Love versus Political Commitment

An Arab Intellectual's Dilemma as Portrayed in

Bahāʾ Ṭāhir's *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* (*Love in Exile*)

Line Reichelt Føreland

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Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages

Supervisor: Stephan Guth

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Love versus Political Commitment: An Arab Intellectual's Dilemma as portrayed in Bahā' Ṭāhir's *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* (Love in Exile)

The process a formerly committed intellectual has to go through in order to gain consciousness of his destiny in the post-idealistic, postmodern, globalized world.

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Abstract

This study will examine the novel *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* (*Love in Exile*, 1995) written by Bahā' Ṭāhir. The novel describes the life situation of a formerly committed intellectual living in exile who is trying to come to terms with the loss of his position in society. The protagonist is an avid supporter of the nationalist leader Gamāl ʻAbd al-Nāṣir. He was therefore personally affected by the political turmoil that resulted from the succession of ʾAnwar al-Sādāt and the implementation of the new liberal economical policies (the *infitāḥ* policies). While living in exile, he meets the young and beautiful Brigitte, and experiences a moral dilemma – whether to choose love or political commitment. He has to choose between accepting a love he does not feel he deserves and trying to be a committed intellectual as he is expecting of himself, despite the fact that his (lost) position in society and being in exile make it impossible for him to commit himself to political activism. An Arab prince also appears who tries to trick the protagonist, and who turns out to be a bigger threat than this moral dilemma. The plot of the novel takes place in the year 1982, the summer of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, with the following massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps. The lacking reactions from the outside world contribute to the feeling that people today have become apolitical and detached.

I try to place the novel within the two debates and literary traditions to which I consider it to belong: The role of the intellectual and the East/West theme. The introductory section in this study therefore presents the historical background to both of these themes. After the analytical section, I try to interpret and contextualize the presentation of these themes in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. I do this in order to understand what it means that the novel was published at the time it was with regards to the intellectual's situation in Egypt (and the world), and what kind of impact the novel has had for the 'East/West conflict'. I claim that the novel tells us something about how far the 'globalized intellectual' has come, and what role the Arab intellectual is expected to fulfill.

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A note on translation and transliteration

This thesis is based on the novel *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* written by Bahā' Ṭāhir.[1] I have, of course, used the Arabic original in my analysis. However, when quoting from the novel, I have used the English translation. I did not consider it necessary to 'translate the novel again', as this job has already been done nicely by Farouk Abdel Wahab.[2] Whenever the translation differs significantly from the Arabic original I will provide a footnote to point out the difference.

When using longer quotations from the novel, these will be rendered in Arabic followed by the English translation. When quoting smaller passages, such as a few words or a sentence, these will be transliterated. The same goes for Arabic names used in the thesis, except when using an Arabic name from an English source. Except for the Arabic letters **ذ, ث, خ, ش** and **غ** I will adhere to the principle of one sign for each Arabic consonant.

ا	ā	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j[3]	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	K
د	d	ل	L

[1] Bahā' Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 2nd edition (Bayrūt: Dār al-ādāb, 2008).
[2] Bahaa Taher, *Love in Exile*, translated by Farouk Abdel Wahab (London: Arabia Books, 2008).
[3] When giving the name of the former president of Egypt Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, I will use /g/ instead of /j/.

ذ	dh	م	M
ر	r	ن	N
ز	z	ه	H
س	s	و	w/ū
ش	sh	ي	y/ī
ص	ṣ	ء	’
ض	ḍ		

1 Introduction

1.1 Why *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*?

My first idea for a thesis was that of looking at a novel written in exile, or with life in exile as a main theme. I was curious as to how such a novel would relate to the literary tradition of the author's country of origin, and what impact the exile would have on his or her writing. I wondered whether the author would deal with political and national issues from his or her home country and/or the place where the exile was spent, or if the focus would shift from a national outlook to a globalized one. It was my supervisor Stephan Guth who pointed me in the direction of the novel *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* (*Love in Exile*). When I first read the novel, I was intrigued. The novel dealt with the political past of Egypt, and gave a unique insight into the situation of the Arab intellectual middle class after the fall of Nasserism. At the same time, it dealt with issues such as living in exile, the relation between the East and the West, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with the following massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps in the summer of 1982. In fact, this summer serves as a framework for the novel, giving an insight into how the world reacted to these incidents. The novel itself received both national and international success. Its author, Bahā'Ṭāhir, has experienced many of the conditions the novel describes, such as exile and the situation of the intellectual during and after the fall of Nasserism, himself having been a fervent believer in the pan-Arab vision. Because of my interest in this multilayered story, I wished to spend more time reading and analyzing it in order to obtain a better understanding of what the author wanted to convey by writing it. I also wished to look closer at the structural development of the novel, and therefore chose to use an analytical method that focused on structural features. The goal was to obtain a better understanding of what constituted the *main features* of the novel, and thereby be able to categorize its different themes. This is done in order to make it easier to contextualize and interpret the themes of the novel. Through repeated readings and analysis, I found recurring patterns that seemed parallel those of fairytale stories. I therefore thought it would be interesting to compare the structure of the story with the structure of a fairytale in order to see what would be similar and what would deviate from a fairytale story. I learned

about Vladimir Propp's literary method in a class on Arabic literature, and was fascinated by it. Since this method was originally used on Russian fairytales, focusing on the structure of the stories studied, I considered this an appropriate method of analysis which would shed some light on the use of fairytale elements in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.

1.2 Sources

1.2.1 Main Source

The main source for this thesis is the novel *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. First I read the novel a number of times in order to obtain a greater understanding of the text itself. Then I followed up by analyzing the different themes and categories of the text. The analysis is therefore a very central part of the thesis, and I will use examples from the novel to clarify arguments and findings.

1.2.2 Secondary Sources

The author Bahā' Ṭāhir is mentioned in quite a number of books and studies, but he and his works are often only mentioned *en passant*, if not completely bypassed. An article that has been written about Bahā' Ṭāhir's novels in connection with a similar theme that will be presented in this thesis, is Lorenzo Casini's "Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narrative Discourse".[4] The article deals with "the representation of Europe in present-day Arabic narrative discourse", and uses *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* and *Wāḥat al-Ghurūb* by Bahā' Ṭāhir in order to examine what he perceives as the tendency that "the relationship between the definition of the Self and the representation of Europe appears inverted with respect to Occidentalism".[5] Another article that deals with *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is

[4] Lorenzo Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism: Europe and the Self in Present-day Arabic Narrative Discourse", EUI Working Paper RSCAS 2008/30 (Italia: European University Institute, 2008).
[5] Ibid, written in the Abstract in the beginning of the article.

Reem Bassiouney's "Redefining Identity Through Code Choice in al-Ḥubb fī 'l-Manfā by Bahā' Ṭāhir", which studies the language use and code choice in the novel.[6]

There are three books in particular which deal with Bahā' Ṭāhir's authorship that have been used in this study. These are Richard Jacquemond's *Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State, and Society in Modern Egypt*,[7] Elisabeth Kendall's *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-garde: Intersection in Egypt*,[8] and Rasheed El-Enany's *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction*.[9] The last of the three gives the most information about *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, and this study is therefore regarded as particularly important for the research aim in this thesis.[10]

In addition to the studies about Bahā' Ṭāhir's authorship and *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, I have used a number of studies that deal with Arabic literature, and perhaps especially Egyptian literature.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine more closely what I consider to be an important novel within Arabic literature. There are not many studies written about *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, despite the fact that it deals with central issues and debates such as the role of the intellectual and the relation between 'the East' and 'the West'. The story presents conflicts faced by an important group in the Arabic society today, the secular intellectual group. This group has been a significant one since the *nahḍa*. It also represents another group that has become a large part of the Arabic population: those living in exile. By analyzing a story that focuses on the

[6] Reem Bassiouney, "Redefining Identity Through Code Choice in al-Ḥubb fī 'l-Manfā by Bahā' Ṭāhir" *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, ed. By Alex Metcalfe, Department of History, Lancaster University, vol. 10/5 (2010): 101-118, http://www.lancs.ac.uk/jais/volume/docs/vol10/v10_05_Bassiouney_101-118.pdf (first accessed 23.09.2010), 101.

[7] Richard Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation: Writers, State, and Society in Modern Egypt*, translated by David Tresilian (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008).

[8] Elisabeth Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-garde: Intersection in Egypt* (USA, New York, and Canada: Routledge, 2006).

[9] Rasheed El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[10] There may be much more material in the Arabic press, in literary magazines, and in studies and critiques that are not available on the internet. Since I have not had a research stay, it has been impossible to get the complete list of published studies and materials. The studies presented here are the ones I have relied most on, and had access to during the writing process.

situation of these groups and debates, we may shed some light on the difficulties these groups face, as well as giving new perspectives on the ongoing debates. This is important because of the significance of the debates, as well as the size and important role of the groups in question.

Through the analysis of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* the main elements of the story will become visible, and this will underline the main thematic focus. As was mentioned at the end of section 1.1, I found recurring patterns that draw parallels to fairytale stories when analyzing the story. Another purpose of this study is therefore to examine the fairytale elements in order to see what their significance are, as well as trying to contribute to increasing the understanding of a story that operates on several parallel levels.

The presence of fairytale elements in the story, such as fairytale functions and characters, will be related to the above-mentioned debates and groups. The assumption is that a discussion on how the story differs from and is similar to a fairytale will reveal what the author's contribution to the debates is, and tell us something about why the novel was published at that particular time. Such a comparison between a [Russian] fairytale story and the novel will, at least, clearly present the author's approach to the themes, and presumably give some clues as to what he conceives as possible solutions to the conflicts. The use of genre descriptions and/or comparisons affects how a story is interpreted, and a comparison between *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* and the fairytale as described by Propp will therefore be useful when interpreting the story. Because the topic chosen for this thesis is such a large one, and because of the limited space available, I have had to make some choices regarding theory. There are numerous works written on the topics that will be dealt with in the thesis. In order to present the topics in a systematic way, I have had to leave out some information and discussions despite their possible significance for the analysis and the interpretation. A considerable amount of space will be used on the analysis because it is essential for my understanding of the story. In the interpretation, I will focus on some characters from the novel, mainly its protagonist. Unfortunately, I have had to neglect some of the characters and incidents in the novel. The ones I have chosen to focus on are those that occupy an important place in the analysis.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the demands an Arab intellectual faces today, and how are these demands affected by globalization and life in exile?

- How does the Arab intellectual relate to his country's historical and political background? What impact do historical and political events have on his/her role as an intellectual?

- What does the story tell us about the relation between 'the East' and 'the West' in Arabic literature? Is the presentation of this relation different from other presentations in Arabic literature?

- How is the story structurally similar to or different from a fairytale? What does this mean for the conception of the East/West relation, the role of the intellectual, and the central problem of the novel - the dilemma between a longing for personal happiness and the obligation to be fully committed to the causes of the Arabic community?

1.5 Outline of the thesis

In chapter 2, I will give general information on Bahā' Ṭāhir and *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, and present a summary of the novel. In chapter 3, I will provide a general background for themes and events central to the section on interpretation, in order to explain the results of the analysis. I will give background information about the emergence of the Arabic intellectual because, as I understand it, the intellectual is central to the novel. Then I will present a general overview of the relation between *the East* and *the West* as it has been presented in Arabic literature. I will briefly describe some of the novels that have dealt with the subject to give an impression of how the description of this relation in literature has changed over the course of time. However, I will spend more time on one of the novels, *Mawsim al-Hijra 'ilā l-Shamāl* written by al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ, because of its importance as a historical document which represents a stage in the development of our main theme. This is done in order to be able to compare the presentation to that of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.

Chapter 4 will present the analysis and a description of the analytical method used. I will first provide a schematic overview that presents what I assume are the story's main functions. Afterwards I will perform a functional and role analysis of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, followed by an overview of the main roles in the novel. Then, the literary devices and style of the novel will be presented. As a summary of the analytical section, there will be a conclusive paragraph at the end of the chapter presenting the main analytical results.

In chapter 5 I will give the results of my analysis an interpretation against the backdrop of the contexts sketched in chapter 3. Chapter 5 will therefore present a more detailed picture of some of the themes the novel deals with.

