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Toward a Poetics of the Anglophone Arab Campus Novel

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Abstract

This paper aspires to delineate the poetics of the Anglophone Arab Campus novel. It shows how the genre of the campus novel, which has always been perceived as exclusively American and European, has now reached the Arab region and it took a local shape. This research proves that the Arab world, via the works of Arab writers in the diaspora, is witnessing the birth of the genre of the campus novel. It highlights some of the basic features of the western campus novel and how the selected novels appropriate these features. This paper deals with Laila Lalami's Secret Son (2009), Leila Aboulela's The Kindness of Enemies (2015), and Isabella Hammad's The Parisian (2019). These novels are selected because they highlight different campuses, and therefore, they represent different experiences of Arab academics and students. Some of the aspects that will be discussed throughout the research are the microcosmic relationship between the campus and real life, the state of xenophobia that Arab academics and students face in the west, the process of the protagonists' growth in the university as well as satire and love affairs.

Keywords: Anglophone Arab campus novels, Henry Lefebvre, xenophobia, Bildungsroman, Satire, love affairs.

الرواية الجامعية للكتاب العرب في المهجر

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ملخّص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد نظرية الرواية الجامعية العربية الناطقة باللغة الإنجليزية, وهو يبين كيف أن هذا النوع من الرواية التي كان ينظر إليها دائما على أنها أمريكية وأوروبية قد وصل الآن صيتها إلى المنطقة العربية واتخذ شكلا محليا. هذا البحث يثبت أن العالم العربي، من خلال أعمال الكتاب العرب في المهجر، يشهد ولادة هذا النوع من الرواية الجامعية ويسلط الضوء على بعض السمات الأساسية لها. يتناول هذا البحث كتاب "الطفل السري" للروائية المغربية ليلى العلمي (2009) و "كرم الأعداء" للروائية السودانية ليلى أبو العلا (2015) بالاضافة الى "الباريسي" للروائية الفلسطينية إيزابيلا حماد (2019). تم اختيار هذه الروايات لأنها تسلط الضوء على جامعات مختلفة، وبالتالي فهي تمثل تجارب مختلفة للأكاديميين والطلاب العرب. من بين الجوانب التي سيتم مناقشتها خلال البحث العلاقة المصغرة بين الحرم الجامعي والحياة الواقعية و حالة الكراهية و العنصرية التي يواجهها الأكاديميون والطلاب العرب في المهجر.

الكلمات الدالة: الكتاب العربي في المهجر، هنري لوفيفر، العلاقات

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Introduction:

In his introduction to *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English: The Politics of Anglo Arab and Arab American Literature and Culture*, Nouri Gana (2013) argues that "the Arabic novel owes its beginnings, in good part, to East-West intellectual and cross-cultural encounters, transmissions and exchanges through, among other factors, travel, colonial contact, adaptation and translation." (4) Gana's words confirm the universally-acknowledged fact that the European novel is the precursor of the Arabic novel and that the Arabic novel is born out of the East-West encounter. In this context, one may convincingly argue that the campus novel was born and developed in Europe and the United States as a result of the fast growth and expansion of universities in the second half of the twentieth century. For example, during this period, more than forty universities were established only in the UK. Writers found in the setting of the university a productive topic for their fiction because, as Hague argues, "universities and their denizens have provided subjects for fiction since the novel began" (1985, 171).

In the Arab world, the university was not given much space in literature mainly due to the fact that during the time the campus novel was flourishing in Europe and the US, most of the Arab world was yet recovering from the colonial period. Universities were being established and their number was very few. Therefore, not much people were attending universities, especially women. Al-Qazzat (1980) argues in his article "Education of Women in the Arab World" that "in 1960, several Arab countries like Kuwait, Qatar, Yemen and United Arab Emirates had no college education" (n.p). The number of universities and students started to develop mainly in the seventies, and it witnessed a rapid change during the first decades of the twenty first century. UNESCO statistics show that "over the last two decades, higher education participation has been on the rise in less well-off regions" (2017, 1-2). Among these "less well-off regions" is the Arab world. Rajika Bhandari and Adnan El-Amine (2012) argue in their article "Higher Education Classification in the Middle East and North Africa: A Pilot Study" that "higher education in the MENA region is undergoing a period of rapid change and expansion" (6). This rapid expansion made of universities and campuses a fertile ground through which Arab writers seed and grow their stories. In this regard, Mark McGurl (2011) opines that "the proliferation of universities as settings for novels is […] what we might call a thematic symptom of a larger shift in the institutional arrangements of postwar literary production as such" (47). This may mark the birth of the Arab Campus novel. However, unlike Western campus novels which are exclusively set in universities, Anglophone Arab novels sometimes dedicate several chapters to university life, and in other instances, the campus life is scattered throughout the whole novel. The fact that these novels are not fully set within the walls of the university does not mean that they cannot be treated as campus novels, rather, they represent the early stage of the genre and they are not yet fully fledged like their Western counterparts. Every genre and subgenre reaches the Arab world after it is fully developed in the West and the campus novel is no exception.

