necessary—and it is always necessary—or even seek out, shame, humiliation and suffering. He hopes that misery and suffering will reveal to him the person whom he should imitate *in order to free himself of his wretched condition.*<sup>211</sup>

Desperately he continues to blame and to explain that his situation is due to his hunger, - that it has made him alert and sensitive, and has burned his soul. The more he talks, the more frightened and anxious she becomes, and he understands that he is torturing her. Even then he cannot stop himself, determined as he is just to tell her his whole story. Moved by her growing despair he grabs the latch as if he's about to leave, expecting her to say or do anything, but she remains frozen, even when he kneels down in front of her and reaches out his hand. "Why do you suddenly turn away from me, as if you don't know me any longer? You have plucked me thoroughly clean, made me more wretched than I've been. But good God, I'm not insane. You know very well if you stop and think that there's nothing wrong with me now. So, come here and give me your hand!"<sup>212</sup> Desperately he is waiting and hoping for her to stretch out her hand. At first she hesitates for a second, but as she finally gives him her hand he feels she is doing it out of pity towards him, not out of genuine feeling towards him, and he experiences growing anger and depression. The hero is left denuded of his self-esteem, and is about to lose his confidence in himself as an individual. At this stage the hero's desire acts like a "corrosive disease which first attacks the periphery and than spreads towards the centre; it is an *alienation* which grows more complete as the distance between model and disciple diminishes,"<sup>213</sup> and as Ylajali is now seen as a prostitute, the hero's desire, or more precisely his thwarted desire, turns into hatred.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 182. Italics mine.

<sup>212</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 154.

<sup>213</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>214</sup> This is also very much the situation in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, between Mustafa and Jean, see infra, chapter three.

The next time he meets Ylajali is when he is chatting with “Maiden”, and she walks past them with the “Duke”. “Maiden” asks if he knows this lady, since he bowed so deeply, but the hero tells him he does not, before thinking to himself;

Yes, the ‘Duke’ would walk off with her, of course! Well and good! What business was it of mine? I didn’t give a hang about her, or about all her charms, not a hang! And I tried to comfort myself by thinking the worst possible thing about her, took downright pleasure in rolling her in the mud. The only thing that annoyed me was that I had taken my hat off to the pair—if indeed, I had done so. Why should I take my hat off to such people? I no longer cared for her, not at all; she wasn’t the least attractive anymore, she had lost her good looks—holy smoke, how she had faded! It might very well be she had looked at me; it wouldn’t surprise me, perhaps remorse was beginning to gnaw at her. But that was no reason why I had to go down on my knees and bow to her like a fool, especially since she had faded so suspiciously lately. The ‘Duke’ was quite welcome to keep her, much good might she do him! A day might come when I would take it into my head to walk proudly past her, without even glancing in her direction. I might venture to do this even if she looked hard at me, and was wearing a blood-red dress to boot! I might do it, all right. Ha-ha, what a triumph that would be! If I knew myself at all, I would be able to finish my play in the course of the night, and within a week I would have brought the young lady to her knees. With her charms and all, heh-heh, with all her charms....<sup>215</sup>

The hero’s train of thought reveals his split personality, and how he is desperately trying to hide from himself the fact that Ylajali provoked an imitated desire in him,<sup>216</sup> which he not yet has managed to free himself from. This is underlined by his incessant belief in his literary talent and his ability to complete a piece of good writing. Furthermore, it is revealed through his longing to become a consecrated writer in the literary field of Kristiania, since he also believes and sincerely hopes this will bring Ylajali to her knees. The hero’s yearning to return to Ylajali’s attention must be seen as a masked appeal to his mediator; in fact he is turning himself towards his beloved persecutor, the same way one of the faithful turns towards his god, whilst convinced that he is now turning away from his mediator, Ylajali, in revulsion. As has been argued and demonstrated above it is the acceptance by the “commander” that interests the hero most of all in his pursuit of meaning and process of individuation. Moreover, he cannot deny or ignore the personal side of his individuation to become a complete human being, therefore he cannot neglect the emotional side of his personality and end up being one-dimensional.

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<sup>215</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, pp. 173-174.

<sup>216</sup> Ylajali also stirs erotic desires in him, but they are not essential for this study since these feelings are secondary in value to understand his pursuit for meaning and his process of individuation.

The last time we are told about Ylajali is after the hero has an argument with his landlady, and is told to leave the tavern he had been staying in for a while because of his unpaid bills. After sneaking into his room for a successful, however short-lived writing session, he is discovered by the landlady who loses her temper:

One speech after another sprang up in my head, perfectly finished, and I wrote without a break. I fill one page after another, tear along at full speed, murmuring softly with delight at my fine mood and scarcely knowing what I'm doing. The only sound I hear at this moment is my own joyful murmur...than I hear footsteps on the stairs. I tremble, almost beside myself and ready to jump up at any moment, wary, alert, fearful of everything...the landlady threw the door open all the way and screamed, "I swear to God, if you don't leave this minute I'll call the police!"<sup>217</sup>

The hero stumbles down the stairs and out the gate, the landlady at his heels, only to be met by a messenger who delivers him a letter that contains a ten krone bill. There is no letter, not even a name, but the messenger tells him it has been sent by a lady. With pride burning anew inside him he turns around, crumples the bill and throws it in the landlady's face, and leave the place feeling vindicated: "Ha that's what was called knowing how to acquit oneself! Not say a word, not speak to the scum, but quite calmly crumple up a big bill and throw it straight in the face of one's persecutors. That's what one could call behaving with dignity. It served them right, the brutes!"<sup>218</sup> Angry, exhausted, hungry, depressed and sick with pain and shame he whispers 'Ylajali', shakes his head as it suddenly dawns on him where the ten krone bill came from. To resign himself to this shameful fact seems his only option, since he can hardly go back to the landlady and ask for his money back, nor has he any chance of getting hold of a ten kroner bill anywhere else, and even if he could he does not feel he can return an entirely different bill to Ylajali than the one he received. After having told himself the previous day that the next time he saw her he would make a show of his indifference towards her, he realises that he has only "aroused her compassion and coaxed her out of a pennyworth of charity."<sup>219</sup> A short while later he once again invents excuses for himself, justifying how he spent and thereby accepted the money; as he is not in a position to return the money, why should he carry on worrying about it. Furthermore, knowing Ylajali "she wasn't sorry she had sent the money either...actually that was the least thing she could do, sending me a ten-krone bill

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<sup>217</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

every now and then. After all, the poor girl was in love with me, ha! perhaps even hopelessly in love with me". This method of puffing himself up only serves to conceal his imitated desire for a short while, and then only to himself, making his suffering even more acute when finally he realises he is trapped inside a triangle of desire.

The clock is a little past four and he comforts himself with the idea of seeing the theatre manager if he could just manage to finish the last three or four scenes of the play he is working on, reading once more from the beginning and writing down everything that comes into his mind. He strives to induce another moment of inspiration, but in the end he is deceiving himself, for he has to search for and struggle to find each word. After incessantly banging his head against the wall he surrenders: "I break my pencil between my teeth, jump up, tear my manuscript to bits, every single sheet, toss my hat in the gutter and trample it. "I'm lost!" I whisper to myself. "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm lost!" I say nothing except these words as I stand there trampling my hat."<sup>220</sup> The very act of breaking his pencil, and tearing his manuscript to bits must be understood symbolically. This action announces his withdrawal from the battlefield, his inability or refusal to write anymore. Having destroyed his tools, and thereby his only opportunity to become accepted in the literary field, and to secure himself an income and establish a decent standard of living, he envisions no other possibility than retreat in order to reconsider his approach to Kristiania, its literary field and its inhabitants. By recovering his mind and self-esteem, he hopes to return and start afresh in the city where the lights shine so bright in the windows of every home; he says good bye, but only for now, as he is determined to return to fulfil his pursuit of meaning and process of individuation on the literary battlefield.

## MYSTERIES

*Mysteries* was Hamsun's first novel after his breakthrough with *Hunger*. Published in 1892, two years after the appearance of *Hunger*, it was also to provoke much debate. In *Mysteries* Hamsun took his analysis and his portraits of the characters much further, probing darker regions of the human psyche and intensifying the conflicts explored in *Hunger*. The power battles now take place on two levels - within Nagel's own mind, and

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 190.



in society, as Nagel constantly struggles in his pursuit of meaning. Nagel is consistently put to the test in a life and death struggle: however, the greatest threat to his existence finds its deepest roots within his own philosophy of life.<sup>221</sup> This analysis will deal with Nagel's process of individuation, and scrutinise it from three different points of view: from the perspective of Miniman<sup>222</sup>, Dagny Kielland and Martha Gude.

### **Miniman, a mini man?**

The first two things we learn about Miniman is that he is a very kind-hearted but, exceptionally ugly man, with protruding front teeth, extremely twisted gait, grey hair, and a sparse beard. He is the laughingstock of the whole city and on several occasions he dances and makes a fool of himself for just a few øre. This is what is happening as Johan Nilsen Nagel enters the scene, and sets the imitated desire in motion. The deputy judge, Mr. Reinhardt, is amusing himself and some fellow city folks by forcing Miniman to drink a glass of beer, before making him grind his teeth for their amusement. The deputy has also managed to rip a hole in the already torn coat of Miniman to destroy it further, boasting that he would buy him a new one. Meanwhile Miniman begs him to stop and let him go, but no, the deputy flicks some of his cigar ash into his glass, forcing him to drink it, and as a bonus he is offered a pay rise from ten to twenty five øre,<sup>223</sup> when drinking it. Nagel, who has quietly been following this incident while pretending to read his paper, slowly and quietly walks over to Miniman, and making sure everyone is watching him, humiliates the deputy and frightens Miniman by saying to him, "If you pick up your glass and throw it in the face of that cub over there, I'll give you ten kroner in cash, and save you from all possible consequences."<sup>224</sup> From this time on Miniman is caught within Nagel's triangle, alternatively taking on the role of the subject and the object, as several other characters act as mediators. Nagel, the mythoman, soon becomes interested in Miniman and invites him up to his room at the hotel, not hesitating to summon him inside the triangle. Nagel, who had left some telegrams open in his room to show off his wealth

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<sup>221</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>222</sup> It has become a topos to regard Miniman as Nagel's negative self, see Nettum op. cit., Kittang op. cit., Larsen op. cit., Brynhildsen op. cit.

<sup>223</sup> 100 øre is 1 krone.

<sup>224</sup> Knut Hamsun, *Mysterier*, translated from the Norwegian into *Mysteries* by Sverre Lyngstad (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2001), p. 14. English edition cited.

after allegedly having sold a landed property, asks Miniman to assume paternity for a child who is not his and offers him up to two hundred kroner for it. Miniman turns down Nagel's offer immediately, but considers accepting ten kroner for walking around town with a paper bag or a newspaper on his back. When Miniman is on the verge of accepting this strange proposition, Nagel interrupts him, and offers to give him ten kroner for not accepting the proposition, and another ten kroner if Miniman would give him the pleasure of accepting it. Miniman, and his uncle runs a coal company, and are short of cash, something Nagel has understood and takes advantage of by alluring Miniman into the triangle of desire. Nagel over and over again reassures both Miniman and himself that he is offering him the money because he takes pleasure in the act of giving, and insists that such behaviour is not worthy of admiration:

Does one really give away a krone because one is kind, because one intends to do a kind and moral deed? How naive this view appears to me! There are some people who cannot help giving. Why? Because they experience a real psychological pleasure in doing so. They don't do it with an eye to their own advantage, they do it on the quiet; they detest doing it openly because that would take away some of the satisfaction. They do it in secret, with quick trembling hands, their breast rocked by a spiritual well-being which they do not themselves understand. Suddenly they are overcome by an impulse to give something away; it manifests itself as a sensation in their breasts, a mysterious momentary desire that springs up in them and floods their eyes with tears. They don't give out of kindness, but from an urge, for the sake of their personal well-being; some people are like that! One speaks of generous people with admiration; as I've said, I must be differently made from the rest of you: I don't admire generous people. No, I don't. Who the hell wouldn't rather give than receive! May I ask if there exists a human being on earth who wouldn't rather relieve destitution than be destitute?<sup>225</sup>

Nagel does, however, threaten to kill Miniman if he informs anybody of his gift<sup>226</sup>; in what is obviously a battle for power, and in order to ensure that Miniman imitates Nagel's desire. *Mysteries* is a classical example of Girard's theory of triangular desire, expressed and articulated in an intricate way. Nagel, at first, seems to offer protection to the insulted and injured Miniman.<sup>227</sup> However this is not the case, and Miniman begins to suspect he has a hidden agenda, towards himself as well as Martha and Dagny. Nagel puts his sadistic mask on and asks Miniman where he was at June 6: "Miniman doesn't reply, not a word. Terror-stricken at those staring eyes and that mysterious whisper, completely

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-157.

<sup>226</sup> As shall be returned to later, Nagel takes more or less the same approach towards Martha Gude when he manages to pay her more than 200 kroner for an old, destroyed and useless chair.

<sup>227</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, p. xxi.

unable to grasp this little question about a particular day, a date a month ago, he hurriedly tears up the door and tumbles into the hallway.”<sup>228</sup> Later Nagel explains to Miniman that he thought he had killed Karlsen on June 6. Nagel continues his harassment of Miniman accusing him of being a “quiet, sanctimonious secret sinner of some kind”<sup>229</sup> even if there:

Isn't a soul in this town who thinks you capable of wrongdoing; you receive the best character reference from everybody, you have everybody's sympathy—that shows how secretive you've been in your life. And yet, in my heart, I see you as a cowardly, grovelling angel of the lord, with a kind word of everybody and a good deed every day. But haven't you slandered me, done me harm, given away my secrets? No, no, you haven't; that's just part of your insinuating ways—you do right by everyone, you never do wrong, you are pious and irreproachable and ever free from sin in people's eyes. And to the world that's enough, but to me it's not; I still suspect you.<sup>230</sup>

This tirade, just one among many, demonstrates the power struggle between the two. Nagel is desperate to make Miniman dependent on and trusting him so as he can maintain his role as the mediator within the triangle. Miniman proves this when he shows more kindness to Nagel by saving him from committing suicide. For the proud Nagel this is the greatest humiliation he can get. During the bachelor party Nagel spills some champagne on his vest and he used this excuse to give the vest to Miniman, who tried to return his personal belongings, among them the vial, the next day, without Nagel noticing him. It is not before Nagel has hallucinated and experienced his death for nearly an hour that he realises Miniman has saved him. Nagel remembers suddenly that at the party he had said he did not have the courage to take the poison himself, but still that:

Utterly rotten, hypocritical freak of a dwarf had been sitting on the chair next to him, secretly doubting his words! What a wretch, a real mole!...he thought things over bitterly and clearly. The events of the night had humiliated him and made him seem ridiculous in his own eyes. To think that he had actually scented almonds in the water, felt his tongue shrivel up from it, and sensed death inside him because of it. And this mouthful of perfectly ordinary christening water from the well had made him rave and jump sky-high over stock and stone! Angry and blushing with shame, he stopped and let out a wild scream.<sup>231</sup>

On two occasions this sadomasochistic relation between himself and Miniman takes place in Nagel's unconscious, whilst he is dreaming. The first time he is fighting with a

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

madman, that is stuck within tree roots and kisses the ground in front of Nagel as he walks,<sup>232</sup> so his shoes won't become dirty. As the lunatic spits blood and prays to God for Nagel, Nagel suddenly realises it is Miniman.<sup>233</sup> When Nagel, at a party, reveals this dream to the city's elite, Dagny suddenly cries out that she knew it had to be Miniman when she heard he kneeled down and kissed the ground.<sup>234</sup> The second time Nagel dreams he is down by the dock looking for his iron ring, which he had thrown into the sea. He has to find the ring before midnight or he will be in deep trouble. Haunted by anxiety, he jumps onboard a boat in the docks, and asks a man nearby to help him untie the boat. The man refuses since it is not his boat. The man, hiding his face, grabs Nagel as he is about to jump into the sea, and Nagel faints, too weak to wrestle. The man helps Nagel ashore, and watches him distrustfully, telling him he would never make it because he is too good a swimmer so he would come up to the surface again and be saved. Nagel looks at the man and sees the most hideous face ever; it is Miniman. Once again Miniman has got in his way. Nagel has to cover his ears not to be driven mad by the voice screaming and calling him to come into the sea to pick up the ring. The only solution to his troubles seems to be a six-shooter, but since it is night he cannot get hold of one. When Nagel wakes up from his dream, the ring is gone and the time is just a few minutes short of twelve. His heart hammering and shaking he runs to the docks along the outermost jetty and jumps into the sea.

It appears to Nagel that Miniman loves to play the sadist, especially in Nagel's subconscious, but also in real life Miniman plays his part. When Nagel has finished his tirade of a speech, Miniman returns the envelope with money Nagel had prepared for him, while planning his departure. This makes Nagel nervous and desperately he begs him to take the money, horrified by the idea that Miniman will think he is mad and cannot be taken seriously.<sup>235</sup> However most of the time Miniman has the feeling of being inferior to Nagel and accepts the role of the masochist, apologising to Nagel for talking about his self-respect: "Forgive me for speaking about my self-respect in front of you, as

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<sup>232</sup> This scene can interestingly be analysed in view of Nagel's ambivalent desire to both be the sadist and the masochist at the same time, as he picks on and angers him, until he grabs and terrify Nagel.

<sup>233</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>234</sup> As shall be demonstrated in his relationship towards Dagny Nagel become the masochist in the exactly same manner.

<sup>235</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 261-262.

if it were worth anything. Well, it isn't, it couldn't be less, I assure you; but I still feel it now and then."<sup>236</sup> For both Nagel and Miniman it is case of internal mediation:

The victim of internal mediation always sees...a hostile intention in the mechanical obstacle which the desire of the mediator places in his path. The victim is loud in his indignation but at heart he believes he deserves the punishment inflicted on him. The mediator's hostility always seems somewhat legitimate, since by very definition the victim feels inferior to the person whose desire he copies. Thus contempt and obstruction only redouble desire because they confirm the superiority of the mediator. From this point it is but a short step to choosing the mediator, not because of his seemingly positive qualities but because of the obstruction he can provide; and the more a subject despises himself the more easily he makes this step.<sup>237</sup>

Miniman takes this step with both ease and desire as several times he takes on the role of masochist, especially when voluntarily listening to Nagel's outbursts, and when Nagel threatens to rip his mask off: "Your purity brutalizes me, all your beautiful words and deeds only bring me further away from my goal: to knock you down. I shall rip off your mask and make you betray your true nature; my blood bridles with repugnance every time I see your mendacious blue eyes."<sup>238</sup>

As Nagel sets his eyes on Martha Gude, Miniman is to taste the pain of thwarted desire. From the first time he sees Martha, Nagel avoids meeting her, but as desires and mediators change he soon starts pursuing her. Nagel does not really succeed in his attempts towards Dagny, as will be discussed later, and in an attempt to trigger Dagny's jealousy and as part of their power battle, he engages in a flirt with Martha, in other words, he creates a triangle where he is the subject, Dagny the object and Martha as the mediator. In this sense he tries to get as close to Dagny as possible and provoke her desire by bringing the mediator nearer the line between the two of them. At the same time he is engrossed in another triangle as the mediator, with Miniman as the subject and Martha as the object. This is our point of departure in disclosing Nagel's process of individuation.

### **Martha and Dagny, the white angels**

Early on in chapter XI Nagel meets Dagny downtown and reveals his paranoid and anxious state of mind. Nagel pretends he is just using his imagination when he describes

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>237</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>238</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, p. 260.

Martha's house, in detail, down by the docks. He continues to explain how a certain man had immediately impressed him outside the house, by being nothing other than poorly dressed and walking with a slight stoop. Nagel had had the bizarre intuition that the man's name was Johannes, without being able to explain it.<sup>239</sup> This Johannes is Miniman.<sup>240</sup> Already at this stage Nagel has singled out Miniman and starts supporting him financially, curious about what kind of relationship there is between Miniman and Martha. In something similar to an examination Nagel manages to pump Miniman for information about her name, marital status, relatives, her father's occupation, the fact she is given poor relief, and that she has a bed, a table, three chairs, and one of them high-backed with red plush is broken, not even a clock or a picture on the wall.<sup>241</sup> All this underlines and strengthens his position as the mediator in Miniman's desire for Martha. Having seen Martha for the first time at the market selling eggs Nagel decides to give her some financial assistance, even though the look in her eyes frightens him.

One day Nagel follows her home after she has been to the market, and enters her house without waiting for an answer. Nagel presents himself as a stranger that collects antiquated articles, and declares that he has a special love for her high-backed, red plush broken chair. He goes to all this trouble just to draw her into the triangle. Martha turns out to be difficult, and she will not accept his offer of two hundred kroner, instead offering to give him the chair for free. For Nagel neither the chair nor the money interest him, only Martha and her relationship to Miniman, whom he had seen outside her house at night one of the first days he was in town. Nagel has to camouflage his desire to give her a handout, that is, to buy her. He has got nowhere by just offering Martha the extravagant sum of two hundred kroner, so he has to change tactics. Nagel bribes his friend Kamma to make an offer on the chair, so to fool Martha into believing the chair has real value.<sup>242</sup> His ploy works, and he pays what he originally planned to. Interestingly he uses the same methods with Miniman to cover his action, that is intimidation, and agrees with his victim that they should say he paid just a few kroner for it so she won't

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>240</sup> Miniman's name is Johannes Grøgaard.

<sup>241</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>242</sup> As is the case in intrapersonal relations so it is the case with the chair as well. Its value is decided only in relation to and through a third part, Kamma, The structure is here exactly the same as in triangular desire, only that the chair acts as the object.

lose her poor relief. Martha is now an associate of Nagel, and he utilises this to get to know more about Miniman. When Nagel asks about Miniman Martha blushes, and tells him that they have known each other since childhood, and call each other by their first names. Nagel uses all his slyness to trap Martha, and to try to figure out her relationship with Miniman. As he says, "That Miniman must be very much in love with you. Yes it's true, that's how it strikes me. And I'm not greatly surprised, though I have to admit it's rather bold of him. Don't you agree? In the first place, he's no youth anymore, and besides he's also somewhat disabled."<sup>243</sup> Nagel's action must be seen as an attempt to remove Miniman from a possible position towards Martha, since the closer the mediator comes the less important the object becomes. This is also the reason why the first thing that Nagel does when he meets Miniman is to tell him of the bargain and ask him to keep it to himself. Nagel at this point enjoys the role of mediator in the triangle where Martha and Miniman change of being the subject and object.

The next crescendo takes place as Nagel invites Martha to the bazaar, and she turns up in a beautiful dress. As the evening goes by Nagel and Martha are amusing themselves in the company of numerous of the city's social elite, among them Dagny, Dr. Stenersen and the deputy judge, as well as Miniman. Dagny, needing to prove herself, tells the gathered company in a voice of complaint that Nagel had more than once asked her for a rendezvous, as shall be dealt with later. Nagel surprises the whole city by an impromptu violin<sup>244</sup> concert that completes the night's entertainment and offers to walk Martha home, as he has to tell her something. As they walk off he notices a pained expression on Miniman's face as he watches them stroll off. Miniman is jealous of his rival Nagel, who as the mediator is in a position to control Miniman's desire. The tension between Nagel and Miniman peaks when "the mediator himself desires the object, or could desire it: it is even this very desire, real or presumed, which makes the object infinitely desirable in the eyes of the subject. The mediation begets a second desire exactly the same as the mediator's. This means that one is always confronted with two *competing* desires. The

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<sup>243</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, p. 186.

<sup>244</sup> Nagel carries a violin case when he comes to town, but it has no violin inside, just his dirty laundry, and is a sign of his humbug and way of confirming the odd and stranger-image he desires.

mediator can no longer act his role of model without also acting or appearing to act his role of obstacle.<sup>245</sup> This is the reason why Miniman turns into the masochist-sadist.<sup>246</sup>

This happens when Nagel implies that he has raped Martha, and Miniman's reaction is an example of what Girard calls thwarted desire: "the reverted object has come close; it seems within the reach of the hand; only one obstacle remains between subject and object—the mediator himself. The closer the mediator comes, the more feverish the action becomes...thwarted desire is so violent that it can lead to murder."<sup>247</sup>

You once said something about Miss Gude which I've often pondered: you said that she might not be quite so unapproachable at that, if one went about it in a nice way; at any rate you had gotten quite far with her...you also said that Martha had gone so far as to allow you all kinds of liberties with her, and what's more, you made a most disgusting gesture with your finger as you said it—

Miniman jumps up, red in his face, and interrupts in a loud voice, "That I never said! I never said that!"<sup>248</sup>

A little later Nagel tells him he had seen him outside Martha's house at two o'clock in the morning, and he had straight away become suspicious about him. When Nagel finally gets to be together with Martha he asks her to marry him, but with little real conviction:

Now, you don't believe I'm a liar, do you, that I would lie to you? I want to tell you something. So you don't believe I would lie to you?...Would you believe me, for instance, if I told you I'm very—that I'm really very fond of you? Well you must've noticed that yourself. But what if I went a bit further, I mean...In short, I simply want to ask you to be my wife. Yes, my wife, there I've said it. Not just my sweetheart, but my wife.<sup>249</sup>

Martha is taken aback and cannot believe what she hears. Her immediate response is "no". Nagel does not hesitate to ask her if she is involved with someone else, like Miniman for instance, and Martha cries out, "No!" and gives his hand a squeeze.<sup>250</sup> After a bit of persuasion she, rather unwillingly, gives in to his insistence and the romantic

<sup>245</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>246</sup> Miniman is a masochist in his relationship with Nagel in the sense that he agrees to sit and listen to Nagel's tirades and psychological warfare to be able to understand how much he knows of what is going on. He becomes the sadist when he interferes in Nagel's plans to commit suicide, and when he rapes Martha. Miniman's rape can be seen as revenge for Nagel's actions, as she was his only chance for any personal erotic experiences. After the bazaar when Nagel had proposed to her, Miniman rapes her so she has to leave the city, with the help of Dagny, who also wishes Nagel harm. This is all revealed in the last page of the text. As Miniman prevents Nagel from marrying her, (he was the one who told Dagny about it) he wanted to make sure Nagel will not escape suffering, the same suffering he had felt when Nagel thwarted his desire. As Girard explains, that can lead to murder.

<sup>247</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>248</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.



future he portrays, and they agree to meet the next evening. At eight o'clock he knocks on Martha's door, and finds her weeping. Martha has changed her mind and is sure she will ever be able to love him as much as she ought to. Martha concedes though that she had been so happy last night and could hardly wait until they met again this evening. Yet now she was full of doubt. Nagel, suspicious of what has happened suddenly asks Martha what else Dagny said, and he can tell by Martha's reaction that Dagny has been there, and she is responsible for this defeat. Dagny is the first person he meets after leaving Martha, and immediately a battle for legitimacy takes place. Nagel is full of "a dull blind anger at this woman who might still want to tempt him to forget himself, simply to have the satisfaction of humiliating him afterwards"<sup>251</sup> Girard argues that "only someone who prevents us from satisfying a desire which he himself has inspired in us is truly an object of hatred."<sup>252</sup> As they walk slowly up and down Dagny drops her handkerchief,<sup>253</sup> to test whether Nagel will pick it up. Instead he steps on it, not once but twice, and the second time while she is watching. When Nagel is back at his room he starts crying out of despair, and returns to pick up the handkerchief in order to keep it as a souvenir. Nagel acts as if in a coma, since, "from the moment the mediator's influence is felt, the sense of reality is lost and judgement paralyzed."<sup>254</sup>

The next morning Nagel receives a letter and realises the full extent of Dagny's interference. Martha writes that she has gone away, and he must forgive her everything and not call upon her anymore, since it would only cause her great pain if they were to meet again. The letter is delivered to Nagel's hotel by a messenger from the parsonage. This is obviously not of Martha's doing, but Dagny's. Dagny has been drawn into the triangle against her will, even if she knew about Nagel's tactics. He tells Dagny about his friend who fell in love with a young lady named Klara:

He took great pains to win this lady, but it was no use; Klara wouldn't have anything to do with him, though he was a handsome and well regarded young man. However, Klara had a sister, an unusually lopsided and hunch-backed creature who was downright ugly. One day my friend proposes to her, God knows why; maybe he did it from ulterior motives, or maybe he had really fallen in love with her despite her ugliness. And what does Klara do? Well, here the

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>252</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>253</sup> As in *Hamlet* and *Season of Migration to the North* a handkerchief is a symbol of an unreleased tension and desire between two of the characters.

<sup>254</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 4.

female promptly showed her claws: Klara raises an outcry, kicking up a hell of a row: "It was me he wanted! It was me he wanted!" she said. "He won't get me, though, I don't want to, not for anything in the world," she said. Hm, but do you think he was allowed to get the sister, with whom he had, in fact, fallen deeply in love? No, that's just the catch – Klara wouldn't let her sister have him either. Heh-heh-heh. Oh no! Since it was really herself he had wanted, he wouldn't get her hunchbacked sister either, though she was none too good for anyone. And so my friend didn't get either lady.' ...This was one of the many stories the stammerer told me. He was such an amusing raconteur, just because he stammered so badly. However, the man was a great enigma. ...Am I boring you?"<sup>255</sup>

"No," Dagny replied.<sup>255</sup>

At the bazaar Dagny asks Nagel if Martha is his new partner, only to disguise her obvious jealousy. Nagel pretends not to understand what she means before suddenly remembering Miss Gude, and justifying inviting her since, "she doesn't have a single joy in her life."<sup>256</sup> Dagny is obviously locked inside the triangle, because jealousy implies more than two, a subject and an object, plus the third party against whom the jealousy is directed, that is, a mediator: "Rivalry... only aggravates mediation; it increases the mediator's prestige and strengthens the bond which link the object to this mediator by forcing him to affirm openly his right or desire of possession. Thus the subject is less capable than ever of giving up the inaccessible object: it is on this object and it alone that the mediator confers his prestige, by possessing or wanting to possess it."<sup>257</sup> Dagny accuses Nagel of having told her the story about Klara to make her jealous, but Nagel denies that he would be such a fool to seduce Martha, and just drop her as soon as Dagny entered the stage. Dagny is in an emotional state and makes it clear how much she has been suffering:

I haven't the faintest idea what you are, I only know that you sneaked up on me and caused me the most painful hours of my life, and that I no longer understand myself... You've behaved badly towards me, so how can you expect me to occupy myself with you, on top of everything? Still, you told me a story full of insinuations—I'm quite sure you didn't tell me this thing about Klara and her sister without some reason, no, you didn't! But why are you pursuing me?... I can never tell whether you're telling the truth, no, I can't. I have doubts about you, I distrust you, I suspect you may be capable of just about anything. It's quite possible I'm being unjust to you right now, but why shouldn't I be allowed to hurt you for once? I'm so tired of all your insinuations and your scheming ways....<sup>258</sup>

While Dagny is suffering Nagel persists in his sadistic role, and cannot resist further distressing Dagny, asking her to remind her fiancé to give Miniman the two woollen

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<sup>255</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, p. 171.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>257</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>258</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 199-200.

shirts he had promised him about two years ago. This cruel behaviour is a demonstration of how Nagel himself, in his pursuit of meaning, by his own peculiar "method"<sup>259</sup> doubts whether he can and will find what he is searching for in Dagny, or if she is in fact the only one he cannot have, since she is symbolically engaged the day he arrives.<sup>260</sup> "Sadism reveals once again the immense prestige of the mediator. The face of the man now disappears behind the mask of the infernal god. Horrible as the madness of the sadist is, it has the same meaning as previous desires. And if the sadist resorts to desperate measures it is because the hour of despair has struck."<sup>261</sup> Nagel's hour has not yet come, but he can feel it coming. This is made clear by his desperation at having thrown away his iron ring, as the clock approaches midnight. One minute he wants Dagny, the next minute he is not sure. The more emotional Nagel is, the more frightens she becomes and the more fervently she rejects him. The result is that he adopts the masochist mask, desiring to be humiliated by Dagny. Nagel admits: "I might throw myself at her feet and implore her to make me blissfully happy by spitting on me,"<sup>262</sup> "I've wandered about in front of her home at night, trying to catch a glimpse of you at the window; I've been on my knees here in the woods praying to God for you."<sup>263</sup> Nagel even offers to kill himself to rid her of him, begging her:

"I don't want to hurt you," he said, "and do have some pity! I'm willing to kill myself here and now, just to rid you of me; it will cost you only a word. And I would repeat this tomorrow if I should meet you. Grant me the mercy of doing me justice, at least. You see, I'm in thrall to your power, and I have no control over that. And it isn't all my fault that you came into my life. I wish to God you may never suffer as I do now!"<sup>264</sup>

Nagel loves Dagny, not only for her virtues but even more, as seen, for her malice. Nagel, however, never loses hope of winning over Dagny, especially as she is moved and sexually aroused when he tells her about his encounter with the blind girl, in one of his

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<sup>259</sup> This method is his arsenal to win Dagny's heart by putting himself in a bad light so she through her own knowledge will be surprised and wonder why he puts himself in such bad light, and consequently feel even more for him. See especially chapter VIII.

<sup>260</sup> Miss Andersen is not engaged to anyone and would seem a much more obvious choice than Martha, given her family's position and her beauty, but since Dagny is not available Nagel's mediation lead him into sadistic and masochistic behaviour as is a consequence of imitated desire.

<sup>261</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>262</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, p. 127.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

dreams.<sup>265</sup> “Dagny had turned flaming red, her breast rose and fell, her nostrils quivered.”<sup>266</sup> Furthermore Nagel keeps telling himself that Dagny is not yet lost to him. That is why he keeps on playing his game, unfortunately too well hidden behind the mask so that Dagny cannot see the real Nagel. He will not give up hope and continues trying to influence her and make an impression upon her. On one of their many walks in the woods he tells her of his desire for her, then excuses himself for troubling her and lying to her, before again exposing to her to his inner thoughts:

All right, she's engaged and she'll soon be leaving, goodbye; but she's not utterly lost to me yet, she has not already left, she's not married, or dead, so who knows? And if I gave it my all, perhaps there would still be time! You've become my constant thought, my obsession, I see you in everything and call every blue stream Dagny. I don't believe a single day has gone by during these past few weeks without my thinking about you. No matter at what hour I leave the hotel, as soon as I open the door and find myself on the steps, the hope shoots through my heart: maybe you'll meet her this time! And I look for you everywhere.<sup>267</sup>

A little later, on another walk, Nagel talks about the hypocrisy of his life and of the city, as well as of Mrs. Stenersen and Miniman. Dagny rejects his words vehemently, and with bowed head sheds a few tears. Dagny feels sorry for him: “she knew at that moment that she had to do with a torn and tormented soul.”<sup>268</sup> Dagny regrets her harsh words and admires him as she wonders if this strange man might have seen and understood more of the life in the city in a few weeks than she herself had done in years. When Nagel wraps his handkerchief around his hand, she stops and asks in a sincere and emotional voice if she can see his hand, and Nagel's passion runs away with him once again:

At this moment, when she was standing so close, her head leaning over his hand so that he could take in the fragrance of her hair and the nape of her neck, and without a word being said, his love reached the point of frenzy, of madness. He drew her close, first with one arm and then, when she resisted, with his other arm as well, pressing her long and fervently to his breast and almost lifting her off her feet. He felt her back yield, she was giving in. heavy and delicious, she rested in his embrace, her eyes half veiled as she looked up at his. Then he spoke to her, telling her she was enchanting, and that she would be his one and only love till his dying day. One man had already given his life for her, and he would do the same, at the slightest hint, a word. Oh, how he loved her! And he repeated time and again, as he pressed her more and more tenderly to his breast, “I love you, I love you!”

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-97. One might analyse the dream in relation to the city and its characters and the father might be Miniman and the blind woman can be Dagny who are and can not to see the real Nagel behind his mask.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

She no longer made any resistance. Her head resting lightly on his left arm, he kissed her fervently, interrupted only, at brief intervals, by the most tender words. He had a distinct feeling that she clung to him of herself, and when he kissed her she closed her eyes even more.<sup>269</sup>

Most readings of Hamsun's work are too Freudian.<sup>270</sup> They argue that Nagel only desires Dagny because he cannot have her.<sup>271</sup> Nagel is a vain person in all respects, and "A *vaniteux* will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires. The mediator here is a *rival*, brought into existence as a rival by vanity, and that the same vanity demands his defeat."<sup>272</sup> "It is because the *vaniteux* feels the emptiness...growing inside him that he takes refuge in shallow behavior and imitation. Because he cannot face his nothingness he throws himself on Another who seems to be spared by the curse."<sup>273</sup> Nagel admits to himself that he does not desire to harm Dagny or to take revenge, but acts out of self-love, to keep himself afloat, since as an engaged woman she is unattainable for him and mocks all his efforts to make her love him.<sup>274</sup> According to Nettum, Nagel struggles with, and protests against, not only marriage and bourgeois respectability, but also against the common belief in the nineties that love is a natural force no one can defend themselves from.<sup>275</sup> Nagel values his freedom and independence highly, and is presumably afraid of the power of love and hides behind a mask, a mask Dagny sees rather than the real Nagel. Comprehending his disappointment is crucial if we are to understand Nagel's anger, his condemnation of

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>270</sup> The problem with such views are that they take the work of Freud for granted, excluding other triangles of desire than the oedipal, and ignoring the fact that desire has an essential role to play further than a sole and one-dimensional understanding of the object. Psychoanalytical literary theory only looks into the past in a regressive manner, contrary to the novel as a genre, that is accordingly progressive as well. Moreover psychoanalytical literary theory are only related to a western and patriarchal understanding of society, and are useless as a tool for instance in analysing Chinese literature as there do not exist any Oedipus complex in China, due to Confucianism, or several African literatures that have emerged from matriarchal societies. Such methods demonstrate no understanding to adopt an approach, which achieves a delicate balance between text-centred and context-related literary analysis that shun simplistic one-dimensionality.

<sup>271</sup> Kittang, Brynhildsen, Larsen and Nettum among others argue that the hero of Hunger, Nagel and Glahn of *Pan* all suffer from and persecute themselves because of a castration-anxiety towards the female heroines.

<sup>272</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>274</sup> Hamsun, *Mysteries*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>275</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 162.

society and his destiny in his pursuit of meaning.<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, it is obvious that his love for Dagny cannot become a reality since his desire for her is not real, in other words, he imitates lieutenant Hansen's desire, and as has been demonstrated, one never becomes Another by imitating him, nor even his desires. Hansen is Nagel's rival, a rival whom he copies.

Seen in relation to the theories of Stuart Hall, and Anthony Giddens, the character of Nagel was created to express a more general view that every human being is a mystery, and its inner psyche, emotions and desires cannot be articulated, unless the individuals are seen and treated as individuals. From now on individuals are not just a social issue, and part of the community, they had developed subjectivity. Furthermore, the individual has now become more vulnerable to existential anxieties, struggling with, and becoming more aware of the unconscious mind, and how this portrayed itself in new irrational dreams and desires. At the time of publishing *Mysterier* Hamsun had been affirming his literary ideas through articles and talks<sup>277</sup> in major Norwegian cities in order to challenge scientific positivism, rationalism and liberal values he believed had poisoned literature and made literary characters too one-dimensional. Humpál suggests Hamsun intends that "everybody in town—Dagny, Martha, Miniman, dr. Stenersen—has an internal life they conceal. Being an exaggerated exhibitionist, Nagel serves as a mirror for these people. *Mysterier* suggest... that not only Nagel's, but also everybody else's social role is a "humbug": everyone wears a mask, behind which the self is hidden; but even this is inauthentic—masks upon masks. The townspeople are not willing to see Nagel's eccentricities as possibly mirroring their own. By defending their illusion of a rational, clear-cut bourgeois existence, they refuse to accept the model of the human being as a mystery."<sup>278</sup> However Humpál does not get it right when he argues that Nagel has no identity or essence, only existence.<sup>279</sup> The case is, as this chapter has demonstrated, that Nagel's essence is created through his existence precisely as he has pursued meaning, and

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<sup>276</sup> The condemnation can be seen as he ritually also condemns the society in his own suicide. It is a quasi suicide of the society, and it will be dealt with in detail later.

<sup>277</sup> For instance *Paa Turné: Tre foredrag om litteratur av Knut Hamsun*, Editor Tore Hamsun (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1971) and "Fra det ubevidste sjæleliv" Knut Hamsun, *Artikler 1889-1928*, Editor Francis Bull (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1939), pp. 46-63.

<sup>278</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

experienced his process of individuation through, triangular relations. Girard's theories demonstrate and explain the complex process of narrative mediation, and how the novelistic characters reaches individuation through a dialectic intra-literary battle, that takes place within a triangle of desire, between the subject, the object and a mediator.

## PAN

After several quiet and difficult years, Hamsun was back on the stage as a symbolic billionaire taking the world by storm when *Pan* was published in 1894. Since *Mysterier*, which had received mixed reviews, Hamsun had written two novels without any particular response.<sup>280</sup> With the release of *Pan* he was back on track. Again Hamsun exploits his sophisticated technique to delve into and divulge what goes on in the inner psyche of his characters as they confront modernity.

### Lieutenant Thomas Glahn

The book has a subtitle, *From The Papers of Lieutenant Thomas Glahn*, indicating that the story has been written down sometime in the past and is only now being narrated. Glahn several times underlines why he is writing. He covers behind some kind of art for arts sake, as he writes for his own amusement,<sup>281</sup> or to while away the time.<sup>282</sup> He also makes is clear that time used to pass much faster before, and he cannot make it pass as fast as he wants, even though he has no regrets and has lived the merriest of lives.<sup>283</sup> Mentioning the letter with the two green feathers that gave him real pleasure, undermines what he later says - that Edvarda, who sent the feathers in return, does not occupy his thoughts anymore. He only thinks of the cries of the sea, hunting in the woods during the warm nights of summer.<sup>284</sup> This helps us understand that he is writing to come to terms with his past, and that writing has a therapeutic effect on his fragile mind.

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<sup>280</sup> *Redaktør Lyngstad and Ny Jord.*

<sup>281</sup> Knut Hamsun, *Pan, Fra Løytnant Thomas Glahns Papirer* translated from the Norwegian into *Pan, From The Papers Of Lieutenant Thomas Glahn*, by Sverre Lyngstad (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998), English edition cited, pp. 3, 11.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

His first encounter with Edvarda, Mack and the Doctor, whom are, together with Eva, the persons with whom he has to fight in his pursuit of meaning, happens as the four of them have to seek shelter from the rain in an open boathouse.<sup>285</sup> He denies, however, that he is affected by the young Edvarda, before the next time when she and the doctor visit him in the hut.<sup>286</sup> The summer arrives at the same time as the first trip to the island, coinciding with the first expressions of love from Edvarda. Glahn had already noticed and been affected by her dusky face and neck and the way she had tied her pinafore low to make her waist seem longer.<sup>287</sup>

She comes straight up to me, says a few words and falls on my neck – she clasps her arms around my neck and kisses me on the lips again and again. She says something each time, but I can't hear what it is. I couldn't understand the whole thing, my heart had stopped, I just noticed the burning look in her eyes. When she let go of me, her little bosom rose and fell. There she stood, lingering, with her dusky face and neck, tall and slim, with flashing eyes, completely reckless; everyone was staring at her. For the second time I was thrilled by her dark eyebrows, which rose in a high curve on her forehead.<sup>288</sup>

Glahn's blood is throbbing and he is worried that Mr. Mack has seen something. Glahn soon starts to excuse himself for offending and taking advantage of Edvarda's wish to exchange flowers with him. He blames his solitary life, that he is not used to associating with ladies, and having had a drink.<sup>289</sup> This demonstrates unmistakably his predicament as a stranger among the local young bourgeoisie, even though he finds trusts in the first place. Giddens argues that: "the establishing of basic trust is the condition of the elaboration of self-identity just as much as it is of the identity of the other persons and of objects,"<sup>290</sup> something which would seem a bit problematical for our hero Glahn. Edvarda continues insisting that Glahn is the one she wants and she will not run after anyone else, and Glahn falls in love with her and assures her that they can meet tomorrow.<sup>291</sup> The two lovebirds cannot seem to get enough of each other, and enrich each others life with joy,

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>290</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity, Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 41-42.