2 Bahāʾ Ṭāhir and *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

2.1 Bahāʾ Ṭāhir

Bahāʾ Ṭāhir is an Egyptian author born in 1935 in Cairo. He left Egypt in 1975 after having been forbidden to write. This prohibition took place during the rule of ʾAnwar al-Sādāt. Bahāʾ Ṭāhir then travelled for a long period in Africa and Asia, and afterwards he moved to Switzerland where he worked as a translator for the UN. As an author, he is considered to belong to the "generation of the 1960s" (*jīl al-sittīnāt*),[11] regarded as one of the most important authors of what is termed "the New Sensibility", the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda*.[12] The term 'New Sensibility' has been extensively described and used by Idwār al-Kharrāṭ and by Sabry Hafez [Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ]. Al-Kharrāṭ explains that "the characteristic features of the literature of the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda* is how, over the course of the 1960s and in particular the 1970s, the understanding of and approach to what constitutes reality changed."[13] This change is described as such an important change that "all previous literary production despite its undoubted diversity and complexity would now have to be subsumed under the term Old Sensitivity which, except for the odd early precursor, had been predominant until the end of the 1950s".[14] Hafez argues that literature changed because of the major political, social, and cultural change that took place in the 1960s, and because of "the tempo and the effectiveness" of it.[15]

The writers from the generation of the 1960s, or the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda*, were generally politically 'committed'. Starkey describes their 'characteristic mood' as "one of rejection, disillusion and self-doubt rather than optimism".[16] During the 1960s, Bahāʾ Ṭāhir was an

[11] Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-garde: Intersection in Egypt*, 93.
[12] Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck, "the Egyptian Magazine Gālīrī 68: Truth Innovation, and Diversity" [2011], about to be published in *From New Values to New Aesthetics: Turning Points in Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. S. Guth & G. Ramsay, vol. 1: *From Modernism to the 1980s* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011], 10.
[13] Stephan Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", [2011], about to be published in *From New Values to New Aesthetics: Turning Points in Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. S. Guth & G. Ramsay, vol. 1: *From Modernism to the 1980s* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011], 3.
[14] Ibid, 3.
[15] Hafez, "The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties", http://www.jstore.org/stable/4182965, 69.
[16] Paul Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 139-140.

active member of Cairo's "left-winged and avant-garde literary circle" and one of the writers who published in the literary magazine *Gālīrī 68*.[17]

According to Rasheed El-Enany, Bahā' Ṭāhir belongs to the era termed "the postcolonial period: humbled encounters".[18] About this era, El-Enany writes the following:

> The heady years of national self-confidence in the early post-independence period were, however, not to endure. The turning point was the humiliating Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel. Arab intellectuals did not see the defeat in only military terms, but were to see it in the fullness of time as a symptom of the collapse of the national dream in the post-independence era. Colonial rule was gone, but in its place what emerged was not democracy, liberalism, and the welfare [sic] statae, but rather autocratic governments that repressed individuals and groups, often more fiercely than under colonialism, and disastrous policies that led to military defeats and economic decline. There was a sense of pervasive national disillusionment.[19]

Today, the author mostly lives in Cairo. He has published a number of short stories and novels, several of which have been translated into other languages. In 1964 he published his first short story, and his first short story collection (*al-Khuṭūba*) was published in serialized form in 1972. Bahā' Ṭāhir has also published three other short story collections, namely *Bi-l-'ams Ḥalimtu bīk* (1984), *'anā l-Malik Ji'tu* (1985), and *Dhahabtu ilā Shallāl* (1998). His first novel, *Sharq al-Nakhīl* (*East of the Palms*), was published in serialized form in the journal *Ṣabāḥ al-Khayr* in 1983. Afterwards he wrote *Qālat Dūḥā* (1985), *Khālatī Ṣafiyya wa-l-Dayr* (1991), *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* (1995), *Nuqṭat al-Nūr* (1999), and *Wāḥat al-Ghurūb* (2007).[20] Bahā' Ṭāhir has received international, national and pan-Arab recognition for his authorship, and in 2008 he received the IPAF, the International Price for Arabic Fiction, for his sixth novel *Wāḥat al-Ghurūb* (*Sunset Oasis*).[21]

The author's work is often characterized by the use of realistic settings describing human relationships. The descriptions are often quite detailed, but first and foremost they describe the *external* emotional build-up of the characters. He presents the conversations the characters

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[17] Arab World Books/*muntadā al-kitāb al-'arabī*, "Bahaa Taher", Gaber Asfour, Marilyn Booth, Professor Frances Boyle, Gamal El-Ghitani, Abdelraouf El-Reedy, Richard Jaquemond, Bahaa Taher (1998-2000) http://www.arabworldbooks.com/authors/bahaa_taher.htm.

[18] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*,113.

[19] Ibid, 113.

[20] Arab World Books/*muntadā al-kitāb al-'arabī*, "Bahaa Taher" http://www.arabworldbooks.com/authors/bahaa_taher.htm.

[21] International Price for Arabic Fiction/*al-jā'iza l-'ālamiyya li-l-riwāya l-'arabiyya*, "Book Synopsis: WINNER: Sunset Oasis"(2008) http://www.arabicfiction.org/book/27.html (first accessed 01.05.2011).

take part in, the events that occur, and perhaps the thoughts of one or more protagonists.[22] The author describes *external* problems, such as death, anxiety, and alienation.[23] In many respects, Bahā' Ṭāhir continues the style he became associated with already in his earlier works. He is, mostly, a representative of what al-Kharrāṭ called the "external-oriented, things-in-themselves" mode of "New Sensibility" (*tayyār al-tashyīʾ aw al-tabʿīd, aw al-taḥyīd, aw al-tajrīb*).[24] This writing style refrains from making the inner emotional life explicit and rather prefers to show the surface only. This narrative style characteristically uses a 'neutral tone', giving a detailed picture of the surroundings without commenting on its impact on the individuals. This 'neutral tone' is not a hint at an emotional detachment, in fact the exact opposite is more likely the case.[25]

Viviani argues that in the short story *Walākin* (*But*), a story he wrote while in Genève, "the reader may find an answer to the thorny dilemma that had been tormenting Bahāʾ Ṭāhir for a long period before he wrote it: what has happened to Egypt?"[26] In fact, this short story has many similarities with *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, both when it comes to the plot and the main character. Viviani argues that because of Ṭāhir's many visits to Egypt during his stay abroad, he was able to watch "great and shocking changes take place in his homeland, which instilled into his soul a profound sadness as well as innermost downheartedness".[27] This position - being able to watch Egypt from "the outside" while reflecting upon the changes - is significant in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, where the protagonist watches from outside, living in exile. His life in exile seems to have had a major impact on Bahā' Ṭāhir, given the fact that a number of his works, among them the one to be studied here, deal with this subject.

This subsection has dealt with general information about Bahā' Ṭāhir, his authorship and literary style. The next will provide information about the novel analyzed in this thesis, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.

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[22] Roger Allen, "Bahā' Ṭāhir", in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, 2nd edition, 752 (London: Routledge, 2010), 752.
[23] H. Aboul Hussein, "Ṭâher Bahâ: né en 1935", in *Dictionnaire de littératures de langue arabe et maghrébine francophone*, edited by Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, 364, *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, edited by Béatrice Didier, 2nd edition (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 364.
[24] Cited in Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", 8.
[25] Ibid, 8-9.
[26] Paola Viviani, "Looking at Egypt from Afar: Bahā' Ṭāhir's exile and *Dhahabtu ilā shallāl*: In Search for Unity and Reform for the Arabs' Sake", *Asiatische Studien* Vol. 62, no. 4 (2008), 1213-1220: 1213.
[27] Ibid, 1213.

2.2 *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

The novel analyzed in this paper, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, has been described by the author himself as "a testimony on contemporary Arab politics".[28] In an interview he states that he wrote the novel because of the violent incident that took place in the refugee camps Ṣabrā and Shātīlā in Lebanon while he was abroad. He witnessed the incident when he was in Europe, where European television stations showed what happened without concealing the truth. (*riwāyat "al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā" katabtuhā natījat infiʿāl ʿanīf jiddan li-maʾsāt "Ṣabrā wa-Shātīlā" allatī ḥadathat wa-ʾanā fī ʾŪrūbā wa-shāhadtuhā ʿalā shāshāt al-tilīfizyūn al-ʾūrūbī alladhī ʿaraḍ al-ṣūra bi-kull ḥaqāʾiqihā*.[29])

al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā is an important novel because of the unique picture it presents of what happened to the intellectual middle class after the fall of Nasserism. As Gunvor Mejdell describes in her afterword to the Norwegian translation, the novel describes the intellectual climate of Egypt, and asks how the political change that took place after al-Sādāt succeeded ʻAbd al-Nāṣir could have happened. The novel asks which political group was right, the Nasserists or the Communists, and how the intellectuals could let radical Islam win political space. Not least, it looks at how both Arab countries and Europe have dealt with the Israel-Palestine conflict. It gives credit to some idealists, but criticizes the missing reactions to the terrible massacres that took place in the summer of 1982 in Lebanon. It also deals with human relations, with love and with betrayal.[30] It may be argued that the novel is written as a continuation of the presentation of themes such as "the East and the West" and "the role of the intellectual". The novel is thus an important contribution to these themes and their respective debates.

The subsection below will provide a summary of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* that will be necessary in order to follow the analysis presented in section 4.

[28]Mona Anis, "The Unbearable Weight of History" *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Al-Ahram Organisation, no. 883 (7-13 February 2008) http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/883/cu1.htm (first accessed 20.03.2010).
[29] Aḥmad Ṭāyil, "Bahā' Ṭāhir al-ḥilm al-miṣrī wa-abnā' rifāʻa ḥiwār: Aḥmad Ṭāyil" *Alwatanvoice*, 12.11.2006, http://pulpit.alwatanvoice.com/articles/2006/12/11/66397.html (first accessed 04.02.2011).
[30] Bahaa Taher, *Kjærlighet i eksil*, translated by Gunvor Mejdell (Oslo: L.S.P. forlag, 2008).

2.2.1 Summary

The protagonist in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is an older divorced journalist from Egypt. He is the father of two children, Hanādī and Khālid, who still live in Egypt together with his former wife Manār. The protagonist lives in exile in a European city of a certain importance, presumably Genève. In this city he meets the Austrian woman Brigitte, who works there as a tourist guide. Brigitte and the protagonist fall in love with each other despite how diametrically different the two of them are in age and looks. Brigitte also lives outside her country of origin, but is a European and considers all of Europe to be her country.

The first time the protagonist sees Brigitte is at a human rights conference where she is working as a translator. At the same conference he randomly meets an old friend, Ibrāhīm. The protagonist and his friend decide to go to a café to catch up on old times, and end up discussing the political past of Egypt during the rule of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir and what happened after the succession of al-Sādāt. At the same café they meet Brigitte, together with the person that was in charge of the conference, Dr Müller. Ibrāhīm later reveals that he is in love with Brigitte, but is not capable of acting on his feelings.

After Brigitte and the protagonist have spent some time together she tells the protagonist about her background, and her former marriage with Albert, whom she met at university. Albert is from Equatorial Guinea, and has escaped from the country and its regime. The couple met a lot of resistance because Albert was an African. Then Brigitte got pregnant. One Friday when they were walking together, they were surrounded by a group of youths. One of the youths pushed Brigitte so that she fell down, which caused a spontaneous abortion. After the incident they were not able to overcome the difficult time together, and their relationship ended in a divorce.

When the protagonist and Brigitte fall in love with each other, they decide to put all burdening things behind them. The protagonist stops sending correspondent letters to his newspaper, and realizes that he has always tried to fill the roles that were expected of him; being a good husband, a good father, and so on, but he has never tried to simply be happy.

The plot of the novel takes place in 1982, in the summer of Israel's occupation of Lebanon, with the ensuing massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps. When the Israeli invasion of Lebanon begins, the protagonist gets emotionally disturbed. The news reports describe the horrifying scenes, but nothing is happening outside of Lebanon. Before he learns about the massacres he meets a Norwegian nurse named Marianne Eriksen who has just returned from Lebanon after working in a refugee camp. Her story has a deep impact on him. When he comes home that day he collapses and is hospitalized. The hospitalization forces him to avoid all disturbing news, but when he gets out of the hospital he starts to read the news again.

One day the protagonist has an appointment with a journalist friend named Bernard. He brings Ibrāhīm with him, so that Ibrāhīm and Bernard can discuss the possibility of publishing news about what is happening in Lebanon. While at the café, the café owner, Elaine, introduces them to her younger Egyptian husband Yūsuf. Through Yūsuf, the protagonist is indirectly introduced to a mysterious prince that wants his help to start an Arabic newspaper. During the abovementioned hospital stay of the protagonist, he receives flowers from the prince every day. After a while, and because of Yūsuf's persuasions, the protagonist agrees to meet the prince. The prince, who in the beginning was presented as progressive and with good ambitions, turns out to be corrupt, and has connections with the most ill-natured villains. In the end, he turns out to be a bigger threat to the love relation between the protagonist and Brigitte than the author's inner conflict.

After Ibrāhīm has left the city where the protagonist now lives, the protagonist receives a phone call from him. Ibrāhīm is in the refugee camp Ṣabrā, and he describes terrible scenes from the massacre that has taken place. Because of the massacres in Ṣabrā and Shātīlā, Brigitte and the protagonist participate in a demonstration against the cruelties in Lebanon. Even though Brigitte participates eagerly, she tells him afterwards that she still thinks that the one who suffers or dies will do that alone, and that the demonstration cannot bring the dead in Lebanon back.

The same day, the protagonist receives a letter from the newspaper in which he gets fired. The same thing has happened to Brigitte. This turns out to be the work of the prince. Because Brigitte becomes unemployed and is without a work permit, she decides to travel back to

Austria to spend some time with her father. The protagonist wants to suggest that they can leave together, but knows that Brigitte would answer that it is impossible because ‘they are everywhere’. The protagonist drives Brigitte to the airport, and she tries to make the protagonist drive off the road so they can at least die together. He does not want to do this, and they briefly say goodbye. The protagonist then visits the home of the prince to confront him, but to no avail. The prince only asks him through his servant why he has not left in the same way as Brigitte. The protagonist leaves, sits down on a bench in a desolate park where everything (including the novel) ends. He thinks that it is a beautiful ending, leading to peace and quietness.

3 Regional and geographical background

The previous section dealt with the novel *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, and gave information about its author Bahāʾ Ṭāhir. This one will provide general background information that is significant for the interpretation in this thesis.