All this proves Roger Allen's idea that "with regard to the Arabic novel, there is fairly general agreement among critics that its origins lie in the Western tradition" (1982, 15). As El-Enany (2006) argues, Arab intellectuals and novelists at the start of the twentieth century have assumed that in order to "gain freedom from Western domination, the Western life model had to be adopted" (4). In addition to this East-West encounter, Al-Musawi argues that the modern Arabic novel is linked "to the imperial legacy at large" (2003, 163). Its development is related to "its engagement with postcolonial issues that relate to identity formation, the modern nation-state, individualism, nationalism, gender and class demarcation, and micro-politics" (1). Here, Al-Masawi's central thesis is that there is a strong relationship between post-colonialism and the Arabic novel. He argues that one cannot discuss the modern Arabic novel without its relation to the empire and to colonial and postcolonial issues. According to El-Enany, these colonial issues are seen as the first sign of the East-West encounter which was discussed earlier. El-Enany maintains:

> The Arab world's encounter with the West in modern times goes back, as we have seen, two hundred years or so, to 1798 to be exact, the year Napoleon's army landed in Egypt, an event generally accepted as the medieval Arab East's first encounter with both modernity and colonialism at the same time. (2006, 7)

Here, the link is drawn between the development of the modern Arabic novel and its relation to the East-West encounter, colonialism and modernity.

Additionally, one should also remember that due to the immigration of Arabs to Europe and America over the past one hundred years or so, a new breed of the Arabic novel has emerged. Specifically, Arab writers in diaspora have represented the complex dynamics of their "immigration and settlement experiences" in European languages in a way that reflects their hyphenated identities (Awad, 2012, 22). In this context, Nouri Gana argues that the development of the Anglophone Arabic novel in the last few decades is mostly related to the events of 9/11. He states that "in fact, more than half of Arab novelists writing in English today wrote their début novels after September 11, 2001, and the number of new novelists will continue to proliferate exponentially" (2013, 2). In this regard Mazen Naous argues that Arabs were socially and culturally invisible prior to 9/11 (2020, 2). He argues:

> The terrorist attacks of 9/11 threw the Arab and Arab American communities into sharp relief and brought with them the added responsibilities, which Arab American writers continue to carry, of denouncing extremism while engaging and challenging pernicious stereotypes and manifestations of Islamophobia in the US... after 9/11, Arab Americans came to "exist" in the US. (Naous, 2020, 3)

Thus, as Gana and Naous argue, the events of 9/11 were among the most important reasons that made Arab and Anglophone Arab literature and culture visible in the West. From all this, it can be argued that the East-West encounter, the colonial and post-colonial experience along with the recent events of 9/11 all contribute to the development of the modern Arabic novel with its multiple genres that we have now. It is as Waïl Hassan puts it, "a compromise between local and imported forms, a compromise that constitutes a law of literary evolution" (2017, 35).

However, all these influences do not mean that the Anglophone Arab novel cannot stand by its own. It is true that its beginnings are strongly linked to the Western novel, yet, Arab writers, specifically those in diaspora, because of their unique position as cultural mediators between the East and the West were able to create and to develop a literature of their own. They highlight all the issues related to Arab communities both in the Arab world and in the West. Thus, this literature started due to Western influence, but its development and the stage it reached nowadays is due to the efforts of Arab writers in diaspora who use their texts as "a space through which... [they] voice their ephemeral joys and their ever resurrecting pains" (Salhi, 2006, 4). The focus of this research is to show the pain and experiences of Arab academics and students. The authors whose works will be discussed in this paper live in the diaspora and they have obtained their academic degrees from Arab, American or British universities. All of them are related to the university either as current teachers or former students which highly makes their works inspired by their experiences. Moreover, though many researchers draw the link between campus, university, college and academic novels, these terms will be used interchangeably since they highlight the issues related to professors, students and the academy itself.

The University as a *Lefebvrian* Space in Anglophone Arab Campus Novels:

In his article "Nabokov and the Campus Novel," David Lodge (2008) argues that the word "Campus" is originally Latin and it means field, and it was applied to the physical *space* of a university or college by American critics (n.p, emphasis added). The French Marxist Henry Lefebvre argues that "space, along with the way it was measured and spoken of, still held up to all the members of a society an image and a living reflection of their own bodies" (1991, 111). So, dealing with the university as a space, one can say that it reflects to a great extent the outer world. This makes of the campus novel "a sub-genre of the novel which treats the academic community as a microcosm reflecting the great world" (Fiedler, 1964, 5). This idea of the microcosm is one of the most important features that permeates all campus novels. The writers of the campus novel, whether Westerners or Arabs, all made the university a space of political, religious and social struggle and interaction, just like the outer world. Therefore, the university as a space becomes an important political subject. It mirrors all that happens outside on a smaller scale. For example, the political parties that are contesting in the government are found in the university; there are Marxist, secular, Islamic groups, and many other ideologically-oriented groups. Every country is constituted of people from different backgrounds and they are all found in the university. In this regard, Terry Eagleton

argues that the setting of the university might offer a setting full of "intellectual wrangling, political infighting and sexual intrigues" (qtd in Lambertsson Björk, 1993, 11). This means that the academy is not different from the outer world.