<sup>291</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 28.



tenderness, love and laughter.<sup>292</sup> Edvarda, though, once asks him not to thump her back anymore.<sup>293</sup> This makes Glahn doubt Edvarda, so he tells the story of the white silk scarf:

Once on a sleigh ride a young lady took a white silk scarf from her own neck and tied it around mine. In the evening I said to the lady, 'I'll return your scarf to you tomorrow, I'll have it washed.' 'No,' she answers, 'let me have it now, I want to keep it as it is, just as you have worn it.' And I gave her the scarf. Three years later I met the young lady again. 'The scarf?' I said. She brought the scarf. It lay in its wrapping, as unwashed as ever, I saw it myself." Edvarda glanced up at me. "Well? What happened then?" "Nothing, that's all," I said. "But I do think it was a nice touch."<sup>294</sup>

The story demonstrates Glahn's adurance that whatever might happen between the two of them she will always have a special place in his heart. Their rendezvous' comes to a halt and their passion and desire changes character, as Edvarda tells Glahn that her father is going to Russia. Glahn immediately gets up to leave to Edvarda's great surprise and he blames it on the late hour. As he walks Edvarda home he also witnesses Mack secretly leaving the blacksmith.

So far we have two subjects and two objects and the mediators are just about to enter the triangles of desire. Suddenly several triangle structures become apparent: Glahn-Edvarda-Eva, Glahn-Edvarda-Doctor, Glahn-Edvarda-Mack, Glahn-Mack-Eva, and Glahn-Mack-Baron.<sup>295</sup> Glahn is waiting in agony for Edvarda to come, but she is at home helping her father, Mr. Mack, who is preparing for his trip to Russia to find a suitable man for his daughter to marry. In Mr. Mack's absence a second trip to the island is arranged and this time it is the doctor who is the hero, at least for Edvarda, and the mediator for Glahn, because he steals Edvarda's attention and Glahn becomes jealous and acts so thereafter. The doctor entertains, and is courteous towards, the ladies, and has everybody's attention. Edvarda has successfully managed to stir up Glahn's jealousy by turning to the doctor, and she gets her reward. Glahn in the end has to beg anyone to take a look at his fly book and ironically it is the doctor that comes to his rescue. When the doctor and Edvarda find the green bird feathers, Glahn is desperate to convince her to keep them: "'Keep them,'" I cried. "Yes, please, do me that favor today. They are two

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-34.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>295</sup> It is important to remember that within all the different triangular constellations the roles of subject, object and mediator may vary, change, and rotate so all persons may play all roles.

green bird's feathers. Do me a kindness, let it be a remembrance."<sup>296</sup> This demonstrates that "it is THE transfiguration of the desired object which constitutes the unity of external and internal mediation. The hero's imagination is the mother of the illusion but the child must still have a father: the mediator."<sup>297</sup> The more the doctor is in the centre the more alienated Glahn feels, surprisingly as he now should be a lot more familiar with his fellow guests. Glahn seem to have lost some of the trust he had in Edvarda, the doctor and all the rest of the party, since trust may be defined as "confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events, where that confidence express a faith in the probity or love of another,"<sup>298</sup> and in a love Glahn now feels is conditioned and unreliable. This leads him into despair and anxiety, and as Giddens demonstrates:

Rising anxiety tends to threaten awareness of self-identity, since awareness of the self in relation to constituting features of the object-world becomes obscured. It is only in terms of the basic security system, the origin of the sense of ontological security, that the individual has the experience of self in relation to a world of persons and objects organised cognitively through basic trust.<sup>299</sup>

The return from the island proves to be dramatic. Glahn had planned to go in the other boat but Edvarda calls on him to join her, and as their knees touch the emotion that rises in him turns into despair, jealousy and anger, when she turns her back on him in favour of the doctor: "Then I did something I regret and haven't yet forgotten. Her shoe slipped off her foot, and I grabbed it and flung it far out over the water— whether for joy at her being so near or from some urge to assert myself and remind her of my existence, I don't know. It all happened so quickly, I didn't think, I just had that impulse."<sup>300</sup> Glahn suffers from internal mediation. Girard argues that:

We never recognize a model in the person who arouses jealousy because we always take a jealous person's attitude toward the problem of jealousy. Like all victims of internal mediation, the jealous person easily convinces himself that his desire is spontaneous, in other words, that it is deeply rooted in the object and in this object alone. As a result he always maintains that his desire preceded the intervention of the mediator, he would have us see him as an intruder, a bore, a *terzo incomodo* who interrupts a delightful tête-à-tête. Jealousy is thus reduced to the irritation we all experience when one of our desires is accidentally thwarted.

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<sup>296</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 40.

<sup>297</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>298</sup> Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 34.

<sup>299</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 45.

<sup>300</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 41.

But true jealousy is infinitely more profound and complex; it always contains an element of fascination with the insolent rival.<sup>301</sup>

It is the doctor who advises Glahn how to deal with Edvarda's behaviour, and encourages him to take the decisive steps towards Eva, as another triangle is formed. Moreover, Glahn has to succumb to Edvarda and ends up on bended knee as a slave. After the shoe-throwing incident he lay awake at night thinking of her, and she has been busy preparing a ball, and answering his questions that she has not forgotten about him. As they speak the doctor arrives to help her with the final preparations and when he leaves, Glahn turns around to find Edvarda watching him:

Edvarda was standing at the window watching me; she was holding back the curtains with both hands to see, her expression was thoughtful. An absurd joy flashes through me, and I quickly put the house behind me, with light feet and dimmed eyes, the gun light as a walking stick in my hand. If I should win her I would become a good person, I thought. Reaching the forest, I thought again, If I should win her I would serve her more tirelessly than anyone else, and even if she proved unworthy, if she took it into her head to demand the impossible of me, I would still do all I could and rejoice that she was mine....I stopped and fell on my knees, and in humility and hope I brushed my tongue against the blades of grass by the roadside, whereupon I got up again.<sup>302</sup>

Glahn has become the slave, and at the ball he consents to be the masochist, victim to Edvarda's continuous humiliations. Glahn is overlooked all the time, and she never pays attention to him and whenever he tries to talk to her she just turns away to speak to some other friends, whilst commanding him to stay and be the last one to leave. He stays on and Edvarda's next move is to tell everybody that Glahn gave the oarsman five dollars for saving her shoe from the water,<sup>303</sup> as well as addressing him as Sir whilst telling everybody at the farewell party of the Baron that he is having a rendezvous with the servant Eva.<sup>304</sup> Glahn is left disarmed and confused, but refuses to follow her game plan, saying in a loud voice, "I must point out to all of you here that this is either a mistake or a lie. It never even occurred to me to give the oarsman a five-dollar reward for your shoe. I ought perhaps to have done it, but so far I have not."<sup>305</sup> Glahn's behaviour is a mix of stupidity and stubbornness empowered by desire. He suffers when he sees Edvarda

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<sup>301</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>302</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 44.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

unhappy, and asks her why she has suddenly become so sad. She blames “everything” for her sadness, and says she wishes all the people had gone except him.<sup>306</sup> To demonstrate his gratitude to her kind words Glahn offends one of her friends, but this strategy backfires and he obtains no gratitude at all, just mistrust and rejection. Glahn decides to give his rival, the doctor, every advantage possible and forces himself to laugh aloud as the doctor tells his jokes. When the party is over and everybody has left, Edvarda walks Glahn to the door, and Glahn is disappointed because Edvarda had not anything special in mind by asking him to be the last to leave. She only wanted to pour more salt in his already open wound, and she even gives Glahn the doctor’s walking stick. When Glahn answers that he could not understand how the lame doctor could forget his stick, Edvarda bitterly cries out, “you’re not lame, no, but even if you were lame, on top of everything, you couldn’t hold your own against him; no, you couldn’t, you couldn’t hold your own against him.”<sup>307</sup> Glahn is speechless, and as he walks home he says to himself that she had planned so he would not be the last to leave, and his suspicions are confirmed as he meets the doctor at the edge of the forest, on his way back to Sirilund to pick up his walking stick. Glahn suffers from thwarted desire, and of course his attempt to humiliate the doctor ends in his own humiliation, shame and despair: “I held out my gun to him, as if he were a dog, and said, “Jump over!” And I whistled and wheedled to make him jump over.”<sup>308</sup> Glahn is thrown off balance by the doctor’s kind and calm words: “why are you really doing all this?”...“there’s something wrong with you. If you’ll tell me what it is, perhaps....”<sup>309</sup> Glahn excuses himself and assures him that he is fine, and returns to his hut and shoots himself in the foot. Shortly afterwards the doctor knocks on the door, thinking it would be nice if they talked and, shocked to see Glahn’s condition, helps him straight away. Glahn’s shooting his foot is a desperate and disguised appeal to Edvarda. Glahn turns to his admired and beloved tormenter, that is Edvarda, as he would obey an omnipotent God. It is significant to note that he wants us to believe, and has already deceived himself, that he is rejecting Edvarda in disgust. This is proven to be a lie when

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

he later cross-examines<sup>310</sup> the doctor about Edvarda. Glahn acts as if he is indifferent, but takes note of everything that is said, and is told how Edvarda humiliated the doctor in a similar fashion as she did Glahn. The doctor tells him about how emotively Edvarda has been talking about Glahn, and that she needs a strong man to take her away. He reproaches Glahn for ruining his chances, adding that Glahn's uniform might give him an advantage in the battle for her heart and soul. Glahn is angry with himself and decides to be harder with Edvarda and so projects his desire onto Eva and draws her into the triangle, as we shall see later.

As Glahn struggles to recover his health Edvarda suddenly appears at his door full of compassion towards him: "Remember, some give little and it's a lot for them, others give all and it costs them no great effort. Who, then, has given the most?"<sup>311</sup> Edvarda says this to underline her love and affection towards him, and to make him understand that what she has given him has cost her dearly. Glahn is moved and he sends for his uniform, but as he feared with Mack's return there is also another rival, the Baron. Glahn's boat is taken away, since the Baron, a seabed researcher, needs it. With the boat, the attention from Edvarda also disappear, at least on the surface. Edvarda cannot get Glahn out of her mind and she has to tell the Baron of his shooting incident, and turns red when the Baron repeats it to Glahn. Yet she still acts indignantly towards Glahn, and when once more she is standing in the window watching him walk away, Glahn is filled with anger: "By God in heaven, this must end! Suddenly I was hot with anger and groaned. Alas, there was no honor in my breast anymore; I had enjoyed Edvarda's favor for a week at most, it was now long past, but I had failed to act accordingly. From now on my heart would cry at her, Dust, air, dirt on my way, by God in heaven..."<sup>312</sup> Days and weeks go by and Edvarda and the Baron spend all their time together and Glahn seeks refuge with Eva, and as Eva takes on the role of Edvarda's mediator, Edvarda becomes desperate and angry. One day the rain is pouring down and she stands outside Glahn's hut drenched, but smiling as he returns. Glahn manages nothing but a facetious reply, and refuses a shawl she wants to wrap around him. Instead he humiliates her when he ironically offers her his

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<sup>310</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-57.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

jacket, arguing he would have given it to anyone, even a fishwife. Edvarda says she just wanted to tell him something, but Glahn interrupts her and starts a sadistic tirade: "Frankly speaking, Miss Edvarda, send that prince about his business. He's not the man for you."..."I suggest the Doctor to you instead. What fault can you find with him? A man in his prime, an excellent head. Think about it."<sup>313</sup> Edvarda is desperate to make Glahn understand he is the only one for her, so she screams out:

"No, don't tear my heart out of my breast. I've come to you today, I've been on the lookout for you here, and I smiled when you came. Yesterday I went nearly out of my mind because of something I had been thinking of all the time...He placed a small box in my lap, I opened the box and found a brooch in it. There was a cornet on the brooch, and I counted ten precious stones in it...Glahn, I have the brooch right here, would you like to see it? It's trampled to bits, just come here and you'll see it's trampled to bits...But I handed the brooch back to him and said, 'let me be, I think of someone else.' 'Who else?' he asked. 'A hunter,' I said. 'He gave me only two lovely feathers to remember him by...I have been waiting here since one o'clock, I stood beside a tree and saw you coming, you looked like a god. I loved your figure, your beard and your shoulders, I loved everything about you...."<sup>314</sup>

Glahn's heart is now as hard as stone and when she has finished, he walks away saying, "you wanted to tell me something, didn't you?"<sup>315</sup> Glahn thinks to himself that it is his being indifferent and mocking her that brings him closer to her; he is content to tell himself that he doesn't want to let himself be blinded anymore.<sup>316</sup> The triangle now becomes even more intricate. Mack views Glahn as his rival and mediator in relation to Eva, and he, therefore, tells Edvarda about Glahn's visit to the blacksmith's. Predictably Edvarda flares up in anger, and makes it her priority to take revenge, deciding to tell Glahn that Eva is actually married to the blacksmith, not his daughter, and that the Baron is "something", and that she even intends to marry him. Edvarda confronts Glahn with his visit to the blacksmith's place, explicitly to Eva. Glahn sticks to his gun and makes it even worse for Edvarda when he admits he had also invited Eva into the hut, and begins insulting the Baron and suggesting the doctor as Edvarda's prince. In return Glahn is told how useless he is when it comes to behaving within social settings. Glahn admits she is right:

Her words hit home, I bowed my head and replied, "you're right, I don't know very well how to act with people. Show some mercy; you don't understand me, I prefer to stay in the woods,

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

that's my joy. Here in my solitude it does no harm to anyone that I am as I am, but when I get together with others I have to concentrate on being as I ought to. For two years now I've been very little among people<sup>317</sup>

Edvarda however is not finished yet, and tells Glahn she will prove that she loves the Baron, and that their marriage will be the proof; that she does not care about Eva, and that she does not want to see him ever again.<sup>318</sup> Glahn and Edvarda are now master and slave and cannot see their mutual dependency. Girard demonstrates how:

The more one becomes a slave the more ardently one defends slavery. Pride can survive only with the help of the lie, and the lie is sustained by triangular desire. The hero turns passionately toward the Other, who seems to enjoy the divine inheritance. So great is the disciple's faith that he perpetually thinks he is about to steal the marvellous secret from the mediator. He begins to enjoy his inheritance in advance. He shuns the present and lives in the brilliant future. Nothing separates him from divinity, nothing but the mediator himself, whose rival desire is the obstacle to his own desire.<sup>319</sup>

### **Glahn's revenge**

All heroes and characters in Hamsun's work suffer from excessive pride and the need to enslave or be enslaved. Glahn turns to Eva for consolation, thus proving that no one, not even he, entirely believed in his declarations of love. As was the case with the hero of *Hunger*, Glahn turns to organic falsehood.<sup>320</sup> This is the case when Glahn visits Eva and tells her:

"I've been longing for you with all my heart," I said to her. And I was moved at the sight of her, she could barely look at me for surprise. "I love your youth and your kind eyes," I said. "But today you must punish me for thinking more about someone else than about you. Listen, I've come here just to look at you, it does me good, I love you. Did you hear me calling you last night?"

"No," she replied, dismayed.

"I called Edvarda, Miss Edvarda, but I meant you. I woke up from it. Oh yes, I meant you, I can explain it; I made a slip of the tongue when I said Edvarda. But let's not talk about her anymore. My God, Eva, aren't you my dearest girl, though!"<sup>321</sup>

Glahn continues to mock Edvarda, by saying she has not learned to speak yet, and that she has a devilish forehead, and that her hands are dirty. Suddenly he has tears in his eyes and Eva asks why, answering himself, "come to think, she does have an attractive

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>319</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>320</sup> See supra, p. 58, note 188.

<sup>321</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 69.

forehead," I say, "and her hands are always clean"<sup>322</sup> Glahn acts sadistically towards Eva, and she adopts and accept the masochist mask in her relationship with Glahn, and also in her relationship with Mack, as shall be demonstrated later. Time after time Glahn confesses his love for Eva: "Eva! I won't resist you any longer, I'm yours, I'm yours..."<sup>323</sup> and in the end he asks her to come away with him: "I swear I'll die for love of you, I love you more and more, in the end you'll come with me when I leave. Just wait and see. Could you come with me?" "Yes," she answers.<sup>324</sup> During the second iron night Glahn tells Eva he loves three things, "I love a dream of love I once had, I love you, and I love this patch of earth."<sup>325</sup> When Eva asks what he loves the most, he answers the dream, and this dream is to be his nightmare. During the rest of their conversation Eva condemns Edvarda for having laughed at Glahn when they meet earlier that day, an incident that has put him in a very blue mood. At this stage Glahn condemns himself, however, and defends Edvarda: "No, it was not mean of her!" I scream. "You mustn't sit there and blame her, she never does anything mean, she was right to laugh at me. Shut up, damn it, and leave me alone, do you hear!"<sup>326</sup> Glahn soon regrets his harsh words, and once more wants to reassure himself that he does love Eva. On bended knee he says, "It's you I love best; how could I love a dream? It was only a joke, it's you I love."<sup>327</sup> This dream of love is a dream of Edvarda that soon turns into a nightmare, that takes place in the Indian jungle.

On the third iron night Glahn tells Eva the anecdote about the blind Lapp,<sup>328</sup> and it is a clear indication that he himself has not given up his hopes for Edvarda. He describes hope as something very special: "You may be walking along some road one morning, hoping to meet someone you love there. And does the meeting come off? No....For example, I'm right now hoping to forget the person I didn't meet on the road this morning."<sup>329</sup> Edvarda is the one he cannot have, but she is also the one who is most alive in his mind, exactly because she seems to be unattainable. Nettum suggests Glahn's

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-85.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-85.



repeated assurances of how much he loves the present Eva, is a clear indication of how much he is in love with the absent Edvarda.<sup>330</sup> Glahn is to be disillusioned when he meets Edvarda shortly afterwards, outside the doctor's. It is crucial to understand that it is Edvarda, in power of her position as mediator that has chosen Eva as Glahn's next object. For Glahn as it is for Girard's hero: "He cannot deny the failure of his desire but he can confine its results to the object which he now possesses and possibly to the mediator who directed him to it."<sup>331</sup> It is in this way that Glahn's many short, intense and erotic romantic liaisons have to be understood. Eva is not only obeying Glahn but also Mack. Prior to the evening when Mack met Glahn at the blacksmith, Eva had been visited several times by Mack,<sup>332</sup> who is clearly becoming more and more jealous of Glahn, especially when Eva tells Mack she loves Glahn.<sup>333</sup> In a sense there is a power battle on several levels between the two. On the one hand about legitimacy in the village. In the first battle it seems that Mack is the stronger contender as he has most symbolic and economic power; he runs the village's business, looks after and regulates national property, hosts the Baron and equips him for his research, and owns the hut where Glahn is living. It is also a defeat when Glahn, who is a lieutenant, chooses to belittle Mack and his position by, voluntarily or not, desiring Eva, yet winning her over and not choosing Edvarda, a member of the village's petit bourgeoisie. Furthermore, as has already been demonstrated, Glahn's desire for Eva is not real, first of all because it is an imitation of Mack's desire, and secondly because Edvarda has made the selection.<sup>334</sup> This is also the reason for his scarcely mourning or grieving for Eva when she is killed. The story of the maiden in the stone tower exemplifies this, which shall soon be demonstrated. When Mack's jealousy increases he releases his anger by forcing Eva to do hard labour that would normally be done by a man. She does not complain,<sup>335</sup> she accepts the role of Mack's slave in the same way she has accepted that of a slave of love with Glahn. Eva suffers, and is made a tool in their power struggle, as they both exploit her, for work and

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<sup>330</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 250.

<sup>331</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 89. see infra chapter III on Tayeb Salih.

<sup>332</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, pp. 19, 34, and 71.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>334</sup> In this case Glahn is entangled in two triangular desires at the same time, where in both cases Eva is the object, but the mediators are respectively Mack and Edvarda.

<sup>335</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 96.

sex. The battle is fought on a further two levels. Mack has warned Eva that Glahn's life is in danger because Glahn is his *one* rival and he must get rid of him. By now Glahn has been in the mountain preparing his salute to the Barons departure: "I'll load my gun, take to the mountains and fire a loud shot in his and Edvarda's honor. I'll drill a deep hole in a cliff and blow up a mountain in his and Edvarda's honor. And a big rock will roll down the mountain side and crash mightily into the sea as his ship passes by."<sup>336</sup> One day on his way back from the mountain he meets Eva, who now has her doubts about she being his only love. As a testament to their waning love they suddenly witness Glahn's hut in flames, an act perpetrated by Mack, who even dares to make Edvarda offer Glahn a room on his behalf. Glahn had underestimated Mack's desire for revenge. Mack had got to know about Glahn's plan to blow up the mountain, and had ordered Eva to tar a boat just underneath the cliff. Glahn wonders: "why exactly at the landing? Why not on the dock?"<sup>337</sup> When returning to his blasting hole he recognises tracks in the gravel and realises that Mack has been there. At this moment it is clear that Glahn finally understands the full extent of the plot. While he planned to blow the mountain, Mack commanded Eva to tar a boat just underneath. He tells himself that he did not see anyone so he had no idea of what harm he was causing. Glahn's immediate reaction to the scene that greets him when he gets down to the harbour is one of agitation. We might wonder why he does not mourn more deeply, but as has been demonstrated, Eva did not really mean anything to Glahn; she was no more than a short term substitute for Edvarda. The first thing he writes after Eva's death is the legend of the imprisoned maiden. The story is an allegory for Glahn's relationship with both Eva and Edvarda. Glahn see their relationships as existing of triangles of masters and slaves, initiated by desire, driven by hatred, jealousy, sadism and masochism. Earlier Edvarda pointed out to Glahn the discrepancy between a person giving lavishly at no emotional cost and the one giving little but at huge cost; Edvarda has given a little but at great effort, while Glahn has given a lot but at no cost to himself.

Glahn puts on his uniform and wanders off to Sirilund to say good-bye, hoping to make an impression on Edvarda, in their ongoing power struggle. Glahn grasps her hands

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

and a senseless rapture takes hold of him as he exclaims, "Edvarda".<sup>338</sup> Edvarda is destined not to be the loser, and remains cold and defiant. At last she confesses she would like to have a souvenir of Glahn and asks for Aesop, and Glahn answers yes straight away. When Glahn returns home he loads his gun, points the muzzle at Aesop's neck and pulls the trigger, then has Aesop's body delivered to Edvarda. Killing Aesop is a symbolic expression for his attempt to free himself from Edvarda, and as was the case with Nagel, he does not want to be anybody's dog, he does not want to sit and wait, like the maiden in the stone tower, for anything that might never arrive. Glahn relates to the story of the maiden, and her lord is similar to his Edvarda. In his longing for her he has become blind to his true desires, which is the reason behind him going to Nordland in the first place.

Glahn, a lieutenant, replaces his uniform and travels away from the city, opting for a solitary life in the woods. This drastic change signifies his rejection of a homogenous society;<sup>339</sup> yet his own and true desire has to have another and much deeper meaning, than a return to a more primitive stage in human evolution, or just a return to nature. As Edvarda explicitly said she had given more than Glahn because she had suffered more, and the reason is hidden in, just exactly his askesis. Several times Glahn has indicated this, and there is a simple reason: Glahn and Edvarda are in love with each other, and precisely the moment their love and/or desire are revealed it increases and arises a rival's desire. The most obvious action is then to conceal ones desire. Such concealment is called *hypocrisy*.<sup>340</sup> Thus the hypocrite, in this case Glahn and to some extent Edvarda, conceal and suppress every impulse towards the object, that is, the Other: "Only this concealment of desire *for the sake of desire* can act as the basis of a "dialectic of master and slave."<sup>341</sup> Glahn is a hypocrite for as he does not really intend to stay in the woods, either in India or Nordland, his stay in all these places represents a poor attempt to escape

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>339</sup> Nettum, op. cit., p. 221.

<sup>340</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

from a civilised and homogeneous<sup>342</sup> society; he never manages to settle due to his desire for askesis, yet it is far more rewarding in terms of his process of individuation.

Since Girard has now created the framework for the puzzle, it makes the task to fill in the missing pieces that much easier. Thus when Glahn shoots himself in the foot, it is his own punishment for disclosing his weakness to Edvarda and to the doctor, in other words he has flaunted, not concealed his desire. When Glahn later displays a heroic indifference and lack of sympathy towards Edvarda it is the price he must pay for exposing his emotions towards her time after time. Such a “mistake is analogous, the self-punishment is no less so. Every infraction of the code of hypocrisy is atoned for by an increase in ascetic dissimulation,”<sup>343</sup> in other words, his withdrawal. It is when he receives the feathers that inspire him to write, and later the letter when he is in the jungle, that his dream becomes a nightmare, and he becomes ontologically sick, and turns to thoughts of suicide. From a medical point of view Glahn’s, or Edvarda’s to some extent, diagnosis is obvious because he believes he is the only one to know the truth. Glahn is miserable when he compares himself with the Other; he has his own laws, which he uses to condemn and acquit the Other, and such a sickness is contagious whilst still isolating the individual.<sup>344</sup> For Glahn it now becomes a question of abandoning his pride, or imitating his own desire. This is because: “modern *lucidity* has shifted the problem of askesis and broadened it. It is no longer a question of renouncing the desire itself. The choice is between pride and desire since desire makes slaves of us.”<sup>345</sup> The ultimate aim of Glahn is to reach a state of non-desire. In his desperation he turns towards physical pain, alcohol, and erotic abuse, the most common means by which to destroy and or paralyse his desire, in and before going to the jungle. In the jungle the narrator gives an epilogue about Glahn’s death.<sup>346</sup> He presents us with an unpleasant picture of Glahn, and in this way excites our curiosity and even sympathy for this vulnerable man. Moreover, the way Glahn is presented underlines and supports our analysis of Glahn and his askesis in relation to his pursuit of meaning:

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<sup>342</sup> Glahn has chosen to exchange his uniform for hunter’s clothes, and this must be seen as a break with society and civilisation as he now becomes a stranger in every place he visits.

<sup>343</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>346</sup> According to Nettum this narrator can be seen as Glahn’s alter ego, Nettum, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

I'd heard he had had an affair with a young Nordland woman from a big house and that he had compromised her somehow or other, whereupon she had sent him packing. In his foolish defiance, he had then sworn to revenge this on himself, and the lady calmly let him do as he pleased in this regard, it was no concern of hers. Only from now on did Thomas Glahn's name become really well known; he cut loose, went crazy, drank, caused one scandal after the other and resigned from his commission. What an odd way of revenging yourself for being jilted! There was also another story going around touching his relationship with the young lady: that he had by no means compromised her but that her family had thrown her out, and that she herself had helped them do so after a Swedish count, whose name I shall not mention had asked for her hand. But this report I put less trust in, regarding the first as the truer one<sup>347</sup>

It is this second version that Glahn has told throughout the novel. Furthermore, Glahn is given some kind of moral victory and compensation in the epilogue, as his positive aspects as a hunter, his manliness, beauty and physical power are emphasised. What is crucial for our analysis is to remember that his askesis for the sake of desire has opened and removed most of the obstacles on his road to the object, that is, Edvarda, since it obviously discourages imitation. His askesis has finally brought him some success in bringing Edvarda closer to him, a fact which is proved by the letter Edvarda sends asking him to come back: "Haw-haw! Just think of it, a married woman proposing to a man, a married woman!"<sup>348</sup> The last and greatest impediment is however his own ontological sickness, and he becomes more ill the closer Edvarda gets, so that out of the blue he often shouts, "Never! Never! I'd rather be drawn and quartered!"<sup>349</sup> Girard explains:

The ontological sickness grows more and more serious as the mediator approaches the desiring subject. Its natural end is death. The power of pride cannot but end in the fragmentation and ultimately in the complete disintegration of the subject. The very desire to unify oneself disperses, and here we have arrived at the definitive dispersion. The contradictions caused by internal mediation end by destroying the individual. Masochism is followed by the last stage of metaphysical desire, that of self-destruction.<sup>350</sup>

Glahn, by now, knows the secrets of internal mediation, and demonstrates that it is not the physical distance to the mediator that is decisive. Glahn carefully and deliberately copies and thwarts the narrator's desire for Maggie, and according to Girard: "thwarted desire is so violent that it can lead to murder."<sup>351</sup> On several occasions we learn that the

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<sup>347</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, p. 112.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>350</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

narrator loses his temper with Glahn because Glahn beguiles Maggie, and Maggie finds him more fascinating than the narrator himself.<sup>352</sup> This goes on for a while, until the narrator threatens to shoot and kill Glahn if he does not desist from seducing Maggie.<sup>353</sup> Such a threat is just what Glahn has expected and desired, and he only intensifies his efforts to seduce Maggie, provoking the narrator by arranging their rendezvous outside his doorstep. The next morning Glahn is eager to go hunting and puts on his best costume and admires himself like a bridegroom who is preparing to be wed. Glahn has several times assured himself that the narrator has loaded his gun, and even sings the bridal hymn in front of the narrator's gun barrel. It is obvious whose wedding he is going to, and as the narrator pulls the trigger Glahn finally gets his bride; he weds death, instead of Edvarda. This form of indirect suicide is the only medicine able to cure his ontological illness. Glahn dies the victim of a bullet, a bullet that is very much his own.

### **Hamsun in short**

Knut Hamsun had a clear vision of his need to become an author. He viewed the role of literature as one of probing the complexities of the individual psyche, in opposition to realist objectivity and bourgeois modernity. His creations in the selected novels are all "individual psyches of highly individualistic social outsiders. Their extreme individualism, heightened sensitivity to beauty and emotions as well as their sense of their uniqueness alienate them from the bourgeois public world."<sup>354</sup> Hamsun described the socio-political and cultural transformations in society by emphasising their impact on man and creating isolated and anxiety-ridden individuals who constantly question their existence in their quest for meaning. The theories of both Girard and Bourdieu have proved especially relevant to making this connection between the social and psychological. This is because the conflict in Hamsun's novels is between the individual and society and is presented as internalised in the character's mind and the conflict in the novel takes place inside the triangle of desire and is initiated and controlled by the mediator.

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<sup>352</sup> Hamsun, *Pan*, pp. 116, 117, 120-124.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>354</sup> Humpál, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

Hamsun illuminates his characters' psyches from all possible angles and the polyphony of the novel is used to express and manifest the inner self, all the contradictory thoughts, emotions, and desires which the heroes struggle with. The hero of *Hunger*, Nagel and Glahn, are traumatised by their lives in the metropolis, that in modernity singles out and leaves the individual a stranger and an outsider in his own environment. This condition causes the individual's mind to split and undermines any hope of reconciliation. Hamsun renders the (anti-) heroes' self-consciousness through interior monologue. Some of these are extended in order to underline and portray the protagonists' psyche in their own idiom, as it is here that their identity is shaped and the process of individuation and the pursuit of meaning is displayed. Free indirect discourse must be linked to the rise of modern subjectivity, as it is a technique that has in its subjective idiom the potential to present individuality. The author's control of free indirect discourse lessens with modernity and releases subjectivism. It is within free indirect discourse that Bakhtin's dialogism and polyphony take place and through the discourse of language, Hamsun's *Hunger*, *Mysteries* and *Pan* "eschew the idea of literature as furthering social process through participation in critical public dialogue and emancipate the individual's private world from such framework."<sup>355</sup>

The situation for the hero of *Hunger* is that of an individual whose only desire is to become an accepted part of a literary field; but his fragile mind and anxiety-ridden self-consciousness prevent him from fulfilling his true potential as a writer. He is constantly haunted by contradictory thoughts about his own eligibility as a writer. The crucial element in his process of individuation is his desire to be part of that literary field, and how he at times takes on the name of an renowned journalist to impress others and sustain his lie and satisfy his pride. When his articles are rejected several times he still does not give up his dream, and in the end he is rewarded with acceptance by "the commander" who see his talent as a writer and supports him both financially and morally. The hero also engages in a rather strange relationship with a woman he names Ylajali. They meet early on by chance, but later on she tracks him down, clearly fascinated by what she believes is a cultivated and "crazy" artist. She withdraws when she realises that the hero is a stranger made up of lies, pride, desire and sadistic feelings towards others.

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<sup>355</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 38.

This forces them into internal mediation, where an atomization of their identities takes place. The situations where they later meet each other, forces the hero to withdraw into his own self and, through a polyphony of voices, he questions his own identity and value as a human being. It is these voices that shape his identity as he pursues meaning in a society that leaves him framed against the brutal realities of the modern metropolis.

Nagel of *Mysteries* is also an outsider when he arrives and settles in this small village. He deliberately puts on a show for the rest of the community wearing several masks in order to gain as much attention as possible. Miniman is a local outcast and laughing stock with whom Nagel allies himself, and bribes to make him loyal in his attempt to charm the local princess Dagny. Dagny becomes fascinated by Nagel, however he cannot win her over, so he tries to make her jealous by approaching the old and miserable Martha. This sparks a lot of desire and emotions, as Miniman is in love with Martha, and Dagny does not want Nagel to be with anybody other than herself. Nagel starts to question himself more and more and withdraws. He locks himself inside his own subconscious psyche, haunted by destructive phantoms that finally drives him to his own death. The destructive forces of imitated desire forces him into annihilation and he tries to kill himself with poison, but as he has taken Miniman's freedom away, Miniman takes revenge for thwarting his desire towards Martha, and replaces his poison with water. Nagel is filled with self loathing, and indulges in many long interior monologues, all of them filled with several voices that in the end make him crazy and deceive him into choosing death. He finally drowns himself after Martha breaks their engagement and escapes town. Nagel is, nonetheless, filled with satisfaction as he accepts the idea of his suicide, and his death brings some kind of freedom, as every death, according to Girard, gives birth to a new beginning.<sup>356</sup>

Glahn also leaves the city for the countryside in Nordland's woods. He engages in several triangular relationships that all lead to his own death. Glahn denies his real feelings for Edvarda, lying to himself in order to sustain his pride. This is emphasised in the jungle when Glahn receives a letter from Edvarda begging him to come back and marry her. He refuses to do so, and his pride lead to his downfall. Throughout the novel Glahn falsified his own past, by narrating the story from his desired point of view not

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<sup>356</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 312.



challenging his pride. When in the Nordland woods Glahn is happy to have broken away from the homogenous society of the city. However, he is an outsider in this environment and contaminates all the other inhabitants. When he promises to give Edvarda his dog Aesop as a souvenir before he leaves, he shoots him dead and sends the body to Edvarda. This act is some kind of protest against being a victim of triangular desire, and it is an illustration of his pain and his hopeless grappling with the pursuit of meaning and modernity, similar to Nagel and the hero of *Hunger*. Hamsun focuses on the inner psyche of individualistic outsiders, and portrays the conflict between society and the individual as dialogically internalised in the heroes' consciousness; that their minds are split between two desires, determining the shaping of their identities and their processes of individuation; authentic living in the public world vs. authentic self-enclosure.

## CHAPTER II

### Naguib Mahfouz

#### The Beggar

#### Respected sir

‘Suppose you win the case today and possess the land only to have it confiscated tomorrow by the government?’ He answered disparagingly, ‘All that matters is that we win the case. Don’t we live our lives knowing that our fate rests with God?’ I had to admit the validity of his argument, but my head began to spin and everything seemed to disappear.

Omar al-Hamzawi <sup>357</sup>

‘My struggle is noble, he thought to himself. ‘As for my feelings and thoughts, these belong to God alone.’ He believed that God made man for power and glory. Life was power. Survival was power. Perseverance was power. And God’s Heaven could only be attained through power and struggle.

Othman Bayyumi. <sup>358</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Naguib Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, translated from Arabic by Kristin Walker Henry and Nariman Khaled Naili al-Warraki, (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), pp. 6-7. English edition cited.

<sup>358</sup> Naguib Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, translated from the Arabic by Rasheed El-Enany, (London: Quartet Books 1986), p. 59. English edition cited.

### Doyen of the Arabic novel

On December 11<sup>th</sup> 1911, Naguib Mahfouz Abd al Aziz<sup>359</sup> was born into a Muslim, lower middle class family, as the youngest of seven children. Mahfouz's family lived in al-Jamaliyya, a quarter in the heart of Cairo's old city, until the age of twelve when the family moved to one of the new Cairo suburbs north-east of the centre, called al-Abbasiyya. However Mahfouz really never left al-Jamaliyya, since his love for the area meant he was to revisit its streets and alleys again and again in his work. Most of Mahfouz's early realistic work is set in al-Jamaliyya, especially *Midaq Alley* and *The Trilogy*, and later he returns once again in novels like *Children of Gebelawi*, *Fountain and Tomb*, and *The Epic of the Harafish*, to mention only a few. In this sense "Jamaliyya continues to haunt his work in various mantles of disguise and lends to it many of its typical characters and physical assets."<sup>360</sup> Naguib Mahfouz is the author *par excellence* of the metropolis and especially of Cairo, as all his novels take place in the city of his birth, with only a few exceptions where the plot is set in Alexandria, like *The Search*, or *Miramar*.

In 1930 Mahfouz enrolled at the King Faud I University<sup>361</sup> where he graduated in 1934 with a degree in philosophy. Mahfouz's interest in philosophy and philosophical questions has never ceased, and he even commenced an MA in philosophy, besides writing numerous articles on the subject. However, in the late thirties he started to focus much more on literature and chose to give up his philosophical research and devote himself entirely to literature.<sup>362</sup> The grappling with existential philosophical problems has been a reoccurring theme throughout his literary career, as several of his heroes have tried to find the definitive answers to eternal questions. It was also in his university years that Mahfouz first became acquainted with western philosophers from Plato and Aristotle, to Henri Bergson. Bergson's notions of evolution, *élan vital*<sup>363</sup> became essential for Mahfouz, as well as the more general concepts of time as a real being, the rejection of

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<sup>359</sup> Najib Mahfuz is the correct transliteration of his name, although in English Naguib Mahfouz is the most common one.

<sup>360</sup> Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz, The Pursuit of Meaning* (London: Routledge Press, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>361</sup> Today the Cairo University.

<sup>362</sup> El-Enany, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>363</sup> For Bergson *élan vital* is a creative force present in all living things and responsible for all evolution, in other words *life force*.

materialism, freedom of the spirit, and the distrust of any all-embracing philosophical theory.<sup>364</sup> American pragmatists, Pierce, James and Dewey, were instrumental in their rejection of -isms, and Mustafa Abd al-Raziq was a great personal moral influence on Mahfouz through his studies of medieval Islamic philosophy.<sup>365</sup>

However, the young Mahfouz had long been a dedicated and inspired reader, especially in his formative years, when he took delight in detective stories, as well as delving into the Arabic classics. The time of Mahfouz's childhood and youth coincided with a period of huge, rapid and drastic transformations in the domestic sphere, as well as in international world politics. Apart from Egypt's struggle for independence crucial changes took place in the intellectual and academic sphere of Arab society: the emergence of a new educated class; a new reading public; the change in artistic sensibility; the establishment of new journals and bulletins; a new journalistic discourse; increased translation and a new world-view. These facts disprove the common misconceptions of western, and even some Arab scholars, that the development and maturation of sophisticated works of modern Arabic prose owed their genesis fully to admired and copied models of western literary genres. Nor were these works simply a return to the old classical literary forms, like the *Maqama*.<sup>366</sup>

Le Gassick is only moderately aware of these crucial factors; nonetheless, he argues that: "imaginative narrative had always been an important part of Arabic literary culture but up to now had been considered infinitely inferior to poetry. The influence of the Arab émigré writers, most prominently Jibran, al-Rihani and Nu'ayma, and the evocative, sentimental prose works of the Egyptian Sheikh al-Manfaluti and others were given fiction a new respectability in Arab eyes that would culminate in the thirties in relative sophisticated works of fiction by Tawfiq al-Hakim, Abbas Mahmud al'Aqqad, Ibrahim al-Mazini, Taha Husayn and Mahmud Taymur."<sup>367</sup> El-Enany supports the notion of Mustafa al-Manfaluti (1876-1924) as a prime source of inspiration, and adds that

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<sup>364</sup> Menahem Milson, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), p. 31.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>366</sup> For a forceful, convincing and detailed analysis of these phenomena see Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature*, (London: Saqi Books 1993), passim.

<sup>367</sup> Trevor Le Gassick, (ed.) *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*, (Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1993), p. 2.

Mahfouz during his 'period of awakening' read what he called 'the innovators.'<sup>368</sup> Mahfouz admits in an interview that these writers and intellectuals were essential for his "emancipation from the traditional way of thinking...the attraction of [his] attention to world literature, [providing] a new outlook on classical Arabic literature, as well as offering him models of the short story, the novel and drama."<sup>369</sup> The single one event to have had the most significant influence on his literary and intellectual development was the 1926 publication of Taha Husayn's *On Pre-Islamic Poetry*, which caused a literary, intellectual and political uproar. The text challenged the established "validity of received opinion on both Islam and literature associated with it."<sup>370</sup> *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* elevates reason, giving it priority over tradition and kept Mahfouz under its influence whether consciously or not.<sup>371</sup> Traces of this influence are found in the *Cairo Trilogy* and *Children of Gebelawi* where religion is supplanted by science as the new creed. Additionally other works of Husayn,<sup>372</sup> especially those on classical literature, forced Mahfouz to reread the poetry of central poets like al-Ma'arri, al-Mutanabbi, and Ibn al-Rumi.<sup>373</sup> Salama Musa also is one of the central figures in the intellectual development of the young Mahfouz, as he taught him to believe in science, socialism and tolerance.<sup>374</sup> Mahfouz's preoccupation with Pharaonic Egypt might be related to Musa's influence, and Mahfouz was later to meet Musa, and write for his journal *al-Majalla al-jadida*. Mahfouz owes a great deal to Musa and even records their first meeting in the last part of the *Trilogy*.<sup>375</sup>

Mahfouz makes a special mention of al-Hakim as "the last great" writer of his generation; one to whom he owes a great debt. *The Return of The Spirit* (1933) paved the

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<sup>368</sup> El-Enany, op. cit., p. 12. The innovators are Taha Husayn (1889-1973), Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad (1889-1964), Salama Musa (1888-1958), Ibrahim al-Mazini (1889-1949), Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956), and later Mahmud Taymur (1894-1973), Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898-1987), and Yahya Haqqi (1905-1992).

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>371</sup> Sasson Somekh, *The Changing Rhythm, a Study of Naguib Mahfouz's Novels*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 37-38.

<sup>372</sup> Like *The Days* (1929), Mahfouz even wrote a similar work called *The Years (al-A'wan)* as well as *Village Dreams (Ahlam al-qarya)* a work which Musa did not find good enough to publish. See Milson, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>373</sup> Somekh, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>375</sup> See Sugar street chapter 13.

way for a new Egyptian national consciousness and its realistic approach to its subject has proved essential for the development of Egyptian literature in particular and Arab literature in general. Al-Hakim, Husayn, and al-Aqqad are the three Egyptian intellectuals Mahfouz mentions as having deserved the Nobel Prize before him;<sup>376</sup> however, it was in his struggle over the legitimacy of the novel as *the* literary genre for the future with al-Aqqad that Mahfouz was to prove his authority in the literary field.