3.1 The Arabic intellectual

The intellectual is central to *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. The novel represents a new attitude toward the intellectual's position in society. It will therefore be helpful to present a short briefing about the background of the intellectual's position in Arab, or Egyptian, society, and its development up until the publication of the novel.

3.1.1 The emergence of the Arab intellectual during the *nahḍa*

The modern, secular Arabic intellectual stands in the tradition called the *nahḍa* (awakening or renaissance). *Nahḍa* is the term used to refer to a period which extended, roughly, from the middle of the 19th century until the end of the First World War. Some of the most important aspects of the *nahḍa* were the idea of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and debates concerning the political organization of society.[31] The *nahḍa* has at its core some of the most fundamental discussions that have continued to be of great importance to this day. Casini argues that "the key and most recurring issues in modern Arabic thought" are represented by a debate about collective identity.[32] He argues that "the formative process of modern Arab identity" has

> [...] developed in a dialogical **interaction with European modernity**, in the context of a cultural movement (the Arab Cultural Revival: *al-nahḍa*) that led the Arab intellectuals to define themselves through concepts that were foreign to their cultural tradition.[33]

During Muḥammad ʿAlī's rule (1808-1848), a number of new policies were implemented, among them guidelines that had cultural influence.[34] The results of these new political

[31] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939 (*London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 67.
[32] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 3.
[33] Ibid, 3.

guidelines were critical for the educational institutions, which were the main source of the dissemination of European culture and the emergence of the Arab intellectual. Many educated Arabs traveled to Europe to work and study, and among them was Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī.[35] Sabry Hafez mentions Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq and Fransīs Marrāsh as al-Ṭahṭāwī's counterparts in the Levant.[36]

al-Ṭahṭāwī may be regarded as one of the foremost representatives of the *nahḍa*. Among his works were travel narratives from the time he spent in France. This led to the emergence of a type of travel literature in which the West and the differences between the West and East were thematized.[37] This theme, and subsequent development of the genre, will be described in section 3.2.

As a result of Muḥammad 'Alī's educational programs, the founding of a state-run printing press and the educational missions of al-Ṭahṭāwī and others, 'literary journalism' emerged, enabling "[…] Egyptian intellectuals to emerge as the educational and cultural leader of modern Egypt".[38] The members of this new educated elite were involved in, and among the major proponents of, reformism, and they were pioneers of nation building.

Amongst the important trends during the *nahḍa* was a growing tendency towards secularization. Another important theme was the question of commitment. These tendencies are important in Arabic literature today, and they have a clear correlation with the *nahḍa*.

3.1.2 Arab nationalism

This section will present a short survey of Arab nationalism, because of its significance in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, and because of the important role the nationalist leader Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir plays and has played in the life of the story's protagonist. The period of 'Abd al-Nāṣir's rule, and the succeeding period leading to economic liberalization (to be described in the section

[34] Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 23-26.
[35] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 17.
[36] Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Study in the Sociology of Modern Arabic Literature* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), 46.
[37] Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature,* 27-28.
[38] Kendall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-garde*, 8-9.

below), have an important effect on the protagonist's emotional make-up, as well as being a reason behind his going into exile and his feeling of alienation in his contemporary society.

After the *nahḍa*, and prior to the rise of Arab nationalism in Egypt, "the weight of considered intellectual opinion in Egypt was in favor of a uniquely Egyptian identity at the expense of an all encompassing Arab identity".[39] This is reflected in the literature of the period, as in Ṭāḥā Ḥussayn's *Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr* and Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *ʿAwdat al-Rūḥ*. During the 1950s and the 1960s, the concept of Arab nationalism gained popularity and support among people in Arab countries, and "by the end of 1956, in any part of the Arabic-speaking world, Arab nationalism had become the dominant ideology".[40] Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir came to power in 1956, and during his presidency he was an advocate of Arab nationalism. Indeed, he is often seen as "the hero of Arab nationalism".[41]

In the discussion of nationalism, it is important to define the term "grand narrative", as it has been described by Lyotard. The term "narrative" may be defined as "[…] the common predominant form within which knowledge is conveyed".[42] According to Lyotard, stories can be used to transmit knowledge, and they can therefore function as a contributor to the satisfaction of the needs of a traditional society. Lyotard goes on to describe how modern times have been "marked by a number of *grand narratives*".[43] Grand narratives may be defined as "attempts to provide overarching, comprehensive stories of the development of [,e.g.,] science, thereby endowing the development of science with sense, with a guiding and worthy purpose".[44] In other words, they are grand, large-scale theories. Nationalist ideologies are grand narratives, built on a common history and literature that is passed on through generations. Sāṭiʿ al-Ḥuṣrī became one of the most substantial contributors to such grand narratives in building up educational programs that established the narrative(s) of nationalism.[45] al-Ḥuṣrī's ideas were secular and "intellectually extricated from Islamic

[39] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century,* 3. ed. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 101.
[40] Ibid, 184.
[41] Ibid, 1.
[42] E.C. Cuff, W.W.Sharrock, D.W. Francis, *Perspectives in Sociology*,4th edition (London: Routledge, 2005), 291.
[43] Ibid, 291.
[44] Ibid, 292.
[45] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century,* 63-64.

political thought".[46] Religion was not considered a "fundamental element of national formation", and he underlined the fact that the Arabs had existed before the wake of Islam.[47]

A turn for the worse for Arab nationalism was the Six-Day War of June, 1967. The war, despite its short duration, was devastating to the idea of pan-Arabism. The regime and the ideas the people used to believe in now appeared as delusions.[48] The shock of the defeat, also named *al-naksa* (the setback), was well represented in the literature. Angelika Neuwirth describes how Egypt "was gripped by a wave of intellectual self-criticism after the June defeat".[49] Critics like Ghālī Shukrī "proclaimed the end of an entire generation of writers and intellectuals". [50]

3.1.3 Economical liberalization

A result of the political change that took place after al-Sādāt succeeded ʿAbd al-Nāṣir was the removal of Nasserist intellectuals from their former positions and their subsequent experience of marginalization in society. The big changes and "loss of authoritative principles" [51] in society had its effect on literature. In al-Kharrāṭ's words: "With this rapid and stormy development, reality itself was even called into question by Arabic literature".[52] The instatement of al-Sādāt also led to an opening (*infitāḥ*) "towards the West and foreign investors",[53] and thus a more globalized economy. Economic liberalization, however, resulted in increasing social disintegration and a widening gap between rich and poor. It brought the middle classes, which had been the foundation of the Nasserist system – among them most of the writers and intellectuals – close to extinction. The Syrian political analyst and journalist Muḥammad Jamāl Bārūt argues that globalization has led to a decline in the social role of the

[46] Ibid, 68-70.
[47] Ibid, 68-70.
[48] Angelika Neuwirth, "Introduction" in Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler (eds.) 2010: 42.
[49] Ibid, 42.
[50] Ibid, 42.
[51] Andreas Pflitsch, "Days of Amber, City of Saffron: Edwar al-Kharrat Remembers and Writes an Unintended Autobiography" in Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler (eds.) 2010: 80.
[52] Cited in Pflitsch, "Days of Amber, City of Saffron", 80.
[53] Stephan Guth, "Authenticity as Counter-Strategy: Fighting Sadat's "Open Door" Politics: Gamal al-Ghitani and *The Epistle of Insights into the Destinies*" in Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler (eds.) 2010: 148.

state (*ʾaddat ʾilā tarājuʿ al-dawr al-ijtimāʿī li-l-dawla*).[54] The new economic system did not lead to sustainable development, and the social disintegration and 'Westernization' resulted in the emergence of Islamism. Bārūt argues that the development changed 'the argument of the intellectual' from "unity is the solution" (*al-waḥda hiya l-ḥall*), or "socialism is the solution" (*al-ishtirākiyya hiya l-ḥall*), to "Islam is the solution" (*al-islām huwa l-ḥall*).[55] The *infitāḥ* politics also led to cultural globalization and openness towards Western values. The nationalist system broke down, and 'the world came in' with all the conflicts that come with such an openness.

3.2 The relation between 'the East' and 'the West' in Arabic literature

Since al-Ṭahṭāwī, the relation between 'the East' and 'the West' has been a recurrent theme in Arabic literature, and it often takes the form of a pair of "opposites or polarities". This theme, Badawi argues, results from "the peculiar process of its historical development from the nineteenth century to our own day".[56] This section will take a closer look at this process, and give examples of how attitudes toward the West has changed and developed. This is done in order to obtain a better understanding of the theme, something that will be useful when looking closer at the relation between the East and the West in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.[57]

Rasheed El-Enany considers Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-73) a part of the period he calls "The pre-colonial period: enchanted encounters".[58] His *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz fī Talkhīṣ Bārīz*[59] (*The Extraction of Gold in the Description of Paris*) is considered the first account of observations of the West based on "firsthand encounters with the Western culture, experienced on its own

[54] Muḥammad Jamāl Bārūt, "«al-ḥayāt» tuḥāwir al-fikr al-'arabī: 'ayna naḥnu fī l-'ālam? Matā yantahī l-inḥidār? 'ayy dawr li-l-muthaqqaf? … muḥammad jamāl bārūt: al-'aḥzāb al-'arabiyya ta'īsh" *al-Ḥayāt* (15.05.2006) http://international.daralhayat.com/archivearticle/133677 (first accessed 05.02.2011).
[55] Ibid.
[56] M.M. Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature" in *Arab Nation, Arab Nationalism*, 129-153, edited by Derek Hopwood (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 2000), 4, 6.
[57] There are of course many novels where this theme is important. There is unfortunately not enough space to deal with all of these. The novels and authors that will be dealt with have been chosen for their direct relevance to this thesis, and because both the novels and the authors are important when discussing modern Arabic literature.
[58] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 17.
[59] From now on *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz*.

land through the observation of social and political phenomena and the systematic study of one or more of its languages and branches of knowledge".[60] al-Ṭahṭāwī both admired and criticized what he saw in France. He presented contemporary Europe as being ahead of the East, but still believed that Islam would be able to 'catch up'. The solution for Islam's 'problem' would be to borrow "the right elements" from Europe.[61] Roger Allen claims that this theme in *Takhlīṣ al-Ibrīz* "served as a framework for a series of novels which have appeared during the course of the twentieth century by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf."[62]

ʿAlī Mubārak (1823-93) was an Egyptian who, like al-Ṭahṭāwī, was part of Muḥammad 'Alī's educational missions to France[63]. He was also an influential figure in Egypt's cultural life at the time.[64] His *ʿAlam al-Dīn* consists of 125 chapters or *musāmarāt* (entertaining chats) taking place between the protagonist ʿAlam al-Dīn and other characters, mainly an Englishman, with whom he discusses and compares oriental and European conditions.[65] *ʿAlam al-Dīn* underlines the importance of learning and benefitting from Western societies while at the same time avoiding their social ills.[66] El-Enany claims that ʿAlī Mubārak's work presented "calls for caution" when dealing with the Western civilization, calls that "were only bound to grow louder in the colonial period when the 'ills' of the West came closer to home, and the antagonism to all things Western was a natural response to the culture of the colonizer".[67]

Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī belongs, according to El-Enany's overview, to what he terms "the colonial period: encounters under duress". Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, and Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī, authors that will be dealt with later in this section, also belong to this period. El-Enany places the period at the end of the First World War. The picture of Europe had changed from one of regarding it as a power one could learn from and that would enable the East to reach

[60] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 17.
[61] Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: the Formative Years, 1875-1914* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 27.
[62] Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 2nd edition (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995) , 20 – with references to other articles.
[63] Kandall, *Literature, Journalism and the Avant-garde*, 8.
[64] J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 65.
[65] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 24-25.
[66] Ibid, 27.
[67] Ibid, 34-35.

modernity, to that of "a power of oppression and exploitation, a hindrance to freedom and progress, a cause for despair".[68] Europe was at the same time both hated and admired.

al-Muwayliḥī's *Ḥadīth ʿIsā Ibn Hishām* (*The story of ʿIsā Ibn Hishām*) follows the protagonist and narrator ʿIsā Ibn Hishām as he meets the Turkish minister of war during the rule of Muḥammad ʿAlī, who has resurrected from his grave. The two of them "explore the many problems, inconsistencies, and ironies of life in Egypt some fifty years after the Pāshā's death, fifty years which have witnessed much modernization and Westernization and, above all, the British occupation of the country".[69] By using this literary device the author is able to compare, contrast and comment on the past and the present state of the different segments of Egyptian society. al-Muwayliḥī was critical towards Westernization, but at the same time looked at what he conceived of as the West's "enormous material and technological superiority".[70] He also warned against the presumed "bad moral effects that would and did result from a blind imitation of the West".[71]

Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's *ʿUṣfūr min al-Sharq* (*Bird of the East*) was published in 1937. The novel takes place in Paris, where the protagonist Muḥsin meets and falls in love with a French woman who later leaves him for her real love, a Frenchman. The novel depicts Western civilization as primarily materialistic, and its contribution "lies in science and technology, which make life much poorer, for real life is the life of the spirit" (*rūḥ*). al-Ḥakīm "asserts the real superiority of the East", and advocates a "return to the East as the only salvation for mankind".[72] This ideological stand was, as one can see by comparing with the examples above, nothing new. It presented a view where the East was depicted as a 'spiritual' and the West a 'materialistic' kind of civilization (*rūḥiyyat al-sharq* versus *māddiyyat al-gharb*).