Lalami's *Secret Son* represents the university as a *Lefebvrian* space par excellence. The novel is about Youssef El-Mekki, a lower-class Moroccan who is admitted to the university and encounters many problems. According to Awad & Tayem (2015), the novel "valorize[s] the socioeconomic problems of contemporary Morocco" as well as "the recent challenges facing Moroccan governments such as religious extremism" (77). In her portrayal of these issues, Lalami made of the university in her novel a prototype of Moroccan society. She represents the university most importantly as a place of contesting political parties. There were students from both IUS and DUN (Islamic Union Students and Democratic Union Students). These groups have opposing principles in the Moroccan government and their influence became stronger to reach and affect young students in the university. An important incident in the novel happens when the government tackles the decision of the fare hike; students from both IUS and DUN join together and they "had come to agree: they would go on strike together" (Lalami, 209, 47). Though they have opposing principles, these groups brought their powers together against their first enemy, the government. This makes the university a place of resisting the authorities and it proves Lyons' idea that "students... like to see themselves in surly rebellion against the system" (1974, 122). When Youssef joins the protestors, he falls down and is injured severely. Later, despite the pain, he runs away from the crowd and escapes the police, but "there was only one place for him to go" (Lalami, 2009, 49), the place was the Party. Hatim, the party's leader, takes photos of Youssef to be published in the Party's newspaper. As the narrator puts it, the Party wants to show "police brutality on student campuses" (51) and therefore this may be one way to attract more students and public opinion to their side since they are all angry at the late government policies.

Through this focus on the Party, or as it is called in the novel Al Hizb, Lalami highlights one of the most crucial issues in Moroccan politics which is the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism and how the university was the place from which this group emerged: "there was the headscarf-and-beard faction – girls who looked at once virtuous and threatening, and boys who had the same determined expressions as the Partisans... occasionally passing out leaflets that urged students to join their group" (Lalami, 2009, 27). The Party was always ready to welcome students like Youssef who did not find refuge other than its walls and it found in the university an adequate place to spread its ideology and principles. So, to use Lefebvre's words, the novel shows "political ideologies in so far as they relate to space" (1991, 105) and here it is the space of the university.

In addition to politics, the microcosmic relationship between the university and the outer world is seen at the level of social status. At the university, Youssef met Alia who is clearly an upper-class student from her clique at the university; she was from "the Mercedes-and-Marlboro group... they spoke French, wore designer clothes and carried patent leather satchels" (Lalami, 2009, 27). Youssef's relationship with Alia develops a bit and they meet at her home to study. When she introduces her colleague to her father, he asks "Youssef comment?" and Youssef "knew well that such a name did not count in this man's eyes: it was not a chorfa's name" (67). So, as a student, Youssef experiences this social gap both in the university and in his private life. He knows that this love affair cannot go far because of their different social status. All this makes of the university nothing less than a microcosm of the society and a political *Lefebvrian* space par excellence.

Another novel where the university is seen as highly *Lefebvrian* is Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*. What is important about this novel is that it is set "in the twilight years of the empire" (Hammad, 2019, 18). Thus, it highlights one of the important issues related to the academy at that time which is its strong relation to the discourse of the empire. The university as a space, to use Lefebvre's words "has one drawback: it belongs to Power. It implies (and is implied by) Divinity and Empire – knowledge and power combined and conflated... we find it hard to accept the idea that space and time should be produced by political power" (1991, 157-158) but this is the truth, the university as a space is truly produced and controlled by political power and there is no such thing called academic freedom. Many critics argue that "academic freedom became enshrined as the raison d'être for the professorate. For many individuals, colleges and universities existed in large part to enable the search for truth by the faculty" (Tierney, 2004, 161). However, despite the efforts of academics to be free and to stay out of such discourses, the academy never allows them. This is shown clearly in *The Parisian*. When Molineu's colleague Patrice asked him about his new research, Molineu's answer was "language and the progress of civilizations"

which sounded at that time "quite German" (Hammad, 2019, 83). Researchers were not allowed to write anything related to the Germans during the war and Frederic said that he "wouldn't publish until after the war" (ibid). They were not allowed even to quote German scholarship, when Frederic was about to quote Humboldt, Patrice told him "don't quote a German, there are people in the hall" (82). Frederic's interest at that time has shifted from anthropology to philology and even this new interest was dangerous: "Philology was the new terrain... that was a technique with German origins. But what could he do, while the men were on the battlefields? Study in secret" (85). To study in secret was the only possible solution for him.