Mahfouz was to spend a major part of his life developing the novel as a genre, reaching maturity with *The Trilogy*. Moreover Mahfouz's dedication to the genre of the novel must also be seen in relation to the shaping of his own identity. Mahfouz came to embody the realist mode of modern Arabic literature, as well as determining the articulation and language of the modernist narrative in the sixties. From a Bakhtinian perspective, language must be understood as praxis, as a recurrent performance of the "lived event."<sup>377</sup> Mahfouz brought something of his own biography and socio-politically formed self into his books, that is, into the dialogues he has with others, either through the characters or with the reader, and, of course, his personality, experiences and world-view determine his utterances. To understand the extent of Mahfouz's dedication to the novel, one must also appreciate that the novel, as some other literary genres:

are clearly demarcated by change of speaking subjects, and these boundaries, while retaining their *external* clarity, acquire here a special internal aspect because the speaking subject—in this case, the *author* of the work—manifests his own individuality in his style, his world view, and in all aspects of the design of his work. This imprint of individuality marking the work also creates special internal boundaries that distinguish this work from other works connected with it in the overall processes of speech communication in that particular cultural sphere: from the works of predecessors on whom the author relies, from other works of the same school, from the works of opposing schools with which the author is contending, and so on.<sup>378</sup>

Mahfouz's persistence in perfecting the novel was rewarded in the sense that through mastering the genre he was able to mark it with his own particularity as a writer. Mahfouz conquered the novel's boarder territories and entered these new terrains "armed with knowledge and artistic instinct, to preserve, yet at the same time invade, its sanctity,

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<sup>376</sup> Milson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>377</sup> Burkitt, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>378</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, translated by Vern W. McGee, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 75.

and fling open doors to a familiarity hitherto unknown.”<sup>379</sup> Mahfouz’s broad insight into the workings of the human psyche made him aware of its complex structures, something he reveals in his meticulous portrayal of his characters’ socio-psychological states. Therefore, Mahfouz was confident of the role he and his authorship played in his own process of individuation, and that his quest for distinguishing the novel as a genre shaped his identity. An Example of this is when Mahfouz’s twice stopped writing after fulfilling the genre’s potential in a particular mode, be it *realism* or *modernism*; that is, his literary silence after finishing writing *The Trilogy* in the early fifties became famous as did his abandoning of the novel for another four years after the publication of *Miramar* in 1967. Dramatic domestic upheavals in Egypt correspond with these periods of silence. Yet Mahfouz managed, through his characters *way* of uttering their language, to relate his own pursuit of meaning to the development of the novel, because “individuality is not in the words that are spoken, but in the *way* in which they are spoken.”<sup>380</sup> Hence Mahfouz becomes interesting because he utilises language and his own various *speech genres* to bring life into the words of his characters. In order to fully exploit the novel’s potential and his own creativity, Mahfouz needed to master the genre. Bakhtin argues that “the better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own identity in them (where this is possible and necessary), the more flexible and precisely we reflect the unpredictable situation of communication—in a word, the more perfectly we implement our free speech plan.”<sup>381</sup> Therefore by probing all aspects of Egyptian life, articulated through his (anti-) heroes in his quest for the Arab novel as a distinct genre, Mahfouz also engages in his own process of individuation.

### **The novel is the poetry of the modern world**

Mahfouz showed early on an awareness of, and desire for, power, a power that would enable him to acquire a substantial readership, and make a name for himself. As we have

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<sup>379</sup> Salma Khadra Jayyusi, “The Arab laureate and the road to Nobel” in Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar (eds.) *Naguib Mahfouz: From Regional Fame to Global Recognition* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>380</sup> Burkitt, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>381</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 80.

seen in the case of Hamsun, Mahfouz, as the newcomer, desired and needed to be *different*. As Bourdieu demonstrates:

To introduce difference is to produce time. Hence the importance, in this struggle for life and survival, of the *distinctive marks* which, at best, aim to identify what are often the most superficial and most visible properties of a set of works or producers. Words – the names of schools or groups, proper names – are so important only because they make things. These distinctive signs produce existence in a world in which the only way to *be* is to be *different*, to ‘make one’s name’, either personally or as a group.<sup>382</sup>

Mahfouz admits such desires in an interview with Fu’ad Dawwara when he tells him that “as a young boy, I made a habit of writing letters to various newspaper columnists, either supporting or contradicting their opinions, so that I could see my name in print, even at the cost of its being accompanied by expressions of abuse.”<sup>383</sup> Such determined behaviour, to make a name for himself, also explains why he chose philosophy in the first place rather than literature, since his heroes, Husayn, al-Hakim, al-‘Aqqad and Haykal, whose essays he began to read in the late twenties, did not devote themselves to the novel alone but exercised their writing craft in several genres at a time when the novel did not have particular cachet: “Literature I considered to be a marginal hobby...the novel did not have prestige and therefore I did not think of devoting myself to literature and the novel...as I read the philosophical essays of the Egyptian thinkers...I started to ask myself philosophical questions and I imagined that by studying philosophy I would find the right answers.”<sup>384</sup> Such imitated desire, to use the vocabulary of Girard, was about to change in the late thirties as Mahfouz became more and more aware of the crucial need of *being different* in order to make a difference: “Historically, poetry has been the greatest verbal art for the Arabs. It is the medium that expresses the Arab spirit not only in its modern transformations but also in its stubborn continuities: the pervasive nostalgia, the passion for the heroic, the grand sweep of self-assertive rhetoric, the resistant spirit and the persistent memories.”<sup>385</sup> When al-Aqqad in his book *Fi bayti*<sup>386</sup> argues that “the novel’s lesser value was apparent in the fact that one line of poetry could convey an idea

<sup>382</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 106.

<sup>383</sup> Fu’ad Dawwara, *Naguib Mahfouz min al-qawmiyya ila al-‘alamiyya* (Cairo, 1989), p. 222, quoted in Milson, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>384</sup> Milson, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>385</sup> Jayyusi, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>386</sup> Can be translated as *at home*.



or an experience in a way that a novel could hardly accomplish in fifty pages [and] that the popularity of the novel among certain "social classes" (supposedly low or poorly educated) was in itself proof of its inferiority."<sup>387</sup> Mahfouz could not resist this chance to make his name and battle for a position within the field, and took on al-Aqqad. In an article published 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1945 in the literary magazine *al-Risala*<sup>388</sup> Mahfouz denounces al-Aqqad's strictures against fiction and shows both a desire to defend the novel and an understanding of its unique qualities and potential, as he argues that: "artistic fiction (*al-qissa al-fanniyya*) means much more than story; it embodies many human values such as characterization and psychology; lyricism and humour; philosophical themes and social concepts...[and] the *Qissa*<sup>389</sup> is the poetry of the modern age, an age of science, industry, and facts which necessitate a new art, an art which is a synthesis between modern man's passion for facts and his age-long attraction for imagination."<sup>390</sup> By declaring the novel to be the poetry of the modern world Mahfouz left himself with little possibility other than to dedicate himself to the novel, and took it upon himself to defend and be associated with the inferior status that belonged to a minor genre. Bourdieu explains that "the hierarchy of genres, and within them the relative legitimacy of styles and authors, is a fundamental dimension of the space of possibles. Even though it is a stake in struggles at all times it presents itself as a given which must be reckoned with, whether in order to oppose it or transform it."<sup>391</sup> Hence Mahfouz's desire to first imitate the desires of his much respected heroes, than to break away from them and accentuate his particularity by championing the novel. Consequently, one must assume that Mahfouz was well aware of the significance of the socio-political, cultural and structural transformations in both Egyptian society and the literary field that made it possible to lay the foundation for the genesis of the modern Arab novel. At this stage it is crucial to be aware of the mechanisms that regulate the structures of a work and the structures of the field, in order to fully comprehend what is at stake. Bourdieu suggests that:

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<sup>387</sup> Milson, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>388</sup> See "Al-Qissa 'ind al-'Aqqad", in *al-Risala*, 3 December 1945, pp. 952-954.

<sup>389</sup> *Qissa* means fiction in general but in this context, it means the novel as opposed to *uqsusa*, 'short story'.

<sup>390</sup> "Al-Qissa 'ind al-'Aqqad", in *al-Risala*, 3 December 1945, pp. 952-954, quoted from Somekh, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

<sup>391</sup> Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 89.

The science of cultural works has as its object the correspondence between two homologous structures, the structure of the works (i.e. of genres, forms and themes) and the structure of the literary field, a field of forces that is unavoidably a field of struggle. The impetus for change in cultural works – language, art, literature, science etc.– resides in the struggles that take place in the corresponding fields of production. These struggles, whose goal is the preservation or transformation of the established power relationships in the field of production, obviously have as their effect the preservation or transformation of the structure of the field of works, which are the tools and stakes in the struggle.<sup>392</sup>

The strategies, that is, position-taking, Mahfouz and his likes employ depend on the positions they occupy in the structure of the field, how much symbolic capital they possess, and their habitus, which is constituted through the mediations of the dispositions.<sup>393</sup> In short this means that if they are to succeed, in the sense of attaining new positions and through them creating an evolution of production, they must create for themselves freedom, in the Sartrean sense,<sup>394</sup> from the field and the constraints it implies for the game and its players. It is the attempt to investigate the limits of the field that the writer finds himself confined to, by the very act of being a player, willingly or not. By providing the means for understanding what one is doing, the players in the field are able to regain a consciousness of their own limitations. The struggle for the novel and for his survival as a novelist was not an easy challenge to take on for Mahfouz, and during the forties he was close to giving in and devoting himself to writing for the cinema.

Language as symbolic power was another way of distancing himself from the other producers and competitors in the field, and Mahfouz's insistence on writing all of his work in literary Arabic, *fusha*, unlike Haykal, al-Hakim and Taymur,<sup>395</sup> who in the beginning wrote all the dialogue in colloquial dialects, *ammaiyya*. One reason for this might be the view of the language of traditional storytellers as vulgar, that the vernacular was un-modern in spirit.<sup>396</sup> More significantly it was a result of Mahfouz's desire to be *different*. His insistence helped in the long run to establish *fusha* as the standard Arabic language, and Mahfouz asserts that he "recognizes only literary Arabic as a language fit

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<sup>392</sup> Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 183.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>394</sup> See *infra*, p. 129.

<sup>395</sup> Haykal and al-Hakim used *ammaiyya* in the dialogues of their works and *fusha* in the narrative. Taymur wrote most of his work in the twenties in *ammaiyya* but later renounced this technique and rewrote the dialogues in *fusha* when, during thirties and forties, he published new editions of his earlier work. A writer like Husayn always used *fusha*.

<sup>396</sup> Milson, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

for the writing of literature. The colloquial language is not a language in its own right.”<sup>397</sup> Publishing his work in *fusha* helped Mahfouz enhance his popularity, and reach potential readers outside the borders of Egypt as publications in *ammaiyya* strictly limit the work to the domestic market. Mahfouz has, since the very beginning, stuck to his early position because, as Bourdieu point out it is:

Only the process of continuous creation, which occurs through the unceasing struggles between the different authorities who compete within the field of specialized production for the monopolistic power to impose the legitimate mode of expression, can ensure the permanence of the legitimate language and of its value, that is, of the recognition accorded to it.”<sup>398</sup>

Mahfouz struggled to beat out his own literary path amongst the philosophical discourses and the literary genres of his era, and as soon as he had decided to dedicate his life to the novel he set out to read all the European classics. He read the major European masters, as well as a few Americans and the most significantly the giants of Russian literature, mostly in English translation.<sup>399</sup> Mahfouz took John Drinkwater’s general guide to world literature, as his point of departure and, because of his late start, he confined himself to the consecrated masters, starting with the modern period and occasionally delving into earlier periods.<sup>400</sup> However, Mahfouz’s first novels dealt with totally different matters. In the early thirties Egypt witnessed a growing national pride, supported by several significant archaeological discoveries about ancient Egypt. In 1932 Mahfouz translated an English text on this topic, entitled *Ancient Egypt*.<sup>401</sup> In general the thirties was a time where several of the writers and intellectuals felt the urge to express their thoughts, feelings and desires through fiction. *The Game of Fates*<sup>402</sup> published in 1939 was Mahfouz’s debut as a novelist, and this historical novel was set in ancient Egypt. Another two novels followed, also set in a time of great upheaval in ancient Egypt, namely

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>398</sup> Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 58.

<sup>399</sup> The ones who had the greatest impact on him were Tolstoy; Dostoevsky; Chekhov; Maupassant; Conrad; Melville; Mann; Proust and Joyce, and in the theatre Shakespeare; Ibsen; Strindberg; O’Neill, and Beckett, and in poetry Tagore and Hafiz Shirazi. Through the work of Galsworthy; Huxley; Lawrence; Balzac; Zola; Flaubert and Stendhal he first became acquainted with realism, a genre in which he later became a master himself.

<sup>400</sup> El-Enany, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>401</sup> *Misr al-Qadima*.

<sup>402</sup> *Abath al-Aqdar*.

*Rhodopis* published in 1943, and *The Struggle of Thebes*<sup>403</sup> the following year. Life as a novelist in Egypt was not rewarded by an opulent lifestyle, and Mahfouz had to add to his income by writing short stories as well as remaining in his job as a civil servant. Later in the forties he also turned to writing for the cinema, something that further enhanced his fame. Mahfouz's was specifically interested in the modernist authors, and yet he in the mid forties he started out on what is known as his realist period. Mahfouz knew realism was a spent force in Europe and El-Enany argues that Mahfouz "felt that since the novel was still a nascent form in Arabic without an established tradition in realism, he could not move straight away from romanticism to modernism: the Arabic novel and his own experience as a novelist in the making had to go through the natural stages of evolution."<sup>404</sup> Nonetheless, there are still several traces of the influence of modernism in his writing, especially the use of stream-of-consciousness/narrated monologue, and in the case of the novel *Mirage*<sup>405</sup> published in 1948, he experiments with the psychological novel. In the novels of the forties Mahfouz established his reputation as one of finest novelists in the Arab world, and finally his disciplined dedication and years of sacrificing his creative energy to form the Arabic novel seemed to bear fruit.<sup>406</sup> Le Gassick argues that:

Thematically, the discussion moved from fate, morality and materialism in *al-Qahira al-Jadida* (*New Cairo*, 1945), to amused and ironic revelation of the colorful and dramatic lives of the inhabitants of Cairo's most ancient quarters in *Khan al-Khalili* (named after a street in old Cairo) (1946), and *Zuqaq al-Midaqq* (*Midaq Alley*, 1947). All these work have a common undercurrent of sadness and express Mahfouz's essentially tragic vision of life. Few of their large cast of characters are happy or successful, their failures sometimes resulting from their own faults of character or conduct, sometimes from the callous and unkind hand of fate.<sup>407</sup>

A crucial element to Mahfouz's work is how social and political conditions influence human behaviour, and his broad background and knowledge of sociology, psychology as well as philosophy, directed his sensitivity towards the versatility of fiction and the art of

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<sup>403</sup> *Kifah Tiba*.

<sup>404</sup> El-Enany, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>405</sup> *Al-Sarab*.

<sup>406</sup> Mahfouz admits in an interview with Dawwara that he and two other young writers, 'Adil Kamil and Ahmed Zaki Makhluף, were tormented by doubts about the significance of their work, and thought their literary effort was totally wasted and worthless. 'Adil Kamil and Ahmed Zaki Makhluף both stopped writing because of this crisis. See Milson, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>407</sup> Le Gassick, op. cit., p. 3.

writing, an important asset in his literary career that helped him succeed in more than just one genre or style.

Mahfouz “established the novel’s inception in the Arab world; in the course of three decades, he transformed a hesitant, rather naïve art into the pre-eminent literary form of our time.”<sup>408</sup> The determining factor in this power battle between poetry, criticism, drama and the novel was Mahfouz’s insistence and dedicated fascination with the genre and his sacrifice of years and years of creative energy, in his desire to prove that now was the time for the novel to become *the* major genre in Arabic literature: “The movement, action, and moods of modern people in the Arab world are more adequately translated through the novel than through the epic or platform poems more suitable to a heroic age,”<sup>409</sup> therefore in the rapidly changing Arab environment of the thirties, forties and fifties the form of the novel and its multiple voices, or in Bakhtin’s words, the polyphony of the text, could articulate in a more sophisticated and modernist way the concerns, emotions, and desires of contemporary Arab society. Nearly thirty years after his first published novel Mahfouz fulfilled the potential of the realist novel, with the publication of *The Trilogy*.<sup>410</sup> “*The Trilogy* radically changed the whole balance of Arabic literature. The former intractability of the novel was broken, and the old timidity and sense of alienation that Arab creative talent had felt toward that medium were gone. Mahfouz proved its accessibility, and after *The Trilogy* many writers began writing novels, quickly learning the craft and realizing the possibility of a novelistic achievement.”<sup>411</sup> In the years that followed *The Trilogy*, the novel had soon established itself as the leading genre, but for Mahfouz his adventure in realism was over, and he now longed to embark upon the style and form he admired the most, modernism.

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<sup>408</sup> Jayyusi, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>410</sup> *Al-Thulathiyya*, in three volumes, as *Palace Walk (Bayn al-Qasrayn)* 1956, *Palace of Desire (Qasr al-Shawq)* 1957 and *Sugar Street (Al-Sukkariyya)* 1957.

<sup>411</sup> Jayyusi, op. cit., p. 13.

### The artist's response to his new reality

Various explanations exist for why Mahfouz stopped writing for a period of several years between 1952, the year he allegedly finished *The Trilogy*, and the late fifties.<sup>412</sup> Sabry Hafez explains most convincingly that:

The completion of this magnificent work coincided with the decline and fall of the old social and political establishment – with the end of the monarchy, the dismantling of the great feudal estates, and the termination of British occupation. Mahfuz thus found himself on the horns of a dilemma, for he could not continue treating the out-of-date questions of the old and fallen regime, and it was too early to reckon with those of the new one, which had still to take shape. He abandoned writing altogether for almost seven years, during which he endeavoured to understand and analyse the characteristics of the new regime and to grasp the new sensibility of the period.<sup>413</sup>

*The Trilogy* was the culmination of the realistic trend in the Arabic novelistic tradition,<sup>414</sup> and although Mahfouz embarked upon a new modernist form and style it would be naive to conclude that the characteristics of the realistic novel in the fifties were now a finished chapter. It is crucial to grasp the main features of the realistic novel in the fifties as it is relevant to an understanding of the paradigmatic changes in the sixties that acted as a novelistic point of departure, and a useful yardstick to measure subsequent transformations. Further it helps “to comprehend the essential changes in attitude and theme which occurred in the sixties and altered the character-types common to the fifties. By setting this image against the new picture elicited from the novel of the sixties the change and alterations become evident.”<sup>415</sup> The majority of realistic novels set in the fifties have as their main themes, the issue of patriotism and the socio-political, economic, cultural and intellectual changes in society, helping to foreground important questions on the development of the nation and its future. The heroes are fighting to create a brighter future and to enhance Egypt's progress, and any country or person trying to hamper such improvements are seen as enemies of Egypt. Hafez describes these heroes:

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<sup>412</sup> Milson suggests that Mahfouz was depressed after his publisher Sa'id al-Sahhar turned it down as he thought it was too long and a calamity not a novel, and points out that Mahfouz resumed writing when it was eventually published.

<sup>413</sup> Sabry Hafez, “The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties”, in *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Volume VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 72.

<sup>414</sup> The first trend was the historical, the second was the romantic, and third the realistic. See also Sabry Hafez, “The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties”, in *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Volume VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), pp. 68-84.

<sup>415</sup> Hafez, “The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties”, p. 70.

The typical hero of these novels engages all his intellectual and physical activities in the task of *transforming external reality*. This behaviour is the result of his *desire to fulfil himself in a society in whose potential for development and change he has not yet lost faith*. He is, if not (politically) committed, at least concerned with social and patriotic ideas and forces. His sense of responsibility for what is going on in the society is very strong, and he always seeks to express himself through action and to fulfil his role in the external world. He has not yet lost his sense of belonging to society, even if he rejects some of its dominant values or acts against those in power.<sup>416</sup>

These heroes criticise their fellow citizens and a society, of which they still feel a part and which they feel an obligation to: "because his vigorous sense of responsibility and involvement with reality his internal and psychological questionings, if present, may be seen as a result of his yearning to take an active role, and do not stem from frustration or an inability to be in harmony with society. Thus his internal conflicts are not intended to depict him as an isolated island, but to manifest his deep relationship with reality, and to demonstrate how his act spring from the very roots of his character. His profound involvement with external reality demands a high degree of clarity in the treatment of the issues, and this is in fact a prominent feature of the major realistic novels of the fifties."<sup>417</sup> With the changes, brought about by the 1952 revolution, and Egypt's new socio-political, economic and cultural outlook that gradually altered the conditions within society, the need for a new sensibility about the future emerged. The transformation was evident not only in the author's perception of life and his surroundings, but in the Arabic novel's aesthetic response. In the sixties a new generation of authors emerged, their cultural formation having taken place during the fifties, unlike the older authors with their knowledge and experience about the field from the previous decades. This new generation, as well as some of the older generation, in particular Mahfouz, now looked towards writers like Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Woolf, Faulkner and Camus, and paid less attention to former influential writers like Balzac, Zola, Dickens, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Flaubert. Such new influences, Hafez argues, "help to distinguish the realism of the sixties from that of the forties and fifties, and to enlarge the novelist's artistic means so as to cope with the changeable and unstable reality of Egypt in the sixties. Because of the high degree of organic relationship between structure and texture, denotation and

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71. Italics mine.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

connotation, referent and reference, these influences widen the scope of vision and enrich both the form and content of the novels of the sixties,<sup>418</sup> especially in the works of Mahfouz as we shall see.

Mahfouz silence was broken with the serialisation of the new and remarkable different novel *Children of Gebelawi*,<sup>419</sup> that first appeared in *Al-Ahram* in 1959.<sup>420</sup> This book was the first in a series of six novels, before another four years of literary silence, where he tried out new ideas in his search for a new style. In *Children of Gebelawi* Mahfouz seems to return to a ground zero in more than one sense, as the novel renounces religion and argues for science as the new creed. In 1930, the year he embarked upon his university studies he published his first article in Salama Musa's magazine *al-Majalla al-jadida*. It was entitled *The Dying of Old Beliefs and the Birth of New Beliefs* and argued that religious faith was dying in the modern area and that it was no longer the guiding moral force it used to be. Religion had to step down for new beliefs, among which were communism and socialism,<sup>421</sup> and he later added science, influenced as he was by Auguste Comte; society was the new God and science the new religion.<sup>422</sup> However, more significant for this study is that the science that killed God does not offer any better solution. Man now has to search for God again, or try to become God himself, as science failed to quench his metaphysical doubts, hence in the novels of the sixties one find "a new blend of realism, mysticism, and existentialism, mixed with social criticism and contemplative and analytical elements. Through this new style Mahfouz portrays the feelings and problems associated with the new sensibility of the sixties."<sup>423</sup> These novels most important theme is the heroes' desperate search for freedom, according to George

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-72.

<sup>419</sup> *Awlad Haratina*.

<sup>420</sup> The novel was serialised from 21.09. to 25.12. and Mahfouz was discouraged by the feedback on his new style, form and content, which resulted in the novel being banned and not appearing in book form until 1967, in Beirut, not Egypt. *Awlad Haratina* is still controversial in Egypt to day, and led in 1994 to an attempt on Mahfouz's life.

<sup>421</sup> Milson, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>422</sup> Somekh, op. cit., p. 40

<sup>423</sup> Hafez, "The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties", p. 73.



Lukács in “a world that has been abandoned by God”<sup>424</sup> and has to surrender its reason and logic to an inverted law.<sup>425</sup> Lukács goes on to argue that:

The novel hero’s psychology is demonic; the objectivity of the novel is the mature man’s knowledge that meaning can never quite penetrate reality, but that, without meaning, reality would disintegrate into the nothingness of inessentiality....The novel tells of the adventure of interiority; the content of the novel is the story of the soul that goes to find itself, that seeks adventures in order to be proved and tested by them, and, by proving itself, to find its own essence.<sup>426</sup>

Unfortunately for the heroes, these adventures “end without dissipating the clouds of discontent and uncertainty, and their only outcome is to underline the validity and solidity of the inverted law which govern external reality.”<sup>427</sup> In all these novels the hero, or the anti-hero, finds himself isolated from society, grappling with a quest for identity and a pursuit of meaning, that is, to find the essence of his being and reason for his existence. A significant change in these novels is that the heroes’ isolation is not temporary anymore, but has now become a permanent condition. As one of the aims of this thesis is to link this process of individuation to socio-political, cultural and economic transformations in society, this thesis will argue that this new and permanent isolation of the hero comes as a result of the hero’s spirit of opposition to the social order and the unified reaction of society to the hero’s conduct; in other words his isolation is a consequence of the disembedding mechanisms of modernity. The hero is now concerned with his internal, personal spiritual aspirations not with the political and social aspects and implications of society even though he is well aware of them. This de-centring of the subject, as Hall has called it:

Marks the birth of a new and profound internal conflict, resulting from a radical change in society which has been remote from, if not inimical to, the interests and concerns of the main character, and has the effect of stripping his life of meaning...or from the social and cultural maze in which the characters finds himself, and through which he gradually recognises the futility of his quest for self and freedom...or from his loss of belief and hope for fulfilment and his fall into boredom and insignificance.<sup>428</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, translated from the German by Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 88. English edition cited.

<sup>425</sup> Hafez, “The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties”, p. 73.

<sup>426</sup> Lukács, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

<sup>427</sup> Hafez, “The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties”, p. 73.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

Many of the novels of the sixties have some kind of tragic end, indicative of Mahfouz's development away from romantic novels as opposed to novelistic,<sup>429</sup> Explicitly, Mahfouz's work in the forties and fifties reflects the presence of a mediator without revealing it; however, this changes in the sixties when the mediator's presence is revealed, resulting in an isolated and anxiety-ridden hero, and his desperate quest for meaning. Hence: "the progress of the psyche, which very often involves a gradual elimination of hope and a corresponding weakening of the protagonist's confidence in himself, is towards more intensive isolation culminating perhaps in death or martyrdom."<sup>430</sup> Consequently understanding the point of death is crucial if we are to grasp the meaning of these new novels of Mahfouz, and to do so one has to:

Go beyond metaphysical desire to the truth of the novel which shines beyond death. The hero succumbs as he achieves the truth and he entrusts his creator with the heritage of his clairvoyance. The title of hero of a novel must be reserved for the character who triumphs over metaphysical desire in a tragic conclusion and thus becomes *capable of writing the novel*.<sup>431</sup>

## THE BEGGAR

*The Beggar*<sup>432</sup> published in 1965 is Mahfouz's fifth novel<sup>433</sup> after he resumed writing in the late fifties. It is a typical example of Mahfouz's newly adapted style, and content, and there is no attempt to disguise the spiritual quest for meaning. These new novels are all much shorter in length and unlike the earlier novels, where the plot culminates in a catastrophe, the protagonist's despair, anxiety and alienation is now the novels' starting point. This is the case in *The Beggar*, when Omar, sitting in the doctor's waiting room, starts questioning the content of the picture on the wall. The questions he asks himself reveal his agitated state of mind, its fragility, and Omar's ontological illness.

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<sup>429</sup> Girard differentiates between *romantic* and *novelistic* works. *Romantic* works reflect the presence of a mediator without ever revealing it, and *novelistic* works reveal this presence. See Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>430</sup> Hafez, "The Egyptian Novel In The Sixties", 73. Death is also the result of alienation and anxiety in the works of Tayeb Salih, especially *Season of Migration to the North*.

<sup>431</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>432</sup> *Al-Shahhadh*.

<sup>433</sup> The other are *Awlad Haratina (Children of Gebelawi)* 1959, *Al-Liss wa al-Kilab (The Thief and the Dogs)* 1961, *Al-Summan wa al-Kharif (Autumn Quail)* 1962, *Al-Tariq (The Search)* 1964, and after *Al-Shahhadh (The Beggar)* 1965, he published *Tharthara fawq al-Nil (Chatter on the Nile)* 1966, and *Miramar* 1967 before another literary silence of four years.

There the child looks at the horizon, and how tightly it grips the earth, closes in upon the earth from any angle you observe it. What an infinite prison. Why the wooden horse, why the cows so full of tranquillity?<sup>434</sup>

After the meeting with the doctor Omar once again looks at the picture:

The child was still riding his wooden horse, gazing at the horizon. Was it this which prompted his mysterious smile? The horizon still closed in upon the earth. What did the beams of starlight travelling millions of light-years perceive? There are questions which no doctor can answer.<sup>435</sup>

Central to *The Beggar* is the protagonist/anti-hero's disillusionment and anxiety; his sensation of being a stranger in his own surroundings, among family, friends and colleagues and his desperate attempt to return to status quo, a ground zero, from where he can again create for himself a sound foundation for a meaningful life. Omar's quest to find his and his society's equilibrium inspire him to seek out something new, but his distorted vision prevents him from embarking on a journey to his destination straight away. Instead he searches for the answer in death, sex, mysticism and the pleasure of creative expression, as we shall later return to. This search is the core of the novel and we follow Omar in his increasingly desperate pursuit of meaning and quest for identity in the transformed Egyptian society of the mid sixties. In one sense he deliberately seeks his own destruction in order to be able to make a new and fresh start.<sup>436</sup> It is in this sense that the theories of Hall and Giddens, on the one hand, and the theories of Girard on the other make such a fruitful marriage because the sociological and the psychological spheres go hand in hand; in other words the political, cultural and economic transformation of society influences and alters the individual's perception of himself, his role in society, his relation to others in society, and the reason for his existence in society. Furthermore, the individual's new perception of himself in this transformed society, his interaction with others, mainly in triangular relationships, in his quest for meaning also contribute to, and enhance the transformation that is already taking place, in a mutually dynamic process. It is by such approach one is able to disclose the intimate and crucial relationship between

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<sup>434</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>436</sup> One might be tempted to draw a parallel to Dante and *The Divine Comedy* as he first has to go through hell and destroy himself before he can start his ascent into heaven and paradise, where he can only enter alone without his Beatrice.

society and literature, and thus comprehend the literary aesthetic change that takes place in a society's literature when this society is in rapid transformations.

Omar al-Hamzawi from the outside seems to be a happily married and successful lawyer; however, he finds himself in an increasing condition of despair over his state of affairs and one day he consults the doctor to find a solution to the illness that he insists he suffers from. Omar is not ill in the usual sense, not overworked, or suffering from fatigue, rather he no longer has any desire for anything:

“Very often I'm sick of life, people, even the family. The situation seemed too serious to keep silent....The problem is very serious. I don't want to think, to move or to feel. Everything is disintegrating and dying. My hope in coming here was to find some physical cause”<sup>437</sup>

The doctor, who symbolises the past, remarks with a smile, “if only we could solve our most serious problems with a pill after eating or a spoonful of medicine before sleeping.”<sup>438</sup> The doctor suggests that Omar is suffering from a ‘bourgeois disease’, since his anxiety is about future work and his financial situation has got the better of him. The doctor declares that he need no prescription, but rather that he has the cure in his own hands alone.<sup>439</sup> The last thing the doctor says about his recovery is that Omar has to understand life, a statement that makes Omar wonder what he means and where he is going, so he says to the doctor, “But your treatment of me is based on some sort of philosophy. Hasn't it ever occurred to you to question the meaning of your life?”<sup>440</sup> To Omar's great surprise and despair the doctor says he has no time for such thinking and cannot understand the meaning of the question, and suggests Omar trusts in God and listens to the warning he has been given from nature.<sup>441</sup> From this time onwards and throughout the novel Omar engages in every possible situation that might lead him into what seems to be his ultimate riddle of self-destruction, and meaningless intra-personal relationships in his frantic pursuit of meaning. To grasp the essence of his journey we need to examine all his relationships, to family, friends, work, and society, in detail by applying Girard's concept of the triangle of desire.

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<sup>437</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 9.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

Omar is the typical example of the literary hero of the sixties novel, in the sense that he traces his ills and those of his society, not in social conditions but rather in the spiritual and existential, and this obsession consumes Omar. Over and over again he returns to an encounter he had with a client as the fatal watershed in his illness, although his disease is of an insidious nature:

The man said, 'I'm grateful, Counselor. You've grasped the details of the situation superbly. Your fame is well deserved. I have great hopes of winning the case.'

"I replied, 'So do I.'

"He laughed contentedly and I felt a sudden, inexplicable wave of anger. 'Suppose you win the case today and possess the land only to have it confiscated tomorrow by the government?' He answered disparagingly, 'All that matters is that we win the case. Don't we live our lives knowing that our fate rests with God?' I had to admit the validity of his argument, but my head began to spin and everything seemed to disappear."<sup>442</sup>

It is this man's, and everybody around Omar, firm belief in God and his omnipotence that is the cause of Omar's despair. On one level Omar is engaged in a power struggle with God himself, or at least the image of God in society as the determinant for man and man's future. God is the mediator between Omar and all the other people he meets, and the closer God gets the stronger the mediation is felt. Girard argues that: "When the *nature* of the object inspiring the passion is not sufficient to account for the desire, one must turn to the impassioned subject. Either his *psychology* is examined or his *liberty* invoked."<sup>443</sup> Therefore the mediator for Omar in all his relations is God, at least as an imagined mediator, since Omar in the end only wants to become God himself, in other words, imitated desire, through a destruction of himself, a point in which we shall return. The affiliation between Omar and God is as a master and slave relationship where Omar imitates God, because for Omar God becomes his beloved and is divided into, and plays the role of both subject and mediator.

Omar's desperate search and imitation of God is the only means he can think of to reach his aim of nothingness. Nothingness in the existential sense is not as Hegel suggested an opposition to being, as thesis and antithesis, because non-being is the contradiction of being, not its opposite: "Nothingness is subsequent to being, since it is

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-41. See also pp. 44, 50, 77,

<sup>443</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 2.

being, first posited, then denied.”<sup>444</sup> Hence we must understand Omar’s pursuit as a denial of his being as Omar al-Hamzawi, since by the very act of denying his being, he has supposed it. Only when he is not being anymore, when he has rid himself of all his human emotions and desires, might a departure from the materialistic environment he is living in be possible. As Jean-Paul Sartre points out in *Being and Nothingness*: “Nothingness stands at the origin of the negative judgment because it is itself negation. It finds the negation as an *act* because it is the negation as *being*. Nothingness can be nothingness only by nihilating itself expressly as nothingness of the world; that is, on its nihilation it must direct itself expressly toward this world in order to constitute itself as refusal of the world.”<sup>445</sup>

### **The family, Arab society in miniature**

Omar searches for the cure for his ontological sickness by indulging in poetry, sex and Sufism. The failure of all the journeys he sets out on must be seen as the defeat of his ideological and philosophical beliefs. The lack of support and empathy from his surroundings, leave him an anxious and alienated person, as he drifts more and more apart from his friends and family. As Omar explained to the doctor he has now lost interest in everything, even his family and wife; whatever she is doing, saying, her very existence makes him feel sick, and ultimately indifferent. Traditionally the family has been seen as the core of Arab society, and society is the enlargement of the family unit. The family used to be the central socio-economic unit that held society together, providing education, welfare, employment, religious education and socialization, but the increasing role of the state in modernity, began to alter the hegemony of the family; however, it is still central to the social organization of Arab society, whether in an urban, rural or Bedouin context, and especially among the latter two it provides its members with support and grants security in periods of individual and societal stress.<sup>446</sup> As argued in the introduction and demonstrated throughout, in reference to the theories of Giddens

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<sup>444</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness, an Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, (London: Routledge 2000), p. 14.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>446</sup> Halim Barrakat, *The Arab World: society, culture, and state* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 97-98.

and Hall, these traditional values disappear when the forces of modernity set in. This is the case with Omar as, although he manages to keep up the father's traditional role as provider, he loses interest in his family and especially his wife Zeinab. Traditionally, "one's commitment to the family may involve considerable self-denial. Parents, and particularly the mother, deny themselves for the sake of their children. The source of the mother's happiness is the happiness and prosperity of her children. Ideally, both children and parents are totally committed to the family itself."<sup>447</sup> Another change in family structure brought about by modernity is the creation of the nuclear family.<sup>448</sup> However, none of this seems to bother Omar and he appears increasingly as an alienated stranger, displaying no commitment to his family, friends or work. At this point Omar suffers from internal mediation, and as Girard points out, the hero then "contaminates everyone and everything with which he has contact."<sup>449</sup> Omar several times has this feeling towards everyone and everything around him, especially towards Zeinab:

Zeinab's speech is too sober, though why sober speech should annoy me these days I don't know.<sup>450</sup>

Her eyes slay me.<sup>451</sup>

Although he felt lighter and more energetic, a nagging exasperation remained— the flies, his work and his wife.<sup>452</sup>

I'm disgusted with myself, or rather because I'm disgusted with myself, all else sickens me.<sup>453</sup>

I can't bear her now. My house is no longer the happy abode.<sup>454</sup>

My work, Zeinab, and myself are really all one thing, and this is what I want to escape from.<sup>455</sup>

Such contamination seldom comes alone, and the more alienated he feels in his quest for meaning, that is nothingness, the less able he is to find any healthy remedy for his illness. This leads to an increasing condemnation of himself, and Omar's augmented subjectivity is charged with self-hatred as he cannot find the answers he is looking for and his pride is hurt. When Omar sets out to discover a cure, his vanity prevents him from grasping the

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<sup>447</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid, p. 106. Omar's wife cut herself off from her family and converted to Islam when she married Omar and changed her name to Zeinab after the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed. See Mahfouz, *The Beggar* p. 43.

<sup>449</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 56

<sup>450</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 23.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

essence of his own demands. Girard explains that these demands “cannot originate in the self. An exigency arising from the self and bearing on the self must be capable of being satisfied by the self. The subject must have placed his faith in a false promise from the outside.”<sup>456</sup> For Omar and all our heroes this promise is fundamentally a promise of metaphysical autonomy. Nietzsche and Lukács agrees that in the novel *God is dead* and so does Girard:

God is dead, man must take his place. Pride has always been a temptation but in modern times it has become irresistible because it is organized and amplified in an unheard-of way. The modern “glad tidings” are heard by everyone. The more deeply it is engraved in our hearts the more violent is the contrast between this marvelous promise and the brutal disappointment inflicted by experience.<sup>457</sup>

The major disappointment for Omar is his discovery that the promise of God’s existence is false, but that he feels unable himself to externalize his experience and make himself heard; he finds no help what so ever in his family, friends and society. This is the reason for his desire to imitate God and search for nothingness, as if by becoming God he will be able to preach this new creed to Arab society. Mahfouz resorts to allegory and irony in *The beggar* as he is begging for the rational truth, in order to understand his own solitude and alienation from a changed society; he wants to understand the implications of modernity and Omar’s reciting of Sufi poetry is in this sense ironic.<sup>458</sup>

When Omar decides to search for a remedy for his illness, he elicits little empathy from his intimate and most trusted friends; nobody can appreciate or support his journey into nothingness, as he exiles himself from society, and cannot find any relief amongst his friends and family. As Andrea B. Rugh, suggests: “one implication of belief in the value of corporate good is an inability in certain contexts for people to develop an individual sense of identity...Egyptians tend to see themselves in relation to others, as members of groups, or in the context of their structural roles. They rarely think of themselves as individuals with unique potentials to develop or unique needs to satisfy.”<sup>459</sup> Omar gives his family a second chance when Zeinab gives birth to their son Samir, but to

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<sup>456</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>458</sup> Hafez, “Begging for the Truth” (istijda’ al-haqiqa) in *al-majallah* April-May 1966, pp. 51-63. (April), pp. 78-98, (May).

<sup>459</sup> Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (New York: Syracuse University Press 1984), pp 34-35.



no avail. His disappointment with her still being faithful to her traditional values, turns in the end to indifference, and Zeinab must be understood as the personification of the regressive forces in society that obstruct him in his pursuit of meaning by creating the boundaries that he has to surpass. Omar explains:

Her serious green eyes still had their charm, but they were now the eyes of a stranger. She was the wife of another man, the man of yesterday who hadn't known listlessness or fatigue, who had forgotten himself. How was she related to this man, the invalid without an illness, who avoided starches and liquor and who scrutinized the humid air for warnings and undefined peril.<sup>460</sup>

I don't love her anymore. After long years of love, shared life, and loyal memories, not a grain of love remains. Pray that it's just a symptom of the disease which will disappear with recovery, but now I don't love her. This is the most bitter disillusionment. You hear her snoring and feel no sympathy or tenderness. You look at her and wonder what brought you together, who imposed this damned parody.<sup>461</sup>

He returned home, unchanged, feeling neither love nor hatred for Zeinab. But the disappearance of hatred signified the disappearance of Zeinab herself, the victory of his advancing exile over her world.<sup>462</sup>

Neither to his friends Mustapha or Othman does Omar have significance as an individual, and they both long to bring back the old Omar, Omar the poet, or Omar the revolutionary. This is essentially because they themselves have become parodies of what they used to be, a fact that does not disturb them. Mustapha describes himself as a "vendor of melon seeds and popcorn"<sup>463</sup> and he has long ago deserted his critical writing and become a selfish, pragmatic and opportunistic parasite, with no interest at all in society; he is the symbol of the illness of the decadent bourgeoisie from which Omar suffers and tries to cure himself. Othman on the other hand is just a parody and an abstraction of the socialist revolution<sup>464</sup> - a man who supports any revolutions no matter what it is for. Othman is the disruptive force that rips Omar out of his Sufi refuge, and signifies the end of Omar's pursuit of meaning, but neither one of them seems to appreciate Omar as the unique individual he is. Part of the explanation rests with traditions in Egyptian society: "Only by some kind of exchange, material or verbal, is the Egyptian able to place himself in contact with others and assess what is the critical aspect for him—the content of his social

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<sup>460</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 38.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>464</sup> Hafez, "Begging for the Truth"

relationship with others. As an individual he is insignificant; as a social being he has significance.”<sup>465</sup>

### **Ontological sickness! Poetry, sex and Sufism as means to an end**

Omar’s ontological sickness grows ever more acute and an attempt at reconciliation with his family is a failure. Omar is confronted by a wall of silence from his friends and family, which only aggravates his malady. Omar seeks to reach the point of ecstasy that make him feel alive and healthy again. He wants to rid himself of the philosophical barriers he faces and to penetrate through to the source of his ontological sickness, and thus to initiate something new. His journey into poetry, sex and Sufism ends in nothing but a confirmation of his abortive ideological quest, but is essential in his process of individuation, a process that happens over three stages.

In his youth Omar was experimenting with poetry, but he turned his back on it after the revolution in order to study and practice law. He is both surprised and shocked when Zeinab tells him that their daughter Buthayna has confessed she is writing poetry after Zeinab told her about Omar’s poetic past:

He frowned and asked, “didn’t you tell her how I ended up?”  
 “But it is lovely for a girl her age to write poetry.”  
 “It is.”  
 “You must read her poetry and give her some advice.”  
 “If my advice had any value it would have benefited me!”<sup>466</sup>

Later Omar confronts Buthayna with her poetic desires, and wonders why she chose poetry, when she is doing so well in science, and her answer recalls in his own youth, as she answers:

“I was more strongly affected I think.”  
 “Have you read any other poetry?”  
 “I’ve read some collections.”  
 “Collections?”  
 She laughed. “I borrowed them from your library.”  
 “Really?”  
 “And I know you’re a poet, too.”  
 The remark pained him but he dissimulated gaiety.  
 “No, no, I’m not a poet. It was a childhood pastime.”  
 “You certainly were a poet. Anyway, I was strongly tempted by poetry.”<sup>467</sup>

<sup>465</sup> Rugh, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>466</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 29.

This conversation provokes an internal monologue as Omar remembers the good old days, when he believed and trusted the universal truth and power of poetry, even after the power struggle for literary legitimacy with Mustapha:

You suggested the theatre, my friend, but I'm a poet. I find myself caught in a whirlpool from which there's no escape except through poetry, for poetry is the very aim of my existence. Without it, what would we do with the love that surrounds us like air, the secret feelings which burn us like fire, the universe which oppresses us without mercy? Don't be supercilious about poetry, my friend.<sup>468</sup>

Omar is happy with her desire for "searching for the tunes in the air"<sup>469</sup> but he can not restrain himself, and warns her that poetry is fine as long as it does not spoil life, interrupt her studies and jeopardise her future. Buthayna brings him her silver-coloured notebook with her poems, and love and anxiety stirs up in him, but anguish fills him immediately as he begins reading. Omar is reminded of the ideological failure of the past and the way their disappointments have made him the alienated outsider he is today: "The year of 1935 intervened tauntingly, that year of agony, secret schemes, wild hopes and dreams of utopia."<sup>470</sup> Buthayna is actually nothing more than an incarnation of the illusions of Zeinab, and her young naïve dreams of the power of poetry painfully increase his ontological illness, and remind him of the power battles with Mustapha: "Perhaps it is the final purpose of all things,"<sup>471</sup> is Buthayna's reply to Omar's question about the purpose of her writing and whom she is addressing in her poems. Sarcastically he answers "then you are enamored of the secret of existence."<sup>472</sup> Buthayna cannot understand why Omar stopped writing poetry. It is the lack of acknowledgement from the literary field, as Bourdieu has written about: Omar confesses, "no one listened to my songs,"<sup>473</sup> and the fact that Mustapha had his play accepted and staged made Omar's predicament worse: "The silence became more oppressive."<sup>474</sup> As a result of this power battle Omar retreats into his own shell and says to his daughter, "Why rescue the secret of existence from

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<sup>467</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

silence, only to be greeted by silence?”...“Don’t you want people to listen to your poems?””<sup>475</sup> Omar reaches the climax of his disillusionment with poetry, as the ecstasy he experiences on reading his daughter’s poems is fleeting:

I felt a strange yearning for the old books I’d deserted twenty years ago...Yes, a certain sensation crept into my sluggish brain and I began searching for lost tunes. I even asked myself whether it might be possible to start again. But it was just a fleeting sensation which soon disappeared...I went back to reading, and jotted down a few words, but it came to nothing.<sup>476</sup>

The elation Omar feels comes as some kind of shock, however, and does spark a renewed lust for life in him. Driven by this desire to satisfy his thirst for adrenaline he gradually opens his eyes to whatever might catch his interest, and produce heartbeat: “A pretty girl strutted in front of them and the glance he caught from her delighted his senses like the scent of jasmine.”<sup>477</sup> This is the first time Omar feels a small sense of ecstasy, and later when he experiences beauty again he feels the kind of sensation he is longing for. He explains to Mustapha:

“One evening when I was at the cinema, I saw a beautiful face and felt the same sensation.”