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, like all the authors described above, lived for a time in France. Upon his return to Egypt he was greatly concerned with the nationalist fight against the British rule. At the same time he had internalized a typically European and secularist standpoint, and thereby

[68] Ibid, 34.
[69] Allen, *The Arabic Novel*, 29.
[70] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 12.
[71] Ibid, 12.
[72] Ibid, 13.

"adopted the very 'otherness' of the other."[73] He believed that there was no difference between the Egyptians and the European 'other'. Accordingly, he argued that they did not need to adopt the European method to become like the Europeans, but only "recognise themselves for what they truly are", which may be considered one of the main points of his book *Mustaqbal al-Thaqāfa fī Miṣr*.[74]

Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī published his *Qindīl Umm Hāshim* (*The Saint's Lamp*) in 1944. The protagonist Ismāʿīl has been brought up in a traditional Muslim culture, but when he moves to England he is influenced by modern Western culture. In England he has a relationship with an English fellow student, and as a result has his religious faith replaced by a fervent belief in science and rationality. This has fatal consequences when he returns to Egypt, eager to reform his country. His alienation ends after a mystical experience where he realizes that both the East and the West have their own values, and that "the need to assert one's own cultural identity can be satisfied but not at the expense of total rejection of the other".[75] Badawi describes the East/West opposition in the novel as "an attempt by an Egyptian to effect a reconciliation between the values of the East and the West", and the experience Muḥsin has with the West appears to be "a necessary phase to go through in order to find one's own identity."[76] Even though the East and the West are described with 'typical' adjectives, the spiritual East and the materialistic West, the author tries to find a method which makes it possible to deal with both cultures without giving up one's cultural background.

al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ belongs to the "the postcolonial period" after the Second World War and the gaining of national independence, a period characterized as an era of "proud encounters".[77] The changes that took place in this period, such as the emergence of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's regime in Egypt, affected how the Arab intellectuals saw the European 'other', and a new feeling of national confidence was born. This feeling was followed by "[...] representations in literature of the self as an equal of the other".[78] al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's novel *Mawsim al-hijra ilā l-shamāl* (*Season of Migration to the North*) is structurally more complex than the novels described

[73] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 55.
[74] Ibid, 55.
[75] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 15.
[76] Ibid, 15.
[77] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 87.
[78] Ibid, 87.

above, and the topic of the novel has been described as "the process of communication and interchange during the postcolonial era, and the tensions that cultural influences bring about."[79] The novel is set in Sudan where the narrator, who is returning to his native village Wād Ḥāmid after having spent some time studying in England, meets a certain Muṣṭafā Saʿīd. This Muṣṭafā Saʿīd later tells the narrator that he also studied in England. In London Muṣṭafā Saʿīd started to take advantage of his "exotic appeal as an African avenging the wrong done to his colonized people by his conquest of women of England".[80] When Muṣṭafā Saʿīd later drowns in the Nile he leaves behind an envelope giving the narrator, among other things, the key to a secret room. When the narrator returns to the village he enters the locked room. It is furnished "exactly like the study of an English gentleman don" .[81] It is a 'piece of England', but at the same time a place of isolation: nobody has been allowed into the room, nor even known what he has kept in the room. Muṣṭafā Saʿīd's room is contrasted with the first room the reader learns about, namely the "oriental" room, in which Muṣṭafā Saʿīd has created an oriental illusion for luring women. The "oriental room" used to serve "as a grotesque parody of the worst excesses of European notions (or fantasies) concerning the exotic Oriental."[82] Muṣṭafā Saʿīd is playing on the old prejudices against "the orient". When asked about the function of these rooms in the novel, the author commented: "I had in mind the idea that the relationship between the Arab world and the western European civilization … was based on illusions both on our parts and theirs".[83]

In *Mawsim al-hijra ʾilā l-shamāl*, there are two protagonists. Muṣṭafā Saʿīd, who is somehow the combination of characters from earlier novels, represents the old colonial period, while the narrator represents a new era. When Muṣṭafā Saʿīd commits suicide he thereby kills the representative of the old colonial period. The narrator, on the other hand, represents the new Sudan immediately after Independence. In the face of the obvious burden of the colonial past, made evident by the desperate action of Muṣṭafā Saʿīd, the narrator contemplates suicide by drowning in the river Nile. When he finds himself in the middle of the river, on the verge of drowning, however, he decides that he wants to live on. He, the representative of the new era,

[79] Allen, *The Arabic Novel*, 89.
[80] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 16-17.
[81] Ibid, 17.
[82] Allen, *The Arabic Novel*, 160.
[83] Quoted in Allen, *the Arabic Novel*, 160.

will have to live on, although he does not know how. The story reflects the conflicts of the period it was written in; the author confronts his colonial past, but gives no indication of what should be done after this confrontation.[84]

This section has presented different approaches to the theme concerning the relation between the East and the West. The one below will give information about a topic that is central to *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, namely political commitment.

3.3 Political commitment (*iltizām*) and the intellectuals

Since the question of political commitment is central to *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, it will be helpful to give an outline of its history before beginning the analysis and interpretation proper. In this thesis, the term, as it relates to literature, will roughly be understood as "[…] the need for a writer to have a message, instead of just delighting in creating a work of the imagination", and it "[…] denotes at least a certain measure of nationalism".[85]

Previously in the thesis, it was pointed out that the intellectual elite that emerged during the *nahḍa* became Egypt's cultural and educational leaders. Nation building and 'the state of the nation' was an important topic for these intellectuals and/or writers, as is the case for intellectuals elsewhere.[86] They were 'committed intellectuals', expected to serve as examples others should follow.[87] However, the Arabic term for commitment, *iltizām*,[88] did not appear until long after the *nahḍa*. Badawi describes how the term became more common in the 1950s:

> Early in the fifties the term 'committed' had already become a term of praise. In the same (second) issue of *al-Ādāb* (p. 72) certain plays by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm are recommended for being committed, although it

[84] Since this is only an introduction, this is a quite superficial description of a deep conflict within the Arab intellectual at the beginning of independence from the former colonizer.
[85] M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature and the West* (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), 2-3.
[86] Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation*, 105.
[87] Ibid.
[88] There is a monography on *iltizām*, in German, by Verena Klemm (*Literarisches.* ***Engagement*** *im arabischen. Nahen Osten. Konzepte und Debatten*, Würzburg: ERGON-Verlag 1998). Unfortunately, I have not been able to profit from Klemm's findings because I have no command of the language.

> may be pointed out that the word '*multazim*' is still used between inverted commas. But it was soon to become fully incorporated as part of the vocabulary of the literary critic.[89]

The term is regarded as a direct translation of how Sartre understood the French term *engagement*.[90] During the fifties, the writings of Sartre and Camus were translated and studied, and this had a huge impact on Arab intellectual life.

> When Sartre and Camus […] were translated and studied all through the fifties, they took Arab intellectual life by storm. […] One did not have to agree with everything Sartre said, but his ideas became pivotal to the new generation of writers who sought involvement in the political and social issues of their time. Whether novelists, essayists or poets, their pre-occupation was with radical change and the concepts concomitant to it. 'Commitment' was now the key-word […][91]

Arab causes were considered to be of utmost importance, and situations like those in Palestine or Algeria were seen as demanding commitment from the Arab literary field.[92] The 1950s and the 1960s, especially the latter period, has been described as "a period of extreme politicization worldwide."[93] In addition to this, the period "witnessed an intense and many-sided conflict with the West symbolized, though not exclusively, by [the] Suez [crisis]."[94] The leitmotifs of the new authors were: freedom, anxiety, protest, struggle, social progress, individual salvation, rebellion, and heroism,[95] and "there was to be commitment to humanity."[96] Badawi describes the assumption that literature should "reflect and indeed change social reality" as a "radical change which had taken place in modern Arabic writings in the conception of literature and the function of the writer".[97] Andreas Pflitsch adds that, "at issue was not *whether* literature should be committed to social and political causes but *how* it was to undertake this mission", and he describes this as something that, "if a cautious generalization may be permitted, has remained the case until the present day."[98] This means, in Pflitsch's words, that "in the mid-twentieth century, literary engagement [sc. (i.e.,)

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[89] M.M. Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature and the West*, 13.
[90] Ibid, 9.
[91] Ibrahim Jabra Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West" in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2. (1971): 76-91, http://www.jstore.org/stable/4182870 (first accessed 11.11.2010), 87-88.
[92] Ibid, 88.
[93] Andreas Pflitsch, "The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism" in Neuwirth/Pflitsch/Winckler (eds.) 2010: 29.
[94] Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West", 88. For the Suez crisis, see Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, With an Afterward by Malise Ruthven, 2nd edition (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2005), 365-369.
[95] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 4-5.
[96] Jabra, "Modern Arabic Literature and the West", 88.
[97] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 4-5.
[98] Pflitsch, "The End of Illusions: On Arab Postmodernism", 29.

commitment] was the all-determining concept in the discourse of literary criticism, in the Arab world and elsewhere."[99] In addition to this, Badawi draws a parallel between the politically committed Arab authors and authors who have lived, or still live, in authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world. He describes this commitment as the individual's opposition against authority.[100] Several of the non-Arab authors he uses as examples of such opposition are also used as examples in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, among them the Nigerians Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. In addition to these, Casini mentions the poet Federico Lorca and the assassination of the former Chilean president Salvador Allende.[101] Arab intellectuals also have their place, among them Khalīl Ḥāwī. Ḥāwī was a Lebanese poet who held an important position among Arab poets in Beirut between the 1950s and the late 1970s.[102] During the occupation of Lebanon in 1982, Ḥāwī committed suicide.

When discussing political commitment, one year stands out because of its historical significance and its impact on Arab writers – 1967: "The crushing defeat suffered by the Arab states at the hands of Israel in the June War of 1967 was far more than a military catastrophe; it marks a caesura that cleaves Arab cultural history in the twentieth century into a before and after."[103] Pflitsch's description of what happened afterwards, with its special attention to Nasserism, deserves to be quoted in full because of its relevance to *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.

> With the ideological edifice of Nasserism collapsing like a house of cards and the era of a new dawn and belief in progress and development coming to an abrupt end, it was not only Egyptian society that was propelled into a state of shocked rigidity. There was hardly a single Arab author whose belief in progress was not profoundly shaken and who was not suddenly deprived of any ideological orientation: in short, who had not begun to doubt the tenets of modernity. The undaunted belief in a better future, the hallmark of Nasserism at its prime, gave way to profound scepticism and deep-seated mistrust. The mood of a new dawn and the euphoria that anything could be done – frequently enough allied to megalomania and fantasies of absolute empowerment – gave way to a bludgeoning handover and anguish. At once Nasserism was nothing more than a pompous ideology. The king was naked. Words had lost their innocence. Literature would never be the same again.[104]

It is this event which prompted the emergence in literature of the so-called 'New Sensibility'. Bahā' Ṭāhir is, as described in section 2.1, counted among the movement's major representatives.

[99] Ibid, 29.
[100] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 137.
[101] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 13.
[102] Neuwirth, "Introduction", 60.
[103] Pflitsch, "The end of Illusions", 29-30.
[104] Ibid, 29-30.

4 Analysis

In the following pages I will perform an analysis of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. In order to do this, I will look at what I consider to be the main storyline of the novel: the process of a formerly committed intellectual gaining consciousness of his destiny in the post-idealistic, post-modern, globalized world with its lack of interest in politics. In short, it is the story of an intellectual reaching a higher consciousness. First, the analytical method used will be briefly described. Then the functions and events in the novel will be summarized in a schematic overview to clearly present what I presume are the main functions of the novel. During the analysis performed in section 4.4, I will refer to an event's respective number as it is presented in the schematic overview. Afterwards I will present what I presume are the main roles of the novel.[105]

4.1 Vladimir Propp, functions and roles

In order to perform an analysis, it is necessary to apply an analytic method. The method chosen for this thesis is the one developed by Vladimir Propp. His ideas have been further developed, but since *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* displays a number of traits conforming to the original method, it will still be applicable.[106]

Vladimir Propp was a Russian folklorist and language scientist who could be called the 'father' of literary structuralism and theory. In fact, it has been argued that the method he developed, and which is described in his book *Morfologiya Skazki* (1928; English translation *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1968),[107] "served as the point of departure for the structuralist

[105] Since the term used to describe the different functions and who performs them is important when performing the analysis, it may be helpful to refer to section 4.4 when a specific role is referred to. When I have chosen to keep the current structure, it is in order to avoid prematurely revealing the results of the functional analysis.

[106] The necessary descriptions of the Proppian functions will be given when comparing the Proppian function with the ones found in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. For further detail, see Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, chapter III "The functions of Dramatis Personae", 25-65.

[107] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the folktale*, first edition translated by Laurence Scott with an introduction by Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson; second edition revised and edited with a preface by Louis A. Wagner; new introduction by Alan Dundes, 19th paperback edition (Austin, TX : University of Texas Press, 2008).

study of the plot".[108] In his book, Propp analyses and closely examines Russian fairytales. Through this analysis he tried to find the "morphology of the folktales". In the introduction to the book he explains his project by using a metaphor from botany: "The word 'morphology' means the study of forms. In botany, the term 'morphology' means the study of the component parts of a plant, of their relationship to each other and to the whole – in other words, the study of a plant's structure."[109]

To do this, he tries to find the basic components of the fairytale, paying attention to their respective function for the story as a whole. These components he terms *functions*, and he defines a function as "an act of character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action" (sc./i.e., as a whole)[110] – in other words the totality of a narrative, or its "syntagma" (structural arrangement). Propp describes the functions as "*stable, constant elements in a* [Russian fairy-]*tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled*" and he adds that they *"constitute the fundamental components of a tale*".[111] He further emphasizes the importance of the sequence of the functions. The sequence of the stories he studied is, according to Propp, not random or accidental, but rather *uniform*, and the functions are limited.[112]

4.2 Schematic overview

The schematic overview below will present what I assume are the main functions of the story. This is done in order to give a general overview of the story that will be useful to refer to when the functions are described in more detail after the schematic overview.