Moreover, academics who challenge the authorities are not left in peace, and they are accused of being traitors. For example, when Patrice; Molineu's friend, expresses his attitudes against the war, he is threatened many times. Many letters are sent to him and finally he decides to leave everything behind. When Molineu hears of this, he runs to his office afraid of being accused as a traitor. He is afraid that someone would come and search his office and the catastrophe would come:

> Even if they were in French – here, there, references to German philosophers, scattered all over the place. He snapped open two leather folders and slipped the papers inside as neatly as he could without bending the corners, collected his three most recent notebooks and an English translation of the Quran, and scanned the room one last time before running out again. (Hammad, 2019, 115-116)

So, for academics, it is either you are with the system, or you are a traitor. Thus, the university or any academic sphere are never free form the dominant political system but rather they are complicit with it and teachers are obliged to accept this.

Xenophobia and Marginalization in Anglophone Arab Campus Novels:

In her book *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and its Discontents*, Elaine Showalter (2005) argues that "the best academic novels... comment on contemporary issues" (4). This is clearly seen in both Western and Eastern campus novels. Where we live in a world of post 9/11 and post 7/7, many novels depict these issues. Sometimes writers criticize these issues directly which results no doubt in them being under surveillance. Other writers, to make their works seem more superficial, use the setting of the university as an alternative space for their country and its politics. In the Arab world, this has become quite popular recently and many Arab writers made use of the university as an important setting for their novels through which they represent important issues. While some Arab writers in diaspora portray their academic characters and the challenges they face in their homeland, other authors portray a set of academic characters who live as exiles and the racial discrimination they encounter as Arabs and Muslims in the West, especially after 9/11 and 7/7.

Janice Rossen (1993) states that "the university can be a place of exclusion and marginalization, rife with class-consciousness, misogyny, competition, and xenophobia" (7). Seen from Rossen's perspective, one may convincingly argue that class-consciousness and misogyny are common features that permeate both Eastern and Western universities and which many authors reflect in their writings. Marginalization and xenophobia, on the other hand, are mostly seen in novels that deal with several races where the non-white characters experience racism and marginalization. In the Anglophone Arab campus novels, one can clearly see the exclusion and the difficult circumstances that Arab academics and students face in the West both in the past and the present. Arabs and Muslims have always been marginalized and excluded both inside and outside the university. What made this feeling of xenophobia worst is the traumatic events of 9/11 and 7/7. Muhammad Anwar argues that since 9/11, "there has been an intensification of anti-Muslim attitudes in Britain that sometimes resulted in attacks on individuals and property, and also marked direct religious discrimination" (qtd in Awad, 2018, 76). Muslim students and teachers are one category from those who suffered religious discrimination at its best.

One of the important novels that portrays such issues in details is Leila Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies* (2015). This novel is set within the context of the ongoing 'War on Terror.' It highlights the issues related to both academics and Muslim students in the West. The protagonist, Natasha, is a professor of History in a Scottish university. She is interested in the topic of *Jihad* and she has written several papers about Imam Shamil, a military leader of the Caucasus resistance against Russia and whose leadership is driven by his Sufi principles. Natasha has proven her position in the university through her hard

work and successive publications which made her confident. However, her confidence starts to be shaken because of the several problems she encounters. All of it starts when Natasha visits the house of her student Oz (originally Osama). She goes there for the sake of her research interest since Oz and his mother are the descendants of Imam Shamil. While staying there, the police attack the house and arrests Oz, accusing him of being involved in terrorist organizations. They took him and turned his life upside down.

This incident makes Natasha a suspect, and therefore, she is interrogated by the police. She says:

> In the afternoon, the police had come to the university and checked my desktop; they searched my office and asked me question after question. On the titles of my papers, *Royal Support for Jihad as Resistance*; on my political opinions, on my other nationalities and, of course, on Oz. (Aboulela, 2015, 167)

She feels frustrated because all her private documents and emails and other personal stuff are checked. This shows that even her research interests raise suspicion. Natasha feels at this moment that she is an outsider, she is no longer that indulgent researcher who is all confident in her position. One mistake (if it is at all) puts her into the margins, as she said: "every step climbed, every achievement, every recognition – all that hard work – had not taken me far enough, not truly redeemed me, not landed me on the safest shore" (Aboulela, 2015, 167). As a teacher, she even goes on to attend some training courses where it was "agreed with the effectiveness of the strategy to prevent radicalization and by extension another terrorist attack," (141) which many other teachers refuse to do, and this did not save her. On the contrary, her guilt has been strengthened because she was blamed for not reporting Oz as a student who is vulnerable to radicalization. Yousef Awad argues that despite the efforts of assimilation; Natasha "ends up as an outsider whose persistent attempts for assimilation have collapsed and gone with the wind" (2018, 83).