“Is sensation what you’re after?”

“Sensation or intoxication—the creature within me revived all at once and I believed it to be my aim, rather than work, family, or wealth. This strange, mysterious intoxication appeared as the sole victory among a series of defeats. It alone can vanquish doubt, apathy, and bitterness.”<sup>478</sup>

From now on the road is leading him into the open and warm embrace of passionate prostitutes, as Omar enters the second stage - the purgatory of Dante’s *La Divina Commedia* - of his journey towards God. Sex is now his tool in what must be seen as a quest for unifying himself with nature, and returning to the ground zero he is looking for.<sup>479</sup> As Giddens point out:

The narrative of self-identity is inherently fragile. The task of forging a distinct identity may be able to deliver distinct psychological gains, but it is clearly also a burden. A self-identity has to be created and more or less continually recorded against the backdrop of shifting experiences of day-to-day life and the fragmenting tendencies of modern institutions. Moreover the sustaining of such a narrative directly affects, and in some degree helps construct, the body as well as the self.<sup>480</sup>

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>479</sup> Hafez, “Begging for the Truth”.

<sup>480</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 185-186.

Through his sexual conquest he frantically tries to grasp the moment of eternal creation,<sup>481</sup> and poetry loses all its meaning and potential as a remedy when he sees Margaret on stage at the New Paris. Margaret is surprised when Mustapha introduces Omar as a poet since she thinks he looks so sedate, and to this Omar responds, "That's why I gave it up so quickly,"<sup>482</sup> before Mustapha adds "So now he regards beauty as a treatment which will cure him of the strange illness he's been suffering from recently."<sup>483</sup> Beauty and the excitement of bodily control are evident in the case of Omar. As Peter Brooks describes:

In modern narrative literature, a protagonist often desires a body (most often another's, but sometimes his or her own) and that body comes to represent for the protagonist an apparent ultimate good, since it appears to hold within itself—as itself—the key to satisfaction, power and meaning. On the plane of reading, desire for knowledge of that body and its secrets becomes the desire to master the text's symbolic system, its key to knowledge, pleasure and the very creation of significance. Desire for the body may appear to promise access to the very *raison d'être* of the symbolic order. Thus narrative desire, as the subtending dynamic of stories and their telling, becomes oriented towards knowledge and possession of the body.<sup>484</sup>

In this sense Omar's first trip to the New Paris is a reaction to boredom and sadism, and a naïve belief that through sex and possession of the female body he will find the key to his pursuit of meaning and become closer to God; to be exact he will reach his desired stage of nothingness. Girard demonstrates that:

The "physical" and "metaphysical" in desire always fluctuate at the expense of each other. This law has myriad aspects. It explains for example the progressive disappearance of sexual pleasure in the most advanced stages of ontological sickness. The mediator's "virtue" acts on the senses like a poison which constantly spreads and slowly paralyses the hero.<sup>485</sup>

In the case of Omar this is evident as in the beginning he is happy and content just to venture into different night clubs, and maintain his illusion that sex with prostitutes will help him reach heaven. In his ecstasy he engages in a more serious relationship with Warda, not because he loves her, but in order to love, and to still have faith in his mission. Omar buys a new flat for Warda and himself when it becomes clear that it is a

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<sup>481</sup> Hafez, "Begging for the Truth"

<sup>482</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 54.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>484</sup> Peter Brooks, *Body Work, Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>485</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 87.

permanent affair, and reflects that happiness is enough to cure him, at least he believes so. Throughout the novel Omar is desperate to construct himself as a being that has meaning and he seeks comfort in a permanent relationship with Warda. This relationship has its challenges, since as Giddens points out:

The pure relationship is a key environment for building the reflexive project of the self, since it both allows for and demands organised and continuous self-understanding – the means to securing a durable tie to the other...many actual relationships exist and endure where little symmetry is found, and where each person is held in thrall by traits in the other which on the surface repel them...[thus] the authentic person is one who knows herself and is able to reveal that knowledge to the other, discursively and in the behavioural sphere...the pure relationship contains internal tensions and even contradictions. By definition, it is a social relation which can be terminated at will, and *is only sustained in so far as it generates sufficient psychic returns for the individual.*<sup>486</sup>

In relationships where there is little equilibrium a struggle for legitimacy might ensue and result in sadism. Sadism is not the case of Omar and Warda's relationship in the beginning, but the more intense Omar's ontological illness becomes, the more he realises that sex is not the right means to reach his goal of nothingness, and the relationship becomes doomed. However, Omar never gets rid of the ever present question of the existence of God, and how his surroundings relate to, believe and find comfort in His existence. In a conversation with the owner of the Capri Club, where he first met Warda, he reveals his real intention:

"So you live knowing your fate rests with God?"

"That's undeniable of course."

He smiled. "Do you believe in God?"

The man replied in astonishment, "Naturally. What an odd question."

"Then tell me what He is."

He laughed openly, for the strange question had removed all ceremony. "Will your infatuation for Warda last long?"

"Of Course."

"Couldn't it...?"

He interrupted. "*If you tell me what God is, I promise I'll let you have her immediately!*"<sup>487</sup>

Still Omar insists on pursuing his sexual journey and leaves home to live permanently with Warda, excusing himself of ridding himself of death.<sup>488</sup> He is hiding behind the mask of the proud hero: "The disappointment is irrefutable proof of the absurdity of triangular desire. It would seem that the hero must now submit to the evidence. No

<sup>486</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 186-187. Italics mine.

<sup>487</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, pp. 78-79. Italics mine.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

person or object now separates him from the abject and humiliated Self which desire had somehow hidden from him with the mask of the future."<sup>489</sup> The romance with Warda comes to an end when he suddenly meets Margaret again, a classical example of the triangle of desire, and this time on the more primitive level Margaret is the mediator. Girard has demonstrated the law of metaphysical desire, and the disappointment that follows. According to him the disappointment is entirely metaphysical when "the subject discovers that possession of the object has not changed his being—the expected metamorphosis has not taken place. The greater the apparent "virtue" of the object the more terrible is the disappointment, thus disappointment deepens as the mediator draws closer to the hero."<sup>490</sup> Furthermore, on a more ontological level this has even greater significance. In this case the mediator is God, in other words, the state of nothingness Omar is searching for, and as he gradually realises that he is not able to reach any closer to the point of creation, through his sexual adventure with Warda, or any other prostitute, and as the result of this his illness worsens, and he soon abandons sex for mysticism. Omar now falls into a state of indifference, but Margaret again affords him a small thrill, however short-lived, and he asks himself when racing with Margaret out to the pyramids:

Could Warda be uprooted so easily from his soul, as if only an artificial flower?<sup>491</sup> Why are we reminded of death so insistently, whatever we do? Who can affirm that these drunken souls really exist?...How wonderful her touch was, yet in itself it meant nothing. To touch life's secrets is all that matters....He sighed with the fullness of pleasure, he sighed with relaxation, but then, dear God, he sighed with weariness and distress. He looked into the black night and wondered where ecstasy was.<sup>492</sup>

Omar desperately tries to keep his ontological illness in check by pursuing more and more women, and as Warda leaves him he blames his recurring illness for ruining their relationship. Finally Omar realises that sex is not taking him any closer to nothingness, or the moment of creation, and he gets ready to enter his last stage on his way to God.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>491</sup> In Arabic the name Warda means flower. For a detailed study on the meaning of names in the works of Mahfouz see Milson, op. cit., part four and five, pp. 159-279.

<sup>492</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 92.

<sup>493</sup> Søren Aabye Kierkegaard also argued that there are 3 stages in life. In his first major work, *Either/Or* (1843) Kierkegaard described two stages of existence for the individual. The first stage, the aesthetic way of life, is a refined hedonism, consisting of a search for pleasure and a cultivation of mood, we are concerned with ourselves and our own lives on a surface level, and care little for the consequences our actions have for others. The aesthetic individual constantly seeks variety and novelty in an effort to stave

“The ecstasy of love fades and the frenzy of sex is too ephemeral to have any effect. What can we do when we find no food to satisfy our hunger? You’ll be swept into the tornado and annihilated. There is no way to bring back stability after it has died...If his heart didn’t stir, it would die. Poetry, wine, love—none of them could call forth the elusive ecstasy...he felt that the end was coming—the answer to his search—insanity or death.”<sup>494</sup>

Omar now prepares for his mental suicide, through Sufism, to rise above all his desires, but at his last encounter with Warda he can not refrain from asking her about God:

He sighed, then continued feverishly. “And God, what do you think of him?”

She looked at him distrustfully, but he entreated,

“Please answer me, Warda.”

“I believe in Him.”

“With certainty?”

“Of course.”

“How does such certainty arise?”

“It exists, that’s all.”

“Do you think about Him often?”

Her laugh was a bit forced. “When in need or adversity.”

“And other than that?”

She said sharply, “You love to torture others, don’t you?”<sup>495</sup>

The sadistic way Omar treats Warda and his other prostitutes in the end, reveals the impact of God as the mediator. The more Omar becomes aware of his failure to reach his desired state of nothingness, in the Sartrean sense, the more the tormentor in Omar takes control and as the sadist he himself adopts the role of the mediator: “The sadist wants to

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off boredom but eventually must confront boredom and despair. Omar is such a person as he frequents various clubs, dates several prostitutes, enjoy drinking and merrymaking, and has lost interest in his job, friends and family. The second stage, the ethical way of life, involves an intense, passionate commitment to duty, to unconditional social and religious obligations. At some point in life many realize that if we care nothing for others, they will come to care nothing for us. This realization sometimes hits people late in life, with the force of a revelation, and so they are led to try to treat others with love and respect. Omar at a certain point tries to pull himself together, and resume work and family life and put straight his relationship to his daughter Buthayna. He even abandons his new flat where he lived with Warda and moves back home to live a respected life, but to no avail. This leads to the third and last stage, explicitly expressed in *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), where Kierkegaard discerned in this submission to duty a loss of individual responsibility, and he proposed a third stage, the religious, in which one submits to the will of God but in doing so one finds authentic freedom. To avoid ultimate despair and overcome his hopelessness the individual must make a similar “leap of faith” into a religious life, in which we choose to believe in our salvation even though we know it is hopeless. We meet despair and overcome it, not by reason or belief, but by faith. The religious life is inherently paradoxical, mysterious, and full of risk. One is called to it by the feeling of dread, which is ultimately a fear of nothingness. Omar’s escape into Sufism describes this part of his life, and he deserts everyone to live in solitude desperately seeking to reach some kind of higher knowledge which he again can use in creating the foundation he needs in his pursuit of meaning in his life.

<sup>494</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.



persuade himself that he has already attained his goal; he tries to take the place of the mediator and see the world through his eyes, in the hope that the play will gradually turn into reality. The sadist's violence is yet another effort to attain divinity."<sup>496</sup> Omar's desire to question everyone around him and their relation to God is due to what started him off on his metaphysical quest for meaning, the words of his client: "Don't we live our lives knowing that our faith rests with God?" Since Omar cannot at the present stage in his life answer this question, he seeks to imitate God and searches for a ground zero where he can grasp the eternal truth. The more Omar has to go through, and the more he is confronted with the existence of God. Yet without being able to comprehend his own existence he feels that God is tormenting him, and this is also the reason for his own sadistic behaviour. Omar's predicament seems natural, because "in order to desire to persecute we must believe that the being who persecutes us thereby attains a sphere of existence infinitely superior to our own."<sup>497</sup> In this sense Omar imitates God and God's behaviour because he wants to be God in order to reach his desired stage of nothingness.

The question of freedom is crucial to understanding Omar's last transformation, and his pursuit of sex and prostitutes for the sake of mysticism. Freedom in this context does not mean to be able to obtain everything one desires, but rather ones' ability to make one own choices. By engaging in all these physical relationships Omar never gained anything more than an understanding of his own being. This is unfortunately because "it is not the permanence of being on which middle-class consciousness prides itself, it is a permanence of nothingness. Desire never actually acquires its true object: it leads to failure, oblivion, and death."<sup>498</sup> What constitutes the essence of Omar's process of individuation is exactly his struggle to separate his present from his past. Sartre outlines the core of Nothingness:

Every psychic process of nihilation implies then a cleavage between the immediate psychic past and the present. This cleavage is precisely nothingness....The condition on which human reality can deny all or part of the world is that human reality carry nothingness within itself as the *nothing* which separates its present from all its past. But this is still not all, for the *nothing* envisaged would not yet have the sense of nothingness; a suspension of being which would remain unnamed, which would not be consciousness of suspending being would come from outside consciousness and by reintroducing opacity into the heart of this absolute lucidity,

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<sup>496</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

would have the effect of cutting it in two...Nothingness...is the ground of the negation because it conceals the negation within itself, because it is the negation as being.<sup>499</sup>

Omar's decision to abandon and renounce himself, his family and his friends is an expression of his desire and desperate search to return to the status quo, a ground zero, from where he can again create for himself the sound foundation for a meaningful life, and make a break with the past. His desire for an awakening is part of his search for an absolute, an authentic belief, hence his desire to imitate God. Othman's return to society marks Omar's departure from civilisation: "In his present psychological state, he was not ready for the meeting. A man re-enters this world from prison; another leaves this world for an unknown universe."<sup>500</sup> Othman is also the one that signifies the end of mysticism, the end of Omar's journey and search, as a stray bullet rips him out of his meditations. Othman was one of the three young revolutionaries who fought for a humane world and a world founded on revolution and science, but during a clash he was hit by a stray bullet, captured and imprisoned. What might seem ironic on the outset is that the revolutionary Othman is still kept in prison after the revolution has achieved its goal. But Othman is not just a socialist revolutionary, he loved the revolutionary ideal as an abstract imaginary set of ideas, and these ideas do not have anymore resonance with Omar:

He doesn't want to budge. How strange, it's as though you'd never been associated with him, as though you'd never wanted this meeting at all. You share nothing but a dead history, and he arouses in you only feelings of guilt, fear, and self-contempt. He hasn't yet discovered that philosophical works have replaced the socialist tracts in your library. Here he sits obstructing you like fate while you try to flee from your people and from the world.<sup>501</sup>

Yet, Omar<sup>502</sup> offers Othman a job at his office, as "what's important now is to start a new life, in compensation for the past." To which Othman replies, "I'm afraid I won't find anything that can really compensate for the past".<sup>503</sup> Othman cannot grasp that Omar has lost interest in politics since the revolution broke out, and even less that Omar really does not care about anything at all, at least not about the ills of society and that the sociological truisms about humanity have been replaced with philosophical meditations.

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<sup>499</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>500</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 110.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>502</sup> Omar suffers from a sense of guilt since Othman had to go to jail and he was free. In Egypt during the sixties all the active people on the left that escaped from prison suffered from a nagging feeling of having a "chap on the shoulder".

<sup>503</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 116.

Othman's attitude towards Omar's pursuit of meaning and illness demonstrates that he represents old-fashioned values and that the forces of modernity have not yet reached him. The following dialogue demonstrates that the general attitude in Egyptian society, of which Othman is a representative, is that as an individual you are insignificant, but as a social being you have significance:

Mustapha said. "he's searching for the meaning of his existence."

"When we are aware of our responsibility toward the masses, the search for the personal meaning becomes quite insignificant."

Omar asked with irritation, "Do you think the question will die when the dictatorship of the proletariat is established?"

"But it hasn't been established yet." He looked from one of them to the other. "Scientists search for the secret of life and death through knowledge, not through illness."<sup>504</sup>

Othman's lack of metaphysical understanding of his existence as an ontological being<sup>505</sup> only drives Omar further into his ontological illness, and he soon leaves them all for his esoteric Sufi escapism. In his last stage of ontological illness Omar suffers as any other hero, because when the illness becomes more serious "the hero's existence loses all stability. There is no longer even a semblance of permanence and homogeneity. Form now on the existential moment, the moment of heterogeneity and intermittence, becomes one with appearance."<sup>506</sup> This makes it easier to understand Omar's tormented thoughts:

There's no point in continuing to look upward, burning the heart out, listening to its cries of yearning reverberate hopelessly in heavens. The nagging rhymes, Margaret's golden hair, Warda's gray eyes, and the image of Zeinab leaving church. What are they but pale ghosts wandering in a hollow head? Mustapha laughs, tolling the dead hope, while Othman rages like a prophet of nihilism. I've spoken to the chairs, the walls, the stars and the darkness; I've argued with the void. I've flirted with something which doesn't yet exist, *until I finally found comfort in the prospect of my complete annihilation*. Everything has been demeaned, the very laws that rule the universe have been discredited, predicting even the sunrise is impossible. After this how can I peruse the case files or discuss the household budget?<sup>507</sup>

The trivialities of everyday life have driven Omar into this state of disillusionment and he now only finds comfort in his annihilation. This is also what in the end makes him decide to withdraw from society and delve into mysticism, in order to avoid going mad or

<sup>504</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>505</sup> In this context metaphysics points to the study of individual processes which have given birth to *this* world as a concrete and particular totality, dealing with the problem of why concrete existences are as they are. Ontology by contrast is the study of the structures of being of the existent taken as a totality. Ontology describes Being itself, the conditions by which "there is" a world, human reality, etc. See Sartre *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 632-633.

<sup>506</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 244-245.

<sup>507</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 125. Italics mine.

committing suicide. Omar gives Zeinab power of attorney over his property, and leaves his associates in charge of the office. He can now leave the society he regards as a prison, and liberate himself, although such liberation and symbolic death cure himself from the ontological illness that prevented him from integrating into his surroundings, it leaves him isolated and exiled as a stranger. The combination of lack of belief in, and the lack of trust from, family, friends and society force Omar to question his identity and meaning as in individual being. Such questioning is a result of the disembedding mechanisms of the beast of modernity. Thus it is in the reflexivity of modernity, as applied to the self, that the threat of personal meaninglessness can derive. Giddens argues that “the forging of trust here is the very condition of acknowledging the clear identity of objects and persons. If basic trust has not developed or its inherent ambivalence not contained, the outcome is existential anxiety. In the most profound sense, the antithesis of trust is thus a state of mind which could best be summed up as existential *angst* or *dread*.”<sup>508</sup> Omar’s metaphysical questions and search for an absolute authentic belief or truth from the beginning of *The Beggar* is in essence a begging to create a status quo, a ground zero, from where he again can create for himself the sound foundation for a meaningful life, since God is dead.<sup>509</sup> The firm belief of his client, and of the owner of the Capri Club, Mustapha, Zeinab and everyone else around him that God exists, even while they all confess their faith in rationality and science,<sup>510</sup> contributes to his ontological illness. Omar believes that by attempting to grasp what God is and by understanding the essence of his being, he will be able to cure himself of his illness and reach his goal of an individuated self and a new starting point.

What follows is Omar’s departure from society as he enters the last stage of his illness that will eventually liberate him, so he can enjoy and long for “the day when memory will lose its tyranny and you’ll merge into nothingness. Then the chants of India and Persia will no longer echo and the rosy beams of ecstasy will fall directly upon you. That precious, hard-won ecstasy of dawn will draw you with all the force out of the unknown

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<sup>508</sup> Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 100.

<sup>509</sup> *The Beggar* is Mahfouz’s strongest renunciation of God so far in his literary career even though he has dismissed his existence other places He has always managed to hang in there some place, until now.

<sup>510</sup> This might be because they believe that since God is almighty he also created rationality and science, and thus they see no contradiction.

into heavens dome, where your heart will awake while the bodily senses sleep.”<sup>511</sup> His daughter Buthayna wonder why he has to go and if he is not afraid of the loneliness in this empty place, but he tells her that he leaves for the sake of nothingness, and that in the midst of the crowds he was oppressed by loneliness.<sup>512</sup> For a period of about a year and a half Omar is left alone, grappling with his nightmarish phantoms in a hope to cure himself, but most of the time he opens his eyes to the dark and repeatedly experiences the disillusionment, of not having been able to liberate himself and reach nothingness. Omar several times remarks, “this dream could only mean that I’ve not yet escaped the call of life. However often I think of you during my walking hours, these weird fantasies mock my sleep.”<sup>513</sup> “In Sufism, everything external (*zahir*) has an internal aspect (*batin*) and everything internal, in turn, contains an inner core which is its real essence (*haqiqa*). For the Sufi, things are therefore not what they appear to be; hence, ambiguous phrases and oxymorons are the very staple of Sufi diction.”<sup>514</sup> This explains why Omar witness several absurdly violent and bloody battles in his dreams, often between science-fiction like monsters, and once he sees Zeinab, Buthayna, Samir, Jamila, Othman, Mustapha and Warda in his dreams too. At first it seems like a pleasant and happy reunion, but suddenly their faces and bodies starts to mutate, and one of these hybrids, of Samir and Othman, starts chasing him until he is forced to surrender, only to realise it was a dream, and the theatre of the absurd. Omar seems to be lost in his religious trance and unable to liberate himself from the mediating God and His firm power. Ironically it was Othman’s release from prison that gave Omar the last push onto the path of mysticism, and it is his return to jail that again brings Omar back to life. Haunted by reality and his outdated socialist-revolutionary beliefs Othman is again in trouble, and is wanted by the police. He escapes to Omar’s secret place where Omar goes into a trance. It is not Othman’s visit, nor the news that Othman and Buthayna are now in love and expecting a child, that make Omar return from his trance, but Othman’s stray bullet, like twenty years ago. This time it hits Omar in the collarbone, and Omar suddenly feels “real pain rather than a dream

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<sup>511</sup> Mahfouz, *The Beggar*, p. 132.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid., pp. 133, 134, 135, 137.

<sup>514</sup> Milson, op. cit., p. 270.

confounded by the devil”<sup>515</sup> Luckily for Omar it is now and not twenty years ago that he is hit, because if it had been the reverse he would have become a regressive character like Othman rather than the modern *Homo Individucas* he is about to become. Suddenly he become conscious about where he is:

I sighed wearily and opened my eyes. This dream could only mean that I've not yet escaped. Why is it I think of you whenever I'm awake, yet these delusions mock my sleep? But wait. Where am I? Where are the stars, the grass, and the cypress trees? I'm riding in a car, lying on a stretcher, on the edge of which a man is perched. On the other side of the car, Othman sits in silence between two men. I must still be dreaming, but the pain in my shoulder causes me to moan.<sup>516</sup>

Omar continues to jabber incoherently to the people around him until he talks to himself in a low voice before closing his eyes: “When would he see the vision? Hadn't he deserted the world for its sake?”<sup>517</sup> These are the last thoughts Omar had before returning to the world again, and he could once more feel his heart beating as he tried to remember a line of poetry that reverberated in his now conscious mind. Seen in light of Omar's sudden bodily experience of pain one might conclude that he has now returned to this world again, and as Brooks suggests “if the sociocultural body clearly is a construct, an ideological product, nonetheless we tend to think of the physical body as precultural and prelinguistic: sensations of pleasure and especially of pain, for instance, are generally held to be experiences outside language; and the body's end, in death, is not simply a discursive construct. Mortality may be that against which all discourse defines itself, as protest or as attempted recovery and preservation of the human spirit.”<sup>518</sup> Omar's injury is what wake him up from his spiritual trance, cures him from his ontological illness, help him return to society, fulfil his desire of becoming God and reach a stage of nothingness. Throughout *The Beggar* Omar has shown pride and an increasing disrespect towards family and friends who have not shared his desire for a pursuit of meaning, or were incapable of understanding his quest. Such pride, Omar has demonstrated, desires in the end nothing else than its own nothingness, unlike the vain hero who desires for the other and through the other. Therefore, according to Girard, the proud man:

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<sup>515</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>518</sup> Brooks, op. cit., p. 7.

Is no longer looking for escape from his nothingness in desire; rather after a radical mental *askesis* he makes that nothingness the very object of his adoration. His aim is still divine autonomy but the direction of his effort is reversed. To found the whole of existence on that nothingness which one carries inside himself is to transform impotence into omnipotence, to inflate the inner desert island of Robinson Crusoe to the dimensions of infinity.<sup>519</sup>

This is exactly what Omar al-Hamzawi has been struggling to achieve through escapism into poetry, sex or Sufism, but to no avail. It is by choosing to wake up to the real world he manages to break free and liberate himself from the ills of his society, gaining his freedom and individualism as a human being. Poetry, sex and Sufism represent three phases of sterility and barrenness<sup>520</sup> and are useless to cure Omar's ontological illness. Consequently the essence of each and every individual exists not in external forces, but in coming to terms and understanding one's own being. Mahfouz's treatment of death also underlines such aspirations. *The Beggar* signifies a paradigmatic change from death as a social necessity to death as a metaphysical necessity,<sup>521</sup> and it is crucial to understand and be aware of the complications of such change, because it justifies the reason for locating Omar's process of individuation in the imitation of the divine God and his desire for nothingness. That is, to cure himself of his ontological illness Omar has to die a metaphysical death if he is to materialize as a new Omar, which he did not reach through poetry, sex or Sufism. He has reached the final gate into Heaven, and as Dante's hero he is only allowed entry alone, and when he chooses to enter, in other words, end his Sufi escapism and return to the real world, he reaches the aim of his search, and can continue his process of individuation, the denial of the Omar of the past, and by such changes prepared the new Omar for the future, since he has transformed his metaphysical state of mind as a being.

## RESPECTED SIR

Mahfouz completed the symbolic and allegorical phase of his literary career with the publication of *Miramar* in 1967, and fell into another literary silence<sup>522</sup> that lasted until

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<sup>519</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>520</sup> Hafez, "Begging for the Truth".

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> This literary silence meant not publishing any novels for five years, however Mahfouz after *Miramar* published several short stories and plays. These works are *Khammarat al-Qitt al-Aswad (The Black Cat Tavern)* 1969, *Taht al-Mazalla (Under the Bus Shelter)* 1969, *Hikaya bila Bidaya wala Nihaya (A Tale*

1972 when he published *Al-Maraya (Mirrors)*. A common feature of his work in the seventies is the use of surrealism, the absurd character or the un-actable dry abstract playlet packed with direct social and political commentary. Mahfouz's prime concern now was: "to get his views across to the reader at a time of crisis in as simple and straightforward way as possible."<sup>523</sup> *Respected Sir* published in 1975 followed *Hubb that al-Matar (Love in the Rain 1973)* and *Al-Karnak (Karnak 1974)*, and represents, from the outside, a significant stylistic and thematic change from *The Beggar* in the sense that the protagonist hero's struggle is now of a less metaphysical character. However a close reading of the novels, and the heroes' search for meaning in their lives, reveals that the differences are not so great; they both desire to become God, and in their effort to fulfil their desire they do not rule out any means. For Omar in *The Beggar*, the power battles took place primarily inside the hero, but in *Respected Sir*, Egyptian society is the battleground. It is in this sense that in addition to Bourdieu Hisham Sharabi's theory of neopatriarchy in Arab society is essential to the analysis of Othman Bayyumi and his pursuit of meaning. This is because the notion of neopatriarchy brings together not only the traditional idea of men's subjugation of women, but more crucially the hierarchical relations among social classes, and frames the individual in its relationships to family, work, state, neighbourhood, the public sphere, sex, and itself.

Arab patriarchy is "a specific psychosociological totality which is encountered in social and psychological structures. It is a system of values and social practices belonging to a determinate economy and culture."<sup>524</sup> Neopatriarchy as a phenomenon has derived its structure from an amalgamation of patriarchy and modernity. According to Sharabi:

Over the last hundred years the patriarchal structure of Arab society, far from being displaced or truly modernized, have only been strengthened and maintained in deformed, "modernized" forms. That is to say, the Arab Awakening or renaissance (*nahda*) of the nineteenth century not only failed to break down the inner relations and forms of patriarchalism but, by initiating

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*without Beginning or End*) 1971, *Shahr al-Asal (The Honeymoon)* 1971, and *Al-Jarima (The Crime)* 1973. Mahfouz explained this to me in an interview the 15 June 2005 to come as a result of the loss in the six-days war in 67. Mahfouz said that his short stories was a symbol of the internal dialogue that was going on in the Arab society, and that he through the novel would not be able to embrace this new sentiment among the population.

<sup>523</sup> Rasheed El-Enany, introduction to Naguib Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. xi.

<sup>524</sup> Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy, A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 17.



what it called the modern awakening, also provided the ground for producing a new, hybrid sort of society / culture—the neopatriarchal society / culture we see before us today.<sup>525</sup>

For the analysis of Mahfouz's work the notion of neopatriarchy is useful on two levels, firstly because the concept of neopatriarchy "refers equally to macrostructures (society, the state, the economy) and to microstructures (the family or the individual personality)."<sup>526</sup> Secondly because most of Mahfouz's characters and heroes are from the petit bourgeoisie, and it is this petit bourgeoisie which Sharabi defines as the class most characteristic of neopatriarchal society.<sup>527</sup> To reveal Othman Bayyumi's process of individuation and quest for meaning this analysis posits that one must take into account the two most essential aspects of his life; his strive for promotion, and the attempt to marry above his rank in order to enhance the probability of his promotion. They both signify the quintessential spirit of his desire, the battle for (symbolic) power. This struggle materialise on different levels, all of them though have to be seen through Girard's notion of triangular desire.

### **Battle for symbolic power**

*Respected Sir* mixes Mahfouz's role as writer and civil servant, and for his part there is a power battle on three levels: in society, in the text, and between society and the text; specifically, between Mahfouz and his work, and his position as a player in the Egyptian literary field and the battle for legitimacy, language and symbolic power. The level on which Othman is fighting for power, be it symbolic or not, is exactly like the one described by Bourdieu in the introduction. The battlefield here is the state and its institution and the high priest is the Director-General, the God Othman desperately yearns to become, so that he can exercise his powers. This is a classic example of imitated desire, and as Girard explains: "the passion that drives men to seize or gain more possessions is not materialistic; it is the triumph of the mediator, the God with the human face."<sup>528</sup> An illustration of this is Othman's assessment of his own job:

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>528</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 61.

He also told himself that 'government official' was still a vague concept inadequately understood. In the history of Egypt, an official occupation was a sacred occupation like religion, and the Egyptian official was the oldest in the history of civilisation. The ideal citizen of other nations might be a warrior, a politician, a merchant, a craftsman or a sailor, but in Egypt it was a government official. And the earliest moral instructions recorded in history were the exhortations of a retiring official to his son, a rising one. Even the Pharaohs themselves, he thought, were but officials appointed by the Gods of heaven to rule the Nile Valley by means of religious rituals and of administrative, economic and organizational regulations.<sup>529</sup>

Othman dreams of himself becoming the God, that is, Director-General, ruling, Pharaoh-like, his employees and they loyally obeying him, just as he himself goes down on bended knee before all his superiors. Although he is just one of many agents in the field, he is much more determined in his pursuit of power than his colleagues. His *habitus* and his determination to reach his goals are crucial to his success, and he will employ any means in his journey towards the Blue Room. As we shall see he exploits anyone and any opportunity to get a promotion, and sets up a strategic plan for work and living.

In *Respected Sir* Othman reduces his life to his job, and values success and quality of life in relation to whether or not he gets his promotion. Not only is the Director-General God, the Blue Room is Heaven. Othman faces many obstacles on his road, and most of them are as a result of his imitated desire to become Director-General, in other words the Blue Room and the Director-General are his mediators. In all his relations, be it with colleagues, girlfriends, or prostitutes he behaves in the way he thinks secure his entry into "heaven". Difficulties occur when he finds himself in positions that require decision-making that might delay or even halt his journey. In *Respected Sir* one finds neopatriarchal structures on both the macro and micro levels, and the state and the company is a mirror of the family and the Director-General is the father. Othman sets the scene from the first pages of the book to underline his ultimate goal, the blue room, and the position of Director-General, and the power that flows from such a position: "An electric shock went through him, setting off in his innermost heart an insane love for the gloriousness of life on the pinnacle of power. At this point the clarion-call of power urged him to kneel down and offer himself in sacrifice."<sup>530</sup> Othman is a resolute warrior as "he lived with his senses always on the alert and with heightened awareness, constantly

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<sup>529</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

seeking to provide himself with every possible weapon<sup>531</sup> in order to position himself within the field and enhance his chances of promotion; in other words, consecration by another player in the field, one possessing more symbolic power. Othman's devotion to his task is demonstrated by the eight point working schedule he creates for himself in order to achieve his ambition of inhabiting the Blue Room.

Programme for Work and Living

1. fulfilment of duties with care and honesty;
2. study of the Financial Bill as if it were a holy book;
3. studying for a university degree as an external student;
4. a special study of English and French, as well as Arabic;
5. acquisition of general knowledge, particularly of the kind beneficial to a civil servant;
6. demonstration by every proper means of piety and rectitude as well as diligence in work;
7. efforts to gain the confidence and friendship of seniors;
8. seizing useful opportunities without the sacrifice of self-respect. For instance: helping out someone in a position of influence, making useful friendships or a happy marriage conducive to progress.<sup>532</sup>

This list illustrates his obsession with the Blue Room. In Othman's first period at the incoming mail he works under Sa'fan Basyuni, and by acquitting himself of his duties he earns his superior's friendship and confidence, which he can exploit when he needs to. But when Basyuni happens not to be in position to promote him any more and needs some help and support from Othman he is indifferent to his predicament. On one occasion Othman has been invited to Basyuni's home, and Busayni suggests that Othman works and studies too much, that his ambitions are too high and that life demands much more of one than that. As contempt rises inside Othman he says to Basyuni, "you are very wise, Mr Basyuni."<sup>533</sup> However Othman shows his true face when Basyuni is pensioned off, and is suffering from a stomach disease. Othman only cares about the future vacancy that take him up to grade five; when the very ill Basyuni suddenly visits him in the office and asks him to help him with three pounds for treatment at the doctors, Othman excuses himself by saying he has no money and that he would rather steal than turn down his request. Later that week Basyuni dies, and Othman denies himself suffering, justified by his own pain, and belief in God. The death of a superior holds out the hope to Othman of career advancement, as does the promotion or retirement of a superior, and when Hamza

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

al-Suwayfi, the director of administration, falls ill it provokes mixed emotions in Othman: "It was also said that Mr al-Suwayfi might have to retire or at least give up his chief responsibilities. Othman listened to these surmises with interest and his heart pounded with secret delight. He deplored and resented this feeling, as usual; but it also roused his dreams and ambitions."<sup>534</sup> As al-Suwayfi retires Othman is upgraded but his satisfaction is only short lived, because he feels better qualified than those above him, but takes comfort from the fact that he believed that "the sorrows of this world exist to sharpen our determination, not to dull it,"<sup>535</sup> however only for a short period. Time in most of Mahfouz's work is according to Rasheed El-Enany:

Felt as one of a *force majeure*, acting invisibly behind the scenes, wreaking havoc everywhere and steadily leading characters to their perdition. The difference in *Respected Sir* is that time appears here as almost a physical force, of which the protagonist...is aware, and with which he is all the time contending. Here time is seen as the major external force with which the hero has to battle.<sup>536</sup>

Othman soon starts to realise this and the closer the mediator gets, the more intense the desire is felt: "he left the room satisfied in some degree, but his irritation soon got the upper hand and the joys of promotion were forgotten. He cursed everybody without exception and said to himself in terror that life went faster than any kind of promotion... What's the use of all these advantages when life flies by or a sudden illness descends?"<sup>537</sup> All the above examples demonstrate how his own ambition and *askesis* lead him into annihilation. Girard suggests that:

In the universe of internal mediation desire for omnipotence, like the desire for omniscience, contains within itself the germs of its own failure. Desire misses its object at the very moment when it seems to attain it, for by becoming visible it arouses rival desires that stand between the hero and his object. Each individual's activity is restrained by the Others and the more spectacular the activity the more effective the restraint. Now the master is drawn relentlessly, from desire through desire, towards the supreme spectacle of his own omnipotence. He always moves, therefore, towards his own destruction.<sup>538</sup>

Indeed Othman's desperate pursuit for power leads him to bring about his own destruction, in a masochistic fashion not, however, without letting his sadistic abilities be revealed. Girard argues that:

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>536</sup> El-Enany, *The Pursuit of Meaning*, p. 186.

<sup>537</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, pp. 106-07.

<sup>538</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 166-67.

sadism is the “dialectical” reverse of masochism. Tired of playing the part of the martyr, the desiring subject chooses to become the tormentor. The triangular conception of desire reveals the relationship of the two attitudes and their frequent alteration...Sadism reveals once again the immense prestige of the mediator. The face of the man now disappears behind the mask of the infernal God. Horrible as the madness of the sadist is, it has the same meaning as previous desires. And if the sadist resorts to desperate measures it is because the hour of despair has struck.<sup>539</sup>

### Sex and power

Sayyida his first love, long time girlfriend and expected wife to be, is the first victim of his loyalty to the Work Programme. Sayyida feels her womanhood stirring inside her and when Othman became a government employee she cannot see any reason to delay marriage and the starting of a family. However Othman has other plans like fulfilling point 3 in his Programme for Work and Living:

‘I will carry on with my education, Sayyida,’ he said quietly.

‘Do you need more education still?’

‘A university degree.’

‘What for?’

‘A useful asset for promotion.’

‘Will it take long?’

‘Four years at least.’

With concealed anguish, he noticed an expression of coldness in her eyes, perhaps also of shame with something of anger in it too.

‘And what do you need promotion for?...It seems promotion is more important than I imagined...’<sup>540</sup>

Later on when the topic of marriage again comes up, Sayyida says their relationship lacks something and he answers selfishly, “our perfect love lacks nothing.”<sup>541</sup> Throughout the novel Othman seeks comfort in the arms of prostitutes when he has some kind of difficult relationship to any person that might come in the way of his Programme. As a relief for the justification of his mad aims he takes comfort in excuses such as; he is sanctified by suffering and that work and worship are inseparable.<sup>542</sup> Such an attitude justifies point 6 and 8, as “he would often do his own work as well as that of others who fell behind with theirs, and people spoke of his helpfulness no less than of his ability. The tremendous

<sup>539</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>540</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 13.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

determination with which he advanced in his study promised brilliant success.”<sup>543</sup> And success he achieves, and after graduation as a law student he dares to advise the Director of Administration, Hamza al-Suwayfi, on the budget while al-Suwayfi is impressed by his qualities as a reader and translator. Othman is drunk with happiness at becoming the confidant of the Director, even more than with his promotion to grade seven. His pursuit of point 4 and 5 in his Programme is now finally going to pay off in success in point 7, as one day the Director, al-Suwayfi, complains about his son falling behind in foreign languages at school. This chance Othman could not resist so he insisted on giving the boy private lessons, and his tutorage results in the boy passing his examination: “The director tried to reward him but he recoiled as though from fire and said: “I shall not permit Your Honour that either...I owe so much to you for your kindness and encouragement.”<sup>544</sup> Such behaviour reveals two things: first, his determination to serve and please the other players in his field, who possess more symbolic power than himself, in order to be consecrated, and secondly, the language used underlines his position to and praise of the more powerful Director. The rejection of any reward from the director pained him as well as his disappointment of not encountering any suitable women for marriage at the director’s house, since marriage was something he thought might bring him closer to the Blue Room.

Miriam Cooke suggests that “*Respected Sir* exemplifies the problematic relations all Mahfouz’s men have with woman. To them, middle-and upper-class women represent their class and nothing more. They are prizes to be coveted because of the social prestige that association with them promises. Prostitutes are symbols of pleasure. Mahfouz’s men cannot imagine that a woman’s function masks an individual, and that once they have stripped away her function—by marriage, for example—the individual remains.”<sup>545</sup> In this case Othman’s rejection of marriage to Sayyida, because he views it as a possible obstacle to future promotions, is just the opposite side of the coin to the desire for marriage for the sake of promotion. The predicament he faces is therefore of an intricate nature, a catch 22, since if he marries a woman suitable for him and his desired

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>545</sup> Miriam Cooke “Men Constructed in the Mirror of Prostitution” in Beard and Haydar (eds.), op. cit., p. 115.

promotion when he is, for instance level five, she will also be the one thing, besides his humble background, that prevents him from further advancement, since he will then need a woman of a more noble sort. This predicament leads him to reject several suitable candidates and to deny his own emotions, which then leads him to be viewed as a stranger as he does not have any wife, family or children, a crucial asset in the Egyptian society for a man with his ambitions. At the core of neopatriarchal society one finds the traditional patriarchal family:<sup>546</sup> "Family as the most intense social group in Egyptian society with the strongest set of mutual obligations becomes the ideal by which other social groupings are measured. The idioms that are peculiar to its organization are used to reinforce other social, political or economic relations."<sup>547</sup> Throughout *Respected Sir* Othman several times visits the matchmaker Omm Husni, without luck, as he is not content with any of her suggestions. Traditionally:

Marriages are expected to strengthen families as corporate units (1) by expanding their effective modes of operation through the recruitment of non-kin to positions within the system of obligatory relations, as happens when "strangers" marry; (2) by reinforcing already existing ties through adding new layers of affective and obligatory expectation, as happens when relatives marry; and (3) by satisfying certain felt needs by selection of marriage partners who are thought capable of alleviating those needs."<sup>548</sup>

Omm Husni fails to find any suitable wife for him, first of all because she fails to grasp Othman's ambitions, and secondly because her network is limited to the alley. Thus Othman turns down all her potential candidates since none of them can help him to get further promotions, but single he becomes more and more alienated, especially after Saniyya is married off to another man: "He felt sorry for Omm Husni who knew so little about him despite their long familiarity. How could she grasp what it meant to be an auditor and translator at the budget department?"<sup>549</sup> Othman makes his intention of marriage clear when he invites Omm Husni home one day:

'I want a wife from a good family.'  
 'What about the daughter of Mr Hassuna, the owner of the bakery?'  
 'Forget about our area! A good family, I said'  
 'You mean...'  
 'Distinguished people...senior officials...people in power'<sup>550</sup>

<sup>546</sup> Sharabi, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>547</sup> Rugh, op. cit. p. 43.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>549</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 50.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

Othman continues to turn down various women, and at the same time to deny a strong part of himself to the extent of renouncing his own desires; in other words, he alternates between masochism and sadism, so as not to create any obstacles on his path to glory. His treatment of Asila, the headmistress, is particularly grotesque. First he rejects her and then when she comes begging, he takes advantage of her desperation and suggests that they should become lovers. In despair she finally gives in and arranges a small flat where they can meet, but he still does not do anything so she visits him at his flat, thinking she can convince him to marry her by giving him sex, but to no avail; he has sex with her, then rejects her and her humiliation is complete:

He felt a steady repulsion towards her which nearly turned into hatred.

'What do you think,' she asked.

'Nothing!'

'What do you mean? Don't torture me! Please.'

'I don't intend to do anything.'

'I thought you had agreed and promised,' she said in a trembling voice.

'I don't intend to do anything.'

'If you have no time now...'

'I have no time now, nor will I in the future.'

Asila breathed heavily and said with a break in her voice: 'I thought you felt differently.'

'There's no good in me,' he confessed, 'that is the fact of the matter.'

She shied away as if she had been stabbed. She put on her dress in a hurry, but she collapsed again on to the settee overcome by fatigue....She got up with some difficulty, made her way, subdued and crestfallen, to the door and disappeared from his view. He sighed deeply with relief.<sup>551</sup>

When Othman falls in love with Onsiyya, one of his young employees, he tells her that marriage is the most important thing in life, but he himself suffers from an illness that makes him unsuitable for her. As their relationship develops he falls desperately in love with her. Yet, however how strong his feelings for her become, he is still more in love with his dream of the Blue Room and of becoming Director-General. He puts on the mask of a con artist, deceiving her as he is not brave enough to reveal the truth. Girard points out that:

Defence mechanisms are obviously the result of mediation....The falsification of experience is not carried out consciously, as in a simple lie; rather the process begins in advance of any conscious experience at the point at which representations and feelings about value are first

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96.



elaborated. The "organic falsehood" functions every time someone wishes to *see* only that which serves his "interest" or some other disposition of his instinctive attention.<sup>552</sup>

Othman explains:

'Surely you must have asked yourself the question? Otherwise what is the meaning of life?'