Event in the narrative	Function
α. Initial situation: The narrator's background and current life situation	*Introduction*.

[108] Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* (London: Routledge Classics, 2007), 242.
[109] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, xxv.
[110] Ibid, 21.
[111] Ibid, 21.
[112] Ibid, 22.

is described.	Introduces different characters. *Function:* The hero carries a burden/lacks something.
1. The narrator describes the general ignorance of his contemporaries, and their non-idealistic attitudes.	*Function:* Introduces the (general) villainy.
2. The narrator sees Brigitte for the first time and thinks that she is beautiful.	*Function:* The hero's attraction to the princess is revealed.
3. The narrator meets Ibrāhīm and Bernard, Brigitte and Müller, and then Yūsuf.	*Function:* Establishment of several kinds of relationships with characters who will affect his personal development. *Function:* Introduce and start to negotiate some of the key (problematic) tasks that will have to be solved by the hero: the past, the present state, and personal problems like how to have a share in love and happiness.
4. Brigitte takes the narrator home to her apartment.	*Function*: Early germs of love between the hero and the princess are established.
5. The narrator is introduced to the prince through Yūsuf, without the prince being present.	*Function:* Introduces the villain and establishes a relationship between the villain and the hero. *Function:* The villain tries to deceive the hero for the first time, without the hero

	realizing it.
6. The narrator is informed that Ibrāhīm desires Brigitte, and Ibrāhīm understands the narrator's repressed love for her.	*Function:* The wish for personal happiness manifests itself, and the early germs of love are threatened.
7. Brigitte tells the narrator about the tragic incident that happened with her and her former husband Albert.	*Function:* The hero receives an impulse to rethink his life and develop self-consciousness. *Function:* The hero receives a fellow sufferer. *Function:* The relationship between the hero and his princess is strengthened. *Function:* Information that has a destabilizing effect is added. The hero learns about the evildoings that his beloved has been subjected to.
8. The narrator tries to tell himself that what is happening between him and Brigitte is not love.	*Function:* The hero denies his love for the princess because of contradictory forces. He is affected by the feeling of not deserving to love.
9. Israel invades Lebanon, escalation of the war.	*Function:* The hero receives a task (a moral obligation). *Function:* Reinforces the demand for commitment. *Function*: Villain causes harm to a family

	member – the Arab unity. Act of villainy.
10. The narrator meets Marianne Eriksen who describes the horrible events transpiring in Lebanon. The narrator becomes emotionally disturbed.	*Function:* The hero meets a giver and receives a "magical" gift. *Function:* Reinforcement of task.
11. The narrator collapses and is hospitalized. Brigitte visits him every day at the hospital, which in the beginning pleases him, but after a while makes him feel embarrassed.	*Function:* Conflict between sense of responsibility and personal happiness. *Function:* Transfer to another place where he is isolated.
12. The prince sends him flowers every day.	*Function:* The villain tries to deceive him.
13. Brigitte tells the narrator that she loves him, and their love is in full bloom. As a result he understands that he has always tried to fill roles expected of him by others and has not lived for himself.	*Function:* The hero receives the magical gift of love *Function:* The hero and the princess marry each other (a Proppian *Marriage*). *Function*: Fulfillment of emotional needs of the hero as an individual. *Function:* The hero is lured by the temptress into (temporarily) forgetting a task.
14. The narrator meets the prince with Yūsuf. The prince tries to trick the narrator.	*Function:* The villain tries to trick the hero / The hero is facing an obstacle.

15. The narrator tells Yūsuf that the prince is really a villain.	*Function:* The villain is exposed.
16. Yūsuf tells the narrator that he no longer wants to ruin his life because of high moral principles, and will therefore "join" the prince's side. Question put to the narrator: should he behave in the same way?	*Function:* The hero is shown an alternative. *Function:* The hero becomes the villain's target, and is in danger: may threaten the love and the hero's relationship and makes it difficult to follow the demand for commitment. *Function*: Difficult choice to be made.
17. Brigitte wants to take their relationship to the "next level". She wants to have a baby with the narrator, but he does not want to.	*Function:* The hero is put in a difficult situation where he has to make another choice between love and moral obligations.
18. The prince contacts Brigitte and lets her and the narrator know that he is powerful and all-seeing.	*Function:* Villain threatens the "newlywed couple".
19. The massacres in the Ṣabrā and Shātīlā refugee camps are revealed. Ibrāhīm contacts the narrator from Lebanon, and describes terrible scenes.	*Function*: Villain causes harm to a family member. Major act of villainy. *Function:* Hero is given a task.
20. The narrator and Brigitte participate in a demonstration against the brutalities in Lebanon. After the demonstration Brigitte tells him that	*Function:* Indication that there might be a way to harmonize the contradictory forces. Momentary solution. *Function:* Indication of a culmination of the

the demonstration will not bring the dead ones back, and that those who suffer or die will do that alone.	clash of the two forces, personal happiness and obligation to commitment.
21. The prince interferes, and makes the narrator and Brigitte lose their jobs. He indirectly forces them to leave town, and they cannot travel together as the prince will find them.	*Function:* The villain interferes and causes harm. *Function:* The hero and his princess are expelled and separated. *Function:* The hero has to make a difficult choice – fight against the villain, or submit to his demands.
22. Brigitte leaves, and the narrator drives her to the airport. On the way she wants him to drive off the road so they can at least die together, but he does not want to. The couple re-interpret their defeat: actual defeat is interpreted as a moral victory: love remains stronger.	*Function:* Confirmation of the villain's actual victory. *Function:* The couple is separated. *Function:* Transfiguration: The couple emerges in another form.
23. The narrator seeks the prince. He tries to confront him, but the prince is not willing to talk to him.	*Function:* The hero confronts the villain, but is defeated.
24. When the narrator leaves the prince he sits down on a bench in a desolate park. Here he realizes that this is where everything ends, and thinks that it is a beautiful ending. He is carried away on a wave,	*Function:* A transfiguration turning the actual defeat into an assumed moral victory: the hero reaches 'nirvana'. *Function:* The hero reaches a level of

accompanied by melancholic music, leading to peace and quietness.	higher consciousness.

4.3 Analysis of the structural functions and roles in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

The functions described above will now be examined more closely. The events described will be enumerated according to the schematic overview in order to make it easier to follow the logical structure of the analysis.

Propp states that "a tale usually begins with some sort of initial situation" in which "the members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero (e.g., a soldier) is simply introduced by mention of his name or indication of his status".[113] Propp underlines that the initial situation is not a function, but at the same time an "important morphological element".[114]

The initial situation (α) in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* describes the current situation of the (unhappy) hero of the novel. He describes the burden he carries: the past and his life as an exiled intellectual without influence or a purpose in life. In other words: the hero *lacks* a purpose in life. Propp describes the function of *lack* as a requirement for the tale.[115] The *lack* in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is therefore a "lack" in the Proppian sense since it is the precondition for the major events' starting to evolve.

A large part of the introduction describes the protagonist's reflections on and thoughts of the past and his present condition. The protagonist returns to what is considered the initial situation several times during the story by reflecting on past events.

Along with the hero's initial situation, the opening episodes of the novel also introduce and describe different characters that are important for the later development of the story, and the protagonist's future love and relationship with Brigitte. The characters that are introduced are Ibrāhīm and Bernard, Brigitte and Dr Müller, Yūsuf, and the protagonist's family. The

[113] Ibid, 25.
[114] Ibid, 25.
[115] Ibid, 36.

introduction of the characters, however, is not considered a function in itself, as the existence of characters is taken as a matter of course for the plot. The transition from the initial situation to the first event of the story, however, is not easily detectable. In the beginning, the protagonist describes his past, but also the present condition of the society and what he presumes is the general ignorance of his contemporaries, event 1. The function of this event is that the first "villain" appears.

Propp regards *villainy* as an "exceptionally important" function that creates the "actual movement of the tale".[116] As for the villainy of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, there appears to be several types of it, and they do not immediately conform with Propp's categories. Casini, who in his analysis of the novel follows a Greimasian approach, argues that the story has a more general opponent, represented by "the axis that connects American and Israeli policies with Islamic fundamentalist thought".[117] This kind of general, non-personal, 'actantial' villainy is introduced quite early in the novel (event 1). We may add to Casini's triad another aspect of this villainy, present throughout the story, namely the general ignorance of people of the world.

الآن لا يبكي على هذا أحد. لا يبكي أحد لأن سادة دنيانا يغرقون البن في البحر أو يهشّمون جبال البيض. الناس الآن أعقل. العواطف الآن أهدأ. الدموع الآن لا تنزل إلاّ من إدمان النظر للتلفزيون[118]

> Nowadays no one cries over that. No one cried because the masters of our world dump coffee beans into the sea or bulldoze mountains of eggs. People now are more rational, emotions calmer. Tears well up only from watching too much television[119]

This ignorance may be understood as a result of the political and social changes in the world: a man-made ignorance. The protagonist describes how nobody reads Neruda's poems anymore, an important poet to the protagonist's politically committed background. He blames the military who took power in Chile after Allende for silencing the poet. The socialist leader Allende is also considered an important symbolic person for the left-wing background of the protagonist. He also seems to blame the change from a socialist regime during ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's rule to the capitalist regime of al-Sādāt for what has happened to the intellectuals in Egypt – the loss of an important reference point. The protagonist compares this type of villainy with

[116] Ibid, 30.
[117] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 15.
[118] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 14.
[119] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 11.

what he regards as the more idealistic period of the past. He is frustrated about the lack of commitment that exists today. This frustration is part of the moral dilemma the protagonist faces, and the question, "commitment or not?", is raised several times during the story.

There is also the villainy as it is presented through the role of the prince. Casini sees the prince as one of those performing the function of opponent.[120] In the novel, the protagonist is introduced to the prince by means of other persons, event number 5. He is presented as a "progressive prince" (*ʾamīr taqaddumī*[121]) who is trying to convince the protagonist to 'join his side' by flattering him. This 'side' is not revealed, but presented as a (false) wish to be committed for idealistic reasons and not purely for egoistic ones, as the protagonist later reveals. Through his mediators the prince tells the protagonist that he knows him as a journalist, and is enthusiastic about him and his work. This event functions both as a means to establishing a relation between the protagonist and the prince, and to giving the protagonist the impression that the prince has only good intentions.

In Propp's model, *villainy* is the first function in the main story, and he regards the preceding functions as a "*preparatory part* of the tale".[122] The villainy of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, on the other hand, appears at several places in the novel since there are several types of it. Both the types of villainy that was described above are introduced quite early in the story. The more general type of villainy is presented in event number 2 of the story, and the prince's villainy in event number 5. However, there are two main 'acts of villainy' present that take place at a later stage in the novel – events number 9 and 20, respectively. There are several events with important functions for the development of the story which take place before the function of villainy has emerged. Those preceding functions are therefore not regarded as part of a *preparatory part* in this analysis, but rather as functions necessary for the development of the story as a whole.

The early seeds of love between the hero and his princess are established in the beginning of the novel. The reader learns about this love in the first sentence of the novel: "I desired her

[120] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 15.
[121] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 95.
[122] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 31

impotently, like one afraid of incest".[123](*Ishtahaytuhā shtihā'an 'ājizan, ka-khawf al-danis bi-l-maḥārim.*[124]) When the protagonist first sees Brigitte, he finds her very attractive, event 2. He stares at her, and it seems as if he is drawn to her already in that first moment: "For the first time I turned my eyes from Brigitte to the man sitting to her right."[125] (*wa-li-'awwal marra taḥawwaltu bi-baṣrī min brījīt 'ilā l-jālis 'alā yamīnihā.*[126]) This first vision of Brigitte reveals the protagonist's attraction to her, even though the protagonist will suppress his feelings for a period of time. The hero sees the princess for the first time, and the first glance of love is revealed. When she brings him home, event 4, the early germs of love are established.

Later in the story, event 6, the protagonist learns that Ibrāhīm also loves Brigitte. Ibrāhīm tells the protagonist about his feelings for her, but he also understands the protagonist's repressed love for Brigitte and therefore says: May God help you! (*kān allāh fī ʿawnika ʾanta!* [127]). Ibrāhīm's words at the end of their conversation function as a sort of warning or advice to the protagonist after he has gotten the chance to try his love for Brigitte and failed. The early seeds of love between the hero and his princess are threatened. Ibrahim's involvement provokes a reaction in the protagonist, and he therefore screams back to Ibrāhīm: What do you mean? (*mādhā taqṣid?*[128]) It is clear from this that the protagonist did not know about the love between himself and Brigitte, or has been denying it. The function of this passage is therefore to reveal this love. At the same time it shows that there is a danger connected with this love, and it is therefore also threatening. As it later turns out, the love between the them makes it difficult to remain politically committed, and in doing so love complicates the choice the protagonist faces – "commitment or not".