Natasha's student, Oz, is another victim of the ongoing 'War on Terror.' Oz is one of the smartest students, to use Natasha's words. He was one of the "brightest students, the one who asked good questions in class, the one I found myself preparing my lectures for" (Aboulela, 2015, 5). The novel clearly shows how after the traumatic events of 9/11 and 7/7, the university has become a place where teachers are "monitoring their Muslim students" (141). Teachers are supposed to write reports about Muslim students describing if they behave suspiciously. Therefore, Muslim students are under continuous surveillance. As a Muslim student, Oz has always been under surveillance and the moment he visits websites linked to terrorist groups like Al Qaeda, he has been caught by the police and is detained for several days. Such policies affect students negatively and Oz is only one example. After the attack on his home, he decided to drop out of the university and to join his father in South Africa. This seems to be destroying his future. He does not want to stay in a country where he is not free. A place which is supposed to be home is no longer safe for him because of his religion. As Natasha remorsefully informs us, his dropping out of the university was a good news and it "was passed around the department with relief as if we were well rid of him. One of our best students" (309). This shows that "academic links to Islam, no matter how tenuous they are, have become suspects under CONTEST" (Awad,2018, 83). Thus, where the university should be a safer place than the outer world, it has become a perilous space where Muslim students and teachers are under continuous surveillance.

This prejudice toward Muslim and Arab students and teachers has not started with 9/11 but rather it has been intensified by it. Such discrimination has existed long before that and Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, a historical novel set in the early years of the 1900s, shows this clearly. Midhat, the protagonist of the novel is a student of Medicine at the University of Montpellier. There, he stays with Dr. Molineu. During his stay with the Molineux, Midhat has always been referred to as the oriental. They consider him different from them and somehow inferior. For instance, Molineu presents Midhat to his guests as the "young guest du Proche-Orient" and he adds that he expects the guest "is feeling a little désorienté at the moment" (Hammad, 2019, 15). This means that Midhat feels disoriented when he is surrounded by French people. Moreover, he never feels relaxed or at ease but always tries to control himself and at many times he tries to impress his host. The narrator says that "since arriving in Montpellier a month ago, he had developed a habit of pausing whenever he felt uncertain. Ever mindful of his ignorance of convention, he strongly wished to avoid making a fool of himself." (47) All this is because

of his Arab origins. Arabs at that time were seen as uncivilized and it is the white man's burden to civilize them, and it will be shown later how Molineu was trying to civilize Midhat the Arab.

The Anglophone Arab Campus Novel as a Bildungsroman:

Sibel Erbayraktar (2017) argues in her article that "once an individual steps into the academia, there comes a process of adaptation and transformation" (1276). This process is what shapes the lives of the characters during their years in the university and after. It also makes of the novel a bildungsroman, a genre which follows the growth of the protagonist and his journey until he/she comes of age. This means that the university is a turning point in people's lives. It has a great role in shaping their personality throughout the course of the novels. Erbayraktar's statement draws a strong link between both the campus novel and the bildungsroman genres. It makes of the university a space of psychological and moral growth and it creates a common ground between both genres. Jerome Buckley argues that in the conventional Bildungsroman, "it is part of the youth's ordeal to suffer 'alienation', to experience the loss of home and father and the correlatives of innocence and faith, and to seek self-realization in a new often unaccommodating environment" (qtd in Hogg, 2020, 309). Buckley also argues that in those novels, "the central character's development from childhood or youth to adulthood is typically dependent on the movement away from the family environment" (qtd in Hogg, 2020, 313). Seen from this angle, the university as a space is a new environment for the individual, and hence, it helps reinforce his/her independence from his/her family and this is clearly seen in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*.

Looking at the university as a new environment in this Anglophone Arab campus novel and others, one may argue that these novels depict the university, whether at home or in diaspora, as a significant space that plays a pivotal role in the development of a certain character. In other words, in almost all Anglophone Arab campus novels, the protagonists are involved in events that crucially take place in the university. Midhat Kamal, the protagonist of Hammad's novel can be seen as a person whose life is highly affected by his university experience. At the beginning of the novel. Midhat was a student of medicine in the university of Montpellier. There, he stays with Dr. Molineu who is a professor of anthropology. In the course of this sojourn, Midhat comes to terms with why he is really welcomed in France. Molineu's first words after welcoming him are "we are honored to have you as our guest and enthusiastic to show you how we live" (Hammad, 2019, 13). Molineu is very interested in Midhat's first impressions about all sorts of things (13). In Molineu's greater scheme, Midhat is not just a guest, he is Molineu's project in anthropology. Molineu tells him: "we are so enthusiastic about your coming. I'm afraid we are going to ask you all sorts of questions. Professionally, I am a social anthropologist. The lining of my heart is sewn with questions" (14). In fact, "Midhat did not understand this last phrase" (14) until later in the novel when he realizes that he is a pawn in Molineu's anthropological experiment. It is a moment of epiphany for Midhat. Educated in French schools, Midhat has never considered himself inferior. He went there with the aim of being trained as a doctor in one of the best universities in Europe. However, his confidence was betrayed by Dr. Molineu who was trying to conduct an anthropological study on him and to "humanize" him (134).