She fixed her gaze on the ground as though, expecting only the worst, she no longer wanted to know more.

'I'm ill,' he went on.

'No!' she exclaimed in genuine fear.

'I'm not fit for marriage.'

'Don't let my appearance deceive you...My illness is not fatal, but it makes it impossible for me to marry.'

He looked down in distress. The sharp sigh he heard transfixed his heart. He was on the point of casting off the shackles of his ambition, throwing himself down and kissing her feet and begging her to accept him as husband. But another force held him back and paralysed him...He avoided her eyes. He had carried out his plan successfully to the end. But success was harsh, and he now found himself alone in the wilderness of desolation, alone with his anguish and shame, without faith, without solace. Madness was the only way out, he told himself. Madness alone had room for both belief and disbelief, glory and shame, love and deceit, truthfulness and lies. For how could sanity stand the absurdity of life? How could he look up at the stars when he was sunk up to the neck in slime? Through the long night he wept and wept.<sup>553</sup>

This abortive relationship with Onsiyya throws him into despair and together with his increasing disillusionment about his ability to get to the Blue Room, provokes in him a mad desire to get married, just in order to be fully accepted by society. He now decides not to procrastinate any longer so he targets a new girl in the office. Ihsan does not respond to his hints so he has to ask if she is married, and as she is engaged he asks if she could help him find a wife. When she answers that "all my friends and relatives are about my age. They wouldn't suit you, I'm afraid"<sup>554</sup> he burns with anger, and as has been the case with all our vain heroes; thwarted desire leads to hatred: "Madly he began to make advances to women in the streets and on buses but he had no experience in that sort of thing and had to give up. 'What a waste my life has been,' he would often sigh to himself."<sup>555</sup> So far, all of Othman's potential brides had to hold out the possibility of improving his chances of promotion; marriage had to promise him advantages not responsibilities, hence his fear of women that might actually need him. One way out of

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<sup>552</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>553</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>554</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

his predicament is to marry a prostitute, whose apparent passivity would confirm his masculine power.<sup>556</sup> Disillusioned, anxiety-ridden, lonely and desperate he asks his long time prostitute, the half negress Qadriyya, to become his wife:

It was enough that the best time of life for love and marriage was gone. How he yearned for a wife, for genuine affection, for an honest partnership, a warm house, children, a human relationship, a loving heart, a kind touch, conversation, a refuge from torment, a shield against death, a saviour from loss, a prayer-niche worthy of true faith, a resting-place secure from foolish dreams, a truce with frugality, and deprivation and loneliness...It was as though the desire for marriage had all the time smouldered inside him until it finally erupted like a volcano.<sup>557</sup>

In the case of Othman, his desire for power and the path he chooses renders him incapable of any stable relationships. The result is an increased diffidence towards society as he lacks what Giddens has called "basic trust", without which he experiences almost pathological anxiety and dread. Othman believes, however, that he will gain this trust by becoming Director-General. But as Giddens demonstrates: "the individuals sense of ontological security is achieved through a fantasy of dominance: Since omnipotence is a defence it is brittle, and often links psychologically to the other pole of the powerlessness/appropriation composition: in other words, under pressure it can dissolve into its contrary, engulfment."<sup>558</sup> Othman is, as the novel progresses, more and more desperate for promotion, power and real love, and the more he tries the less he achieves. After his failed marriage to Qadriyya that did not bring about any of the changes he desired, Othman once again embarks on a relationship with one of his much younger employees Radiya Abd al-Khaliq, whom he fears just as much as he likes.<sup>559</sup> Such despair illustrates, as Cooke argues, that "the relationships Mahfouz's men initiate with women are always explicitly grounded in asymmetric power. Woman's insubordination—any hint of autonomy—threatens these men's fragile identities and represents the final stage in their alienation."<sup>560</sup> The psychological circle has come full circle. Othman learns at the expense of his pride the essence of triangular desire is that "most of our ethical

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<sup>556</sup> Cooke, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>557</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 115.

<sup>558</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 194.

<sup>559</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 134.

<sup>560</sup> Cooke, op. cit., p. 107.

judgements are rooted in hatred of a mediator, a rival whom we copy.”<sup>561</sup> After marrying Radiya Othman changed style drastically, with a new grey suit made of English wool and shirt and tie as well as stylish shoes. He even starts worrying about his health and tries to start his life anew.<sup>562</sup> He decides to go on a pilgrimage, to be reborn, body and soul, and reconciles himself with the idea of never becoming Director-General. Then the unexpected happens; Abdullah Wajdi is appointed Under-Secretary of State for foreign affairs, and the true Othman is resurrected: “He closed his eyes and tried to master the beating of his heart. With the vacant post occupying the foreground, everything else in his life – his bride, his joys, his hopes – were consigned to oblivion. His suppressed ambition exploded and once again he worshipped in the sacred temple of advancement.”<sup>563</sup> Othman just waits for the promotion to take place, and wonders whether they will promote him directly or first appoint him acting Director-General and then give him substantive promotion. Growing impatient with waiting for the key to the Blue Room, he agrees to go to the al-Qanatir gardens, to relax within the beauties of nature, but “when he looked around all he saw was scenery that had never meant anything to him in the past; nor did it now. The fact was he was always absorbed in an inner world, a world of restricted thoughts and fancies conjured up by instinct, a world in which God and God’s earthly glory, and the conflict between good and evil, were predominating. These things apart, he saw nothing of life.”<sup>564</sup> His thoughts and emotions were all preoccupied with one idea: his becoming Director-General. It was more than just another job with new opportunities and challenges, as “a government position is a brick in the edifice of the state, and the state is an exhalation of the spirit of God, incarnate on earth.”<sup>565</sup> Hence Othman has no regrets or even doubts about sacrificing anything or anyone to be the God on earth and the occupier of the Blue Room. This is because the object, be it promotion or a high-class wife, is only a means by which to reach his mediator, the Director-General. All these moral compromises brings misery to himself and all those around him; however, they are also the main determinants for the shaping of

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<sup>561</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>562</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, 140.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

his identity. Othman, from the second he enters the Blue Room, dreams of absorbing and assimilating the being of the Director-General, because he imagines a synthesis of all the Director-General's strengths with his own intelligence, as the perfect combination. According to Girard: "he wants to become the other and still be himself."<sup>566</sup> The rhythm of the novel consists of work-promotion-rejection of women, and is broken twice at the end of the story. First when he marries Qadriyya, and secondly when he realises that Radiya is playing him at his own game. The latter experience is also the last nail in his coffin, in other words when he comes face to face with himself. When Othman is recovering from his first heart attack he eavesdrops on Radiya and her aunt. The aunt is saying,

'You've brought all on yourself. I warned you long ago.'

'What's the use now?'

'See what your greed and miscalculations have brought you!'<sup>567</sup>

This is the climax of the novel, which finds Othman abandoned, alone and dying and unable to assume the position, and execute the powers for which he had sacrificed everything and everyone, most of all himself. El-Enany points to the strict moral of Mahfouz's story, as he deprives Othman of his cherished dream: "The protagonist who has always wanted a wife who was a means to an end, but never found one, is used in the same manner by an equally Machiavellian woman. On the other hand, and as a consequence of this, the official position, at whose alter many a noble value had been made an offering, is never practically attained: poetic justice is done."<sup>568</sup> Mahfouz is equally harsh on Radiya for Othman falls ill before their marriage is made public and she is left empty-handed.

### **God and divine power**

So far we have firmly located Othman's behaviour within the theoretical framework and showed what socio-cultural forces influenced him and how they transformed his perception of reality, consciously or not, and demonstrated to what extent it shaped the process of individuation and the psychology of the individual. The main question that

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<sup>566</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>567</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 151.

<sup>568</sup> El-Enany, op. cit., p. 178.

arises now is why Othman is so desperate to reach the Blue Room and the post of Director-General? Once again Sharabi's theory of neopatriarchy is useful. Drawing on the work of Ali Zay'our, whose central thesis focuses on the "'lostness" of the individual in the father-dominated family, the neopatriarchally organised society, and the denial by both of the possibility of "self-fulfilment."'"<sup>569</sup> In this case the:

Family is relentless in its repression. [The child] is brought up to become an obedient youth, subservient to those above him—his father, older brother, clan chief, president....The father, the prototypical neopatriarchal figure, is the central agent of repression. His power and influence are "grounded in punishment."...the main concern is that the child be obedient, well-mannered, ignorant about sexual matters, "better" than his fellows....By being compared to others to underscore his failure he is driven to view himself negatively and to lose self-esteem (to the extent of self-punishment at times).<sup>570</sup>

Othman grew up very much alone, as both his parents and his two brothers and a sister had died. However, "The memory of his family was painful to him, and how he mourned for his parents! He linked these happenings with an exalted drama which he contemplated with respect and awe. For fortunes were determined in the alley through conflicting wills and unknown forces and then consecrated in eternity. By this token his belief in himself was boundless, though in the end he depended on the Almighty God."<sup>571</sup> This statement is significant because it highlights Mahfouz's use of irony, especially as, for Othman, the Director-General is God. Moreover, this perception is related to and "links repression in the family to the prevalence of "irrational and superstitious" attitudes in the mass of the population, which facilitates control by the status quo and makes people blindly opposed to social change."<sup>572</sup> As Hall and Giddens have demonstrated, Othman is a victim of modernity's disembedding mechanisms that de-centre the subject: "we can glimpse how the socialization process may affect not only the "education" of the individual, but how it may condition one's inner capacity for perception and one's experience of oneself and others."<sup>573</sup> Othman's sacred description of the position of Director-General stems from a belief that God is dead, a principle outlined by Lukács and a belief to which all the heroes in the novels we have analysed so far adhere. Such an argument might seem

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<sup>569</sup> Sharabi, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>571</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 9.

<sup>572</sup> Sharabi, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

contradictory, but as we shall see it is not if one bears in mind Othman's desire for power. El-Enany argues that: "the protagonist's professional ambition is presented in a vocabulary and imagery which evoke an exalted and arduous religious quest, as though the attainment of the position of director-general were a sacred mission ordained by divine will, and for whose sake no sacrifice was too dear."<sup>574</sup> The thirty-two years<sup>575</sup> time he believes it will take him to graduate from grade eight to the position of Director-General, is in fact a time line that inevitably turns back on himself at the time of having the right to, but not the God given strength to inhabit the Blue Room. His pursuit for the Blue Room is, as has been demonstrated, grounded in metaphysical desire, and what provokes Othman's metaphysical desire is the contempt and hatred of the self that underlies and determines all his actions. This means that as Othman believes himself to be, or at least aspires to be, God, he separates himself from all mortals, and creates a gulf between himself and the existing society where Others live; it becomes an inaccessible paradise to which he dreams of returning as soon as he has become Director-General, that is, God. It now becomes evident that his essential lack of fixed character and originality of his own, motivates his desire to transform his nothingness and become "something" through the position he occupies. Othman cannot equal the model he has chosen, but his vanity prevents him from admitting his failure, and he blinds his own judgement in order to deceive himself, and to further identify himself with the Director-General in the Blue Room, that is, God in Heaven. Othman's destiny is similar to Omar in *The Beggar* because "desire never actually acquires its true object: it leads to failure, oblivion, and death."<sup>576</sup>

### **Mahfouz in short**

Mahfouz's determination to transform the genre of the novel and its position in modern Arabic literature goes hand in hand with his own process of individuation. The question of identity and pursuit of meaning for Mahfouz changes over time from a metaphysical quest to a socio-psychological search. In *The Beggar* Omar suddenly finds no meaning in

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<sup>574</sup> El-Enany, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>575</sup> Mahfouz, *Respected Sir*, p. 6.

<sup>576</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 238.

the life he is living and embarks on a mission to find the answer to the existential questions that forces him to leave his friends and family. The search for a resolution leads him to engage in sex and try an unsuccessful return to poetry but to no avail. Yet his escape into mysticism satisfies his ontological sickness. In the period following the Second World War Egyptian society struggled with a cultural and socio-political transformation, and in the wake of independence these changes had a huge impact on the perception of the individual, his role in society, and relationship with other individuals.

This affected Mahfouz to such an extent that his work changed dramatically, and the protagonists have now lost their sense of belonging to a community. A society with a new socio-political pluralism has slowly undermined the position of the patriarchy, fragmented the self and left it alienated, and in conflict with itself and society. In Mahfouz's novels from the sixties two types of characters emerged. One, like Omar, was always questioning his existence, but never reaching a solution, whereas Othman in *Respected Sir* has all the answers, but is denied access to them. Girard's triangle of desire reveals in both instances how the protagonist pursues meaning either within his own metaphysical inner consciousness or in the socio-psychological relationship between the individual self and society.

Mahfouz's novels give insight into the Egyptian societies transformation from a traditional order into a society with more socio-political pluralism, and how patriarchal structures even then maintained their influence. Omar suddenly finds no meaning in his life as a lawyer. He sets out on a quest for meaning, that leads him into the arms of prostitutes, before returning to his family and rediscovering his early passion for poetry. However, nothing seem to satisfy his thirst for meaning. His last option is an escape into mysticism, and he leaves society and withdraws into a metaphysical askesis. Omar's need to question himself and everybody around him, to find the answer to his unhappiness is a dramatically new feature of Mahfouz's novels in the sixties, and is a proof of a new awareness of metaphysical questions, also in regards to Mahfouz's own self-consciousness. The three stages he has to go through before returning to society shape his identity and determine his process of individuation. He believes that escaping from reality and reaching a stage of nothingness is the answer to his quest, but when he is hit by a stray bullet he is brutally brought back to reality.

Othman in *Respected Sir* is Omar's opposite in that he has most of the answers to his questions, but is denied access to them. First of all because patriarchal structures and nepotism still delay his promotion, secondly because his background is not of a noble character for him to marry into the Blue Room. The transformation from Omar's metaphysical quest into Othman's socio-psychological search is crucial and must be related to important changes in Egyptian social and political life such as the loss in the six-day war, which had an impact on Mahfouz's style of writing, from realist to modernist narrative techniques. Othman's despair at not managing to be promoted fast enough lies in his desperate desire for power. His yearning for power makes him deny his true emotions for Sayyida, and prevents him from marrying anyone else, since he sees them as obstacles to further promotion. His desire for position and power makes him hard and cold and he shows no sorrow or understanding for people who are not in a position to help him, while working as a slave for those above him. Through his denial of his real self, he extinguishes his own identity, for that of the loyal servant empties him of his own concrete value, and shapes his identity as a lonely stranger. His dream of being associated to power suddenly ends in a nightmare, to such an extent that when he is finally promoted to Director General he falls ill and dies. The crucial element in Othman's process of individuation is located in power battles in which he engages in his socio-psychological search to gain promotion as fast as possible. Everything he does, thinks, and says is intended to please his seniors and must be related to the field of power and the triangle of desire. The ironic tone throughout the text might also be Mahfouz's bitter comment on how his own experience as a civil servant, from 1934-1971, shaped his own identity while he himself was pursuing a literary career.



## CHAPTER III

### Tayeb Salih

#### The Wedding of Zein

#### Season of Migration to the North

Above all else, the foundation of my work, for what it is worth, lies in what I am: a Sudanese Muslim Arab who was born at a certain time, in a certain place.

Tayeb Salih<sup>577</sup>

I wish to be acknowledged not as *black* but as *white*. Who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. Her love takes me onto the noble road that leads to total realization.

Franz Fanon<sup>578</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Mona Takieddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>578</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* translated into English, by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 63. English edition cited.

### Stranger in the promised land

Tayeb Salih was born in 1929 in the little village Karmakal close to the city of Debba, the administrative capital of the district of Marawi in the northern part of the Sudan. His village is considered to be the intellectual and cultural centre of the Sudan since it crosses the 'valley of the King' and hosts Arabs, Nubians, Bedouins, and other tribes.<sup>579</sup> Growing up at the crossroads of the Arab world and black Africa, and writing in exile from London distinguished him as a highly original author when he first emerged onto the field of modern Arabic literature in 1953. Hence "his fictional village Wad-Hamid in northern Sudan represents the complexities of such a location: situated between the fertile Nile valley and the desert, inhabited by peasants and nomads, and crisscrossed by blacks, whites and browns. Its religion, "popular Islam," is a mixture of orthodox Islamic, Sufi (mystical), and animist beliefs. The village is beset by tensions that have defined Arab modernity since the nineteenth century: between old and new, science and superstition, tradition and modernity."<sup>580</sup> In London, as an Arab-African outsider, Salih wrote about the colonial metropolis from a perspective that was entirely new to the existing field of Arab literature, perhaps because his social background differed from that of the Arab writers from the mashriq, who dominated the literary scene. Such habitus ensued his development and articulation. His is one of the most powerful representations in Arabic literature to date of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, just at the point when the contradictions inherent to the Arab discourse on modernity were revealing themselves.<sup>581</sup> Salih explains:

When I came to London I felt an inner chill. Having lived the life of the tribe and the extended family of uncles, aunts and grandparents, among people you know and who know you, in specious houses, under a clear star-studded sky, you come to London to live in an emotionless society, surrounded by the four walls of a small room. There was a small heater in that room and you had to lie under a heap of blankets to feel warm. Your neighbours don't know and don't care about you. It is quite possible that when you go out, only "Good morning" would be enough, and sometimes you even get no response to that. I had an overwhelming feeling that I had left good things behind....When I began writing, nostalgia for the homeland and for a world which I felt was fast disappearing dominated my work. Nevertheless, I tried not to be

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<sup>579</sup> Constance E. Gresham Berkley, *The Roots of Consciousness Molding the Art of El Tayeb Salih: A Contemporary Sudanese Writer*, (New York, New York University, PhD 1979), p. 27.

<sup>580</sup> Wail S Hassan, *Tayeb Salih, Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (New York, Syracuse University Press 2003), p. ix.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

carried away by that nostalgia so that what I wrote didn't turn into mere contemplation of abandoned campsites.<sup>582</sup>

Salih relates his presence in England, and the growing loneliness and alienation he experienced, to his becoming a writer:

Had I been in the Sudan, perhaps I wouldn't have been a writer, because the society's values were opposed to writing (creative) at that time. I would have experienced great psychological obstacles...The question of art and literature did not experience a sense of respect in the society of that time because it (the society) believed in influence. Perhaps I might have written, but not published...perhaps...or, perhaps I might have written articles.<sup>583</sup>

Influenced by the philosophy, culture, literature, and politics of the West, Salih uses literature and the reoccurring motif of the village, to compensate for never returning to his native Sudan. In fact Salih's loyalty to his Sudanese roots, his deep love for his country, village and culture, enables him to transgress that limited field of literary production and look beyond his immediate environment and display a genuine and humane respect for and understanding of other cultures. He retains both his own and the "Others" positive self-identity, necessary for creating a credible literary contribution to human society. As an individual Salih manages to retain his individuality and avoids becoming the characters he portrays, what Frantz Fanon suggests that:

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.<sup>584</sup>

Salih was indeed influenced by England and its educational system and society, but managed through his writing to stay close to his Arab-Islamic Sudanese roots. He describes his struggle:

One does not make use by learning more about that culture, but by discovering oneself...we used to look down at our inheritance and our heritage...we preferred the British culture to our own. The best thing in being exposed to a new culture is that it gives you a new perspective about your own cultural inheritance.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>582</sup> On the Road with Tayeb Salih: Outline of an Autobiography, 1997, pp. 15-16, quoted in Hassan op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>583</sup> Berkley, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>584</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 18.

<sup>585</sup> Berkley, op. cit., p. 14.

Such attitude underlines indeed Bourdieu's notion of a literary field of production on which writers from regions and countries that are traditionally seen as the developing world, play the role of social critics, and cultural historians within their own culture. Writing, thus, becomes a social and moral act and literature is not produced in the sense of art for arts sake. Salih "believes that writing is an adventure in which the artist participates to the fullest of his ability. In this process of creating, the author is responsible, to the farthest limits of his capability, for constructing a form which compliments theme in a way which can create a unified work of art."<sup>586</sup> This rejection of the romantic view of the artist, underlines and elucidates the battles for symbolic power that takes place in *Wedding*. Even though Salih himself came from the influential *Rikabiyya* tribe, central in the dissemination of Islam, and especially Islamic knowledge and teachings in the Sudan, he does not champion this point of view in his work, but rather tries to integrate his belief in Islam with Sufism, and with more traditional religious beliefs, a point to which we shall return.

As Barakat has pointed out above the individual's pride in his loyalty to his extended tribal family is held in high esteem within Arab society and Sudan is no exception. Such local ties became even more entrenched once the Turko-Egyptian regime was ousted in 1956. Under the rule of the Turko-Egyptians, "the Sudanese' desire for political freedom coupled with the Madhi's superior moral and spiritual values, made it possible for the Sudanese to overcome their traditional tribal allegiances. The Mahdiyya was able to draw its adherents from all parts of the country."<sup>587</sup> Hence the concept of Sudanese nationalism weakened further with the departure of the foreign rulers, and the importance of clan, tribe and family was enhanced as it strengthened its grip on the social organisation of society. The southern part of the Sudan, that was less incorporated in the rule of Mahdiyya, displayed fierce resistance to all new attempts to centralise the rule of the country, as Mahdi's successor Khalifa Abdullah tried, as well as repelling the attempt by the Anglo-Egyptian forces to re-colonise the Sudan. It was also due to the Arabic-Islamic religious fervour in the north that the Sudan more or less became separated. Salih touches upon this theme when Mustafa Sa'eed uses several masks and identities when

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

seducing European women, because “while Arabization and Islamization in the north have produced overlapped identification with Islam and Arab civilization they were syncretistically introduced and assimilated along the lines of pre-existing African religions, cultures and ethnicities. The result is that the race, the religion, and the Arab culture which prevail in the North are peculiarly Sudanese.”<sup>588</sup> Salih wants to unite all these differences in *Wedding* and it is essential to understand these power battles, if we are to grasp the shaping of the individual’s identity within Sudanese society, because as Berkley suggests “by clinging to the individual particularities of their respective lineal groups, each person was able to retain some modicum of self-importance through association with the unique achievements of his own people. By encouraging and maintaining separation between each extended lineal group, the tribal segmentation of traditional Sudanese society became synonymous with ethnic identity.”<sup>589</sup>

In 1953 the democratic process began as the first parliament was formed. This was the first step towards independence in 1956; however, ever since the Sudan has been embroiled in religious sectarian violence, drawn into the rivalry between the *Mahdis* and the *Khatamiyya*. To a great extent this is one of the many sad legacies of the colonial policy of “divide and rule”, which even today is destroying any communal spirit in the Sudan, particularly after The National Islamic Front established a theocracy following the 1989 *coup d'état*.<sup>590</sup> The process of independence coincided with Salih’s first attempts at creative writing, as his first short stories were written from 1953 when Salih was twenty-four and had just moved to London. As Salih earlier explained, the setting in London made writing a lot easier for several reasons, not least because Sudanese literature was a tiny and little developed field.

### **Development of a Sudanese literary field**

Until the 1930s the literary and cultural scene had suffered from stagnation and political retrenchment, but a series of events were to bring about a paradigmatic change.

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<sup>588</sup> Francis M. Deng, *Dynamics of Identification, A Basis for National Integration in the Sudan* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1973), p. 102.

<sup>589</sup> Berkley, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>590</sup> For a detailed discussion see Abdel Salam Sidahmed, *Politics and Islam in contemporary Sudan* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996).

Mohamed Omer Beshir points to several incidents: the student strike in 1931, the revival of the Graduates' Club in Omdurman, the return of several prominent figures from exile in Egypt, the foundation and publication of *al-Nahda* literary magazine in 1931, the appointment of a new and moderately liberal Governor General in 1933, as well as an increasing dissatisfaction with government policies during the global recession, and an augmented belief in Egypt as the savior.<sup>591</sup> Furthermore, influential figures like Hamza al-Malik Tambal, Mufiawiya Muhammad Nur and 'Arafat Muhammad 'Abd-Allah pioneered a literary revival, redirecting their energies from political activism to literary and intellectual pursuits and to championing a modernisation and revival of Sudanese literature. To achieve literary liberation one had to break free from the influence of western, as well as other Arab literatures, especially Egyptian literature. Ironically the man who initiated this transformation in literary and intellectual sensibility was an Egyptian himself, namely Dr. Muhammad al-Nuwayhi who courted controversy by pointing to the lack of a genuine national character and spirit in Sudanese literature. As was the case in Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world, literary groups, a new reading public and journalism played a significant role in establishing a new sensibility towards literary and artistic works. As a result of the post 1924 events in the Sudan, from the late twenties to the mid thirties, the number of books and magazines that were read and imported, primarily from Egypt and England, increased.<sup>592</sup> Egyptian literature in particular, both fiction and non-fiction, proved instrumental to the development of a distinct literary field in the Sudan. The doyen Taha Husayn, as well as other writers like Haykal, al-'Aqqad and al-Manzini exerted a powerful influence on the intellectual development of Sudanese writers and afforded them an insight into world literature. This literary revival soon resulted in two new literary groups, the *al-Hashmab* and the *Abu-Ruf*. The latter group consisted primarily of ambitious young men driven by elitist perceptions of themselves and romantic ideals. Their sense of superiority precluded them from engaging in ordinary concerns, even though they showed resistance towards both the government and the British. Paradoxically they later became interested in Egyptian as

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<sup>591</sup> Mohamed Omer Beshir, *Revolution and nationalism in the Sudan*, (London: Collings, 1974), pp. 111-17.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

well as English literature, especially the socialist ideas of the Fabian Society. Members of *al-Hashmab* were profiled contributors to both *al-Nahda* magazine and the Graduates' Club in Omdurman. They championed modernism, provoking condemnation from more traditional thinkers for their gullible admiration of the West and for turning their backs on their Islamic heritage. In 1934 they started publishing a magazine called *Al-Fajr* in collaboration with 'Abd-Allah. *Al-Fajr* soon became the leading intellectual publication in the Sudan and managed to attract, and to a certain extent bridge the gap among, the various factions within the literary field in its broadly cultural nationalist agenda that transcended narrow tribal, political and personal interests. The majority of its secular-minded members had problems accepting the growing power and authority of the various religious sects. However factionalism among the elite members diluted its founding principles. The dominant theme became a romantic one focusing on the spirit of the natives as the basis for creating a distinct national Sudanese identity, as well as offering a kind of mental, and even physical, refuge from an austere and bleak social reality.<sup>593</sup> As was the case in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, the discovery of Russian, French and English literature persuaded Sudanese writers to experiment with realism. The experience that other Arab authors had gained through adaptations of western works and from their time abroad accelerated the maturation of the Sudanese literary field, and introduced the agents to the new genres of the novel, short story and theatre, as well as to new cultural and literary movements such as Romanticism. These new magazines contained various kinds of prose writing such as essays and literary criticism, while the short story also made an appearance from early thirties in *al-Nahda* and mid thirties in *Al-Fajr*.

The Egyptian short story has been a model for other Arabic countries, and since its emergence as a form it found maturation in the thirties through the work of Mahmud Lashin and Muhmud Taymur. The history of the short story has been one of "perpetual search for change, renewal, metamorphosis, and modification."<sup>594</sup> Like their Egyptian mentors and the pioneers of the short story, the Sudanese short story writers also

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<sup>593</sup> Eiman Abbas Hassan El-Nour, *The Man from the Village, Tayeb Salih and the Quest for Sudanese Identity*, (unpublished PhD. from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>594</sup> Sabry Hafez, "Innovation in The Egyptian Short Story", in R.C. Ostle (ed) *Studies in Modern Arabic Literature*, (Warminster: Aris and Phillips LTD, 1975), p. 99.

“emphasized the importance of the genuine marriage between the inherited traditional elements, (especially as found in some patterns of the Arabic Maqamat and didactic tales), and the western short story.”<sup>595</sup> This development of the Sudanese literary field, and its maturation and experimentation with various literary genres leads up to and underlines the settings, themes and literary aspirations of Salih and his work. Wail S Hassan tries to demonstrate Salih’s ideology and craftsmanship as an author by drawing attention to the fact that Salih sets all his work in the fictional city of Wad Hamid.<sup>596</sup> This is done in order to deal with the myriad aspects and obstacles with which Sudanese society grappled in its confrontation with modernity, in its attempt to create a national consciousness, and in the personal quest for an individual identity.<sup>597</sup>

### Traditional society and traditional power battles

Tayeb Salih’s first publication was his collection of short stories written between 1953 and 1962 under the title *Dawmat Wad Hamid: Sab’qisas*.<sup>598</sup> Mona Takieddine Amyuni argues that Salih’s fiction can be read on two levels; *place* and *out of place*. *Place* is a constant focal point in Salih’s fiction, and *out of place* is another constant of his imaginative world.<sup>599</sup> Hassan argues that *place* is the village of Wad Hamid and *out of place* is always north of the village - London, Cairo, Beirut, and Nicosia. *Place* and *out of place* also describes metaphorically psychological, cultural, and historical dislocations.<sup>600</sup> These early stories can be divided into two groups, with the first group containing four stories: *Muqqaddimat*,<sup>601</sup> *Risala ila Eileen*,<sup>602</sup> *Hakadha ya sadati*,<sup>603</sup> and *Idha ja’at*.<sup>604</sup> Already in these stories one can find traces of what came to be a central characteristic of Salih’s work, namely the dichotomy and mediation between North and South. These

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>596</sup> An exception to this are his first short stories that also do not have the same characters as later works, and must be seen more as sketches for his future novels.

<sup>597</sup> See Wail S Hassan, op. cit., pp. 183-85 for details.

<sup>598</sup> *The doum tree of Wad Hamid: seven short stories*.

<sup>599</sup> Takieddine Amyuni op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>600</sup> Hassan, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>601</sup> *Preliminaries*.

<sup>602</sup> *A Letter to Eileen*.

<sup>603</sup> *So It Was Gentlemen*.

<sup>604</sup> *If She Comes*.



narratives can be seen as studies for later work, and especially for *Season*, in which the portrayal of the characters is of a social, physical, and crucially psychological nature, and how the protagonists relate to sexual quest, love, culture, metaphors and identity. The second group consists of three stories: *Nakhla 'ala al-jadwal*,<sup>605</sup> *A Handful of Dates*, and *The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid*. According to Hassan they “are set in the village of Wad Hamid and introduce the concern of the entire Cycle: spirituality, colonialism, resistance, tradition, modernization, patriarchy, and authority.”<sup>606</sup> Certainly all of these aspects are present in *Wedding*, however for the purpose of this study one must add power and triangular desire in order to locate the shaping of the society’s identity in general and the person’s in particular, and especially that of Zein. Several readings<sup>607</sup> of *Wedding* emphasise Salih’s optimistic predictions for the future of the Arab world and his belief in the amalgamation of North and South. In this sense the village of Wad Hamid is a metaphor for the synthesis of western rational knowledge and Arab Islamic culture, being able to take place without jeopardising progress. The optimism that fills *Wedding* is in stark contrast to the pessimism of *Season*. In *Wedding*, suspension of the crucial narrative event and the divergence between the narrators’ point of view and the character’s position underline, protract, and intensify the mediation on the state of harmony created at the expense of socio-historical reality. The wedding symbolises peace, love and unity, and to maintain this sense of harmony, the struggle for symbolic power must be suspended.<sup>608</sup> Salih uses the village in *Wedding*, and the desert in *Season*, as a metaphor for the Sudan and urges all the different peoples to unite and bury all the divisive factors - their differing beliefs and lifestyles - that separate them, and to embrace a more tolerant attitude towards one another that is free of the repulsive bigotry that has come to characterise their society. Furthermore, *Wedding* satirizes the unremitting failure of the post-independence Sudanese regimes to unite the nation.

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<sup>605</sup> *A Date Palm by the Stream*.

<sup>606</sup> Hassan, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>607</sup> See for instance Constance E. Gresham Berkley, *The Roots of Consciousness Molding the Art of El Tayeb Salih: A Contemporary Sudanese Writer*, Eiman Abbas Hassan El-Nour, *The Man from the Village, Tayeb Salih and the Quest for Sudanese Identity*, (unpublished PhD. from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003). and to some extent Wail S Hassan, *Tayeb Salih, Ideology and the Craft of Fiction*.

<sup>608</sup> Hassan, op. cit., p. 55.

Crucial to this study is an awareness of the changes taking place in the Arab world: "the changes in the social reality are closely related to changes in the Arabic novel and have altered the nature of the relationship between them."<sup>609</sup> Salih published *Wedding* in 1962, a period in which the Sudan, as did the majority of Arab and African countries, struggled to establish a nation-state in the wake of independence. Gradually modernity was embraced and had a significant impact on traditional Sudanese society and culture; the individual was now more exposed to himself than to the extended family, tribe or clan. In a rural setting, like the village, we find the same character, the same struggle for power and legitimacy, the same pride, hatred, imitated desire, and the same pursuit of meaning in all the novels; each character is asking the same questions regarding their existence, due to the impact of modernity and its de-centring of the self. From the beginning of the sixties Hafez points out that:

The traditional rural/tribal vision has given way to one which is generally urban and quasi-modernistic. This has resulted from the multiplicity of socio-political projects, the relative absence of cultural cohesion, and the loss of traditional stability which followed on independence. When the enemy that united many contradictory social interests disappeared, conflicts between different social classes and visions came to the fore. The unified world with its clear sense of purpose no longer existed; in its place came an aggregate structure with semi-autonomous areas which dissipated the old system of social interdependence. With the end of the old harmonious existence went its unified and human scale of values and its normative system of social status and accepted social roles. In its place appeared a quasi-institutionalized society with a clear attempt to legislate differences, define various social territories, and codify class gains. Its endeavour to enshrine some of the old values in a body of law further segregated the old monolithic world. *The collective consciousness was replaced by a more individualistic one, and cohesion tended to be confined to small groups rather than vested in the community at large.*<sup>610</sup>

Hence the necessity to scrutinise the struggle for legitimacy in order to be able to pinpoint the quest for meaning and the shaping of the individual's identity. Zein's process of individuation takes place at the centre of these power battles as he mediates between all the various players in the field of power in Wad Hamid; in doing so he develops and matures from being a childish local village fool to being a grown man to be reckoned with. The particularity of Zein and his behaviour is that he is the only one in the village that is able to, and indeed allowed to, interact with the several groups of people within the

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<sup>609</sup> Sabry Hafez, "The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response" in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, (London: School of Oriental and African Studies 1994), p. 93.

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94. Italics mine.

community, be it women, the outlawed, the Bedouin, Mahjoub's gang, or Haneen. The two main opposing power structures, the spiritual and the secular, are both securely established in what Sharabi has described as a system of "Neopatriarchy". So far analyses have tended to favour the spiritual, and Zein's relationship with Haneen. This study will deal with both the spiritual and the secular since they are equally significant for Zein's personal development. This investigation will start with the latter.

### THE WEDDING OF ZEIN

*Wedding* opens with the reaction of Amna, the headmaster, and Abdul Samad to the news of Zein's wedding to Ni'ma, and we straight away enter the battle field. Traditionally Zein marrying Ni'ma would not elicit any surprise since they are cousins; however, in this case Ni'ma is the most beautiful and respected girl in the village and Zein is regarded as ugly, a fool and a clown, acting the dervish whenever the occasion arises. In this sense he is an outsider in Wad Hamid, although born and raised within the community. Therefore, for two reasons it is difficult for Amna and the headmaster to accept his marriage to Ni'ma. Firstly, they can not understand and comprehend Ni'ma's decision although endogamy is common practice as Barakat makes clear: "village social organization is an intricate net of interrelationships of extended families...[and] marriage within the same lineage, sect, community, group village, or neighbourhood...reflects the fact that the family rather than the individual constitutes the fundamental unit. The advantage of endogamy lies not only in a lower *mahr* and the retention of family wealth and property within the clan, but also in the strengthening of kinship solidarity, in preventing the separation of the bride and her immediate kin."<sup>611</sup> Secondly, and more crucially, Zein is both the mediator and rival in their own dreams of marrying Ni'ma into their own ranks. Once again Girard's notion of the hatred that arises in the subject when the mediator comes closer to the object and thwarts the subjects desire proves to be right. In the case of Amna she had to humiliate herself to go to Ni'ma's mother, Saadiyya, and ask, on behalf of her son Ahmed, for Ni'ma's hand. Saadiyya tells Amna that the decision

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<sup>611</sup> Barakat, op. cit., pp. 55, 109. What makes this marriage so special is the fact that it is not any member of Ni'ma's family that suggests or even support this wedding due to the kinship with Zein, but Ni'ma herself that "feels" Zein is the right one.

lies with Ni'ma's father, and in the end they refuse saying she's too young, although it is Ni'ma's own choice. This is a sensitive issue as the village has been split in two over the quarrel between the women, and as Amna is the one who must modify her position on ever visiting Saadiyya again, she feels herself to be the loser in the power-struggle.<sup>612</sup> The headmaster himself had asked Ni'ma's father Hajj Ibrahim for her hand, and when Hajj Ibrahim asked for whom he was asking, the headmaster's humiliation had been complete; he even begged Hajj Ibrahim to keep this between the two of them: "Yet in the depths of his being he [the headmaster] felt, as had Amna, that a personal affront had been directed against him."<sup>613</sup> Later when he thinks about Ni'ma he feels a dagger stirring in his heart,<sup>614</sup> and declares indignantly that "the biggest miracle of all is the business of Zein's betrothal and that Zein's a dervish of a man who shouldn't be marrying at all."<sup>615</sup> The headmaster like the majority of the villagers is very surprised at the news of Zein's wedding, as no one at first took the news seriously. In fact many of the customs in the village that relate to the segregation of the sexes did not apply to Zein, since he was not considered a threat to the women or their reputation, least of all as a potential suitor. Zein, however, was known for his good taste and over and over again he picks the most beautiful girls in the village, as if struck by a *coup de foudre*, and cries out his emotions. As soon as he has proclaimed his love for any girl she immediately attracts the attentions of several attractive suitors, both in terms of looks and status, a good example of imitated desire: "The marriage of the Omda's daughter and that of Haleema were a turning-point in Zein's life, for the mothers of young girls woke up to his importance as a trumpet by which attention was drawn to their daughters. In a conservative society where girls are hidden away from young men, Zein became an emissary for Love, transporting its sweet fragrance from place to place. Love, first of all, would strike at his heart, then would be quickly transferred to the heart of another—just as though Zein were a broker, a salesman, or a postman."<sup>616</sup> Zein is suddenly in demand, treated as a guest of honour and presented with all types of delicacies; the more invitations he gets to visit girls and their families,

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<sup>612</sup> See Salih, *Wedding*, pp. 48-50 for the details of Amna's and Saadiyya's quarrel.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the more elusive he becomes, however, as soon after Zein's visit "some handsome young man's hand would stretch out to take that of the young girl."<sup>617</sup> All these episodes confirm Girard's concept of triangular desire, as the role of the mediator is magnified by the subject and even by the potential object.

The ongoing fight for legitimacy and social standing within the village is crucial: "when individuals act, they always do so in specific social contexts or settings. Hence particular practices or perceptions should be seen, not as a product of the habitus as such, but as the product of the *relation between* the habitus, on the one hand, and the specific social context of 'fields' within which individuals act, on the other."<sup>618</sup> It makes sense to look at how the various players in the field of Wad Hamid are competing for power within the village, and how their habitus determines their success. The community is divided into three groups, depending on the position they adopt in relation to the Imam, whom they regard as an institution, rather than a person and whom they never call by name: "One of the camps, composed by mostly sensible-minded grown-up men headed by Hajj Ibrahim, Ni'ma's father, treated the Imam with reserved affection. They used to attend all the prayers in the mosque...invite him to lunch every Friday after prayers...pay him appropriate alms and give him the skins of the animals they slaughtered at the Greater Bairam feast. If one of their sons or daughters got married, they would give him a fee in cash, together with a cloak or piece of cloth."<sup>619</sup> The second group is made up primarily of young men under twenty years, who are openly antagonistic towards the Imam. They are either students, travellers that have returned from abroad, people who are too lazy to get up in time to do their ablutions for the dawn prayers, or adventurers that enjoy drinking and making merry in the "Oasis". Curiously the leader of this group is Ibrahim Wad Taha, a poet in his seventies.<sup>620</sup> Mahjoub and his "gang" that consists of Abdul Hafeez, Taher Rawwasi, Hamad Wad Rayyis, Ahmed Isma'il and Sa'eed, wield the greatest influence due to each of them having larger than average fields to cultivate, business, as well as being married and having fathered children. The "gang" see to and organise all weddings and funerals, arrange the digging of channels, secure the centre

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<sup>617</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>618</sup> Thompson, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>619</sup> Salih *Wedding*, p. 90.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-91.

with barricades when the Nile spate, and later estimate the damages. They reprimand, and even strike women who misbehave towards men, and scare off any strangers found hanging around the village. When the Omda comes to collect his taxes they stand up and defend the people and claim that this or that was a more appropriate tariff. If government representatives visit the village they receive them, and offer a sheep or a lamb while talking over important matters. When new buildings are put up, like schools, hospitals, they are the contractors and overseers and made up the committees that are in charge of everything; they even pay the Imam his salary, collecting it from the villagers. If someone wants to accomplish anything, he needs the gang's blessing. Even though they regard the Imam as a necessary evil they never reveal their personal inclinations, except in their customary evening gatherings outside Sa'eed's shop.<sup>621</sup> However, Zein is in a group of his own and, therefore, mixes and moves freely amongst all the villagers, whether they be women, rich, powerful or poor.

### **The battle for religious legitimacy**

The main power struggle in Wad Hamid is concentrated around Zein-Haneen and Seif ad-Din-Imam and their relationships with the "gang". Since the Sudanese believe in the Imam's spiritual relationship with the larger universe<sup>622</sup> it is crucial to understand that in Wad Hamid there are two types of religious beliefs that prevail. On one side there is Mahjoub and his "gang" and Zein who do not attend the mosque, but have their own individual spiritual beliefs; these beliefs are more related to the idea of man having a close relationship to the surrounding universe. On the other side there is the conservative Imam and his disciples who represent formal religion and who strongly defends its doctrines, not being very popular among the villages. "He was, in the opinion of the village, an importunate man, a talker and a grumbler, and in their heart of hearts they used to despise him because they reckoned him to be practically the only one among them who had no definite work to do: no field to cultivate and no business to occupy him, but lived off teaching children for a set fee collected from every family—a fee grudgingly

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<sup>621</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-93.