Before the protagonist admits his feelings for Brigitte, he gets to know her in another way. Brigitte tells him about her background and the horrible events she has been subjected to, represented in the schematic overview as event number 7. She gives the main reason for her

[123] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 3. I do not think the translation of the sentence is sufficiently equivalent. For a comparison this is the Norwegian translation: Jeg begjærte henne. Et avmektig og fryktsomt begjær, som stilt overfor det forbudte. Taher, *Kjærlighet i Eksil*, 5.
[124] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 5.
[125] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 14.
[126] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 17.
[127] Ibid, 130.
[128] Ibid, 130.

going into exile, namely the terrible incident that happened to her and Albert, her former husband. We understand why Brigitte is reluctant to commit: She places part of the blame for what happened to her on Dr Müller and *his* commitment. The same reason is behind her wish to 'hide' from the world, and later to 'hide' her love affair with the protagonist. She wants to give up political commitment and just care about the love between them, to just enjoy the happiness. The question for the protagonist is whether he is able to give up being committed in order to be happy, or give himself the right to love. When hearing about Brigitte's background, the protagonist also receives an impulse to rethink his life and further develop self-consciousness. After Brigitte has told the protagonist about the incident, their relationship grows stronger. However, the protagonist still tries to ignore his feelings for her because of contradictory feelings. He is not able to give up the internalized demand to be committed. The function of this event is to give the hero a fellow sufferer, and to strengthen his attraction to the princess. The event also functions as a means to adding information that has a destabilizing effect. The protagonist then tells himself that what happens between him and Brigitte is not love, event 8. The hero tries to deny his love for her because of contradictory feelings, and does not allow himself personal happiness.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, event 9, once again provides the hero with a concrete task, and reinforces the demand for commitment. The invasion also causes harm to him and his 'family', the Arab unity or society. It may therefore be regarded as an 'act of villainy', as described earlier. The protagonist still feels, as an intellectual, a strong attachment to the imagined Arab community and thereby the causes of this community.

The invasion of Lebanon is regarded as the turning point in the middle of the story. The protagonist explains this with the words: "but everything changed after what happened in Lebanon" (*lākinna kull shayʾ taghayyar baʿd mā ḥadath fī lubnān*[129]). As a result of the invasion, he feels like he is forced to act, to be committed. The turning point is also evident in the novel's style. Even though Casini regards the protagonist's reaction to the massacres of Ṣabrā and Shātīlā as the turning point, I believe his description fits with what is regarded as the turning point in this analysis – the Israeli invasion.

[129] Ibid, 151.

> Before the massacre occurs, the text is largely introspective, dominated by dialogue and the free direct thought of the protagonist, that is centred around the memories of his life. After the massacre, instead, the protagonist attempts to reassert his existence as a political subject by denouncing what has occurred in Lebanon.[130]

Because of the invasion, the protagonist receives a task (a moral obligation), and has to commit. This function may be compared to Propp's *difficult task*: "a difficult task is proposed to the hero".[131] The hero is tested, and it crystallizes the *lack* mentioned in the initial situation.

Casini argues that the events after the turning point form the core of the story.[132] If one looks at the Israeli invasion of Lebanon as the main storyline, this is a reasonable argument. On the other hand, if one sees as central the development of a formerly committed intellectual towards gaining consciousness over his situation and lost position in society, as this analysis does, the events prior to the Israeli invasion will also have to be counted as part of the core of the story. On this analysis, the lack of a sense of purpose is the precondition for the major events to start evolving.

Because of what happens in Lebanon, the protagonist is introduced to the Norwegian nurse, Marianne Eriksen, event 10. She has just returned from Lebanon, and when she meets the protagonist she tells him about her personal experience with the invasion. In meeting the Norwegian nurse, the hero receives critical information about the Middle East. Marianne Eriksen gives him information that forces him to act on his moral convictions. In passing this information on, the giver makes the contradictory forces within the hero reappear. He becomes emotionally disturbed – not only the moral obligation, but also his internal conflict has gained strength. Receiving the information is therefore not necessarily a positive incident.

The protagonist's reaction to the information he receives from Marianne Eriksen leads to his hospitalization, event 11. This now makes it imperative for him to escape from conflict and history, or the burden of the past, to love and innocence as embodied by Brigitte. The hero succumbs to the magical gift of love, and their love is in full bloom. The hero has not only been given a magical gift, but has also been *tempted* by a temptress, something that makes him neglect his task.

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[130] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 14.
[131] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 60.
[132] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 14.

Since he is not able to fulfill his moral obligations, the function has both a positive and a negative outcome. The hero is weakened by the incident, and he is not to gain his previous strength. Brigitte visits the protagonist every day, which in the beginning pleases him, but after a while makes him feel embarrassed. It pleases him that she cares for him, but he also feels that her visiting him at the hospital only underlines how diametrically different they are as persons. The embarrassment may signify that, even though he has to escape from the conflict, the love affair is not (yet) a hideout he is completely satisfied with. At the same time, it is a love, despite being a love in ruins, which will remain as an ideal and an aim. It may also signify that the hero understands that the princess is a temptress that forces him to make an impossible choice. The hero has met the possible source of his personal, individual happiness and thereby emotional fulfillment. However, it is still important to fight against 'the world'. This fight turns out to be rather illusory because the system is stronger than the individual intellectual. In the end, love turns out to be the only achievable positive result in the whole novel.

As explained earlier, the protagonist first tries to deny his feelings for Brigitte, event number 8. He tells himself that what is happening between them is not love. After a while they admit their love for each other, and decide to act upon their feelings, event 13. They also decide not to care about the outside world, and hide from the social realities they, or at least Brigitte, think they cannot change. The protagonist accepts that he deserves to love, and decides to put commitment aside. A part of this acceptance is to allow himself permission to care for his true feelings, and not hide behind what he is supposed to do. He realizes that he has always acted as he 'should', but now, he exclaims, is the time to follow his inner needs. The function of this sequence is that the hero neglects his task, or is lured into (temporarily) forgetting it, but at the same time he reaches a new level of consciousness.

أشرق في ذهني أنني كنت عبر تلك الشهور مع بريجيت أتلمس الطريق إلى حقيقة كانت هناك طوال الوقت, ولكني كنت أعمى عنها:
أنني ظللت باستمرار أمثِّل أدوارا حتى غاب عني أنا نفسي, وسط كل تلك الأقنعة, وجهي الحقيقي.. أنني حتى لم أحلِّق في التمثيل عالياً.. كان جناحاي أنا أيضاً من شمع ذابا في شمس الحقيقة.. ذابا في بطء معذِّب أوشق أن يقتلني.. فما أسعدني لأني أخيراً سقطت على الأرض!..[133]

It dawned upon me that throughout those months with Brigitte, I was trying to find the way to a fact that was there the whole time, but to which I was blind: that all the time I have [sc., i.e. had] been playing so many roles that I myself, in the midst of all those masks, lost my own real face. Even though I didn't soar high in my play-acting, my wings also were made of wax that melted in the sun of the truth. They

[133] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 187.

> melted in a painfully slow way that almost killed me. So, how happy I was to have finally fallen to earth![134]

The protagonist now remembers Ibrāhīm's warning (event 6), and says to himself: "And forgive me Ibrahim because she is not coming back to me at the end of life as a punishment, but as a blessing."[135] (*wa sa-'amḥanī yā Ibrāhīm, li-'annahā lā tarji' lī fī ākhir al-'umr ka-'iqāb, bal tarji' ni'ma*.[136]).

The abovementioned reaction and hospitalization both lead to his violation of Ibrāhīm's warning, and to the hero, or in this case the victim, submitting to deception. During his hospital stay, he receives flowers from the prince every day, event 12. By sending him flowers, the villain continues his attempts to deceive the hero. It first seems as if the protagonist in fact succumbs to the prince's persuasion, but afterwards we learn that he only pretended to do so in order to please Yūsuf. His agreeing to the meeting, event 14, also leads to him figuring out who the prince *really* is. This function may be compared to Propp's *exposure* function.[137] The exposure of the villain leads directly to the hero being threatened. When the protagonist explains to Yūsuf who the prince really is, event 15, he ends up in a dangerous situation: The hero becomes the villain's target. Yūsuf is also forced to choose sides, and he ends up being the prince's helper. Yūsuf gives in to the prince's demands, and thereby gives up *his* moral obligations. He explains that he does not want to ruin his life because of principles anymore, event 16. This poses a question to the protagonist: Should he do the same as Yūsuf chooses to do? The discovery of the prince's evildoings is not enough to stop him, as the prince is too powerful. Being in this dangerous situation, the protagonist will find it more difficult to pursue his moral obligations, *and* his love for Brigitte.

When Brigitte wants to have a baby with the protagonist, event 17, this puts him in a difficult situation. He is confronted, and now has to choose between the personal, or private, and the public, between a commitment to Brigitte or to the overall humanist cause. The function of this event is both to put the hero in a difficult situation, where he once again has to choose between moral obligations and love, and to add more destabilizing information. Even though

[134] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 164-165.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 188.
[137] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 62.

the protagonist has accepted his right to love earlier in the story, Brigitte's wanting to have a baby strengthens the feeling of being diametrically different. The protagonist already has two children, and does not wish to father more. Brigitte has tried to have a child earlier, but as both the reader and the protagonist know, she lost the baby. Brigitte feels that perhaps this time she will be able to protect her child from the cruelties of the world, but both the protagonist and herself know that they will not be able to find a safe hideout.

[...] ما رأيك أن ننجب "فلاً؟
لم أنتبه إلى السؤال في أول الأمر. ولكن الخيوط المتوازية كانت تتجمَّع الآن بجوار عينيها وحول ذقنها والتمعت عيناها وهي تنظر نحوي في لهفة:
ـ أنتِ تمزحين؟
ـ لا, لم أفكر أبداً في طفل منذ.. منذ غاب ذلك الآخر.
ـ طفل؟.. في مثل سني يا بريجيت؟[138]

> [...] What do you say we have a baby?"
> At first I didn't grasp the question, but the parallel lines were now gathering next to her eyes and chin and her eyes glistened as she looked eagerly at me.
> "You're kidding?"
> "No, I haven't thought of a baby since, since the other one went."
> "A baby? At my age, Brigitte?"[139]

The loss of her baby is Brigitte's big tragedy in life. She was not capable of protecting it, and as a result she does not believe in her capabilities to make a change. This contributes to the dilemma of the protagonist, as she does not want him to follow his moral obligation.

As a continuation of the dangerous situation the protagonist finds himself in after he exposes the prince, the prince contacts Brigitte, event 18. In the beginning she thinks that he contacts her because the protagonist wants to help her through his contacts. She thinks this because the prince has information about her, and because he knows about the bond between her and the protagonist. This function lets the villain show the hero that he is all-seeing and powerful, and that the hero and his princess are in danger. The villain attacks and threatens the happy couple.

The hero is once again tested when he is confronted with external political realities in event 19. In the novel, the protagonist receives a phone call from Ibrāhīm from the refugee camp Ṣabrā in Lebanon. Ibrāhīm describes the massacre that has taken place both there and in the Shātīlā camp. The protagonist cannot ignore reality, and the hero is now once more

[138] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 227-228.
[139] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 200.

confronted with his moral obligations. He follows the perceived moral obligation, commitment to the humanist cause, and love is put aside as it now seems less important. The massacres, furthermore, also represent an act of villainy, since they cause harm to the hero's 'family', the Arab unity.

After the conversation with Ibrāhīm, the protagonist realizes that he cannot hide from reality. He is still able to put the injustice of the world into words, and to some degree he therefore reaches his goal when he manages to help arrange a demonstration against the massacres in Ṣabrā and Shātīlā, event 20. The participation of the protagonist and Brigitte in this demonstration indicates a culmination of the two forces within the protagonist: the yearning for personal happiness on the one hand, and the commitment to his cause on the other. At the same time, Brigitte tells him that she still does not believe that there is anything significant they can do – they cannot change reality.

ولو أنني لم أغيِّر رأيي. من يتعذب يتعذّب وحده ومن يمت يمت وحده. لن تعيد مظاهرتنا الحياة لأي واحد مات في بيروت.[140]

> "I haven't changed my mind, though. He who suffers, suffers alone, and he who dies, dies alone. Our demonstration will not bring anyone who died in Beirut back to life.[141]

Her statement indicates that there is no way to harmonize the contradictory forces of love and moral obligation, personal happiness and commitment.

When the prince interferes once more and makes the protagonist and Brigitte lose their jobs, he causes them harm (event 21). He indirectly forces them to leave town, and they cannot travel together as the prince would then find them. The villain both causes them harm and chases after them. The actions of the villain may be characterized as an expulsion of Brigitte and the protagonist, as he effectively gives them no choice but to leave. The hero is put in a difficult situation where he has to choose between direct combat with the villain and submitting to the villain's commands. At the same time, the protagonist has nowhere to go, as he does not have the option of returning to Egypt. The path ahead therefore seems hopeless.

As a result of the prince's interference Brigitte leaves town, event 22. On the way to the airport she wants the protagonist to drive off the road so they can at least die together. The

[140] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 301.
[141] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 264.

novel has presented another intellectual who made this choice when faced with a similar hopeless path, namely Khalīl Ḥāwī, but the protagonist does not want to follow in his footsteps. The function of the event is to confirm the villain's actual victory. At the same time, it transforms the defeat into a moral victory – Brigitte and the hero will have to part, but love remains victorious.