Molineu and his colleague Laurent did not treat Midhat as a guest but rather as a medical case and Laurent told Midhat that he is "a special case" (Hammad, 2019, 38). Molineu tells Midhat that he "needs to see the culture, the city, the landscape of the interior... the terroir of Occitan" (32). Everything occidental is necessary for Midhat to become a fully civilized person. When Midhat reads Molineu's notebook, he is shocked at the realization that he has been used, and even abused, for the sake of studying him and his behavior as a Muslim Arab. Midhat vehemently repudiates Molineu's claims: "to humanize me?... I am amazed. Monsieur, I am a person. I am – no – [and] he stood" (134). This experience with his host makes Midhat reconsider the fact that as an Arab and a Muslim, he can never be equal to Europeans. He is and will remain always the oriental for them, and he comes to terms with this fact because of his experience in the university. Because of this, he leaves the university to Paris to study history at the Sorbonne. His years there were formative in the way he became highly interested in politics and Arab nationalism and this affects him throughout the course of the novel. Midhat's experience as a student who comes of age can be described, using Kelly's words: "the discovery and revelation of 'truth' is bound up with self-discovery, maturation and independence" (2012, 523). Therefore, it can be argued that Midhat's years between Montpellier

and the Sorbonne were very important in his life. From this experience, he becomes a different person. The Midhat we meet at the beginning of the novel, the confident and the naive who trusted the French, is no longer the same person at the end of the novel.

Moreover, a common ground between the bildungsroman and the campus novel genres can be seen through the comparison between the protagonists' experiences in Western and Arab universities. Through the following analysis, it will be argued that those who study in the West are more likely to have a comfortable and a stable life and future than those who study in Arab universities. Despite the difficulties they encounter, Arab students in diaspora have more opportunities in their lives. For example, Natasha, the protagonist of Aboulela's *The Kindness of Enemies*, is a professor of history in a Scottish university. She encounters many problems in her world of post 9/11 and 7/7 because of her Arab Muslim origins. However, because she is taught in Scotland, she has multiple doors open for her professional and academic development. She has the choice over what to do in her life unlike many women in the Arab world who are still segregated and marginalized. This world gives her the opportunity to develop and improve herself. It gives her the chance to learn and to be independent and it paves the way for her to become one of the best teachers in her university.

On the other hand, Youssef, the protagonist of Lalami's *Secret Son* is a student of English in a Moroccan university. He lives in a world without possibilities where the simplest life conditions are unavailable. Through Youssef, Lalami "explores what it means for her characters to stay rather than flee from the socio-political morass that is modern-day Morocco" (Akbar, 210, n.p.). The situation that Lalami depicts is desperate and many young people tried their luck outside the country; consequently, Morocco witness throughout the years an increase in the number of illegal immigrants who go to Europe searching for the dream of a better future. Lalami's *Secret Son* tackles this issue from a different angle. Whereas her first collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* deals with characters who have already immigrated, this novel represents the fate of those who stay in Morocco. Lalami shows through her novel the chaos that permeates the country; the university is a space where students are exploited and where political parties emerge and grow. She shows part of the circumstances that led Youssef to end up in a terrorist milieu. These circumstances have an effect on where Youssef lives and studies. Lalami sees that because of such problems, most Arab students drop out of the university and religious fundamentalism is the main or the only driven force that controlled their fate by giving them hope and promising them a better future.

So, both Natasha and Youssef live in a world of post 9/11 and 7/7 and they face many difficulties linked to religious radicalism and extremism; yet, Natasha is luckier than Youssef because of her Western education whereas Youssef, despite him being a good and persistent student, is unable to attain his dreams of graduating and finding a decent job. Thus, those in the Arab world are more susceptible to fundamentalism. To live in such a corrupt society and university is so difficult and will affect students no doubt. Natasha's and Youssef's journeys are the same journey but in different contexts. Youssef has the capacity but his situation does not help him. On the other hand, Natasha, because she studies and lives in the West is able to become a well-established scholar. The Western university has made her achieve a degree of autonomy since all students are generally struggling toward self-definition, which is a thing that most Arab universities fail to do. For this specific reason, upper class people in the Arab world tend to look down on local universities and prefer Western-style education for their children. An example of this is Youssef's sister, the legitimate child who was sent by her father to study in the US. That is why, most, Arab writers in diaspora, like Lalami herself, have not valorized the status of Arab universities, rather, they debunk it.

Anglophone Arab campus novels show how the university becomes a space where people become responsible and mature. If the character does not come of age during his/her college experience, it is no doubt that those years are among the most formative years in life. It is seen as an essential part of constructing one's identity. So, in all selected novels, academia becomes an important passage of the protagonists' journeys. The characters are "either in the process of changing or they are terribly aware of why they're not" (Blackburn, 1975, 56). Some characters achieve their moral growth, while others only realize some important facts about themselves; those facts are sometimes the reason of their failure throughout the novel.