<sup>622</sup> Berkely, op. cit., p. 196.

paid...In their minds there clung to his person something old and gloomy."<sup>623</sup> Although the villagers dislike the Imam they recognise their need for him, and are even slightly in awe of his scholarship and his eloquence after his ten years at al-Azhar University. The Imam exploits his position of power to chastise the villagers harshly whilst preaching:

As though avenging himself on them with an outburst of words of exhortation about the Judgement Day and punishment, Heaven and Hell-fire, disobedience to God and turning to Him in repentance—words that passed down their throats like poison. Each would leave the mosque after Friday prayers boggle-eyed, feeling all of a sudden that the flow of life had come to a stop. Each, looking at his field with its date palms, its trees and crops, would experience no feeling of joy within himself...Even so, most of them would go back to listen to him and each time they would experience the same mysterious conflict. They would go back to him because his voice was strong and clear when he preached, sweetly melodious when he recited the Koran, terrifyingly awesome when he said prayers over the dead, thoroughly knowledgeable of all aspects of life as he performed contracts of marriage.<sup>624</sup>

Zein for his part is presented as a kind of extraordinary and unusual person, who from the day of his birth has been considered special because he laughed rather than screamed when he was born.<sup>625</sup> Zein's appearance immediately came under scrutiny because he did not look like anyone else in the village; he is anything but what his name literally suggests: "beautiful". His features are embellished and contradictory; he is described as having an elongated, bony face, a rounded forehead that juts out, and small permanently bloodshot eyes resting in sockets deeply set in his face like two caverns. Zein has no facial hair, not even eyebrows or eyelashes, and has a giraffe-like neck upon two powerful shoulders, long arms like a monkey and extended fingers, ending in long, sharp nails. With a concave chest his back is slightly hunched and he has long and spindly legs, and splayed feet covered in scars. On top of that he has only one tooth in his upper jaw and one in the lower.<sup>626</sup> The story behind one of Zein's scars puts his behaviour into perspective. Zein had always been allowed to transgress social and gender boundaries in the community, and the generally held view was that he was a good-for-nothing<sup>627</sup> who posed no threat to a female's honour. However, whilst he was attending a wedding once he suddenly jumped on the bride and bit her on the mouth, only to be stabbed in his ankle

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<sup>623</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 87.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 36, 60.

with a knife when the bride screamed.<sup>628</sup> Zein's physical appearance is the complete opposite to Ni'ma's; indeed she is considered to be the most beautiful girl in the village: "the heads of both men and women would turn as she passed them on the road,"<sup>629</sup> Ni'ma as the daughter of Hajj Ibrahim is also synonymous with noble birth, virtue and social standing.<sup>630</sup> The marriage of Zein to Ni'ma exacerbates the power struggles within Wad Hamid, especially that between Zein and the Imam. As has already been demonstrated the Imam tries to intimidate and frighten the villagers with his talk of Judgement Day and punishment, Heaven and Hell-fire during the Friday prayers. According to Giddens:

Religious authorities in particular quite often cultivated the feeling that individuals were surrounded by threats and dangers – since only the religious official was in a position to be able either to understand or to seek successfully to control these. Religious authority created mysteries while simultaneously claiming to have privileged access to them.<sup>631</sup>

The Imam feels threatened by Zein's position within the community and the challenge he poses to his position as spiritual leader. This is because Zein is a pivotal character with whom most of the villagers feel a sort of intimate connection.<sup>632</sup> Berkley argues that Zein represents "the link between Man, Nature and God or 'The Gods,' so that his fate is intricately intertwined with the fate of the entire community. Zein's advent into the village immediately sets the forces in motion which will culminate in the rebirth of the community."<sup>633</sup> This power struggle between Zein and the Imam should not come as a surprise since they both hate their mediator, [in this case each other], a rival whom they copy.<sup>634</sup> In fact Zein likes everybody else in the hamlet, except the Imam who,

He treated with rudeness and if he met him approaching from afar he would leave the road clear for him. The Imam was perhaps the only person Zein hated; his mere presence at a gathering was enough to spoil Zein's peace of mind and start him cursing and shouting. The Imam would react to Zein's outbursts with dignity, sometimes saying that people had spoiled Zein by treating him as someone unusual and that to regard him as a holy person was a lot of rubbish, that if only he had been brought up properly he would have grown up as normal as anyone else. Who knows, though, perhaps he too felt uneasy within himself when Zein gave him one of his glaring looks, for everyone knew that Zein was a favourite of Haneen and that

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid., pp. 36-37.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., p. 52

<sup>630</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>631</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 195.

<sup>632</sup> Berkley, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>634</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 73.



Haneen was a holy man who would not frequent the company of someone unless he had perceived in him a glimmering of spiritual light.<sup>635</sup>

Zein's affiliation with Haneen takes the form of a mentor-mentee relationship where Haneen consecrates Zein, in the manner described by Bourdieu, who then stands out from the average man and in some sense becomes a God himself. Several other episodes also underline Zein's place within semi-religious African cosmologies and the saintly aura that surrounds him: As a child he lost all his teeth after, on the way to visit some relatives at sunset, he passes by a deserted ruin rumoured to be haunted and is suddenly nailed to the ground, shivering and screaming with fever. After spending several days in bed he recovers but he has lost all but two of his teeth.<sup>636</sup> As Hassan argues the inhabitants of Wad Hamid interpret this episode,

In light of their belief in *jinn* (creatures of fire invisible to human beings), a belief validated by the Qur'an, which teaches that there are good and evil *jinn*, those who are faithful and those who are the troops of the Devil. The latter are believed to inhabit deserted areas, and what happens to Zein near the ruined building is immediately recognized as the work...of the evil *jinn*, who are always trying to harm humans. Zein's affliction, therefore, is the result of his confrontation with the evil *jinn*, which he is able to resist because, as Haneen vouches, he is a "Blessed One of God."...Similarly, Zein's loss of teeth can be seen as a condition for his special status, in turn, his recovery of teeth suggests his arrival at the threshold of a new stage in his life—one in which he reacquires normalcy. The two illnesses marking those events frame the period of his life during which he is considered a *darwish*.<sup>637</sup>

The sole incarnation of the evil *jinn* is Seif ad-Din on his return to the Wad Hamid. Seif ad-Din is the spoilt child of Badawi the jeweller, probably the richest man in the village, having accumulated much of his wealth from commerce and trading. The fortune he had created from scratch is now invested in land and estates, goods, merchandise, gold and jewellery. As the only son among five sisters Seif is so spoilt that the village folk describe him as "soft and flabby like the tree that grows in the shade of a bigger tree, being exposed to no wind and not seeing the light of the sun."<sup>638</sup> His father spends huge amounts of money on his education, but he fails at each turn and is eventually declared bankrupt after an unsuccessful business venture. His father's influence and contacts offer him a lot of opportunities, all of which he wastes, instead indulging his passion for liquor

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<sup>635</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>637</sup> Hassan, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>638</sup> Salih *Wedding*, p. 67.

and girls. When Seif tells his father that he plans to marry a former slave girl, his father first beats, then disowns him. Seif promptly disappears the next morning and his father is grief-stricken, talking about Seif as one would talk about a dead person.<sup>639</sup> Seif persists with his reckless lifestyle and is even convicted of murder in Port Sudan, only escaping hanging in the last second when the real murderer is found. Badawi however never stops hoping Seif will return to his senses, and never does cut him off from his inheritance. One night during the month of Ramadan the unexpected happens and Badawi dies the death of all good Muslim men, on his prayer-mat after having performed the special late night prayers.<sup>640</sup> Seif soon returns, but he is the stranger no one wants to associate with; he has no luggage, ruffled hair and a thick and dirty beard. His family's despair only deepens on his return and his uncle spits him in the face while his mother, sisters and all his female relatives start wailing anew. Since Badawi had not excluded Seif from his will, he gets his hands on all the money, and starts spending it on women, alcohol and travelling east or west "spending a month in Khartoum, a month in Cairo, a month in Asmara, only coming home to the village to sell some land or dispose of a crop."<sup>641</sup> In Wad Hamid Seif not only becomes the stranger but he also spreads evil and corruption where ever he goes, and comes to represent the opposite of Zein. This opposition is made clearer when Zein takes care of Mousa the Lame after Seif kicks him out from his dead father's house. In one of his intermittent visits to the village Seif discovers that his sister's wedding is in progress, and soon transforms it into a tragedy. Zein who is present at every wedding with his natural gaiety is paid little heed by anyone, until Seif strikes him on the head with an axe.<sup>642</sup> Seif also causes havoc by quarrelling with the bridegroom to the point that he threatens not to go through with the marriage, and the wise men of the village have to intervene. Seif also invites a group of his disreputable friends and some strangers so that the villagers see no other option than giving them all a beating and throw them out onto the street.<sup>643</sup> The incident that is seen to confirm Zein's saintly status is his recovery and change in presence on his return from the hospital after receiving the near fatal blow from

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<sup>639</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

Seif. Filled up with positive *jinn* he attacks Seif and his bad *jinn*, and roots them out of the hamlet; as a result they both are born anew, Seif as a pious religious man and Zein as a man worthy enough to wed the best girl in the village. When Zein is back from the hospital sporting new teeth, he is in the middle of telling Mahjoub's gang of how he seduced one of the nurses in the hospital, when he suddenly jumps to his feet as if stung by a scorpion:

Zein, though, was quicker than them and in a flash had seized hold of his man, had raised him high in the air and thrown him to the ground. Then he tightened his grip on his throat. They all fell upon Zein, Ahmed Isma'il seizing hold of his right arm, Abdul Hafeez of his left, with Taher Rawwasi taking him by the middle, and Hamad Wad Rayyis by his legs. Sa'eed, who was weighing out something in his shop, hurried out and also took hold of Zein's legs. Even so they were not successful...They all knew that this emaciated body concealed an extraordinary, super-human strength and that Seif ad-Din—the prey upon whom Zein swooped—was doomed....'The he-donkey, I'll kill him,' Zein was repeating angrily....Amidst their clamour they heard a snorting sound emanating from Seif ad-Din's throat and saw him striking out at the air with his long legs. 'He's dead, he's killed him,' shouted Mahjoub. But suddenly a new voice, that of Haneen, rose calm and serene above the hubbub: 'Zein the blessed, may God be pleased with you.' Zein released his grip and Seif ad-Din fell limply to the ground....'Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.' They carried Seif ad-Din off and put him on a bench in front of Sa'eed's shop, and with voices tense and low, they began bringing him back to life. Only then did they remember Zein and notice him sitting on his backside, his hands between his knees, with his head bowed. Haneen had placed his hand with extreme tenderness on Zein's shoulder and was talking to him in a voice firm but filled with love. 'Zein, blessed one of God, why did you do it?'<sup>644</sup>

Zein wanted to avenge Seif's attack on him, and he turns to violence, because he represents the positive *jinn* and is destined to root out the negative *jinn*, on behalf of the community.

The act is violent...for great love is usually accompanied by a great act. This action is directed at Seif; it represents the awakening of Zein, so as to be the village protector against these evils. The man who fills the village with joy has to return it once more to these joys by overcoming this evil, or rather ending the man who fills his village with unhappiness and darkness. A confrontation must occur for him to stop.<sup>645</sup>

The use of violence is according to Girard the result of thwarted desire. All the mediations in *Wedding* revolve around the character of Zein and he becomes a substitute for the missing part in the triangle of desire because of the communities severe customs when it comes to interaction between the sexes, and the hierarchical divisions between

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-63.

<sup>645</sup> Ahmad Shams al-Din al-Haggagi, "The Mythmaker: Tayeb Salih" in Ghazoul, Ferial J. and Harlow, Barbara (eds) *The View From Within, Writers and Critics on Contemporary Arabic Literature* (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 1994), p. 116.

various gangs and their struggle for power and symbolic legitimacy. Zein's status as mediator is demonstrated primarily in male-female relations, and his significance is underlined as indicated above, when the mothers of young girls bribe him to declare his love for their daughter, since that is a guarantee that an eligible suitor will soon knock on the door, in other words, Zein becomes the mediator for the girl's beauty and worth. Interestingly, all but one of the mediations in *Wedding* materialise as external, because all of them happen in Haneen's absence. Haneen's presence in *Wedding* is limited and the reader is left with only partial knowledge of his character. However, it is necessary to understand Haneen's importance in the narrative, first of all in relation to Zein and his process of individuation, and secondly because all the village's civil power is centred around and require the power of Haneen. The village is in fact dependent on Haneen for his spiritual education of Zein and his role as a saviour of the hamlet, one that is rooted in religious folk tales and Sufism.

#### **Haneen, Zein and the power of mysticism**

The implications of Haneen in Wad Hamid is demonstrated by the fact that he is the nucleus around which the skirmish between spiritual and secular authority is fought. Haneen for the most part enjoys his own company, and besides his friendship with Zein, he dedicates himself piously to his religious devotions, spending six months in the village praying and fasting, and then disappearing into the desert for the rest of the year. No one ever knows where he has been although there exist numerous stories in which different people claim to have seen him in different places at the same time. These simultaneous sightings add to the mystery surrounding his person. During Zein's fight with Seif even the combined strength of all the men cannot stop him from trying to strangle Seif. What eventually makes Zein let go, just as he is on the point of killing Seif, is the gentle voice of Haneen. Some of the men insist that, "Seif ad-Din had actually died, had breathed his last, and had fallen to the ground a lifeless corpse. Seif ad-Din himself affirms this version and says that he did actually die; he says that the moment Zein's grip on his throat had tightened he completely departed this world."<sup>646</sup> Haneen's timely arrival is like

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<sup>646</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 66.

that of the Sufi master appearing at the crucial time in order to teach his pupil the vocation of a Sufi: "If you love the world, you have to reform it by means of love as well."<sup>647</sup> When Haneen arrives and talks to Zein he prevents murder by teaching Zein how to confront evil. Respected for his spiritual knowledge in the village,<sup>648</sup> he initiates "his pupil" into the mysteries of their society from a cosmic perspective, and it is Haneen who accuses Zein of being in the wrong even though Seif had previously attacked him with an axe, since Seif's sister had an eye on Zein during her wedding. As the gang comes to terms with the incident, Mahjoub, who is filled with an innate awe for religious people in general and especially for ascetics like Haneen despite the fact that he was aware of his mystical power, cries out in contempt that he does not understand why anyone would marry an imbecile that was willing to commit murder.<sup>649</sup> Haneen, who possesses the most legitimate power in the village, gives Mahjoub a stern look that makes him tremble, before calling Zein the blessed one of God. Haneen not only undermines Mahjoub's hitherto powerful position in the field of power, but also confirms Zein's new and consecrated status within the field by declaring Zein his novice and announcing: "Zein is no imbecile...Zein's a blessed person. Tomorrow he'll be marrying the best girl in the village."<sup>650</sup> Zein's obedience towards Haneen forces him to adhere to the laws of the community; he is now a socially reformed character in control of his emotions and strength, as well as being betrothed to the most desirable girl in the village. Zein does not hesitate when Haneen asks him to make up with Seif, who kisses him on the head, before Zein turns towards Haneen and covers his head with kisses saying "Our Sheikh Haneen. Our father, blessed of God."<sup>651</sup> It is an emotive moment for all the men and Seif's eyes are filled with tears when he asks Zein for forgiveness for having wronged him, and kisses Zein's head and the hand of Haneen. This has a profound effect on the gang who all in turn come forward and in silence kiss Haneen's hand. Haneen replies: "God bless you. God bring down His blessings upon you"<sup>652</sup> before picking up his pitcher. He is about to leave when Mahjoub invites him to dine with the "gang", but he gently refuses

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<sup>647</sup> Al-Haggagi, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-17.

<sup>649</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 64.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

while clasping Zein on the shoulder and saying: "dinner's to be in the house of the blessed one"<sup>653</sup> before the pair walk off into the darkness. Haneen carefully orchestrated the whole incident so as to position himself as the most powerful figure in the hamlet. He has also secured the position of Zein, since no one will ever question his position as the chosen man, blessed by God. By kissing Haneen's hand the members of the "gang" acknowledged that Haneen's authority and symbolic legitimacy exceeds their own. "Haneen's departure from the scene, like his sudden appearance, leaves them with the eerie impression that one order of existence has given way to another."<sup>654</sup> The gang always know what is going on in each others' minds, and as they sit outside Sa'eed's shop "Mahjoub looked at Abdul Hafeez, Sa'eed looked at Seif ad-Din, and they all exchanged looks and nodded their heads."<sup>655</sup> What follows these events represents an end for Seif and a beginning for Zein who is now making the transition from childhood, and adolescence into manhood, something which is symbolised by his imminent marriage. This transition underlines the mythical aspects of *Wedding*, and Zein's individuation must be seen as a spiritual and metaphysical triumph, one that could only have happened through divine intervention. Seif's symbolic death mirrors Zein's spiritual awakening; Zein has rooted out the evil *jinn* and Seif is reborn as a repentant, and transformed human being. Seif now spends his time in the company of the Imam, frequenting the mosque, becoming its new muezzin and going on pilgrimage. He also shows remorse for his cruel treatment of Mousa the Lame and offers to take care of him as well as taking over and running his father's business, getting married, and apologising to his family. Now as Seif joins forces with the Imam, the Imam tries to take all the credit for Seif's transformation, attributing it to the always victorious God and not to Haneen's intervention. The Imam mentions Seif's repentance in almost every prayer and condemns and attacks the infidels, exploiting the fact that Seif has now become the most fierce and dangerous adversary for the "Oasis". "The Imam paid no heed to the fact that Haneen, who represented the mystical side of the spiritual world – a side he did not recognize – was the direct cause of Seif ad-Din's repentance."<sup>656</sup> However the villagers do, especially after all the positive

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>654</sup> Hassan, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>655</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 65.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

and surprising events that take place during 'Haneen's year' as it comes to be called. After Haneen blessed Zein, Seif and Mahjoub's "gang", one supernatural event succeeds another, and miracle follows upon miracle. The prices of cotton and dates rise and a large hospital and agricultural school are built. The village also benefits from the supplying of labour, materials and food to the large army camp that sets up outside the village. Furthermore, the government initiates a substantial agricultural project that incorporates all their land, and increases their crops as the newly built water pump irrigates the parched land from the Nile all the way to the desert. Zein is considered one of the miracles that take place in 'Haneen's year' so the Imam is unable to attack Zein on any other grounds than that fact that he is unsuitable for marrying Ni'ma. The Imam uses this as, "an opportunity to make known his disdain of Zein, the only man in the village the Imam really fears because he cannot take him under his wing or subdue him. While he is capable of attacking his opposers in his sermons because they transgress religious and social traditions, he cannot attack Zein on any grounds except to inform Ni'ma's father that he isn't a man for matrimony."<sup>657</sup> Whatever the Imam, Hajj Ibrahim or anyone else says regarding Zein, and the availability of several other suitable husbands for Ni'ma, Ni'ma remains adamant that she will marry the man of her choice, firm in the belief that she is guided by God.

### **Ni'ma and the marriage to Zein**

The wedding further confirms the belief that Haneen is a saint, fulfilling as it does his prophecy that Zein will marry the best girl in the village. However Zein is not the only one who sees Ni'ma as the ideal wife; she has plenty of suitors all of whom she has rejected, much to the chagrin of her family. At one point her father nearly loses his temper and is about to slap her, but is suddenly struck by her resolution and calm, and believes that she must be guided by inner voice, which no one can challenge. By refusing to defer to her father on the question of her marriage, she poses an open challenge to patriarchal authority, which demonstrates, as Sharabi has suggested, that rebellion is the

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<sup>657</sup> Al-Haggagi, op. cit., p. 122.

only way of defeating the system of patronage,<sup>658</sup> and such determination brings her a lot of respect and admiration in the local society, especially among Mahjoub and his "gang".<sup>659</sup> Thus, Ni'ma is the sole individual in Wad Hamid to take control of her life and her own personal development. Giddens supports the main argument of this thesis when he states:

In many pre-modern contexts, individuals (and humanity as a whole) were more powerless than they are in modern settings....In many small-group settings individuals were relatively powerless to alter or escape from their surroundings social circumstances. The hold of tradition...was often more or less unchallengeable....Pre-modern kinship systems...were often quite rigid and offered the individual little scope for independent action.<sup>660</sup>

Both Amna and the headmaster had to go home empty-handed, as was the case with several other suitors, even though Hajj Ibrahim and Ni'ma's brothers all urged her to accept one of them. Ni'ma was not like the other girls in the village; even as a young girl she forced her father to put her into elementary school to learn the Qur'an, where she was the only girl among boys. She soon learnt to read and write and memorise part of the Koran by heart, which gives her particular pleasure.<sup>661</sup> Ni'ma decides not to pursue her education, happy just knowing how to read and write as well as perform her prayers. Ni'ma used to dream that she would one day have to make a sacrifice, and she experienced this same mysterious sensation while reading the *Chapter of Mary*. Marriage was something Ni'ma thought would come to her unexpectedly, just as God's divine decree falls upon His servants. Ni'ma had not set her eyes on any man in particular, nor had she set image of how her future husband should be; the essential thing was that she had to feel an overwhelming love for this man, whether or not he was married, handsome, educated, a farmer or an ordinary man from the village. When Ni'ma thought of Zein "she experienced a sensation of warmth in her heart, of the kind mothers feels for their children. Intermingled with it was another feeling: of pity. She would see Zein as being an orphan in need of being cared for. In any case he was her cousin, and there was nothing unusual in the fact that she should feel concern for him."<sup>662</sup> This genuine respect

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<sup>658</sup> Sharabi, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>659</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>660</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 192.

<sup>661</sup> Especially *Chapter of the Merciful*, *Chapter of Mary* and *Chapter of Retribution* because these chapters are among the most poetic in the Qur'an.

<sup>662</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 55.



Ni'ma shows towards Zein is an attitude unique to her amongst all the other village women. Furthermore, Zein always felt free to flirt and declare his love for any girl in the hamlet except for Ni'ma: "One day, finding him amidst a group of women, joking with them in his usual way, she rebuked him with the words, 'Why don't you give up this nonsensical chatter and go off and get on with your work?' And she glared at the women with her beautiful eyes. Zein stopped laughing and lowered his head in shame. He then slunk out from among the women and went his way."<sup>663</sup> Equally Zein would never declare his love for Ni'ma and he treats her with dignity and respect, she was, "the one girl in the district about whom Zein did not speak and with whom he never played the fool. She was a girl who would observe him from afar with beautiful, sullen eyes and whenever he saw her approaching he would fall silent and leave off his raillery and bufoonery. If he spotted her far off he would flee from her presence leaving the road to her."<sup>664</sup>

Throughout *Wedding* none of the other men in the community treat Zein with the respect he deserves. Zein falls in love easily and the others either make fun of his emotions or take advantage of him. The Omda promises Zein his daughter Azza, as a bride; however, first he must do some work for him, for which he is never rewarded. Because of Zein's gullibility he is made into a laughing stock by the villagers.<sup>665</sup> In the internal power struggles Mahjoub is one of the strongest contenders, resolutely defending the status quo and the position of his own "gang" in the village. However he doesn't protest when Zein confesses his love for his daughter, and even promises Zein her hand, certain that no one, least of all Zein believes it will happen: "I promise the girl to you—right now before all these people here," Mahjoub answered him in all seriousness, as though meaning what he said. 'After you've reaped your wheat and gathered up your dates and sold them and brought the money, we'll make the wedding celebration.'<sup>666</sup> Zein is not only a masochist, he is also being treated sadistically and exploited by the villagers, both by men and women, who seek to promote their own hopeful daughters to potential suitors. To comprehend what this transformation of expectations of marriage

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<sup>663</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

does to Zein, one has to return to Girard's notion that the unity between external and internal mediation is constituted through the transfiguration of the desired object. Thus Zein's behaviour towards all these village girls is meaningless, as there is only one girl in the village he does not treat in this fashion and that is Ni'ma for whom he feels genuine desire, and feelings that are rooted in something other than imitated desire. According to Girard this is because Zein now suffers from internal mediation where the profoundest meaning of the *modern* is found, and further that the atomization of the personality is the final stages of internal mediation.<sup>667</sup> Therefore Zein's unity is broken up into multiplicity as the forces of modernity take hold of Wad Hamid. Since the announcement of his wedding, Zein has become a more mature man and he is now able to enjoy the company of everyone in and outside the village, with the sole exception of the Imam.

### The wedding, and Zein as God

Ni'ma's choice of Zein as her husband is not unusual as they are cousins, but Zein remains an outsider in the village and is the least qualified, both in terms of looks and personality. It is his affiliation with Haneen and his growing saintly status, that encourage Ni'ma's to make this sacrifice, hoping perhaps to secure her place in heaven. Suras from the Qur'an, especially the *Chapter of Mary*, inspire in her both maternal feelings and feelings of mercy towards Zein.<sup>668</sup> Furthermore, Ni'ma seems to be the perfect match for Zein since, "she was prepared by means of a cosmic power to be the *wali's* (saint's) wife. Ni'ma was within the realm of Zein's awakening."<sup>669</sup> She believes her choice is circumscribed by fate and is God's divine decree.<sup>670</sup> Hassan suggests that:

The wedding functions as a symbol of social integration, a celebration on a grand scale that includes almost every house, community, and stratum of the village and its vicinity. The magnitude of the wedding and the juxtaposition of the imam and the prostitutes, the reciters of the Qur'an and the dancers, the dignified pious and the reveling drinkers, with Zein at the center of it all, paints a picture of a community able to manage its internal conflicts, maintain its equilibrium and produce its own symbols of peace and harmony. It may achieve that in the name of religion, mysticism, or miracles, but it would not be possible without efficient and able management of worldly affairs.<sup>671</sup>

<sup>667</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>668</sup> Ni'ma also dreamt that Haneen told her that the girl who marries Zein won't regret it. See Salih, *Wedding*, p. 107.

<sup>669</sup> Al-Haggagi, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>670</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 54.

<sup>671</sup> Hassan, op. cit., p. 76.

The marriage is the greatest of all the miracles in the year of Haneen. The entire community benefits from the abundance and from the extraordinary events of that year – even barren women suddenly give birth: “Zein...is the pivotal force which draws Haneen to the village, thus making it possible for the villagers to go through an intellectual and spiritual catharsis.”<sup>672</sup> Customarily “Arab villages classify this kind of human being into three types: one is associated with God, and selected by Him; the second is Satanic, selected by the devil; and the third includes diseased people with no supernatural powers involved.”<sup>673</sup> Zein no doubt represents the first category, while Seif is the second and the people associated with the “Oasis” represent the third type. As a cathartic expression Zein’s violence cleanses not only Seif, but the whole village and prepares them for the wedding rituals. All the various groups who are drawn to the village are attracted by the mystical aura surrounding the person of Zein, therefore, Zein’s transformation seems to suggest that he now possesses the powers usually attributed to an all powerful God.<sup>674</sup> By marrying Zein Ni’ma will also be receiving all the tenderness, love, care and compassion Zein lavishly bestows upon all his less fortunate friends such as Deaf Ashama, Mousa the Lame and Bekheit. Furthermore, when “the people of the village, seeing these acts of Zein’s would be even more amazed; perhaps he was the legendary Leader, the Prophet of God, perhaps an angel sent down by God in lowly human form in order to remind His worshipers that a great heart may yet beat even in one of concave breast and ridiculous manner such as Zein. Some would say: ‘He places His strength in the weakest of His creatures’.”<sup>675</sup> Zein might seem a weak creature in the beginning of *Wedding* but matures gradually through the story, and his identity is shaped through the confrontation with Seif and the marriage to Ni’ma. It is, however, the close relationship with Haneen that ensures that Zein becomes a *force majeure* in the community. After Haneen’s death Zein follows in the path of Haneen, and within the village he becomes almost an institution, in the manner of a Sufi in pursuit of an eternal existence and knowledge: “Sufis constitute an independent world, and they have a great influence upon the social life in the city, the

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<sup>672</sup> Berkley, op. cit., p. 224.

<sup>673</sup> Al-Haggagi, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>674</sup> Berkley, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>675</sup> Salih, *Wedding*, p. 46.

countryside, and in the oasis. There is hardly a village along the Nile valley without a *wali* (saint) sought by the people for his blessings.<sup>676</sup> Traditionally this had been the role of Haneen, but as his novice, and through his consecration by Haneen and his marriage to Ni'ma, Zein is related to both spheres battling for symbolic legitimacy - the religious and the secular. Al-Haggagi points out that:

The character of Zein is drawn as an enraptured dervish with all the familiar characteristics of a *wali* (saint), as known in Arab villages. This character, generally and specifically, is quite puzzling. Zein has two dimensions: the dimensions of the mindless dervish, who is lost to and unaware of the surrounding world, thus incurring its scorn. The other dimension points to a serious man, who undertakes deeds of which the strongest in his village are incapable. He is singled out among them, yet he is one of them. These two dimensions stand juxtaposed: the distraught Zein versus the serious Zein.<sup>677</sup>

As seen Zein's violence cleanses Seif of his moral lust, and prepares the whole village for the wedding, but during the wedding Zein is also reminded of his own personality, and for the first time he is conscious of his own Being. In the case of Zein this could not happen as long as Haneen was alive. Zein is consecrated by his special friendship with Haneen, and at the moment Haneen dies and the wedding is announced Zein becomes aware of his new divine role, but most of all of his individuality and a new sense of self. This new identity carries its own obligations and he can no longer fool around as he used to. Furthermore, this sense of an individual identity is crucial to the nature of his relationships with the other characters in Wad Hamid, especially those with whom he fights for symbolic power, like the Imam and Mahjoub: "an individual who vests trust in others, or in a given abstract system, normally thereby recognises that she lacks power to influence them significantly,"<sup>678</sup>. This is illustrated during the wedding when Zein mystically vanishes, having retreated to the graveyard to cry on Haneen's grave. This is a manifestation of Zein's love, devotion, and loyalty, as well as his sincere desire for Haneen to be present at his marriage. By visiting Haneen's shrine, Zein further reinforces Haneen's view of religion to be victorious in the village. Haneen, and later on Zein, represent the "mystical side of the spiritual world"<sup>679</sup> and hold a worldview that

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<sup>676</sup> Al-Haggagi, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>678</sup> Giddens *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 193.

<sup>679</sup> Ali Abdella Abbas, "Notes on Tayeb Salih: Season of Migration to the North and The Wedding of Zein" in *Sudan Notes and Records*, Volume LV, 1974, p. 58.

supersedes the conventional, traditional and institutionalised version that the Imam represents. The wedding celebrations are the epic grand finale, commemorating not only the marriage, but also the uniting of an entire community who leave behind all their petty conflicts and tribal feuds and take pleasure from the shared experience. By transforming Zein into a more mature human being Haneen challenges the dogmatic position held by the Imam and transforms Zein into a saintly God-like figure. It is when man becomes god on earth that he achieves the ultimate goal of individuation. Zein is by no means a religious person, nor does he perform his religious duties or respect the Imam, yet he is perceived to be, "the blessed one of God." This is because Zein, with his unique personality, joyous approach to life and his worship of the divine essence, is able to break down barriers between the different communities, tribes and people in the hamlet, and to gather them all at his wedding. In contrast, the Imam always puts people into categories, dividing them into believers and non-believers, and thus prevents mutual tolerance. The Imam acts as a retrogressive force in society, and is the only person Zein hates: "Haneen is called a holy man not because of his dedication to his religious devotions (the Imam is also dedicated to his religious duties but holiness is an attribute which we cannot possible credit him with) but because of his ability to see through appearances and to gauge the importance of the role played by Zein in the life of the community."<sup>680</sup> It is the authority and freedom that follows Haneen's blessing of Zein that allows Zein to act as a harbinger of love; in this role he enhances not only his own process of individuation, but becomes a benign force for change in the community.

### SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

*Season of Migration to the North* has been analysed from many different angles by critics in their attempt to explore the different levels of meaning within the text. Commonly critics look at the text in light of orientalism, post-colonialist theory, and sexual politics. They have drawn attention to the structure of the text, the second self of Mustafa Sa'eed, the role of the narrator, and the history in the novel.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>681</sup> See Mona Takieddine Amyuni, (ed) *Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih, a casebook.*

*Season* is an important and original novel, and a significant contribution to literature in Arabic. It was the first novel to address the subject of violence by the East/ South against the West/North. When reading the text it becomes more and more apparent that Tayeb Salih intended the reader to confront the brutal legacy of the British colonial venture in the Sudan. Therefore, this analysis will reveal the relationship between the sufferings of the Sudanese people under colonial rule, and the violence, counter violence and self destructiveness that exists within the text, while relating this to the characters' quest for meaning and the process of individuation; crucially it will link this process to the specificity of the novel as a genre. This will be achieved by exploring, on a socio-psychological level, the nature of Mustafa Sa'eed's relationships with the narrator and with his female lovers and his quest to create a new Sudan. Moreover it will explore the narrator's continuing pursuit of meaning, and his battle to break free from internal mediation in his relationship with Mustafa.

### **Colonialism, Imperialism, Neo-colonialism or Post colonialism**

It is first of all necessary to establish a basis upon which such an approach is possible. In order to approach the text from a postcolonial perspective and to argue that the violence, counter violence and self destructiveness in *Season* is a consequence of Britain's colonising of the Sudan, it is necessary to establish a clear understanding of post-colonial discourse and to draw upon the works of Franz Fanon<sup>682</sup>, Jean-Paul Sartre, Edward Said, and Robert J.C. Young.

Young provides an interesting explanation of the difference between Colonialism and Imperialism:

a basic difference emerges between an empire that was bureaucratically controlled by a government from the centre, and which was developed for ideological as well as financial reasons, a structure that can be called imperialism, and an empire that was developed for settlement by individual communities or for commercial purposes by a trading company, a structure that can be called colonial. Colonization was pragmatic and until the nineteenth century generally developed locally in a haphazard way... while imperialism was typically driven by ideology from the metropolitan centre and concerned with the assertion and expansion of state power. Colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery,

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<sup>682</sup> Fanon is probably most famous for *The wretched of the Earth*, where he argues for the use of violence against the coloniser, to liberate oneself. He also places a strong emphasis on the need to focus on identity and culture - a point that is further developed in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

economically driven; from the home government's perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power. Thus while imperialism is susceptible to analysis as a concept, colonialism needs to be analysed primarily as a practice: hence the difficulty of generalizations about it.<sup>683</sup>

Today postcolonial theory draws heavily upon the work of Frantz Fanon, and it was Fanon who developed the analysis of colonialism as a single formation, further developing the ideas of Sartre, who insisted on this aspect in his 1952 essay, "Le Colonialisme est un systeme".<sup>684</sup> Whereas western expansion was carried out with the moral justification that it was of benefit to all those nations brought under its sway, the values of 'spreading the light of civilization' have now been effectively contested,<sup>685</sup> and is an aspect of colonialism that plays a major role in *Season*. Colonialism may have brought some benefits of modernity, as its apologists continue to argue, but it also caused extraordinary suffering in human terms, and was singularly destructive with regard to the indigenous cultures with which it came into contact.<sup>686</sup> Young argues that:

What makes it distinctive is the comprehensiveness of its research into the continuing cultural and political ramifications of colonialism in both colonizing and colonized societies. This reveals that the values of colonialism seeped much more widely into the general culture, including academic culture, than had ever been assumed. That archeological retrieval and revaluation is central to much activity in the postcolonial field. Postcolonial theory involves a political analysis of the cultural history of colonialism, and investigates its contemporary effects in western and tricontinental cultures, making connections between that past and the politics of the present.<sup>687</sup>

The conquest of the Sudan was of a very violent character - a lot of blood was shed, as well as a lot of champagne consumed. The brutal reality of introducing the light of Western civilization amongst the sorely tried people of the Sudan, provoked counter violence that in many cases turned out to be self-destructive. Fanon, along with Sartre, argues that the only way to fight colonialism is for the colonised to use violence against the coloniser. In his book, *The wretched of the Earth*,<sup>688</sup> Fanon makes this point very clearly:

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<sup>683</sup> Young J. C. Robert, *Postcolonialism an Historical Introduction*, (Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p, 16-17.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 18.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 5-6.

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 6.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 6.

<sup>688</sup> Stuart Hall called it the "bible of decolonisation".

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex, and from his despair, and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.<sup>689</sup>

Sartre underlines this view when, in his preface to the same book, he claims “no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them”<sup>690</sup> before condoning the arming of the oppressed peoples:

The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill: to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remain a dead man, and a free man; the survivor, for the first time, feels a national soil under his foot.<sup>691</sup>

What now becomes interesting is how this is relevant to *Season*, and to the character of the violence within the novel. In the first chapter the reader learns the date on Mustafa's birth certificate: Mustafa Sa'eed, born in Khartoum 16<sup>th</sup> of August 1898.<sup>692</sup> With this information Tayeb Salih wants to inform the reader that from a historical point of view this is a very significant date – in fact it is the exact day of Britain's conquest of the Sudan, and the start of, what would become for the Sudanese people, a bloody, violent, and tragic fight for liberation. It is also crucial to note that the date of the disappearance/death of Mustafa Sa'eed corresponds with Sudan's independence. It is clear that the life of Mustafa Sa'eed correlates with the period of British domination and control of the Sudan. These are clear indicators of Tayeb Salih's intentions with this novel, which is to address the impact of colonialism, both on the colonised and the coloniser, and to answer the crucial questions posed by the characters in their search for meaning and their process of individuation. Further evidence of the author's intentions is given when the narrator finally enters Mustafa's room after his disappearance/death, and discovers his library. Most of the books are about western literature, history, and philosophy, and there is the Bible and the Qur'an in English translation. More noteworthy, however, is the fact that Mustafa Sa'eed has written some of the books himself. The books are entitled *The Economics of Colonialism*, *Colonialism and*

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<sup>689</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the Earth*, translated from French by Constance Farrington (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1965), p, 73.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid., p, 18.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid., p, 18-19.

<sup>692</sup> Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, translated from Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies, (Colorado USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1997), p, 18.



*Monopoly, The Cross and Gunpowder* and at last but not the least *The rape of Africa*. To this we could also add that he had relationships with five different women at the same time and wears five different masks as well as using different names, which could arguably represent the different experiences of colonialism in Africa. This suggests that Mustafa's concern was not only for the Sudan, but for the continent and the region as a whole, which was to suffer the violent presence of the British.

This is the main theme of the novel. Another, no less important, theme is the pursuit of meaning by both Mustafa and the narrator that takes place on another level. This quest for meaning takes place within Girard's triangle of desire, Mustafa's, quest however is of a kind that only takes place within the notion of internal/external mediation thus when the narrator in his pursuit of meaning manages to break free from the desired desire, and renounce his pride and contradict his former ideas, he is able to metamorphose into another stage.

### Desired desire

Almost all readings of the text raise the question of North vs. South.<sup>693</sup> Many interpretations of the text tend to put too much emphasis on Mustafa Sa'eed's sexual conquest of women in England, however - and for the wrong reasons. Indeed there is a tendency to focus on the sexual acts, and not on the reason behind them. All of Mustafa Sa'eed's relationships take place within the triangle of desire, especially with the conquering of his female victims. The three women, Isabella Seymour,<sup>694</sup> Ann Hammond and Sheila Greenwood,<sup>695</sup> all commit suicide after having fallen in love with him. Mustafa seduces these women by playing on, and eventually making them victims of, their Orientalist notions of the African/Arab male. In *Season* there does not exist any

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<sup>693</sup> See for instance the works of Roger Allen, *The Arab Novel-an Historical and Critical Introduction* (New York: Syracuse University Press 1982), pp, 131-138, or Issa J Boullata, "Encounter Between East and West: A Theme in Contemporary Arabic Novels" in Issa J. Boullata, (ed) *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature* (Colorado: Three Continents Press 1980), pp, 47-60. See also Mona Takieddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook*.

<sup>694</sup> Isabella Seymour differs from the other two in that she is not British. She is the Andalusian "experience" and represents the 15<sup>th</sup> century victory of Christian Spanish forces over the Muslim Arabs.

<sup>695</sup> Here one should notice an interesting intertextuality within the text. Mustafa's use of orientalist clichés to enslave these women, in the way that they become victims of their own orientalist view of him, and how he utilizes it, especially how he has decorated his room in London.

relationships founded upon shared desire. All the characters<sup>696</sup> pursue the person who flees them, and there is pursuit only when there is flight. Apart from one person's brutal rejection of the other, nothing but mediation unleashes this obsessive desire. On several occasions all three women call upon Mustafa as their God, and abandon themselves to a form of enslavement.<sup>697</sup> "The more one becomes a slave the more ardently one defends slavery. Pride can only survive with the help of the lie, and the lie is sustained by triangular desire."<sup>698</sup> Mustafa does this through adopting five different names as he engages in relationships with five different women at the same time.<sup>699</sup>

At first it seems that Mustafa's relationship to Ann, Sheila, and Isabella, is such that double mediation takes place, that is, a relationship where there exists a hope of reciprocity. However, it is not the case since the two persons do not love one another at the same time, even if Mustafa has at any time been capable of loving anyone. Such a form of double mediation is called "coquetry".<sup>700</sup> Moreover, the characters still exist within the triangle of desire. Girard argues that:

In the world of internal mediation every desire can produce other rival desires. If the desiring subject yields to the impulse which draws him toward the object, if he reveals his desire to others, then he creates new obstacles at every step of the way and strengthen already existing ones. The secret of success, in business as well as in love, is dissimulation. One must hide the desire one feels and pretend a desire one does not feel. One must lie.<sup>701</sup>

This is demonstrated on several occasions in *Season*. "Though I realized I was lying, I felt that somehow I meant what I was saying and that she too, despite her lying was telling the truth. It was one of those rare moments of ecstasy for which I would sell my whole life; a moment in which, before your very eyes, lies are turned into truths."<sup>702</sup> As Mustafa enters into relationships with various women, and deceives them, he lies about his life:

"Is it true, by way of example, that in the period between October 1922 and February 1923, that in this period alone you were living with five women simultaneously?"  
"Yes."

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<sup>696</sup> Mustafa runs away from Ann Hammond, Sheila Greenwood, and Isabella Seymour. Jean Morris flees him just as Hosna rejects Wad Rayyes, and she again is turned down by the narrator.

<sup>697</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 142

<sup>698</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>699</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 35.

<sup>700</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107

<sup>702</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 144.

“And that you gave each one the impression you’d marry her?”

“Yes.”

“And you adopted a different name with each one?”

“Yes.”

“That you were Hassan and Charles and Amin and Mustafa and Richard?”

“Yes.”<sup>703</sup>

If this desire is of a purely sexual character the presence of a rival is not needed in order for the desire to be triangular. In the eyes of the lover the beloved is both subject and object.<sup>704</sup> Such a triangle is made up of the lover, the beloved, and the body of the beloved: “Sexual desire, like other triangular desires, is always contagious. To speak of contagion is inevitably to speak of a second desire which is fixed on the same object as the original desire. To imitate one’s lover’s desire is to desire *oneself*, thanks to that lover’s desire,”<sup>705</sup> in a word, “coquetry”. Mustafa’s predicament, however, is that in none of these relationship does he desire either the beloved, the body of the beloved, or the lover; he engages in all these relationships in a quest for domination and in pursuit of individuation.<sup>706</sup> By surrendering themselves to his power, these women accept Mustafa in the role of master and in doing so only increase Mustafa’s contempt for them, especially as each one stakes her personal freedom against the other’s, in double mediation. “The struggle ends when one of the partners admits his desire and humbles his pride. Henceforth no reversal of imitation is possible, for the slave’s admitted desire destroys that of the master and ensures his genuine indifference. This indifference in turn makes the slave desperate and increases his desire.”<sup>707</sup> Fanon has noted interestingly that:

Man is motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of self, the ultimate of what by common accord is called ethical orientation...the person I love will strengthen me by endorsing my assumption of my manhood, while the need to earn the admiration or the love of others will erect a value-making superstructure on the whole vision of the world.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>704</sup> Sartre perceived this phenomenon and based his analysis of love, sadism, and masochism on it in *Being and Nothingness*, where he also formulated a description of love as frustration.

<sup>705</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>706</sup> Later it will be demonstrated that he actually does not even desire Jean Morris sexually, it is all driven by a pursuit for meaning, which he can only reach if he manages to feel equal to them.

<sup>707</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>708</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 41.