The hero is not satisfied with this moral victory, and his dissatisfaction leads him to seek out the prince. The hero and the villain thus meet one last time, event 23. This may be compared to Propp's category of *direct combat*,[142] but in this case the protagonist does not actually meet the prince. The prince gives the protagonist a message through his servant on the calling system at the prince's house. The prince is not willing to listen to him, and just confirms his previous indirect expulsion.

ـ سموُّه يكرِّر أنه يريد أن يقابل أحداً. سموُّه لايريد أن يسمع منك شيئاً. يقول إنك تضايقه وهو لا يحب من يضايقه. سموه يسأل: لم ترحل من هنا بسرعة مثلما رحلت صديقتك؟[143]

> "His Highness reiterates that he does not wish to see anyone. His Highness does not wish to hear anything from you. He says that you are pestering him and he does not like those who pester him. His Highness is asking 'Why don't you leave quickly as your girlfriend did?'"[144]

The hero tries to penetrate the villain's fortress. However, the confrontation does not have a concrete outcome, and the hero is effectively defeated. The villain once again shows the hero that he is powerful and all-seeing when he tells the hero that he already knows that his princess has left town. As the attempt at direct combat turns out to be unsuccessful, the protagonist leaves the prince. After leaving, he sits down on a bench in a desolate park. Here he realizes that this is where everything ends, and thinks that in fact it is a beautiful ending (event 24). The ending is welcomed, and it feels as if he finally reaches a place where he can enjoy some peace and quiet. On several occasions during the story, the protagonist has exclaimed that he longs for 'it' to end, and that he longs for peace. The protagonist also turns an actual defeat into a moral victory, just as he did when driving to the airport with Brigitte. It may therefore be seen as a duplication of, or parallel to, the incident on the road. This time, however, he is satisfied with moral victory.

[142] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 51.
[143] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 316.
[144] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 275.

The incident is described as a sort of reaching nirvana, where he is carried away on a wave, accompanied by melancholic music, leading to peace and quiet. He reaches a higher level of consciousness.

وقلت لنفسي: أهذه هي النهاية_ ما أجملها! وكان الصوت يأتي من بعيد.
كان الصوت يكرر يا سيدا! .. يا سيدا!.. ولكنه راح يخفت وراح صوت الناي يعلو.
وكانت الموجة تحملني بعيداً.
تترجرج في بطء وتهدهدني.. والناي يصحبني بنغمته الشجية الطويلة إلى السلام وإلى السكينة.[145]

> I said to myself, "Is this the end? How beautiful!"
> The voice was coming from far away, saying, "Sir, Sir!" but it kept getting lower as the sound of the flute kept rising.
> The wave was carrying me away.
> It was undulating slowly and rocking me. The flute was accompanying me, with its long, plaintive melody, to peace and tranquillity.[146]

4.4 The characters and their attributes

The previous subsection presented the analysis of the *functions* of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. In this subsection the character roles in the novel will be presented.

4.4.1 The "hero"

The role of the hero in the novel, according to the analysis above, is first and foremost represented by the protagonist. In fact, the role of the hero seems to correspond directly to that of the protagonist. The protagonist is also similar to a Proppian hero as he is the one searching for something, and who gets "married" to his princess. Other functions performed by the hero are those of exposing and confronting the villain. It is the hero of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* who tries to negotiate and resolve the main tasks of the novel.

The narrator may also be considered the main character of the novel, i.e., its protagonist. In the initial situation we learn that the protagonist lives in exile in an unnamed larger city in the North, presumably Genève. The protagonist works as a journalist, but his job is not a significant one. He has just been moved from the influential position he occupied in the past to an empty position where the editor in chief really does not care whether he writes or not. In

[145] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 319.
[146] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 277.

fact, the protagonist states that the editor in chief is more interested in him not writing. (*rubbamā yahimmuhū bi'l-dhāt ʾallā ʾursilahā*[147]). The protagonist is not able to 'perform his duty' as a committed intellectual - to act upon his convictions. He has become old and sick, and is neither capable of changing the social circumstances he wishes to change nor of maintaining a functioning relationship. This situation makes him feel a lack of purpose.

The protagonist gives a description of himself as an elderly divorced father. He also describes himself as the diametrical opposition to Brigitte, who is beautiful and young. Besides these two characteristics, the reader is not given knowledge of his appearance in a more detailed manner. On the other hand, the author gives the reader many clues as to the emotional and psychological makeup of the protagonist. One way this is done is through the use of poetry in the novel. The protagonist uses poetry in his ordinary life, and an example of this is when he meets Ibrāhīm for the first time in the beginning of the novel. Ibrāhīm uses a line from a poem to describe how they should have put the events of the past behind them. He does this because he is aware that the protagonist is knowledgeable about poetry.

أعرف أنك تحفظ الكثير من الشعر. ألا تذكر إذن قول أمير الشعراء:
محا الموت أسباب العداوة بيننا؟ . . [148]

> "I know you know a lot of poetry by heart. Don't you remember Ahmad Shawqi's[149] line: 'Death has erased all traces of enmity between us'? Many things have died, my friend, during these years and enmity no longer makes any sense."[150]

One of the more personal occasions on which the protagonist uses poetry, is when he is not able to sleep and therefore starts to recite lines from poems. The poets he mentions occupy an important place in the modern Arab literary canon and, thence, in contemporary Arabs' collective memory.[151] The event lets the reader, and especially the reader who knows Arabic literature, know that the protagonist is both well-informed about poets and that they mean a great deal to him. The names of the poets also allow the reader to make some assumptions with regard to the protagonist's political orientation, and gives clues about the attributes of the hero, such as his level of education, and his past. The protagonist mentions the following:

[147] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 5.
[148] Ibid, 25.
[149] The translator adds the name of Ahmad Shawqi. The Arabic edition only calls the poet 'the prince of poets'.
[150] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 22.
[151] Issa Boullata, "Contemporary Arab writers and the Literary Heritage" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 111-119, vol. 15, no. 1 (februar 1983) http://www.jstore.org/stable/162929 (first accessed 12.11.2010), 112.

Ṭarafa bin al-‘Abd; al-Mutannabī; al-Buḥturī; Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabbūr; ’Amal Dunqul; Zuhayr; ‘Umar bin ’Abī Rabī‘a; Kuthayyir ‘Azza; al-Sayyāb; ’Aḥmad Shawqī.

The protagonist reflects on the past and compares the widespread political commitment of the past with the apolitical attitudes of today. In this regard he mentions the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. He remarks that Neruda’s poetry is not to be found in any newspaper today, like it used to be when he was young. Neruda was in fact a popular poet in Egypt all through the fifties, and his poems were eagerly read by many.[152] The protagonist also thinks about how poets used to teach them about politicians, and not the other way around as it is today.

وخطر لي أننا في الماضي كنا نعرف رجال السياسة بفضل الشعراء. عرفنا سيف الدولة بسبب المتنبي.. لا العكس - زلكننا نريد اليوم أن نعرف الشاعر بالسياسي.
نقتل شعراءنا بالصمت ونقتلهم بالنسيان. أردت أن أسأل إبراهيم: إن صح. أن الشعراء هم ضمير الأمة, فما مصير الأمة التي تنسي شعراءها؟..[153]

> It occurred to me that in the past we knew the politicians thanks to the poets. We knew the rulers[154] Sayf al-Dawla and Kafur because of Mutababbi, not vica versa. But today we want to know the poet through the politicians. We kill our poets with silence and we kill them with forgetfulness. I wanted to ask Ibrahim, ‘If it is true that poets are the nation’s conscience, what is the fate of a nation that forgets its poets?’[155]

The protagonist of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* used to be a politically committed person, but now he has lost faith. He does seek to fulfill his role in the external world, but because of outside circumstances he is not able to do what he wishes. Among those circumstances are his life in exile and his loss of social position after the rule of ‘Abd al-Nāṣir – a result of the *infitāḥ* politics of al-Sādāt. The hero is outside society by being in exile, and because of his lost position as a formerly committed intellectual.

4.4.2 The “princess”

If there is a “princess” in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, it is Brigitte. She has many qualities and features similar to those of Propp's princesses: For example, she is a beautiful, young woman who becomes an important person in the hero's life.

[152] Jabra, “Modern Arabic Literature and the West”, 85.
[153] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 40-41.
[154] The translator adds ‘rulers’.
[155] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 34.

Brigitte grew up with a father who was active in left-wing politics, and who even went to fight on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War together with Doctor Müller. She is a member of the middle class, and is well educated. The fact that she is an important person in the hero's life has both a positive and a negative outcome: he learns that he deserves to love, that he deserves personal happiness, and he reaches a higher level of consciousness, but at the same time he forgets an important task (moral obligation). She puts him in touch with reality, and gives him the magical gift of love. At the same time she adds destabilizing information on several occasions, and puts the hero in a difficult position where he is forced to make a difficult choice. She therefore also fulfills the role of a "temptress", tempting the hero so that he (temporarily) neglects his task. Her role as a giver and the magical gift of love will be discussed beneath. Her role as a "temptress" will be examined more closely in the interpretative section.

The presence of a princess, or a sought-for person, is a characteristic feature of a fairytale. Propp names this character sphere "[the] sphere of action of a princess (a sought-for person) and of her father".[156] Propp's constituents do not directly fit the role of the princess in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, except for the participation in a Proppian marriage with the hero. Whether she is "sought-for" or not is also debatable. The hero does long for his princess, or beloved, but her presence also hampers the hero's attempts to fulfill his task. She forces him to make an impossible decision, and because there are no solutions to the problem, their love also ends up in ruins. As for her father, he is present, but not as one assigning difficult tasks to the hero. He is rather a part of her background, serving as a source of information about Brigitte's emotional and psychological makeup. She shares with the protagonist a special interest in poetry. Her father taught her to love the poets he loved, and who they were tell us something about Brigitte's political background: "She loved the authors her father loved: Hemingway, Lorca, and Goethe."[157] (*'aḥabbat al-kittāb* [sic] *alladhīna 'aḥabb 'abūhā*..[158]) Brigitte's passion for poetry was also the connector between her and Albert, her former husband. Poetry is also a connector between their relationship and what happened to them in the end. The terrible incident has had an important impact on her emotional makeup, and is the reason for

[156] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* 79.
[157] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 118.
[158] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 132.

her somewhat cynical approach to the world. She does not believe that she, or the protagonist, have the power to change the world, and she sees suffering as something people must go through by themselves, just as she did.

Brigitte is a European. She is originally from Austria, but now lives in the same city as the protagonist. He therefore underlines how she has access, as a European, to all of Europe: "She was like me, a foreigner in that country. But she was European and with her passport she considered the whole of Europe her hometown."[159] (*kānat hiya mithlī, 'ajnabiyya fī dhālik al-balad, lākinnahā 'urūbiyya, wa-bi-jawāz safarihā yu'tabar 'urūbā kulluhā madīnatahā.*[160]) In a way, she therefore belongs to the place he has been transferred to. She also seems to consider the place her home, and has no intention of returning to her country of origin.

[...] سألتها هل أنت بالفعل سعيدة هنا كما قلت؟ ألا تريدين حقاً العودة إلى بلدك؟
فهزَّت رأسها [...] نعم, أنا بالفعل سعيدة هنا, وأنا لا أريد العودة إلى بلدي.
ثم نظرت إليَّ وسألتني, وأنت؟.. [...] فهل أنت سعيد هنا؟
ـ لا, لست سعيداً هنا؟[161]

[…] I asked her, "Are you really happy here as you said? Don't you really want to go back home?"
She nodded […] "Yes, I am really happy here and I don't want to go back home."
Then she looked at me and asked, "And you?[…] So, Are you happy here?"
"No, I am not happy here."[162]

4.4.3 The "Giver"

When Brigitte tells the protagonist about the tragic incident that happened to her and Albert, she gives the hero an impulse to rethink his life and develop self-consciousness (event 7). The hero is introduced to a fellow sufferer, and their relationship is strengthened. Accordingly, she performs the role of a giver. The constituents of the giver, according to Propp, are: "the preparation for the transmission of a magical agent and provision of the hero with a magical agent".[163] The giver plays a crucial role in the hero's journey. Brigitte guides the hero and puts him in touch with reality. At the same time, the role as a giver is not an exclusively

[159] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 3.
[160] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 5.
[161] Ibid, 72.
[162] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 61.
[163] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 79.

positive role. She gives him love, but the information she gives him makes him forget his task.

In addition to Brigitte, there are other characters or incidents which give the hero tasks, or reinforce the already given task. One of these is the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The invasion gives the hero a task (moral obligation). It also reinforces the already present demand for commitment which the hero negotiates throughout the story.

Marianne Eriksen gives the hero critical information about the Middle East (event 10), and is therefore also a giver in passing this information on. The information makes the contradictory forces re-appear, which leads to a conflict between a sense of responsibility and the yearning for personal happiness. As a result, it becomes imperative to escape from conflict and history. This critical information may be regarded as another magical gift, since it is essential to the further development of the hero. The information is added on another occasion by Ibrāhīm, and the point at which the hero receives this news is the novel's major turning point.