Satire in Anglophone Arab Campus Novels:

Satire is a common feature of the campus novel in general. As a literary device, authors, both Westerners and easterners have made use of it to criticize their societies. However, satire through the use of humor is not very common in the Arab world. It is as Khater argues:

> It is rare to find laughter in the works of modern Arab poets or novelists. The reality of military and political defeat, social decay and dislocation... overwhelm and permeate modern Arabic literature to an oppressive extreme. It is as if laughter particularly from a sense of irony, has become an illegitimate or untenable response to the problems of the Arab world. Indeed, the literary response to these crises has generally been either bleak social realism or self-involved individual alienation from society and its problems and failures. (1993, 75)

Because of this situation of decay in the Arab world, writers were not able to directly criticize their societies; rather, they have made use of the university setting to comment on their issues. Therefore, the approach of Arab writers in the Arab world and those in diaspora was not satire in its traditional form; rather, it is a sharp critique of the society through its smaller mirror: the university. Those writers "depict the campus as a microcosm, a Lilliputan world riven by the same moral complacency, elitism, political posturing... in other words, for the satirist, the university is an easy, target-rich environment" (Bailey and Slay, 2003, 25). In addition to satire, the result of the situation in the Arab world is reflected in the Anglophone Arab campus novel through alienated academics and students. This alienation is both from the self and the society.

Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019) can be seen mainly as a critique against the Western academy at the time of the empire. Hammad shows, as mentioned earlier, how the academy is complicit with the discourse of the empire and how Arab academics are always perceived as inferior, which results in their strong feelings of alienation. For instance, Midhat always feels uncomfortable; at his arrival to France, he is "feeling a little désorienté" (Hammad, 2019, 15). What emphasizes his sense of alienation is that in France, he has always been perceived as the oriental whereas in Palestine, he is the Parisian. There, he could not let go of his Arabic tradition and way of life and in Palestine, he could not let go of his European attitudes and the somehow French way of life.

Furthermore, Cao (2020) argues that "Academia... critiques a society so that society can move forward in the right direction" (19). This moving forward of the society is not guaranteed but it is the efforts of writers and intellectuals to change society and its attitudes. For example, through her *Secret Son*, Lalami tries to critique the socio-political situation in Morocco and how it affects all aspects of life including the educational system and universities. Youssef, from his first day at the university, experiences a sense of un-belonging and alienation. The omniscient narrator informs us that there are "clusters of students huddling together in distinct cliques" (Lalami, 2009, 27). Yet, Youssef has never felt that he properly belongs to any of these groups: "every time Youssef tried to penetrate one of these cliques, he felt he was lacking some background, some essential element that would make it easier to know what to say, when to say it, and how to say it." (29). Therefore, he used to set alone by the window in the classroom. This loneliness and alienation leads him toward the end of the novel to extremism. He was longing for solace and he does not find it except within the Party's walls.

Aboulela's novel can be also seen as an academic satire against the Western academy which becomes a space through which Muslim students and teachers are put under surveillance. Oz is a British Muslim who experiences the feelings of alienation and unhomeliness. What is important about him is that he considers himself a British citizen with all what that word should imply. However, his confidence is shaken by what happens to him. He has been accused of being involved in terrorism and he is detained by the police. This experience makes him feel as an outsider in the very country he was born and grew in. Yousef Awad argues in this regard:

> Oz is demonized, tainted and otherized. His sense of citizenship is washed away by being pushed to the margins of the nation. Overall, this incident has made Oz re-think and re-position his identity as a British Muslim and it even made him feel alienated from the greater society. (2018, 80)

So, the place which was home for Oz is no longer home. He is and will always remain the Muslim other.

It is not just students who suffer this alienation in the academy. Belok and Enger argue in their article (1972) that "college professors, experience an acute sense of alienation" (281). The alienation of Arab academics stems either from their feelings of un-belonging to a world run mostly by Arab autocratic regimes, or from their sense of outsiderness in a world that sees Arabs and Muslims as being the sole responsible for the problems happening in the West. Through her novel, Aboulela "captures the sense of alienation that has resulted from prejudice against Muslims under the pretext of fighting terrorism" (Awad, 2018, 76). As a teacher with Arab Muslim origins, she is always afraid of being accused of having links to terrorism. Therefore, she applies for different workshops whose aim is to prevent radicalization and extremism. However, all this does not make her safe or secure. Rather, she realizes that because of her origins, living in the West after 9/11 and 7/7 is a challenge. The incident with Oz has shaken her confidence and she feels herself an outsider and not belonging to that community. Another incident is when her student Gaynor files a complaint against her, and to Natasha's surprise, it is taken into consideration. She says "this isn't the first time Gaynor has complained about a member of staff. How come this time she's being taken seriously?" (Aboulela, 2015, 99) This can be interpreted only as having relation to her origins which makes Natasha even more perturbed and isolated and it strengthens her sense of alienation.