This accurately describes the motivation behind Mustafa's ongoing hunt for new prey. Unfortunately for his own sake, Mustafa does not seem to realise the absurdities inherent to triangular desire and is unable to avoid the pitfalls of which Girard speaks:

The disappointment is irrefutable proof of the absurdity of triangular desire. It would seem that the hero must now submit to the evidence. No person or object now separates him from the abject and humiliated Self which desire had somehow hidden from him with the mask of the future. Deprived of desire the hero is in danger of falling into the abyss of the present like a well-digger whose rope breaks...He cannot deny the failure of his desire but he can confine its results to the object which he now possesses and possibly to the mediator who directed him to it. The disappointment does not prove the absurdity of *all* metaphysical desires but only that of this particular desire which has just led to disillusionment. The hero realizes that he was mistaken. The object never did have the power of "initiation" which he had attributed to it. But this power he confers elsewhere, on a second object, on a new desire. The hero goes through his existence, from desire to desire, as one crosses a stream, jumping from one slippery stone to another.<sup>709</sup>

From here there exist two possibilities: Mustafa can either leave it to his former mediator to point out another object for him, or he can change mediator. What determines his decision is as always metaphysical desire, and the distance separating him and his mediator, nor psychology or freedom. As previously demonstrated when this distance is great, the object has little metaphysical value: "The prestige of the mediator is not involved in particular desires. The God is above the vicissitudes of existence. He is unique and eternal."<sup>710</sup> It is not God *per se* that Mustafa strives to become, he has been dead since Nietzsche declared him so in both in *Die Froliche Wissenschaft* from 1882 and in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* from 1883,<sup>711</sup> but he strives to become a God in the eyes of the other, that is, to become the other. Mustafa does not desire further material wealth or success, since it is in these fields that he equals the European women, and even triumphs over them due to his successful academic career. "There is nothing less "materialistic" than triangular desire. The passion that drives men to seize or gain more possessions is not materialistic; it is the triumph of the mediator, the god with the human

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<sup>709</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>711</sup> Also sprach der Teufel einst sur mir: "auch Gott hat seine Holle: das ist seine Liebe Zu den Menschen." Und jungst horte ich ihn dies wort sagen: "Gott ist tot; an seinem Mitleiden Mit den Menschen ist Gott gestorben." For details see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Chapter XXV, page 348, in Karl Schlechta: Nietzsche-index, zu den werken in drei banden. See also *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), and *Human, All to Human*, translated by Marion Faber (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1986).

face.”<sup>712</sup> Mustafa’s actions and behaviour can therefore only be explained by his uneasy and troubled attempts to overcome his profound feeling of inferiority. Consequently Mustafa’s desire is determined by his inability to be equal to Jean Morris without destroying a part of his cultural heritage. He tries to get rid of his past, to make it disappear, and to invent a new life, but as we shall see this is as impossible to do as freeing himself from exactly the same dilemma, as when he kills Jean, in a desperate attempt to free himself from the passionate presence of a mediator. The pity is that Mustafa does not know what the reader does, that he can free himself without needing to erase the mediator, that is, by renouncing his pride and stop imitating others desire. Mustafa’s yearning to become a replica of his objects evokes the words of Fanon in his interesting study *Black Skin, White Masks*. He writes: “I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine.”<sup>713</sup>

Girard has drawn upon Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of The Spirit* and of the book’s themes two are of particular interests for this study: the “unhappy consciousness” and the “dialectic of master and slave”, not as single phenomenon, but as a synthesis:<sup>714</sup> “The hero of internal mediation is an unhappy consciousness who relives the primordial struggle beyond all physical threat and stakes his freedom on the least of his desires.”<sup>715</sup> Hegel in this sense based his dialectic on physical courage, meaning that the one taking on the master role was without fear, and whoever was afraid was destined to be the slave. By contrast “the novelistic dialectic rests on hypocrisy. Violence, far from serving the interests of whoever exerts it, reveals the intensity of his desire; thus it is a sign of slavery.”<sup>716</sup> Conversely, in all his relationships Mustafa is the sole victim, and the one suffering. It may look though, that it is the women that suffer, due to their suicides, but according to the triangle of desire this is not the case. Mustafa, in his desire to conquer these women can be seen as the avenger of his people for decades of brutal colonial rule, but in this case his desire is determined by his mediator, in other words, his inability to be

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<sup>712</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>713</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 61.

<sup>714</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

their equal. This is especially clear when one analyses his relationship to Jean Morris. It is in this sense that Mustafa Sa'eed's destructive sexuality, due to his inability to control his own desire, becomes *vaniteux and* has to be tackled.

The increasing equality-the approach of the mediator in our terms-does not give rise to harmony but to an even keener rivalry. Although this rivalry is the source of considerable material benefits, it also leads to even more considerable spiritual sufferings, for nothing material can appease it. Equality which alleviates poverty is in itself good but it cannot satisfy even those who are keenest in demanding it; it only exasperates their desire."<sup>717</sup>

Mustafa emphasises the vicious circle in which, in his desire for equality, he is trapped and thus discloses a crucial aspect of triangular desire. Ontological sickness, at all times tends to draw the victims toward the "solutions" that will aggravate their illness. The obsession with equality is a kind of insanity and plays an even greater role in the unhappiness that freedom can engender in those who are incapable of accepting it in a manly fashion. Girard suggests that, "rival ideologies merely reflect both the unhappiness and the incapability; thus they result from internal mediation-rival ideologies owe their power of persuasion only to the secret support the opposing factions lend each other. Fruits of the ontological scission, their duality reflects its inhuman geometry and in return they provide food for the devouring rivalry."<sup>718</sup> When the desiring subject takes possession of the object, it is surprised to find that it is grasping a void. In the end, therefore, the subject/master ends up as far from his attaining his goal as does the object/slave. When simulating desire, he manages to wield control and gain hegemony over the desire of the Other. By possessing the object, the object itself loses its value in the very act of being possessed. This means that when Mustafa finally possesses control over a European woman, and especially Jean, she, and everything she represents, has no value, and he loses his interest. This is particularly evident in the scene where he eventually kills her:

I leant over and kissed her. I put the blade-edge between her breasts and she twined her legs round my back. Slowly I pressed down. Slowly...I pressed down the dagger with my chest until it had all disappeared between her breasts. I could feel the hot blood gushing from her chest. I began crushing my chest against her.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 136-137

<sup>718</sup> Ibid., pp. 136-137.

<sup>719</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 164-165. *Season*, through such detailed, straightforward, bloody, and ferociously descriptions of violence, is a pioneering novel in Arabic literature, and articulates a new language and idiom, representative for later post-colonial literature in its in a description of the killings that takes place.

Therefore he will never be able to realise that the space within which he exists, and desires is not as he believes a straight line between the subject and object, but in reality is a circle which inevitably turns back on himself, and he will never be able to free himself from this type of desire, in other words, imitated desire. Salih, as quoted above, utilises a new, direct and more fierce language in his picturesque description of the brutal violence that takes place in *Season*, which is also one of the text's most significant modernist traits. A further example of this is Husna's killing of Wad Rayyes.

At last, though, I became aware of her voice in the darkness like the blade of a knife. 'If they force me to marry, I'll kill him and kill myself.'...Wad Rayyes was as naked as the day he was born; Bint Mahmoud too was naked apart from her torn underclothes. The red straw mat was swimming in blood. I raised the lamp and saw that every inch of Bing Mahmoud's body was covered in bites and scratches – her stomach, thighs and neck. The nipple of one breast had been bitten through and blood poured down from her lower lip. There is no strength and no power save in god. Wad Rayyes had been stabbed more than ten times – in his stomach, chest, face, and between his thighs.'...We found her lying on her back with the knife plunged into her heart. Her mouth was open and her eyes were staring as though she were alive. Wad Rayyes had his tongue lolling out from between his jaws and his arms were raised in the air.<sup>720</sup>

### Cultural conquest

The devastating effects of colonialism in the Sudan were first felt in the form of military defeats and huge loss of life, even before the cultural attempt was launched. Timothy Mitchell makes this point in his book *Colonising Egypt*: "To establish political authority over a population...there are two modes, one of suppression and one of torturing. The latter is long-term and works upon the mind, the former works upon the body and must come first."<sup>721</sup> This is also the case in the relationship between Mustafa Sa'eed and Jane Morris. Throughout the novel she seeks to humiliate him and to strip him of his cultural heritage. One example is how she forces him to destroy and give up his most personal belongings, for which his reward is to possess her sexually:

Standing in front of me like some demon, a challenging defiance in her eyes that stirred remote longings in my heart. Without our exchanging a word, she stripped off her clothes and stood naked before me. All the fires of hell blazed within my breast. Those fires had to be extinguished in that mountain of ice that stood in my path. As I advanced towards her my

<sup>720</sup> Ibid., pp. 96, 126-127.

<sup>721</sup> Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press 1988), p. 95.

limbs trembling, she pointed to an expensive Wedgwood<sup>722</sup> vase on the mantelpiece. "Give this to me and you can have me," she said. If she had asked at that moment for my life as a price I would have paid it. I nodded my head in agreement. Taking up the vase, she smashed it on the ground and began trampling the pieces underfoot. She pointed to a rare Arabic manuscript on the table. "Give me this too," she said...Taking up the old, rare manuscript she tore it to bits, filling her mouth with pieces of paper which she chewed and spat out...She pointed to a silken Isphahan prayer-rug which I had been given by Mrs. Robinson when I left Cairo. It was the most valuable thing I owned, the thing I treasured most. "Give me this too and then you can have me," she said...taking up the prayer-rug, she threw it on to the fire and stood watching gloatingly as it was consumed, the flames reflected on her face.<sup>723</sup>

At first this could be interpreted as him willingly sacrificing his culture, history and identity,<sup>724</sup> for the sake of a sexual conquest. This is not the case, however, as he later explains, when it is certain that this murderous wars between the two of them will inevitably end in his defeat:

A volcano of violence would explode within her and she would break any crockery that came to hand and tear up books and papers. This was the most dangerous weapon she had and every battle would end with her ripping up an important book or burning some piece of research on which I had worked for weeks on end. Sometimes I would be so overcome with rage that I would reach the brink of madness and murder and would tighten my grip on her throat, when she would suddenly grow quiet and give me that enigmatic look, a mixture of astonishment, fear, and desire.<sup>725</sup>

As demonstrated earlier this is an illustration of how Mustafa despairs of not being in control of his desired desire, that is, the revered object has now come so close that he can touch it, but an obstacle remains between them - the mediator: "The closer the mediator comes, the more feverish the action becomes...thwarted desire is so violent that it can lead to murder."<sup>726</sup>

In Mustafa's relationship with Jean there is an obvious lack of mutual trust and respect, primarily because it is of a purely sexual nature. To achieve what Lawrence Stone calls "affective individualism" it is crucial to remember that "The transition to modern forms of erotic relations is generally thought to be associated with the formation

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<sup>722</sup> It is only in the English translation that the vase Jean Morris destroys is a Wedgwood, since in the Arabic edition it is described as a precious vase (Zuhriyya thamina, p 158). See also Mona Takieddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North*, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook, p. 33, note 9.

<sup>723</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>724</sup> Ali Abdallah Abbas argues that Mustafa Sa'eed has neither roots nor culture to sacrifice at all. See his essay "The Father of Lies: The Role of Mustafa Sa'eed as Second Self in Season of Migration to The North", in Takieddine Amyuni, op. cit., pp. 27-38

<sup>725</sup> Ibid., p, 160-161.

<sup>726</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 85.



of an ethos of romantic love.”<sup>727</sup> In *Season* none of Mustafa’s relationships are based upon trust, and neither person involved can, want or dares to enter into a process that demands a mutual process of self disclosure. For Giddens this is one of the most significant consequences of Modernity,

Erotic relations involve a progressive path of mutual discovery, in which a process of self realisation on the part of the lover is as much a part of the experience as increasing intimacy with the loved one. Personal trust, therefore, has to be established through the process of self-enquiry: the discovery of oneself becomes a project directly involved with the reflexivity of modernity.<sup>728</sup>

Bearing in mind that emotions associated with sexuality are very powerful, it should not come as a surprise that this happens at the very centre of self-disclosure. All this lead us to the, “grand finale”, as quoted above when he kills Jane Morris. As is the case in *Othello*, the murder takes place in bed. Mustafa’s predicament however is not resolved even with the physical elimination of Jean.

Mustafa once again puts the object before the mediator and desire before envy. Such an error forces and tempts him into irreparable and unremitting sufferings from jealousy as he thinks his illness will be cured when the current rival is eradicated. For Mustafa as for everybody else this can only happen when we abandon pride and imitated desire. Barbara Harlow claims that this murder is: “an almost ritual re-enactment of *Othello*’s murder of *Desdemona*,”<sup>729</sup> but whereas *Othello* drops the knife Mustafa Sa’eed plants it between her breasts and presses it down with his chest. The knife must also be regarded as a metaphor for the state of mind in which Mustafa Sa’eed is. Several times in the text Mustafa Sa’eed tells the reader that his sole weapon is, “the sharp knife inside my skull”,<sup>730</sup> and “my mind was like a sharp knife”.<sup>731</sup> A further violent analogy that is also used to express his emotional state is the bow and the arrow: “the bowstring had become more taut. The arrow will shoot forth towards other unknown horizons.”<sup>732</sup> The metaphor reveal the metaphysical significance of desire,<sup>733</sup> as well as, “deflect our attention from

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<sup>727</sup> Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, p. 121.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>729</sup> Barbara Harlow, “Sentimental Orientalism: *Season of Migration to the North* and *Othello*”, in Takieddine Amyuni, *op. cit.*, p, 78.

<sup>730</sup> Salih, *Season*, p, 26.

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 31.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, p, 28.

<sup>733</sup> Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

the object and direct it to the mediator; they help us turn from linear desire to triangular desire."<sup>734</sup>

Triangular desire demonstrate the relationship between passion, of some noble sort, and morbid jealousy, that is desired, provoked and cunningly encouraged.<sup>735</sup> Denis De Rougemont points to the notion that "one reaches the point of wanting the beloved to be unfaithful so that one can court her again."<sup>736</sup> Thus the handkerchief in *Season*, as well as in *Othello*, is a sign of infidelity. Yet Mustafa seem indifferent:

"Once I found a man's handkerchief which wasn't mine. "It's yours," she said when I asked her. "This handkerchief isn't mine," I told her. "Assuming it's not your handkerchief," she said, "what are you going to do about it?" On another occasion I found a cigarette case, then a pen. "You're being unfaithful to me," I said to her. "Suppose I am being unfaithful to you," she said. "I swear I'll kill you," I shouted at her. "You only say that," she said with a jeering smile. "What's stopping you from killing me? What are you waiting for? Perhaps you're waiting till you find a man lying on top of me, and even then I don't think you'd do anything. You'd sit on the edge of the bed and cry."<sup>737</sup>

In the end Jean was right; Mustafa is an emotional masochist. Girard argues that for the masochist, "continual success, or rather continual disappointment makes him desire his own failure; only that failure will indicate an authentic deity, a mediator who is invulnerable to his own undertakings. As we know, metaphysical desire always ends in enslavement, failure, and shame. If these consequences are too long delayed, the subject's bizarre logic will force him to hasten their arrivals."<sup>738</sup> Mustafa pursues Jean, in the hope of becoming her master: "the master has learned from his many different experiences that an object which can be possessed is valueless. So in the future he will be interested only in objects which are forbidden him by an implacable mediator. The master seeks an insurmountable obstacle and he almost always succeeds in finding one."<sup>739</sup> For Mustafa there is only one Jean, and as shall be demonstrated later, Mustafa is the only mediator for the narrator.

After his many conquests Mustafa becomes blasé, he automatically turns into a masochist, in that he desires what he cannot have. If and when Mustafa, or any other

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<sup>734</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>737</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 162.

<sup>738</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

novelistic character, as we have seen, finally possesses the object of his desire, “the disappointment is entirely metaphysical. The subject discovers that possession of the object has not changed his being—the expected metamorphosis has not taken place. The greater the apparent “virtue” of the object the more terrible is the disappointment, thus disappointment deepens as the mediator draws closer to the hero. The moment the hero takes hold of the desired object its “virtue” disappears like gas from a burst balloon. The object has been suddenly desecrated by possession and reduced to its objective qualities.”<sup>740</sup> Mona Takieddine Amyuni, when looking at Mustafa’s relationship to Jean, interprets Mustafa’s actions to be part of an acute sado-masochistic game.<sup>741</sup> This can arguably also be said about how Mustafa and the narrator interact, and even about the manner in which the narrator relates to Mustafa’s ghost. This sado-masochistic game does not come to the surface in sexual conflicts, but more as a battle for power, as it is Mustafa’s obstructive qualities that provoke the narrator’s desire, not his positive sides, as shall be demonstrated. This undermines the myth that Mustafa is a victim of, and not able to control his actions towards Jean, due to the nature and forces of his unconsciousness.<sup>742</sup>

### Mustafa VS the Narrator

So far this reading of *Season* has revealed that Mustafa’s relationship to women, and to Jean Morris in particular, is decided by their position inside the triangle, and the way in which they imitate the Other’s desire, in their quest for equality. This is also the case in the relationship between the narrator and Mustafa, although it is the struggle for legitimacy and power, to adopt Bourdieu’s language, which is of significance when determining how the process of individuation takes place. Several<sup>743</sup> analyses of the

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>741</sup> Mona Takieddine Amyuni, “Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*: An Interpretation”. In *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Volume 2 No. 1 Winter 1980, p. 13.

<sup>742</sup> Most of these analysis depend upon and take for granted the works of primarily Freud, Jung and Lacan, and do not seem to acknowledge the fact that these “unconscious processes” towards creating ones identity are very difficult to see or examine and even more difficult to proof. They therefore view identity as something solemnly formed through unconscious process over time and not as being innate in consciousness at birth.

<sup>743</sup> See for instance Muhammed Sadiq *Patterns of Identity in the Hebrew and Arabic Novel*, (PhD from University of California, Berkeley 1981). Ali Abdallah Abbas “The Father of Lies: The Role of Mustafa

narrator, and the relationship with Mustafa, have had a tendency to rely on a narrow Jungian psychoanalytical approach.<sup>744</sup>

More significant however is the battle for power between the narrator and Mustafa, and how the narrator struggles against the urge to imitate Mustafa, and all that he represents, including his desire. One early indication is when the narrator comes back to his village and suddenly realises that both he and the village are not what they used to be. During the seven years he spent in England studying English poetry, he had felt a strong yearning for his people, and on his return he is greeted with joy by the villagers. The narrator is soon to learn that the village have welcomed and embraced the stranger Mustafa - the person that will change his life. The narrator, in his mid twenties and with a romantic view of the world, fully identifies himself with his family, tribe and village, unlike Mustafa who has no roots or ties to bind him to this particular village, is soon to be invited into the triangle. The narrator's grandfather describes Mustafa as: "not a local man but a stranger who had come here five years ago, had bought himself a farm, built a house and married Mahmoud's daughter-a man who kept himself to himself and about whom not much was known, and that Mustafa during his whole stay in the village had never done anything which could cause offence, that he regularly attended Friday prayers and that he was always ready to give of his labour and his means in glad times and sad."<sup>745</sup> Mustafa, the subject, cannot wait to ensnare the narrator, his object rival, into the triangle. The mediation can now start, as it is aggravated by rivalry, and "it increases the mediator's prestige and strengthens the bond which links the object to this mediator by forcing him to affirm openly his right or desire of possession. Thus the subject is less capable than ever of giving up the inaccessible object: it is on this object and it alone that the mediator confers his prestige, by possessing or wanting to possess it."<sup>746</sup> Mustafa brings some fruit and goes to visit the narrator, and the following conversation takes place:

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Sa'eed as Second Self in Season of Migration to The North", in Takiyeddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North*, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook pp. 27-38

<sup>744</sup> There are definitely positive aspects with the Freudian and Jungian approach in the sense that they forced modern thinking to move away from the idea of a rational subject and identity as fixed and stable, however it seems that such analysis tend to miss or disregard the impact cultural, social, political, and economical changes has on the modern individual.

<sup>745</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 2-7.

<sup>746</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

They said you gained a high certificate - what do you call it? A doctorate?' 'What do you call it? he says to me. This did not please me for I had reckoned that the ten million inhabitants of the country had all heard of my achievement. 'They say you were remarkable from childhood.' 'Not at all.' Though I spoke thus, I had in those days, if the truth be told, a rather high opinion of myself.

'A doctorate - that's really something.' Putting on an act of humility, I told him that the matter entailed no more than spending three years delving into the life of an obscure English poet.

I was furious - I won't disguise the fact from you - when the man laughed unashamedly and said: 'We have no need of poetry here. It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine' Look at the way he says 'we' and does not include me, though he knows that this is my village and that it is he - not I - who is the stranger.<sup>747</sup>

Mustafa has now managed to make the "I" of the narrator feel threatened by the "he" of himself and make the narrator feel like a stranger in his own village, in other words, the narrator now imitates, and desires to be Mustafa. At this stage it is the narrator that is the one coming from outside. Furthermore, the meaning of the term "stranger" has changed with the coming of modernity:

In the case of the stranger, the union of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship is patterned in a way that may be succinctly formulated as follows: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but his strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near. The state of being a stranger is of course a completely positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction...The stranger is element of the group itself, not unlike the poor and sundry "inner enemies"-an element whose membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it.<sup>748</sup>

Anthony Giddens underlines this and suggests that:

In pre-modern cultures, where the local community always remains the basis of wider social organization, the "stranger" refers to a "whole person"-someone who comes from the outside and who is potentially suspect. There may be many respects in which a person from elsewhere fails to receive the trust of the insiders, even perhaps after having lived in that community for many years. In modern societies, by contrast, we do not characteristically interact with strangers as "whole people" in the same way. Particularly in many urban settings, we interact more or less continuously with others whom we either do not know well or have never met before-but this interaction takes the form of relatively fleeting contacts.<sup>749</sup>

This same situation keeps repeating itself, and the narrator again feels that Mustafa is the one playing the role he had planned to take on when returning to the village. This time however it is Mahjoub, the narrator's best friend since childhood, and the president of the Agricultural Project committee that invites him to one of the committee's meetings where

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<sup>747</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 8-9.

<sup>748</sup> Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms* (London: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1971), pp. 143-144. See also part III, chapter 10.

<sup>749</sup> Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, p. 80.

Mustafa is a member. As the discussion over a matter concerning the access to water gets heated and some of the members start shouting at each other, suddenly the narrator witnesses, "Mustafa jump to his feet, at which the uproar died down and they listened to him with great respect, and that there was not the slightest doubt that the man was of a different clay, that by rights he should have been the President of the Committee."<sup>750</sup>

I asked Mahjoub about Mustafa Sa'eed. 'God rest his soul, 'he said. 'We had a mutual respect for each other. At first the relationship between us was not a strong one, but our work together on the Project Committee brought us closer. His death was an irreparable loss. You know, he gave us invaluable help in organizing the Project. He used to look after the accounts and his business experience was of great use to us.<sup>751</sup>

The incident demonstrate how the local village has become a battlefield within which the narrator and Mustafa fight for legitimacy and hegemony, and the determinant for the outcome are their habitus, in other words, who's inherited and acquired dispositions are to lead to victory and end the war.

A pivotal moment in the narrative is when the narrator loses his temper. During a drinking session at Mahjoub's place Mustafa suddenly starts to recite English poetry "Then, suddenly, I heard him reciting English poetry in a clear voice and with an impeccable accent."<sup>752</sup> Even in what is supposed to be the narrator's field of expertise Mustafa appears to surpass him. Mustafa controls the narrator, and make him feel subjugated as he is always present. Mustafa's role as a mediator is now unavoidable, and as has been demonstrated this can lead to murder. The narrator does not attempt to kill Mustafa, due to his increasing curiosity in his mediator, but he screams out in frustration and anger: "Leaping up, I stood above the man and shouted at him: 'What's this you're saying? 'What's this you're saying?'"<sup>753</sup> Mustafa responds with an icy look, pushing him away violently, and leaves the assembled company. The next day, however, the narrator visits Mustafa, and gets what he desires, or more precisely, exactly what Mustafa wants him to desire, now that he is securely locked into the logic of triangular desire. The law of the triangle is that "the person who hates first hates himself for the secret admiration

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<sup>750</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

concealed by his hatred.”<sup>754</sup> “Only someone who prevents us from satisfying a desire which he himself has inspired in us is truly an object of hatred.”<sup>755</sup> Girard argues that hatred is individualistic, and that:

It nourishes fiercely the illusion of an absolute difference between the Self and that Other from which nothing separates it. Indignant comprehension is therefore an imperfect comprehension—not nonexistent as some moralists claim, but imperfect, for the subject does not recognize in the Other the void gnawing at himself. He makes of him a monstrous divinity. The subject's indignant knowledge of the Other returns in a circle to strike him when he is least expecting it. This psychological circle is inscribed in the triangle of desire. Most of our ethical judgments are rooted in hatred of a mediator, a rival whom we copy.<sup>756</sup>

As we have observed, the role of the mediator increases synchronically the closer he gets to the object. In traditional novelistic composition the hierarchy of desire has seen the mediator remaining in the background while the object is promoted to the foreground. This is also the case with *Season*, at least for part of the narrative. Moreover the magic of Tayeb Salih is that as the story develops, he turns this dialectic relationship up side down, as he promotes the mediator, then demotes the object, that is the narrator, in order to make him the determinant of the story, as we shall see later on. This is also the reason why Mustafa is mistakenly seen as the hero of the novel, and not the narrator as is the case.<sup>757</sup> As this takes place the narrator floats with the river Nile, to end the migration of imitated desire, and to proceed with his process of individuation, since through choosing to liberate himself from desiring Mustafa's desire, he is able to narrate the story. However, the narrator is not yet free from the psychological circle inscribed within the triangle, and now that Mustafa has promised to reveal his background and life-story the narrator's desire is set to rise.

Soon after the narrator learns about Mustafa's life and history, Mustafa disappears following a flood that causes the Nile to rise to its highest level in thirty years. “I leave my wife, two sons, and all my worldly goods in your care, knowing that you will act honourably in every respect.”<sup>758</sup> This is the opening of the letter that Mustafa leaves the

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<sup>754</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>757</sup> However as shall be demonstrated all the characters in *Season* are heroes since they all play important roles in creating a new Sudan, and the new individuated narrator, in other words, a personality that is representative of the Sudan Salih hopes to see in the future.

<sup>758</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 65.

narrator. Now that Mustafa is absent in person, his presence is to be felt due to the imagined mediator, within the narrators mind. Even when the narrator is not thinking of Mustafa himself, quite by chance he will come across someone who will speak to him about Mustafa and recall his remarkable personality:

Mustafa Sa'eed died two years ago, but I still continue to meet up with him from time to time. I lived for twenty-five years without having heard of him or seen him; then, all of a sudden, I find him in a place where the likes of him are not usually encountered. Thus Mustafa Sa'eed has, against my will, become a part of my world, a thought in my brain, a phantom that does not want to take itself off. And thus too I experience a remote feeling of fear, fear that it is just conceivable that simplicity is not everything.<sup>759</sup>

"In Khartoum too the phantom of Mustafa Sa'eed appeared to me less than a month after my conversation with the retired Mamur, like a genie who has been released from his prison and will continue thereafter to whisper in men's ears...The person who mentioned his name was the young lecturer at the University and on his face was that very same expression of joy I had glimpsed on the retired Mamur's face"<sup>760</sup>

This same lecturer also claims that Mustafa is now a millionaire living like a lord in the English countryside. The narrator's reaction is faithful to the logic of triangular desire:

Without realizing it I found myself saying out loud, 'On his death Mustafa Sa'eed left six acres, three cows, an ox, two donkeys, ten goats, five sheep, thirty date palms, twenty-three acacia, sayal and harraz trees, twenty-five lemon, and a like number of orange, trees, nine ardebs of wheat and nine of maize, and a house made up of five rooms and a diwan, also a further room of red brick, rectangular in shape, with green windows, and a roof that was not flat as those of the rest of the rooms but triangular like the back of an ox, and nine hundred and thirty-seven pounds, three piastres and five milliemes in cash.'<sup>761</sup>

Once again Girard's thesis proves to be correct, as "the mediator is imaginary but not the mediation."<sup>762</sup> The narrator cannot miss an opportunity to enact "symbolic violence" on Mustafa, when he encounters the latter's "dabbling attempts" at poetry:<sup>763</sup> "I did not, though, waste too much time on it, for in any case it is a very poor poem that relies on antithesis and comparisons; it has no true feeling, no genuine emotion. This line of mine is no worse than the rest, so I crossed out the last line of the poem and wrote in its place:"<sup>764</sup>

<sup>759</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid., p. 56. See also pages 52, 54, 56, 57 and 120 for similar incidents where an imagined mediator persuades the narrator to imitate Mustafa's desires.

<sup>762</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>763</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 152-153

<sup>764</sup> Ibid., p. 153.



The narrator is trapped in Mustafa's snare as he has, according to Takiyeddine Amyuni, unconsciously fallen in love with Hosna, Mustafa's widow.<sup>765</sup> However, this thesis would argue that this is the same imitated desire that stirs inside the narrator when he is together with, or hears the name of Hosna. For the narrator she represents Mustafa in flesh, and she has the distinction of being the only woman he actually loved:

'Did you love Mustafa Sa'eed?' I suddenly asked her. She did not answer. Though I waited a while she still did not answer. Then I realized that the darkness and the perfume were all but causing me to lose control and that mine was not a question to be asked at such a time and place...I almost despaired. Then a brisk of breeze blew in my direction, carrying a charge of perfume greater than I had hoped for. As I breathed it in I felt my despair becoming keener.<sup>766</sup> And I, what shall I do now amidst this chaos? Shall I go up to her, clasp her to my breast, dry her tears with my handkerchief and restore serenity to her heart with my words? I raised myself, leaning on my arm, but I sensed danger as I remembered something, and remained as I was for time in a state between action and resistant.<sup>767</sup> Then like a sudden blow that lands right on top of one's head, Mahjoub's words struck home: 'Why don't you marry her?' My heart beat so violently within me that I almost lost control....I remembered her perfume of the night before and the thoughts about her had taken roots in my head in the darkness...I was in love with Hosna Bint Mahmoud, the widow of Mustafa Sa'eed.<sup>768</sup>

This finally comes to an end when the narrator's thwarted desire brings him close to killing his long time friend Mahjoub. They are discussing Hosna's death, and the surrounding circumstances, when Mahjoub describes her as mad and worthless and mocks the narrator for mourning her death, comparing him to Wad Rayyes and claiming he has become soft from too much education. This is too much for the narrator to bear and he attacks his friend, in what Muhammed Sadiq suggests is a landmark in his process of individuation, because "it demonstrates his readiness to defend his solitary view against the collective judgment of the people that mean most to him: his family, friends and the villagers."<sup>769</sup>

I do remember my hands closing over Mahjoub's throat; I remember the way his eyes bulged; I remember, too, a violent blow in the stomach and Mahjoub crouching on my chest. I remember Mahjoub prostrate on the ground and me kicking him, and I remember his voice screaming out 'Mad! You're mad!' I remember a clamour and a shouting as I pressed down on Mahjoub's throat and heard a gurgling sound<sup>770</sup>

<sup>765</sup> Takiyeddine Amyuni, "Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North: An Interpretation", p. 15.

<sup>766</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 90.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>769</sup> Muhammed Sadiq, *Patterns of Identity in the Hebrew and Arabic Novel*, (PhD from University of California, Berkeley 1981), p. 116.

<sup>770</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 133.

Even if the narrator has some feelings for Hosna, they are triggered, not by his personal desire, but by his desire to be Mustafa's equal within the village, in the power struggle for legitimacy. However the fact that the narrator, in the end does not give in to the imitated desire of Mustafa is a determining factor in his pursuit of meaning, and in the process of individuation, as he takes on the desert, and its caravans of thirst.<sup>771</sup>

All these incidences of conflict in *Season* demonstrate and support Girard's argument on intra-rivalry relationships in the genre of the novel.<sup>772</sup>

The victim of internal mediation always sees...a hostile intention in the mechanical obstacle which the desire of the mediator places in his path. The victim is loud in his indignation but at heart he believes he deserves the punishment inflicted on him. The mediator's hostility always seems somewhat legitimate, since by very definition the victim feels inferior to the person whose desire he copies. Thus contempt and obstruction only redouble desire because they confirm the superiority of the mediator. From this point it is but a short step to choosing the mediator, not because of his seemingly positive qualities but because of the obstruction he can provide; and the more a subject despises himself the more easily he makes this step.<sup>773</sup>

### Back to nature

The use of metaphors in describing the return to nature in an endeavour at constructing the new Sudan is in *Season* also closely linked with those of whom the narrator use in describing both himself and his closest family, especially the grandfather. Metaphors are also used to describe the narrator's liberation, and answering all the questions and issues that Salih raises in the texts:

I want to take my rightful share of life by force, I want to give lavishly, I want love to flow from my heart, to ripen and bear fruit. There are many horizons that must be visited, fruits that must be plucked, books read, and white pages in the scrolls of life to be inscribed with vivid sentences in a bold hand...-and I feel a sense of stability, I feel important, that I am continuous and integral. No, I am not a stone thrown into the water, but seed sown into a field.<sup>774</sup>

<sup>771</sup> It can be argued that the narrator could have prevented the killing of Hosna, as he was in a position to marry her, as she herself wanted. However, if he had, he would never have been able to break out of the triangle and free himself from the imitated desire of Mustafa. One should also bear in mind that he maintains a distance to all the destructive killings and does not narrate any of the death scenes which signals a break with the former traditional socio-political and cultural status and suggests a step towards modernity. For an opposing point of view see Nabil Matar "Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North: Circles of Deceit*". In Takiyeddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook*, pp. 113-122.

<sup>772</sup> This is also demonstrated in the work of Knut Hamsun and particularly in *Mysteries and Pan*, and in the case of Nagel and his relations towards Dagny, Miniman, and Martha, and Glahn's relationship towards Edvarda and Eva.

<sup>773</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>774</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 5.

Mustafa Sa'eed said that my grandfather knows the secret. A tree grows simply and your grandfather has lived and will die simply.<sup>775</sup>

When I embrace my grandfather I experience a sense of richness as though I am a note in the heartbeats of the very universe. He is no towering oak tree with luxuriant branches growing in a land on which Nature has bestowed water and fertility, rather is he like the sayal bushes growing in the deserts of the Sudan, thick of bark and sharp of thorn, defeating death because he asks so little of life.<sup>776</sup>

This contrasts sharply with the way in which Mustafa describes himself: "Yet I had felt from childhood that I-that I was different-I mean that I was not like other children of my age: I wasn't affected by anything, I didn't cry when hit, wasn't glad if the teacher praised me in class, didn't suffer from the things that the rest did. I was like something rounded, made of rubber, you throw it in the water and it doesn't get wet, you throw it on the ground and it bounces back."<sup>777</sup>

As already noted the narrator had an intention to let love free, but did not have the courage, knowledge or the desire to do it, in other words, to get out of the triangle. As he takes on a personal migration through the desert this is to change, and as he experiences and overcomes it, then suddenly the wars have an opportunity to be won. Asad E. Khairallah supports the notion of the desert trip as a milestone for the narrator's personal migration to individuation:

Within the Sudanese context the desert is meaningful as a striking contrast to the Nile, the normal travel way, and the artery of life. In fact, the journey is from the Nile to the Nile, i.e. from life to life. But if "the village", Salih's major concern, is to be understood as the glorious fruit of man's heroic struggle in a particular geographic context, and as a fragile synthesis between life and death, between the Nile and the desert, then our narrator cannot help taking us along in his confrontation with the desert...the desert as the valley of death, where the human caravan resembles the tight-rope walker over the abyss, and where life is possible only through self-confidence and faith in one's courage, cunning and will power to confront danger and attain the other side. *Therefore, the confrontation with the desert is the adequate vehicle for conveying the socio-political, moral and even metaphysical outlook of the novel.*<sup>778</sup>

It is here and only here that we witness serene joy and happiness, as the narrator meets up with a group of Bedouins and they join together in a great feast that has apparently no meaning - a festival of nothingness. The feast, however, is not a meaningless one: "is not

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<sup>775</sup> Ibid., p. 50

<sup>776</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20

<sup>778</sup> Asad E. Khairallah, "The Travelling Theatre or the Art of Entertaining a Doomed Caravan with Amusing Stories", in Takieddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook* p. 98. Italics mine.

only the celebration of victory, but also an instinctive and healthy expression of an unconditional desire to seize the fleeting possibilities of happiness.”<sup>779</sup> Here the narrator is joined by his fellow countryman in a generous and human celebration “to the good health of the Sudan,”<sup>780</sup> as they share a roasted sheep, sweets, cigarettes and beer among each other. “It is against this desert background that joy and marry-making acquire their real value and seem also bigger-than-life. And an integral task of this caravan is to celebrate the rebirth of hope and the return to life.”<sup>781</sup> From here on our narrator can only journey towards the Nile, as “some of the headlights pointed southwards in the direction of the Nile, some northwards also in the direction of the Nile,”<sup>782</sup> a place where he is to make an important choice, for the first time in his life. This is the result of the discoveries he made inside Mustafa’s secret room, and a growing sense of unease about keeping Mustafa’s lies hidden: “there was no limit to his egoism and his conceit; despite everything, he wanted history to immortalize him. But I do not have the time to proceed further on this farce...at the break of dawn tongues of fire will devour these lies.”<sup>783</sup> The narrator is a victim of his imitated desire and seeks revenge:

I begin from where Mustafa Sa’eed had left off. Yet he at least made a choice, while I have chosen nothing...I had lost the war because I did not know and did not choose. Now I am on my own: there is no escape, no place of refuge, no safeguard. Outside, my world was a wide one; now it had contracted, had withdrawn upon itself, until I myself had become the world, no world existing outside of me. Where, then, were the roots that struck down into times past? Where the memories of death and life? What had happened to the caravan and to the tribe? Where had gone the trilling cries of the women at tens of weddings, where the Nile floodings, and the blowing of the wind summer and winter from north and south? Love? Love does not do this. This is hatred.<sup>784</sup>

At the very moment he ceases to imitate Mustafa’s desire he stops hating and is able to let love flow from his heart, to ripen and to bear fruit. What than is the determinant of his success, of his being able to finally free himself from internal mediation? It is his habitus. The narrator several times reveals his great respect and admiration for his grandfather, as does Mustafa who claims that the narrator’s grandfather knows the secret, his way of life and approach to the world around him:

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<sup>779</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>780</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 114.

<sup>781</sup> Khairallah, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>782</sup> Salih, *Season*, p. 115.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-135

And my grandfather, with his thin voice and that mischievous laugh of his when in good humour, where is *his* place in the schemes of things? Is he above this chaos? I don't know. In any case he has survived despite epidemics, the corruption of those in power, and the cruelty of nature. I am certain that when death appears to him he will smile in death's face. Isn't this enough? Is more than this demanded of a son of Adam?<sup>785</sup>

It is this habitus, his inherited dispositions within the village, its traditions, culture, the nature, the desert, the Nile, and the date palm tree inside their house as well as his appetite for life that allow him at last to be triumphant in his power struggle with Mustafa:

And suddenly the war ended in victory...the war ended in victory for us all: the stones, the trees, the animals, and the iron, while I lying under this beautiful, compassionate sky, feel that we are all brothers; he who drinks and he who prays and he who steals and he who commits adultery and he who fights and he who kills. The source is the same. No one knows what goes on in the mind of the Divine. Perhaps He doesn't care.<sup>786</sup>

Obviously He does not care, as He is dead according to Nietzsche, or as George Lukács argues in *The Theory of the Novel*, that "the novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God,"<sup>787</sup> just as he has left the narrator as well. Divine inspiration or not, the narrator finally sees himself as a future representative for his beloved Sudan, just as his grandfather represented the traditional Sudan, an immutable person in a society that is going through rapid and dynamic changes. Mustafa Sa'eed, the stranger, embodies the modern but composite stage in the history of Sudan, just as the narrator represents the society and culture that brings into being a divided self in the respect of representing both the past and the present. In other words the three represent the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the post-colonial stages in the history of the Sudan and they are all named except the narrator who is representative of the new Sudan, still to come. Indeed he has reached a stage where he is now able to see, not with one eye, to speak not with one tongue, to see not in black or white, but to see with two eyes, speak with two tongues, see things as both black and white, as a fusion of eastern and western, in other words as a synthesis of thesis and antithesis.

It is in this direction only that Tayeb Salih wants his future Sudan to develop, and it is this process of individuation that he describes when the narrator utters these words:

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<sup>785</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>787</sup> Lukács, op. cit., p. 88.

I must be one of those birds that exist only in one region of the world. True I studied poetry, but that means nothing. I could equally well have studied engineering, agriculture, of medicine; they are all means to earning a living. I would imagine the faces over there as being brown or black so that they would look like the faces of people I knew. Over there is like here, neither better nor worse. But I am from here, just as the date palm standing in the courtyard of our house has grown in our house and not in anyone else's. The fact that they came to our land, I know not why, does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries. The railways, ships, hospitals, factories and schools will be ours and we'll speak their language without either a sense of guilt or a sense of gratitude. Once again we shall be as we were - ordinary people - and if we are lies we shall be lies of our own making.<sup>788</sup>

These words express the narrator's desire not to mix the present with the future, that is, the past must not be an obstacle for individuation. At this point he has managed to get rid of what some<sup>789</sup> have called the germ of Mustafa Sa'eed, as he leaves his stifling secret room and throws himself in the baptismal water of the Nile to cleanse himself of the remains of imitated desire. The narrator, half way across the Nile, has the opportunity to complete his internal mediation and to follow Mustafa to his death, but suddenly he feels not a violent desire, but a simple desire for a cigarette.<sup>790</sup> He recalls that his daughter's name is Hope and suddenly he realises that in "all my life I had not chosen, had not decided. Now I am making a decision. I choose life. I shall live because there are a few people I want to stay with for the longest possible time and because I have duties to discharge...if I am unable to forgive, then I shall try to forget. I shall live by force and cunning."<sup>791</sup> Only by such approach to life can he create a strong, proud, and united Sudan, where there is room for all of its people to join the feast for freedom and future, since the season of migration is now over, and indeed in *Season* they are all heroes, heroes of their own making.

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<sup>788</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>789</sup> See Mona Takieddine Amyuni, Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North: An Interpretation*. (In *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Volume 2 No. 1 Winter 1980), pp. 1-18. Nabil Matar in Takieddine Amyuni (ed) *Season of Migration to the North, by Tayeb Salih, a casebook*, pp. 113-122. As argued here this can not be seen as a germ since Mustafa represents a necessary stage in the process of individuation, and the narrator could not have managed to create the prosperous future for the new Sudan as he had, and it has been demonstrated that as he managed to break free from the imitated desire, he joined his fellow men in a feast for a "germ free" Sudan.

<sup>790</sup> This has to be seen in relation to the scene in the desert when the Bedouin is desperate for cigarette, and the desert trip as representation for the new Sudan.

<sup>791</sup> Salih, *Season*, pp. 168-169.

### Salih in short

In *Wedding*, Zein's search for meaning is through the social interaction inside the village. As an outsider within the community he is able to interact freely across the borders of gender and class. He also interacts with the three major groups that fight for legitimate power, and after being blessed by Haneen he is in a group of his own. The marriage to the village's princess, Ni'ma, further enhances his special status, as no one had ever anticipated such a marriage. It is within the social aspects of triangular power relations that Zein pursues his meaning and his identity is shaped. Salih then changes his approach in *Season*, as Mustafa cannot be a Zein because he is a stranger and has been affected by and is part of European culture. He seems to have settled in the village and is an active part of the local community, but deep inside he is infected by European values and he contaminates the whole village, even his own wife and especially the narrator. He makes fun of them, and when he disappears he leaves Husna in the hands of Wad Rayyis, and a brutal murder takes place. In London he had to annihilate his own cultural roots in his desire to get Jane Morris, the same culture he exploited to enslave and seduce other women. Mustafa suffers from the legacy of colonialism and finds meaning in avenging British violence and the conquest of the Sudan. This counter violence drives some of the women he is involved with in England to commit suicide. Mustafa adopts and hides behind several different names, and by the time he returns to the Sudan his stay in England has shaped his identity to such an extent that he cannot separate the two and has filled a secret room in his house with English furniture and books, even the Qur'an is in English. Mustafa's process of individuation lies on the crossroads between his two cultures, and inside the triangle of desire; in other words, through his desire to become and imitate the other. From *Wedding* to *Season* the pursuit changes dramatically from one of a traditional trajectory of shaping identity into a clash of cultures as a result of colonialism and an expression of post-colonial counter violence. In *Season* it is the narrator that is the symbol for the new Sudan, because the apocalypse needs a positive side to be complete. In *Season* there are two deaths of significance, that is the death of Mustafa, and the death of the narrator. Mustafa's death is the death of the spirit that embodies the negative sides of post-colonial counter violence. The death of the narrator is the death of life, that is, his inferiority complex in relation to what Mustafa represents; he

chooses not to drown in the Nile, and continues living and participating in the creation of the new Sudan.

Salih articulates the shaping of identity in the Sudanese environment by bringing the ongoing questioning of values into the traditional context of the village, on the one hand, and on the other by broadening the pursuit of meaning into one of post-colonial reality. He demonstrates how the clash of two different societies and traditions shows how the characters challenge both the local and their own perceptions of the process of individuation.



## CONCLUSION

The orientation of the word amid the utterances and languages of others, and all the specific phenomena connected with this orientation, takes on *artistic* significance in novel style. Diversity of voices and heteroglossia enter the novel and organize themselves within it into a structured artistic system. This constitutes the distinguishing feature of the novel as a genre.

M.M. Bakhtin.<sup>792</sup>

This study has endeavored to contribute to the sociology of literature through its analysis of the process of individuation in three distinct literatures, one western and two Arabic. Aware of the pitfalls of often simplistic Orientalist contrasts between western and Arabic cultures and modes of individuality, this study has not looked at just two writers, one western and one Arabic, as is common in the field of comparative literature. Rather the study has selected three different writers all of whom are renowned in their respective cultures, having emerged as a response to their societies' grappling with the painful process of modernity of which individuation is a crucial part.

Each of these writers has since become the emblem of these processes in the Norwegian, Egyptian, and the Sudanese cultures respectively. Choosing these significant

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<sup>792</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 300.

authors allows us to observe, understand and compare three distinct literary traditions and societies, which have had to confront, more or less, the same obstacles and challenges. Although they did so at different times and in different ways, all the selected works represent the transformation into modernism of their respective literatures on four major levels; the socio-political, cultural, psychological and textual.

The heroes in all the novels selected for this investigation fight a battle on the metaphysical level to articulate a new sense of universality and a new concept of individual identity in the face of adverse circumstances. All these novels deal with the characters' search for meaning and fulfillment in his society in general, and in his own life in particular. One of the main objectives of this thesis has been to find out in what way the political, social, and cultural changes are articulated in the various traditions, cultures and by the different authors; how the same changes have had an impact on the authors' writing, through the development of a new style and content – in other words, the literary, aesthetic transformation of the text.

This thesis has investigated the shift away from collective consciousness and how society has perceived the individual and individualism in the three different countries. This thesis has explored the various responses to this situation in three distinct countries and whether individuation is a voluntary isolation and self-imposed exile and/or an existential crisis, and how a shift from a strong sense of unity to socio-political pluralism influenced these writers, and finally, whether there are any parallels between their lives and writings.

Ian Watt argues that “the novel in general has a characteristic impulse to bring the reader very close to the day-to-day texture of experience”<sup>793</sup> He points to the characters' contradictory claims of conscience and emotions, and that their unformed fluency of personality is the reason why the characters reveal the messages of their inner life.<sup>794</sup> He, furthermore, stresses that at its best:

The novel can show human beings in the process of development in a way that other literary forms cannot. In a sense...young protagonists gradually learning to relate dissonant impulses to each other, to circumstance, and to the people they meet. And this is probably why it is in the novel there has been so much emphasis on the distinction between round and flat characters. Compared with drama or epic, the novel has tended to choose young protagonists

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<sup>793</sup> Ian Watt, *The Novelist as Innovator* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1965), p. 6.

<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

whose developing reactions to ordinary human life are interesting precisely because they embody the psychological drama where the ego is formed.<sup>795</sup>

Watt points to the changes in the novel's portrayal of characters, but not to the vehicles and forces behind the transformations; these forces are, as the introduction demonstrated, firmly located in the coming of modernity. Hall accentuated that the de-centring of the self stimulated and promoted the rise "of a new and decisive form of *individualism* at the centre of which stood a new conception of the individual subject and its identity."<sup>796</sup> Interestingly Bakhtin also emphasizes the relation between the de-centered subject and its relationship and interaction with society:

The self is an embodied entity situated in concrete time and space, and which is constituted in the world at large. This subject is certainly 'decentred', but not erased altogether, for Bakhtin places a considerable premium on human creativity, responsibility and agency. We relate to language and other social processes dialogically, as practices that are simultaneously structured and structuring; hence, human beings are not simply 'effects' of linguistic systems or apparatuses of power/knowledge, as many postmodernists would have it. In developing this stance, Bakhtin attempts to reconcile the false dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism, and to sidestep the limitations of the anthropocentric and hubristic tendencies of modernity....Hence, Bakhtin's social thought holds considerable potential for the development of a new humanistic outlook that is not centred in the monologic self-contained subject but on the boundaries between self and other.<sup>797</sup>

The modern novel distinguishes itself from earlier narrative genres by its ability to articulate the shaping of identity and pursuit of meaning in a number of ways. Thus, as our investigation has proved, the dynamics of the novel is the triangle of desire, as it reveals the process of individuation – through exposing and exploring the psychology of the individuals' polyphonic voices – that takes place in a society increasingly governed by heteroglossia; in other words, the dialogism of modernity. Thus the structural element is the core of the novel. Furthermore, as Lukács points out:

The novel compromises the essence of its totality between the beginning and the end, and thereby raises an individual to the infinite heights of one who must create an entire world through experience and who must maintain that world in equilibrium—heights which no epic individual...could reach, because the epic individual owed his significance to the grace accorded him, not to his pure individuality.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>796</sup> Hall, op. cit., 281.

<sup>797</sup> Michael Gardiner and Michael Mayerfeld Bell "Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: A Brief Introduction" in Bell and Gardiner, op. cit., p 6.

<sup>798</sup> Lukács, op. cit., p. 83.

Moreover, Lukács argues that the novel is the new form of humanity as humanity has been forsaken by God:

The first great novel of world literature stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world; when man became lonely and could find meaning and substance only in his own soul, whose home was nowhere; when the world, released from its paradoxical anchorage in a beyond that is truly present, was abandoned to its immanent meaninglessness; when the power of what is—reinforced by the utopian links, now degraded to mere existence—had grown to incredible magnitude and was waging a furious, apparently aimless struggle against the new forces which were as yet weak and incapable of revealing themselves or penetrating the world.<sup>799</sup>

Girard's theory of the triangle of desire is a development of Lukács's theory of the novel, and according to Lucian Goldmann: "the degradation of the fictional world, the progress of the ontological sickness, and the increase of metaphysical desire are expressed in a greater or lesser *mediatization* that progressively increases the distance between metaphysical desire and authentic search, the truth for 'vertical transcendence'."<sup>800</sup> It is external and internal mediation that is the foundation for Girard's typology, and for our investigation the internal is the most essential since the atomization of the personality is the final stage of internal mediation. Therefore, it is in here that the profoundest meaning of modernity is found. Both Lukács's and Girard's approach help to clarify the fact that the novel is both a biography and a social chronicle, and that "the position of the writer in relation to the world he has created is, in the novel, different from the situation in relation to the world of any other literary form."<sup>801</sup> Bakhtin's contribution to the field of literary theory is immense, and his theory of dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia is especially significant in relating the process of individuation, which the triangle of desire has revealed to be the characteristic of the novel as a distinct genre. Hence, in the novel, the "internal dialogization becomes one of the most fundamental aspects of prose style and undergoes a specific artistic elaboration."<sup>802</sup> Like the mediator in triangular desire, "no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is

<sup>799</sup> Ibid., pp. 103-104.

<sup>800</sup> Lucian Goldmann, *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*, translated from the French by Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock Publications 1975), p. 3.

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>802</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 284.

often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape.”<sup>803</sup> Furthermore, the living utterance is shaped and given meaning in an environment that is socially specific to a particular historical moment and cannot fail “to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it.”<sup>804</sup> Such an approach to language relates to Bourdieu’s notion of the battle for symbolic power in the field of cultural production; that is, every discourse of language exists and is entangled in a game for legitimacy between the players of the actual field. This battle may, in the case of internal mediation, take place between the polyphonic voices of a single individual because his dialogism comes as a result of the heteroglot condition of the society in which he exists. Hence, neither Bakhtin nor Bourdieu place importance on the individual author but “on the speaker who is enmeshed in relations of communication with others...Bakhtin’s focus is not, therefore, on the individual author, but on the way that many speakers realize speech genres in the context of their everyday relationships and interactions. Texts are always contextualized in the concrete situations that agents find themselves in and utterances are composed by the way the person uses speech genres to give expression of their social positioning.”<sup>805</sup> The author’s individuality is important, “but only in that his or her utterances flow from the situation and not form some pre-given inner essence of individuality. Furthermore all utterances are a link in a chain of other utterances, so that all speech echoes with the voices of others. There is no such thing as an individual voice given in isolation.”<sup>806</sup>

In modernity Hall’s de-centered self struggles with questions new to the traditional order. The authors and novelistic characters are consequently very much a product of the transformations of society because, as Giddens argues, they are part of “the emergence of new mechanisms of self-identity which are shaped by – yet also shape – the institutions of modernity. The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in

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<sup>803</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>804</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-277.

<sup>805</sup> Burkitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific context of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications.”<sup>807</sup> Moreover, the great dynamic forces of modernity, that is: the separation of time and space, disembedding mechanisms, and institutional reflexivity, play a major role in tearing the individual away from his stable surroundings. In the process of transformation, the dislocation of the subject takes place on two levels; namely the de-centring of individuals from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves. The result of this is according to Giddens that:

The sustaining of life, in a bodily sense as well as in the sense of psychological health, is inherently subject to risk. The fact that the human behaviour of human beings is so strongly influenced by mediated experience, together with the calculative capacities which human agents possess, mean that every human individual could (in principle) be overwhelmed by anxieties about risks which are implied by the very business of being.<sup>808</sup>

Thus far, we have related the shaping of identity to the socio-political and cultural transformation of modernity. We shall relate this process of individuation to the novel as a genre and point to the structural, aesthetic and textual changes that take place in the novel which enable it to articulate these processes more convincingly than other literary genres. Each writer is specific, but common to them all is that they – in their particular ways – articulate and demonstrate how and why the process of individuation takes place in their respective cultures. Their novels carry within their very texture and structure the dynamics of the process and the sediments of its component factors as well as the socio-political and cultural changes. It seems that the novel as a genre is more infused with social reality than other literary forms, as literature is a way of exploring human behavior like science and philosophy.<sup>809</sup> Furthermore, as Sabry Hafez points out there is “a vital interaction between the novel and its socio-cultural context, in that novels encode within their very structure various elements of the social reality in which they appear and within whose constraints they aspire to play a role. Their generation of meaning is enmeshed in a variety of cultural, psychological and social processes, and their reception therefore brings into operation an array of experiences necessary for the interpretive act.”<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>807</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 2.

<sup>808</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>809</sup> Barakat, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-210.

<sup>810</sup> Hafez, “The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel’s Aesthetic Response”, p. 93.

To grasp and utilize Bakhtin's eloquent theory about dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia it is essential to comprehend the aesthetic and textual changes that happened in the novel, and hence paved the way for the dialogic discourses. Hafez locates five crucial points in the aesthetic and textual changes in the novel with the coming of modernity. Firstly, on the writer's point of departure, a typical feature of the novel in modernity was that it embarked upon a constant process of questioning, which changed the existing narrative structure. The omnipresence and certitude the author used to possess began to wither away, as he lost his belief in an objective and absolute truth, resulting in a scraping of shared convictions for the growth of anxiety, doubt, difference and individuality. Soon realism was seen as a literary convention not as a faithful representation of reality, and the view that "the narrated action represents the view of the narrator more than the actual reality had a seminal impact on the textual representation of narrative."<sup>811</sup> Secondly, the narrative structures of the pre-modern novel all relied on the omniscient narrator controlling all points of view, time, space and action and defined the characters from a monophonic and unitary perspective, and the plots were of a syllogistic nature. The new narrative was in a dialogue with classical discourses, hence, the individual fallible narrator adopted a polyphony of narrative voices that relied on multiple and even conflicting perspectives, which changed the concept of plot dramatically, and invalidated its role as the narrative structure's main component. With polyphonic voices the authority of the author and his aim and vision were brought to an end as the technique and textual strategies became more important than theme. Thus, the content of form enriched the narrative and endowed it with numerous layers of meaning.<sup>812</sup> Another feature is that of the transformation of the structure from one of plot and action to one of probing the inner psyche of the characters, by which psychological and symbolic representation increased. Thirdly, the novel's space now became a place of contradictions and a battleground where discordant voices competed for legitimacy, in order to explore new land and discover new horizons.<sup>813</sup> Fourthly, Hafez identifies a change in characterization. The loss of the old certainty led to the author's disavowal of his

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<sup>811</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>812</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>813</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-106.

character which accelerated the decline of the patriarchal order. The reader's position vis-à-vis the characters is now one of discovery, not superiority or empathy as it used be, because the characterization underlines that of individuality and avoids the archetypal and stereotypical representation, and the hero has now turned into an anti-hero. This signifies a focus on one single character "which has the purpose of portraying not just events, but their impact upon the character, his relationship to the political and cultural milieu and the dominant social values which affect his psychological development. The character both rejects and is rejected, he is faced by many obstacles to his fulfillment as a person in the form of external trivialities, which nevertheless exacerbate his anxieties and accentuate the absurdity of his situation."<sup>814</sup> The other characters in the text have as their prime objective to display the innermost depths of the (anti-) hero and the causes of his tragedy. The hero now has a passionate desire to abandon the traditional legacy and liberate himself from the immediate past and its values. The fifth change occurs in the narrative language. In the pre-modern novels narrative language was subdued to create a simple and neutral tone and unified rhythm to underline that the voice was the author's own. In modernity, use of new language took the novel to areas of new meaning and "the multiplicity of voices necessitates a plurality of styles and registers, so that the language of the author is replaced by that of the characters and the situation."<sup>815</sup> Language now also becomes the place where the individual is constructed and social practices develop, thus "man can be seen as *language*, as the intersection of the social, historical and individual discourses. The mediation and comprehension of different characters requires the use of diverse languages, not only rendering them in different languages, but also positing them as distinct and autonomous discourses."<sup>816</sup> In the pre-modern novel meaning only existed outside language, but in modernity this changes and "the belief that meaning does not exist outside language enhances the novel's awareness of context and intertextuality, and a corollary feature is the replacement of the concept of language by that of discourse and discursive field...that has widened the language of narrative beyond its previously limited domain."<sup>817</sup> The aesthetic and textual changes are outlined here as

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<sup>814</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-110.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid., p. 111.



an arbitrary crystallization of a process that took place gradually rather than as a definite break or a cultural rupture. There will always be some kind of overlapping of features among the two phases, because stylistic changes are autonomous and transient, not drawing or carrying on a dialogue with the past. The selection of novelists emphasizes the transformations described because all the novels are written at a time when the respective cultures were grappling with socio-political, cultural, and economic changes. In the western context and particularly in Norway this happened around the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and in Egypt and the Sudan in the decades following the end of the Second World War. All the three cultures struggled for independence during the transformation into modernity<sup>818</sup> and the nationalistic awareness reinforced the social affinities and impelled the population into a much more indigenous way of life.

### **Heroes and anti-heroes**

Our analysis has demonstrated the striking similarities in the process of individuation and pursuit of meaning for all our heroes. Their identities have been shaped within the triangle of desire, although the time and circumstances have varied. The transformation into modernity in late nineteenth century Norway, was carefully captured in the private world and psyche of the hero of *Hunger*, that is, the experiencing self. Hamsun already, in his 1890 essay *Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv*,<sup>819</sup> stresses the thin line dividing the consciousness and the unconsciousness. Hamsun uses *Hunger* to illustrate this division by creating an anxiety-ridden hero with a hypersensitive character of poor psychic integrity. Interestingly the hero is aware of the split in his personality, between an irrational instinctual ego and a rational reflexive ego. Throughout the novel he acts out a set of internal dialogues and self-observations, as his need to communicate with himself

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<sup>818</sup> Norway gained independence in 1905, after having been ruled by Denmark from 1387 until 1814 and by Sweden from 1814 to 1905. Egypt gained its independence in 1922, but was ruled by Britain until 1952. The Sudan had to wait a further four years until 1956, after having been administered by Britain since 1898.

<sup>819</sup> *Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv* can be translated as *From the Unconscious Mental Life of the Soul*. The essay first appeared in the journal "Samtiden", pp. 325-34. It was also published in Knut Hamsun, *Artikler* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1939), pp. 46-63.

is of existential importance.<sup>820</sup> The hero is even conscious of the workings of his irrational other alongside his rational self. "I lay with open eyes in a stare of utter absence from myself and felt deliciously out of it."<sup>821</sup> The hero continuously questions himself, and his own right to existence, and at times he believes he has the answers to all his questions; then in the next second he again questions their value. Throughout he strives to write the perfect academic article, philosophically challenging, but not too difficult for the average reader. As his articles are rejected over and over again he soon starts to realise that he is denied access to the world he desires. The literary field of Kristiania is now filled with contradictory voices battling for legitimacy. This struggle forces the hero to discover new sides to himself, but his failure to fulfill his potential turns him into an anti-hero. The hero's articles are all rejected but one, even though the "commander" has "consecrated" him. Such rejection leads naturally to the hero's rejection of other people, and unfortunately this behavior leads to his increased isolation and aggravates his feelings of anxiety and despair. One of the distinct features of *Hunger* is its explicit use of a new language, intended to shock the reader, and this language creates within it the possibility for polyphonic voices:

Discouraged at not being able to prepare my article, I stuck the papers in my pocket again and leaned back on the bench. At this moment my head is so clear that I can think the most subtle thoughts without tiring. As I lie there in this position, letting my eyes wander down my breast and legs, I notice the twitching motion made by my foot at each beat of my pulse. I sit up halfway and look down at my feet, and at this moment I experience a fantastic, alien state I'd never felt before; a delicate, mysterious thrill spreads through my nerves, as though they were flooded by surges of light. When I looked at my shoes, it was as though I had met a good friend or got back a torn-off part of me: a feeling of recognition trembles through all my senses, tears spring to my eyes, and I perceive my shoes as a softly murmuring tune coming toward me. Weakness! I said harshly to myself, and I clenched my fists and said, Weakness. I mocked myself for these ridiculous feelings, made fun of myself quite consciously; I spoke very sternly and reasonably, and I fiercely squeezed my eyes shut to get rid of my tears. Then I begin, as though I'd never seen my shoes before, to study their appearance, their mimicry when I move my feet, their shape and the worn uppers, and I discover that their wrinkles and their white seams give them an expression, lend them a physiognomy. Something of my own nature had entered into these shoes – they affected me like a breath upon my being, a living, breathing part of me...<sup>822</sup>

I could hear that I was raving, could hear it even as I spoke. My madness was a delirium of weakness and exhaustion, but I was not out of my senses. All at once the thought flashed through my brain that I had gone mad. Terror-struck, I jump out of bed. I stagger over to the

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<sup>820</sup> Humpál, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>821</sup> Hamsun, *Hunger*, p. 57.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

door, which I try to open, hurl myself against it a couple of times to force it, bang my head against the wall, groan aloud, bite my fingers, sob and curse...<sup>823</sup>

Furthermore, language can be seen as a mediator, as it reduces the distance separating subject and object.

In *Mysteries* Hamsun continues his exploration of the human psyche. Nagel is portrayed in a day-by-day, hour-by-hour stream-of-consciousness, as if he is poised on the brink of annihilation.<sup>824</sup> As Nagel gets to know Miniman, Martha and Dagny he engages in relations characteristic of triangular desire, whilst hiding behind several masks to disguise his real self. Like the hero of *Hunger* he retreats into his own world from where he asks the questions, but unlike the hero of *Hunger* Nagel gets all the answers he wants. He “withdraws more and more into the torture chamber of his own subconscious psyche, haunted by phantoms and driven to his death by the mysterious forces he so tirelessly defended against the inroads of science and reason, forces now turned destructive.”<sup>825</sup> Nagel experiences his inner world as proof of the mysteries that exist in the world, and it is the consequences of his understanding of himself as part of this world that shape his identity and starts him on the process of individuation. Whereas the hero in *Hunger* had more concrete enemies, for Nagel the greatest threat to his existence is his own attitude to life. In contrast to *Hunger* the narrative of *Mysteries* is lifted onto a more subliminal level, the power battles are now primarily internalised, and the enemies more difficult to detect. From a socio-psychological perspective Nagel’s pursuit of meaning is cultural and socio-political. Nagel absorbs his battles with Dagny, Miniman and Martha into his own cognitive, and through extensive interior monologues his enemies are revealed as being inside himself, tearing his understanding of himself apart. Both protagonists fear the disintegration of their individuality by slowly becoming part of the crowd. Nagel hides behind several masks to try to stop this erosion of his self-identity, and the hero of *Hunger* dislike all his competitors for literary legitimacy in Kristiania. Due to the increased focus on the psychological and symbolical representation of the hero, the role of plot and action is diminished. In both *Hunger* and *Mysteries*, as readers, we are able to identify much more with the protagonists who are liberating themselves

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<sup>823</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>824</sup> Sverre Lyngstad, “Introduction” in Hamsun *Mysteries*, p. xxvi.

<sup>825</sup> Ibid., p. xxvi.

from traditional values, because the characterization underline their individuality, An essential element of *Mysterier* is the fallible narrator, and the way he exploits polyphony in order to conceal crucial information. In *Mysterier* the reader is not told explicitly what happened between Miniman and Martha, or if Karlsen's death was suicide or murder. Hamsun's aim in withholding information is to underscore the fact that one can never fully understand the motivations of another human being.

In *Pan* Hamsun again resumes his first-person narration, after having written *Mysterier* in third-person. The focus is still on exploring the inner consciousness of the hero, lieutenant Glahn, but the multiplicity of voices within the text necessitates a plurality of languages, hence the character's own language replaces that of the author. Consequently the content of form enriches the narrative and provides the text with several new voices that again establish several discourses of meaning. This is one of the new features of the modern novel, and in Hamsun's work this dialogism is significant in so far as it determines the hero's relationships with women. In *Pan*, Glahn is torn between the desire to isolate himself from the public world and his desire for a woman who belongs to that world, hence he is repressing his memoirs. It is Glahn's polyphony of voices that helps him repress his memories because he does not recount his past but fictionalizes it. Nagel, on the other hand, does not deny his feelings towards either Dagny or Martha, but by acknowledging his desire, he is denied a relationship with the women when revealing his emotions. Both the hero of *Hunger* and of *Pan* denies his own feelings towards Ylajali and Edvarda for fear of being rejected. When Ylajali rejects him he loses confidence in his own identity, and when she gives him her hand he fears it is out of pity for him, and thus he demonizes her. For Glahn the situation is much the same; however, when he receives a letter from Edvarda asking him to marry her, he rejects her and embraces death instead, a feature we also see in *Season*. All of the heroes in this study are outsiders in one way or another and Hamsun's heroes are all strangers due to their ethnical background, not in a socio-political context but psychologically. Glahn's initial motive for moving into the woods was his desire to break free from a uniform society and a civilization that denied him his individuality. Glahn's internal dialogism deceives him as he believes he is, or will become happy when leaving the city. The tragedy of his demise is the result of his displacement and his not belonging to the petty

life of a narrow-minded society. The result is some kind of internal clash of civilizations that impels him to commit suicide.

In *The Beggar* Omar is a typical example of the alienated hero that is always in search of answers, to satisfy his desperate desire to return to some kind of origin from where he can again create for himself the sound foundation for a meaningful life. Socio-political pluralism tears his family apart as his quest for meaning is now of a metaphysical character. The characterization of the hero in *The Beggar* avoids stereotypical and archetypal representation and emphasises his individuality, and has no intentions to represent anything other than itself. Omar's growing self-doubt, indifference and isolation in relation to his friends, family and work, is a direct result of the lack of satisfactory answers to the existential questions he asks, not only himself, but all those in his immediate surroundings. Dissatisfied with the answers he receives, he seeks comfort in the arms of prostitutes, and even has relationships with some of them. The prostitutes turn out to have nothing to offer him other than sex, and he is left with even more questions than before. Neither the suggestions of his friend Mustapha, nor his family can save his ruptured self, and he even abandons poetry as a potential solution to his problems. Like Nagel, Omar's quest has no syllogistic significance for his immediate milieu, even less so when Othman is released from prison, still trusting the finished revolution. As the narrative revolves around Omar's pursuit of meaning, all the other characters and events of the novel are just tools in order to mirror how cultural and socio-political happenings affect his psychological development. Omar constantly rejects everything around himself, and in the end his quest is rejected by the society that places the obstacles on the path to his fulfillment. The result is that his anxiety, alienation and despair are exacerbated, and in the end Omar believes that the final solution is to withdraw from society. The anti-hero of *Respected Sir*, Othman, is in many ways the opposite of Omar. Othman does not question his path in life; one that he feels has been given by God. More seriously, he is always denied access to what he desires, and to the answers to all his questions. He does not want to withdraw, he is very much part of society and struggles to reach his desired position of Director General, but in the end he is forced to withdraw to hospital where he dies a lonely death. Othman also seeks some kind of comfort from prostitutes, but not as Omar, as part of his pursuit of meaning, but

because marrying anyone is either potentially an obstacle to promotion or the very women that could help him get the promotion are out of his reach. Othman, like Glahn and the hero of *Hunger*, rejects and suppresses his feelings towards a woman he loves, Sayyida, not because he is rejected by her in the first place, but because a marriage to her will rule out his chance of further promotion. He only desires women that may enhance his possibilities to become Director General. Othman is always on the outlook for anyone or anything that could speed up his promotion, but several times he is disappointed that less qualified people get his job for various reasons. Therefore when in the end he has given up the dream of the blue room, and marries a young girl from his office, he is shocked to find out that she has used him in the exact same way he would use anyone else for his own good. Othman has many personal characteristics that are similar to those of Nagel. Their behaviour towards other characters is like that of a chameleon; they are always changing and shaping their identity to reach their goals. They both hide behind masks, and never reveal their true identity, and disguise their alienation, isolation, and anxiety, especially if they are among other people. All these protagonists represent prototype-characters of the modern novel since they are desperately trying to abandon the history and the values of the past and liberate themselves from tradition. In common is their yearning for a new beginning, to leave old relationships behind, in order to dominate the present. Such a craving for a new identity is only possible within a dialogic discourse in a heteroglot society, as the quest for meaning becomes the main subject of all the novels. All of them are imprisoned in society and their quest for meaning is a result of their becoming strangers and outsiders to society and to its values. Mahfouz deliberately changed his style of writing in the sixties to be able to articulate and cope with the new sensibility in society after realism was a spent force. Unlike Hamsun, he did not articulate out his stand against the former mode of expression of the leading literary figures, he just transformed radically from one novel to the other. This style led to the loss of the old certainty, and the decline of the patriarchal order was reflected in the author's disavowal of his characters, *Respected Sir* being a good example. Throughout the novel he defers to all the different Director Generals, but the use of irony is so strong that his respect can only be seen as mocking of their authority. Therefore, through the eyes of Othman we not only see the obstacles placed before the anti-hero, but we observe the socio-political and

cultural transformation that is shaping and affecting the socio-psychological development of the hero.

In *Wedding*, Zein searches for his identity within the local community. As the village stranger he is able to freely interact with, and transgress all class, power and gender boundaries in the hamlet. Zein is the major beneficiary of the dialogism that takes place between the various fields of power in the village. By being the only person able to engage in these dialogic relationships Zein's speak several different "languages", each one specific to his social position within the field of power. It is precisely in his interaction with the various agents battling for symbolic power that he pursues meaning in the social context of the village. *Season* also takes place within the village; however, Mustafa reveals the story of his time abroad to the narrator. Zein and Mustafa are not similar because Mustafa is part of the wider world that exist outside the village; he is the stranger that has come from outside with his own history. In this sense Mustafa is another Nagel; he enters a local community and wreaks havoc and contaminates everything and everyone that has not been part of the European experience he represents. Mustafa and Nagel are both complex characters, and in several aspects Mustafa resembles both Nagel and the hero of *Hunger*. Mustafa's desire to suppress his real self means that throughout his time abroad he hid behind masks, invented names for himself and sustained his life with lies. In his relationship with women he was also willing to efface himself just to have the women he desired, and he loses control of himself when Jean brutally rejects him, for he, like Omar, rejected so many himself.

Similar to Glahn's rejection of Edvarda, by choosing death, Mustafa chooses, or at least is responsible for his own death, as well as that of his wife Husna, when he leaves her behind in the village and she is forced to marry old Wad Rayyes. The dynamics between Mustafa and the narrator are similar to those between Nagel and Miniman in the sense that Miniman has lost his freedom and he wants to rob Nagel of his freedom, as when he removes the poison from his bottle. The narrator always feels inferior to Mustafa and his own life and position within his village depends on the position of Mustafa. This is also the case with Omar in *The Beggar* when all his friends and family desperately try to limit his potential to choose for himself. Therefore, when Nagel is fighting with Miniman, he is actually fighting with his inner self, just as the narrator is battling his own

conscience when criticizing Mustafa. In the case of Zein, he seems to be the only one of our heroes who does not battle and question himself internally. His identity is shaped primarily by his relationships in the village because his marriage makes him a respected member of the community, and gives him a new and elevated sense of self. Suddenly he is now to be treated equally to the other men and he finally transcends his own limitations by being blessed by Haneen.

The split in the heroes' minds between the public and the private are often one of the most crucial elements in their quest for meaning; in other words, the heroes are torn between two desires, one is authentic to live in the public world, and the second an authentic self-enclosure. For Glahn this split is between nature and society, and for Omar this split is between family and solitude. In *Season* the dichotomy between Europe and the Sudan is what forces Mustafa into despair. Salih maturely describes the obstacles that the village in *Wedding* faces, but in *Season* the return of the narrator accentuates Mustafa's separated inner self and the result is a clash of civilisations. We find a pattern in the behaviour of all the heroes: all of them have struggled for their process of individuation, and part of their anxiety is related to the anguish they suffer from losing their sense of self. Therefore, when their identity is challenged by society, that is, being incorporated into the crowd they react with aggression and contempt. The only two heroes whose process of individuation is rooted in the integration in society are Zein and the narrator of *Season* because both of them are destined to create a new future for their native village and country.

On the question of suicide and death, several of the heroes experience a feeling of satisfaction and relief when they accept and realize they are about to die. Nagel, Glahn and Mustafa all pursue their deaths in the end, while for Othman death comes as a relief and rescues him from a further predicament in the hospital. Nagel, Glahn and Mustafa all prepare themselves and in some instances their milieu, for their departure, Nagel by carrying poison in his breast pocket, Glahn by dressing up as a bride, and Mustafa by writing his will addressed to the narrator. This desire for death is grounded in something negative, but the result leads to something positive. Both Nagel and Mustafa are strangers from the outside that cause mayhem in the communities where they move, by displaying an attitude and representing an ethos irreconcilable with that of the villages. In *Mysteries*,



Nagel symbolizes the decadence of city life, and when he dies the inhabitants can resume normal life. In *Season* Mustafa represents another world belonging to that of the coloniser and taints the village with his post-colonial hatred and desire for self-annihilation. At first his death/disappearance leads to more destruction and violence as Husna kills Wad Rayyes, but in the end it forces the narrator to take a more active role in recreating the spirit of the Sudan and he chooses life rather than death when he is about to drown in the Nile. The narrator triumphs over metaphysical desire and reaches what is essential to the truth of the novel which shines beyond death, hence he becomes capable of writing the novel, since the hero and the creator have been separated throughout the novel but are reunited in the conclusion. Therefore the conclusion is a memory and every novelistic conclusion is a beginning.<sup>826</sup> All these novels end with a death, either physical or metaphysical, automatically allowing a synthesis between the Self and the Other and the novelist to view his characters from different perspective, and hence it is in the conclusion that the hero speaks in the name of the author.<sup>827</sup> All the selected novels embody both the radically new thematic and aesthetic forms of literature, and thus are able to express the painful processes of individuation, transformation and modernity.

All the novels seem to support the points outlined by Hafez, since the heroes now starts questioning themselves and their immediate milieu, and thereby changing the narrative structure of the novel. Suffering from anxiety, pride, self-doubt and isolation, they start looking inside themselves for answers to their questions, hence the individual fallible narrator adopts a polyphony of voices having to rely on multiple conflicting perspectives which again transforms the concept of plot. When the hero turns into an anti-hero he not only portrays the events in which he lives, but also how they have an impact on himself, that is, on his psychological development. The most significant point in regard to the novel and the novel's articulation of the hero's development and the shaping of his identity, is related to the new meaning of language that constructs the individual. It is now the context of the hero and his milieu that determines the language, not the author. In this sense one can read in the character's language and discourse the heteroglot circumstances from which his utterances are born. By contrasting and

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<sup>826</sup> Girard, op. cit., pp. 296-297.

<sup>827</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

comparing the novels we clearly see the continuity in each author's work and through all the selected novels. Their thematic approach, their questioning and struggling in order to establish a coherent self-identity and consciousness is the same, regardless of culture or literature. The pain of establishing the individual, the distinguishing of language, with and from the other and society is the issue at stake for all our heroes since they are all one. There are slight differences in the circumstance that force the heroes into a pursuit of meaning, but once left alone as alienated, anxiety-ridden strangers in their societies they all ask the same questions and share the same desires.

### **Homo Individucas and the novel**

The novel as a literary genre is more infused with social reality than other literary forms of expressions, because "literature, and in particular the novel, is an alternative field of exploration into human behaviour; a social product or manifestation; a subliminal and cathartic expression; and a system of communication influencing human consciousness. Literature is a way of exploring human behaviour like science and philosophy."<sup>828</sup> As Bourdieu has pointed out, every agent, that is the author, in his battle for symbolic power and struggle for a position within the field, acquires a language to distance himself from other agents, and create an autonomy for himself. This is particularly true for Hamsun and Mahfouz who did this in order to create a new point of departure for themselves. Instead of adopting the traditional – as well as Western in the case of Mahfouz – cultural model with the omniscient and omnipresent author they now created uncertainty with the introduction of the fallible narrator. The loss of control of the narrative world leads to a polyphony of narrative voices and an exploration of the cognitive processes of the heroes. By letting their heroes constantly question their identities, the old scientific rationalism and centrality of man disappears, and to understand the development of the human cognitive in a transformed culture and society the old methods of natural sciences became inadequate.<sup>829</sup> All the heroes, with perhaps the exception of Salih's Zein and Mahfouz's Othman, cannot find answers to all their questions, in regards to the shaping of their

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<sup>828</sup> Barakat, op. cit., p 210.

<sup>829</sup> Hafez, "The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response", p. 102.

identity. By turning the interest of the narrative inwards, the static order becomes more diverse and the inner minds of the protagonists make the texts labyrinthine, wherein there exist several contradictory interpretations. Especially in *Hunger*, *Mysteries*, *The Beggar* and *Season* the interpretative maze becomes the literary equivalent of the state of social fragmentation and disintegration that Giddens and Hall have demonstrated took place with the coming of modernity.

The author's use of various languages might be transmitted to the characters in his writings, to underline how the author's identity is also shaped by the changing socio-political and cultural environment in which he works. Bakhtin argues that:

The language used by characters in the novel, how they speak, is verbally and semantically autonomous; each character's speech possesses its own belief system, since each is the speech of another in another's language; thus it may also refract authorial intentions and consequently may to a certain degree constitute a second language for the author. Moreover, the character speech almost always influences authorial speech (and sometimes powerfully so), sprinkling it with another's words (that is, the speech of a character perceived as the concealed speech of another) and in this way introducing into it stratification and speech diversity.

Thus even where there is no comic element, no parody, no irony and so forth, where there is no narrator, no posited author or narrating character, speech diversity and language stratification still serve as the basis for style in the novel. Even in those places where the author's voice seems at first glance to be unitary and consistent, direct and unmediatedly intentional, beneath that smooth single-languaged surface we can nevertheless uncover prose's three-dimensionality, its profound speech diversity, which enters the project of style and is its determining factor.<sup>830</sup>

This distinguishes the novel and drama, because although both are multilayered but it is only the novel which contains genuine polyphony, and articulates multiple worlds.<sup>831</sup> In the modern novel polyphony is "locked forever within the limits of a single consciousness, rummages around it, and creates a cult of the duality of the *isolated* personality. The important thing in...polyphony is precisely what happens *between various consciousnesses*, that is, their interaction and interdependence."<sup>832</sup> As a result of this change in narrative structure, and the introduction of multiple perspectives and polyphony the text became more open, and relies more on intertextuality, which required more of the reader who is expected to be able to grasp the various levels of meaning. With the rejection of a static structure for a more dynamic experimentation, the hero's

<sup>830</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 315.

<sup>831</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 34.

<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

orientation changed from external to internal matters in order to probe the characters inner psyche. The hero is eager to change his world and become “entangled in his own critical vision, besieged and unable to comprehend external reality.”<sup>833</sup> The unnamed hero of *Hunger*, Nagel, Omar and Mustafa are clear examples of such a character. They are so focused on their own inner selves that they lose an understanding of how the world they remain part of functions, so that the plot is not the main component in the narrative structure anymore. Thus the development of new narrative techniques becomes necessary to express the reason why the heroes now turn to, metaphysical, socio-psychological and symbolic representations of the world they are experiencing.

The narrative space also changed in the modern novel from one that was open, ordered, realistic and harmonious to one that is closed, divided and discordant. This space is just as much psychological as physical. The inner thoughts and desires of each hero is articulated through stream-of-consciousness, free indirect discourse or interior monologue. These dialogues are not the psychological evolutions of single ideas inside the hero’s self-enclosed consciousness; rather the consciousnesses of the desolate hero has become a battlefield for others’ voices. In terms of Girard’s triangular desires, these dialogues are the result of imitating others’ language.

The most crucial events of the hero’s immediate past and present are reflected in his consciousness, and articulated as very intense dialogues, either with the absentee participants, or with himself, in which he tries to restrain his thoughts, emotions and desires. Dialogism seems to be at the centre of the world of the novel, for in order to portray the inner self-identity of man he had to be portrayed in communion with others. In this sense dialogism becomes the action of the novel, the driving force behind the novel as a genre: “In dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is—and...not only for others but for himself as well.”<sup>834</sup> As Girard points out “This victory over a self-centeredness which is other-centered, this renunciation of fascination and hatred, is the crowning moment of novelistic creation. Therefore it can be found in all great novelists. Every novelist sees his

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<sup>833</sup> Hafez, “The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel’s Aesthetic Response”, p. 105.

<sup>834</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 252.

similarity to the fascinating Other *through the voice of his hero.*"<sup>835</sup> Bourdieu has pointed out that all literary production take place in a battlefield, and is thus related to the positions of the other producers in that field and to the agents' *habitus*. Therefore, the positions within the field and the agents accumulated symbolic power is the determinant for the author's position in the literary field, as was the case especially with Hamsun and Mahfouz, and to a certain degree with Salih. This feature is clear in the characterisation of the heroes that have now to some extent become anti-heroes and outsiders. None of the protagonists of the selected novels are representations of an archetype, but are rather individuals with unique personalities and an exclusive quest for meaning. Each of the heroes yearns for a new beginning, either by becoming a writer in Kristiania (*Hunger*); by escaping into the woods in Nordland (*Pan*); by seeking refuge in Sufism (*The Beggar*); by gaining entry into the blue room (*Respected Sir*); or by settling down in a traditional society in the village of Wad Hamid (*Wedding and Season*). The characters reject patriarchal control over their realm, and gradually the hero's voice becomes more important than that of the author. *Mysteries* and *Season* are good examples of this change because one of the crucial results of the loss of centrality is the author's disavowal of his characters. A further development is the marginalisation of the hero as the anti-hero becomes the prominent character in the novel. Glahn and the unnamed protagonist of *Hunger* are definitely anti-heroes<sup>836</sup> in this sense as they do not fit into society and are harassed and stepped on by everyone that has a change to humiliate them. Othman in *Respected Sir* and Mustafa in *Season* are also examples of anti-heroes. Othman, because of his social background, and his ruthless attempt to gain promotion; Mustafa, because he is a victim of, colonialism, on the one hand, and also for his desire for counter violence, as well as his willingness to give up his own cultural identity in his pursuit of revenge contrary to the magnanimous narrator that successfully shapes his identity in his pursuit of meaning. The focus on the relationship between the narrator and Mustafa, makes *Season* a little different from the other selected novels. Hamsun and Mahfouz, especially in the sixties, focus on just one protagonist. The other characters in the novels serve to mirror the development of the (anti-) hero, whose purpose it is, through his inner socio-

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<sup>835</sup> Girard, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>836</sup> They have been termed heroes in this thesis because their pursuit for meaning is heroic.

psychological development, to portray the socio-political and cultural transformation of society and its impact on the individual. In *Hunger* the “commander” and the editors, as well as Ylajali, underline the hero’s desperation for literary recognition. For Nagel this is done by Miniman, Dagny and Martha, and for Glahn by the doctor, Eva and Edvarda, in erotic triangular relationships as well as representing a contrast to the city-life Nagel and Glahn signify. In the same way Zeinab, Mustapha and Othman symbolize the past, and pervade Omar in *The Beggar* with the revulsion that alienates him further from society. For Othman in *Respected Sir* the women underline the madness of his desperate desire for the Blue Room, either by being the victims of his ruthless ambitions, or by exploiting him, in their turn. In *Wedding* the internal power struggles among the different groups underline Zein’s special position and status as the blessed one. For Mustafa in *Season* his relationships with his women reveal his inner despair and his predicament as the victim of his own destructive counter violence towards the West. Furthermore, as Mustafa and the narrator interact; they enlighten their quandary of being part of both the other, and the Others’ world and returning to and settling in a local community. This has prime implications for the narrator, and Mustafa’s presence, physically or not, and the dialogue he creates in the village, is what shapes the narrators identity in his quest for meaning.

Furthermore, it is in the novel that one can find the process of individuation and shaping of identity, for both the hero and the author, through the hero’s polyphony of voices, which takes place during his pursuit for meaning, because dialogism can only take place in a heteroglot society. This means that the role of context governs the meaning of an utterance. In other words “heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel...is another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author.”<sup>837</sup> Therefore, we can read the heroes dialogisms as a manifestation of the authors themselves, and thereby also locate their individuation. One can find the author neither in the language of the narrator, nor in the normal literary language to which the story opposes itself. Rather the author exploits several languages,

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<sup>837</sup> Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 324.

but at various times in order to maintain his freedom and not give himself up to any one of them.<sup>838</sup> By such an approach he might maintain his neutral position with regards to language. Bakhtin argues that:

The author manifests himself and his point of view not only in his effect on the narrator, on his speech and his language (which are to some extent objectivized, objects of display) but also in the effect on the subject of the story—as a point of view that differs from the point of view of the narrator. Behind the narrator's story we read a second story, the author's story; he is the one who tells us how the narrator tells stories, and also tells us about the narrator himself. We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story. The narrator himself, with *his* own discourse, enters into this authorial belief system along with what is actually being told. We puzzle out the author's emphases that overlie the subject of the story, while we puzzle out the story itself and the figure of the narrator as he is revealed in the process of telling his tale. If one fails to sense this second level, the intentions and accents of the author himself, then one has failed to understand the work.<sup>839</sup>

Hafez argues that narrative language underwent an important change in the modern novel. One feature in the selected novels was the use of new words and a language capable of articulating new socio-political realities and of shocking the reader, especially in the case of *Hunger* and *Season*.<sup>840</sup> The novel's use of polyphonic discourses to voice different positions happened because "it perceives language as inseparable from them and from the process of representation and its motivation. Language has become the place in which social practices develop and individuals are constructed, so that man can be seen as *language*, as the intersection of the social, historical, and individual discourses. The mediation and comprehension of different characters requires the use of diverse languages, not only rendering them in different languages, but also positing them as distinct and autonomous discourses."<sup>841</sup>

To be able to relate the process of individuation to the novel as a genre one has to understand the uniqueness of the novel. In the novel every character is first and foremost a speaking character, since "the fundamental condition, that which makes a novel a novel, that which is respectable for its stylistic uniqueness, is the *speaking person and his*

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<sup>838</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>839</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>840</sup> See supra, pp. 194, 221.

<sup>841</sup> Hafez, "The Transformation of Reality and the Arabic Novel's Aesthetic Response", p. 111.

*discourse.*"<sup>842</sup> If a reader or an author misses the unique feature of the novel's internal dialogization and double-voicedness he also misses, and is unable to grasp and exploit, the potential of the novel.

This thesis has demonstrated that the novel as a genre is more capable of articulating the individual's process of individuation, the shaping of his/her identity and the pursuit of meaning than other literary genres. Our analysis has focused on the core of the novel, that is, its structural element, and the dynamics of the novel, namely triangular desire and the polyphony of voices. The modern novel has proved that it is the source of the greatest existential, social and psycho-sociological truth since the late nineteenth century when the various cultures and literatures encountered modernity, and that it is a genre that knows no boundaries. The heroes of Hamsun's novels ask the same questions, have the same desires, face the same predicaments and are battling for the same legitimacy on the psycho-sociological and metaphysical level as those of Mahfouz and Salih, something that emphasizes the strength of the novel in world-literature. The novel was born in and out of a time, a culture and society that needed a new form to express the feelings and desires inherent in its people. It emerged at a time when the transformations created new ruptured individuals living in a socio-political pluralist world. Therefore, the novel as a genre demonstrates the process of individuation and the shaping of identity, and links these processes to the novel, and thereby proves that the novel is cross cultural, that all our human desires are one and that literature has no borders.

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<sup>842</sup> Ibid., p. 332.



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