Love Affairs in Anglophone Arab Campus novels:

In addition to satire, love affairs are a common feature in nearly all campus novels. In the Western campus novel, those love affairs are generally driven by lust and desire. They are most of the time between teachers who try to exercise their power upon vulnerable female students. So, campus novels are not really about love affairs, but rather about some kind of sexual adventures. The Western academic is shown "as sexually weak in the campus text" (Dalton-Brown, 2008, 593). For this reason, Arab writers in diaspora try to defy this image of the academic and they portray respectful academics. Instead of sexual adventures, they portray love affairs based on true love. Whereas the emphasis of the Western campus novel is mainly on sexual adventures, the emphasis of the Anglophone Arab campus novel is on love affairs based on true love. If sexual relations are mentioned, they are not of "a tutor/student relation of the kind described in these [Western] novels" (Lambertsson Björk, 1993, 35). In all the selected novels, the existing love relationships are mainly between young lovers, i.e. students themselves and most of the time they end up in failure, especially when the lovers are from two opposing worlds.

Midhat, the protagonist of Hammad's novel in his stay with the Molineux, falls in love with his host's daughter, Jeannette. Their love affair makes the novel a kind of romance. The first part of the book portrays their strong emotions and desire to be together. However, this affair has many obstacles and the most important one is Midhat's identity as an Arab. Molineu cannot accept the fact that his daughter is to be wedded to an Arab who is not 'civilized' and inferior to them. So, one of the most important obstacles that Arab academics face in diaspora is to fall for a European lover and the inability to transcend the barrier of race and religion. Though he left Montpellier, Midhat never forgot Jeannette and her love haunted him throughout the novel. He does not realize this until he finds her letter in his father's study. Her letter is dated four years from his leaving Montpellier and Jeannette is asking him to come back to her. This letter traumatizes him and he spends a long time in a mental hospital. Despite Midhat being married and having two children, his love during his university experience has never left him and it has had a great impact upon his life because Jeannette is his true beloved.

Moreover, Youssef, the protagonist of Lalami's *Secret Son* is another student whose love affair affects his life throughout the novel. His affair with his upper-class colleague, Alia, makes him more conscious of his lower social class. This affair starts in the university when the professor of literature asks them about Gatsby's dream, and Alia can be seen as Youssef's unattainable dream. Their relation begins with a sexual desire and it is impossible to grow and develop because of the barrier of social class. This makes Youssef's only interest is to make money, but he has chosen the wrong path. He becomes involved in the Party's misdeeds which results in his failure by the end of the novel.

Conclusion:

To conclude, through the previous analysis, it can be argued that truly, via the works of Arab writers in diaspora, the

Arab world is witnessing the birth of the genre of the Anglophone Arab campus novel. Universities in the Arab world are a microcosm of the land itself. The political conflicts and social problems in the novels are mere reflections of what is happening outside. This makes the university a prototype of the outer world, and all those novels reflect to a great extent what people, especially academics and students, face as Muslims and Arabs in the West and in the Arab world. The Anglophone Arab campus novel shares many characteristics with its Western counterpart. For example, both treat the university as a microcosm of society, yet, in the Anglophone Arab Campus novel, this microcosmic relationship goes further to treat the university as a *Lefebvrian* space. Arab writers in the diaspora reflect many social, religious, and economic issues through the university setting but their most important focus is politics, especially when it is related to the Arab academy. They show how the university is highly driven by politics and how it becomes a site for contesting political parties and ideologies. Satire and love affairs are other common features of both Western and Anglophone Arab campus novels but with slight differences that are mainly related to the Arab community.

On the other hand, the Anglophone Arab campus novel has some unique features. For example, it is always a novel of formation. Characters face many problems during their years in the university which make them come of age. Their coming of age is also related to whether they study in the Arab world or in the West. Another unique feature is the focus on the state of xenophobia that Arab academics and students face in the West after the traumatic events of 9/11 and 7/7. Many authors reflect those issues because they stem from their personal experiences either as former students there or as current teachers. Moreover, the selected novels show one important aspect of the Anglophone Arab campus novel which is its partial university setting. It is as Martin Eve quotes Péter Székely: "it is not the *setting* of a text in a university, or the density of its references to academia, that make a text an academic novel. It is, instead, a type of functional deployment" (2016, 47). In all the selected novels, the campus plays a pivotal role where important events take place. This means that it is not about whether a text is fully set in a university that we call it or not a campus novel, rather, it is about the function of the university in it. So, Eve's statement proves that the selected novels, because of the crucial role of the university in them, are all seen as campus novels par excellence. Yet, one may suggest that in the coming years, this Anglophone Arab campus novel may further develop to become as its Western counterpart whose all events take place within the walls of the campus.

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