Another character who performs the role of a giver is Ibrāhīm, who fulfills the function of reinforcing the task given to the hero. When he calls the protagonist from the Ṣabrā refugee camp, he forces him to face historical realities. The hero is indirectly forced to tackle the task, he cannot keep ignoring it. Receiving the information provided to the hero by Ibrāhīm seems to fulfill a similar function to that of the information received by Marianne Eriksen, the difference being the hero's reaction. The latter leads to an indication of the culmination of the two forces of love (i.e., happiness) and commitment. On an earlier occasion, Ibrāhīm has fulfilled the function of warning the hero against the love between him and his princess. This may both be regarded as a warning preparing the hero for the fulfillment of his tasks and as a threat.

4.4.4 The "villain"

The prince in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* fulfills the role of a villain. The prince is from the Gulf, and he cooperates with 'the evil side' in order to obtain more power. The prince tries to deceive the protagonist on several occasions, and uses the protagonist to his own personal advantage. The villain thus tries to deceive the hero – a typical Proppian type of villainy – and he

performs several functions that may be compared to Propp's analysis. Some of these functions are the following: The villain indirectly threatens the hero; the villain makes the hero face an obstacle; the villain interferes and causes harm; the villain expels the hero and his princess.

The acts of the villain function as disruptive events, something Propp regards as the "motor of the event".[164] In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, the villain tries to ruin the hero's relationship with his princess, and tests his moral strength. He is trying to persuade him to join his side and neglect his idealistic stand, like he does successfully with the character Yūsuf.

Another 'villain' in the novel is the more general kind of villainy that was described in more detail in the analysis above – a non-personal, man-made villainy presented as the general ignorance and apolitical attitudes of the hero's contemporaries. The prevalence of apolitical attitudes makes the hero's wish to commit impossible to fulfill. A good example illustrating this, is the press conference the protagonist attends in the beginning of the novel. Despite being a conference on human rights involving serious subjects such as the use of torture, presented by a person who has experienced it himself, most of the journalists leave without even taking one of the brochures with them.

ولم أندهش عندما رأيت معظم الصحافيين يخرجون دون أن يلقوا نظرة على هذه النشرات. كانوا ينصرفون مسرعين كأنم [165] يهربون من المكان كله ومن الحكاية كلها.. أعرف أنه قبل الغداء سنكون جميعاً قد نسينا بيدرو وفريدي وشيلي وسيبحث المضطرون إلى إرسال برقيات أو أخبار إلى صحفهم عن موضوعات أخرى.[166]

> I wasn't surprised when I saw most of the journalist leaving without casting a single glance on the booklets. They were leaving hurriedly as if they were running away from the whole place and the whole story. I knew that before lunch we would all have forgotten Pedro and Freddie and Chile and that those who had to send cables or news stories to their newspapers would look for other topics.[167]

4.4.5 The "helper"

There are several characters who perform the function of helping the hero. One of these characters is called Bernard, a European idealist who has many of the same traits as the protagonist. The presence of this character is not necessarily decisive for the development of the story, or the main functions. Nevertheless, his presence is important in providing a

[164] David Herman, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, 3-22, edited by David Herman, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.
[165] Sic.
[166] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 24.
[167] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 21.

symbolic comparison with the protagonist and his idealistic background. He is also a character who inspires hope, as opposed to the more hopeless situation of the protagonist. Bahā' Ṭāhir himself has emphasized the role of Bernard in the story: "I feel that well-meaning westerners can be equally victimized, as the novel I think shows. Bernard, the left-winged journalist who is prepared to take risks in order to point out the truth, is a good example of that."[168]

Another helper in the story is the Norwegian nurse Marianne Eriksen. An interesting aspect of the protagonist meeting her is her telling him that the reason behind her involvement is not political, and his understanding that she has purely idealistic reasons for being involved.

[...] بصراحة أكثر يريد أن يسأل عن ميولك السياسة, أليس كذلك؟..
هززت رأسي مؤمّناً على كلامه وأنا أقول: هذا بالفعل ما أردت أن أسأل عنه. هل أنت مثلاً...
فقاطعتني ماريان وارتفعت نبرة صوتها قليلاً وهي تقول: لا. لست مثلاً. لست مثلاً أي سيء. لست شيوعية ولا يسارية ولا عضواً في بادر ماينهوف ولا في الجيش الأحمر كما كان يقول لنا الإسرائيليون على سبيل الإهانة. لست عضواً في أي حزب أو منظّمة من أي نوع.[169]

> [...]To be even more frank he would like to ask about your political inclinations. Isn't that so?"
> I nodded, confirming what he had said, saying, "That is indeed what I wanted to ask about. Are you, for instance . . ."
> Marianne interrupted me, the pitch of her voice rising a little as she said, "No I am not, for instance. I am not anything, for instance. I am not a communist. I am not a leftist. I am not a member of the Baader Meinhoff nor the Red Army as the Israelis would call us by way of insult. I am not a member of any party or organization of any kind."[170]

This idealistic motivation makes her a part of the *goodness* in the novel. Both Marianne and Bernard are representatives of this *goodness*.

4.4.6 The "magical gift"

In Propp's fairytales, a magical gift helps the hero discover something which is critical for his further development. In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, one magical gift is love. The gift puts the hero in touch with reality, and leads him to experience an ecstatic moment where he praises the fact that he has lost his past.[171] The hero states that everything that remains is happiness (*mā*

[168] Youssef Rakha, "To Reach the Waterfalls" *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Al-Ahram Organisation: Al-Ahram Weekly Online, (26 November - 2 December 1998) http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/1998/405/cu5.htm (first accessed 09.10.2010)
[169] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 163.
[170] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 144.
[171] The past, as mentioned earlier, is the hero's burden or lack, and the fact that he claims to have lost the past is therefore crucial.

baqiya lī huwa al-saʿāda[172]). The magical gift makes him try to fulfill his personal emotional needs, but it also distracts him from his moral obligations. Political engagement and commitment is required of him as an Arab intellectual, and this distracts him from his search for personal happiness.

As for the sequence of functions, it is worthwhile to notice that the reception of the magical gift happens before the hero's confrontation with the villain. This is important because the villain threatens the existence of the magical gift, the love between the hero and his princess.

A second "magical gift" is the information first provided by Marianne Eriksen and later reinforced by Ibrāhīm, namely the news coming from Lebanon, or more precisely from the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The significance of this "gift" becomes clear when it is reinforced by Ibrāhīm. Another interesting aspect is the fact that the two "magical gifts" seem to be mutually exclusive. The magical gift of love is 'suppressed' when the hero receives the magical gift from Marianne Eriksen, and vice versa.

This subsection presented the most significant character roles of al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā. The subsection below will provide more information on the literary devices and style of the novel.

4.5 Literary devices and style of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

The reader follows the journey and thoughts of the narrator, and the discussions and conversations he takes part in. Since the narrator is an active participant in the story, and in fact is considered to be its main character, the reader is presented with his version of what takes place. The reader is not allowed to learn about other characters' thoughts and experiences, except for those told to the narrator. As for the narrator's experiences, these are revealed by his thoughts and conversations, as well as by the many glances into his past. He is not an omniscient narrator, and the events of the future are not revealed before their actual occurrence in the story. This type of protagonist-narrator is called an *autodiegetic* narrator by

172 Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 188.

Gérard Genette.[173] The protagonist is the one whose eyes the reader sees the story through, and his position may therefore be viewed as "the center of experience", or may be called the "focalizer".[174] This "focalization" appears as a "*fixed focalization*" that is "exclusively told from the point of view of a single focal character".[175]

How the events of the story are described is also affected by the emotional makeup of the narrator. The reader is presented with the events of the past through his eyes. The fact that the narrator is close to the events he renders has consequences for the way they are described. It is *his* point of view which is presented. There is a feeling of despair connected with his rendering when he describes how everything turned out for the worse for him – someone who used to occupy an important position in society. The reader may wonder how reliable the narrator is since he presents the changes that have taken place in Egyptian society, as well as the Islamization of his own family, as exclusively negative. The fact that the reader is presented with events only through the protagonist's point of view does at least affect the reader's attitude towards the text and how he/she interprets its meanings.

The structure of the story follows a natural and logical chronology, only disrupted by thoughts of the past. Gérard Genette presents three categories when discussing "temporal relationships between story and discourse", namely "order", "duration", and "frequency".[176] In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, the events appear in a logical order, but there are many glances into the past that give necessary information about the protagonist's background. Through the use of these flashbacks (*analepsis*[177]), the reader receives certain information when the author finds it suitable, without the need for any lengthy introductions. The significance of the flashbacks is also made clear by their duration. The length of the flashbacks sometimes interrupts events taking place in the novel's present time, making the protagonist ignore or fall out of conversations that are taking place.

[173] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, 2nd edition (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 102.
[174] Teresa Bridgeman, "Time and Space" in David Herman (ed.), 2009: 62.
[175] Manfred Jahn, "Focalization", in David Herman (ed.), 2009: 98.
[176] H. Porter Abbott, "Story, plot, and narration" in David Herman, 2009, 43.
[177] Teresa Bridgeman, "Time and Space", 57.

As was described in the analytical section, there are several functions that are repeated. This use of plot is similar to the "sjuzhet" of the Russian Formalists, "with its analytical attention to the ways in which the plot re-arranges, expands, contrasts, or repeats events of the story".[178] If one replaces the word 'events' with 'functions', this description is suitable for the use of functions in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. There are several functions that are repeated, but with different outcomes, as described in the section 4.3.

The story alternates between fictional and historical events. It uses the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982 as a framework, and this gives the novel a realistic feel. The story includes several factual elements, a fact that is commented on by the author in the novel's afterword.[179] The events that are described as real are the following:

[...] قصة تعذيب بيدرو ايبانيز ومصرع شقيقة فريدو في شيلي [...] شهادة الممرضة النرويجية عما حدث في عين الحلوة شهادة حقيقية [...] المقال المنسوب الى برنار, الشخصية الروائية. نص لمقال حقيقي.[180] [...] شهادة الصحفي الأمريكي رالف حقيقية.[181] [...] هذا, ودم الشهداء.[182]

> The story of the torture of Pedro Ibañez and the killing of his brother Freddie in Chile […] The Norwegian nurse's testimony on what took place at the Ain el Helweh refugee camp is real. […] The column attributed to Bernard, the fictional character, is the text of an actual, published column. […] The testimony of Ralph, the American journalist is real. […] That, and the blood of the martyrs.[183]

Another important element in the story is the use of poetry. An example of this is how the protagonist recites poems when he is unable to sleep. It appears as a natural thing for the protagonist to do since poetry plays an important role in his life. An interesting side of the rendition of poetry in the novel, however, is both how the novel itself is written in plain, completely unembellished Arabic and how poems, with very few exceptions, are only mentioned and not quoted. Mentioning poetry somehow creates a sharp contrast between outside and inside. It makes apparent the deep gap between the narrator's emotional life and his outward appearance. It seems as if he is keen to hold up this outward appearance when

[178] Ibid 54.
[179] The afterword was unfortunately not included in my printed version of the novel, so I had to rely on a version of the novel I found online. As this was the only part that was omitted, I have added the afterword as an appendix.
[180] This column is not described in this thesis. It is column that was written as a reaction of the events of the summer 1982 – the invasion of and the massacres in Lebanon. For the column, see Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 264-265.
[181] The testimony is not described in this thesis. It was held at the demonstration against the invasion of and the massacres in Lebanon by an American Jew who was the first to enter Ṣabrā after the massacre had taken place. For the testimony, see Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 292-295.
[182] Appendix
[183] Taher, "Author's Note", *Love in Exile*, 279.

meeting his environment, and perhaps the reader, something that is probably due to the experiences described earlier, such as banishment and exile. By using poetry, the author is able to convey some of the protagonist's inner feelings, without using an "inner-oriented"[184] narrative style.

The narrator presents detailed descriptions of his surroundings on several occasions. These descriptions make it easier for the reader to visualize the events that take place, and give important clues as to how "characters inhabit the space of their world both socially and psychologically".[185] They may also be considered important representatives of the "external-oriented" narrative style that *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* arguably utilizes, and which was described in section 2.1. The descriptions of the narrator's/protagonist's surroundings create an atmosphere wherein the emotional state of the protagonist is indirectly described. They create the feeling of a visual appearance, expressed by, among other things, picturing the river next to the café the protagonist frequents. Another example is the protagonist's reaction to learning that Yūsuf has 'changed sides', abandoned his principles and joined the prince:

قادتني قدمي دون أن أدري إلى حديقتي السرية الصغيرة, ولم يكن فيها أحد.. جلست مجهداً على أقرب مقعد. كانت الأشجار قد اكتست كلها باللون الأصفر الذي فقد بريقه ونفصت على الأرض أوراقًا تغطيها طبقة بنية بلون الصدأ. شعرت بالبرد بعد قليل, فقمت وأخذت أمشي بسرعة في ممرات الحديقة القصيرة المتقاطعة التي تعود دائماً إلى نقطة البدء.[186]

> My feet led me unconsciously to my little secret garden. There was nobody there. Exhausted, I sat on the nearest bench. All the trees had turned dull yellow and shed leaves covered with a brown layer, the color of rust, on the ground. I felt cold after a short while, so I got up and walked briskly on the short crisscrossing path that always led back to the starting point.[187]

The use of visual description is also central at the end of the novel, where the protagonist's 'martyr death' is described.

Another characteristic feature of the novel is the particular way it describes events and incidents. It does not openly criticize or take a firm stand, but presents the incidents in a rather 'neutral' tone that is characteristic of the "external-oriented" narrative style.[188] This style leaves it to the reader to interpret and make up his or her own opinion. At the same time, if one 'reads between the lines', the attentive reader is given some clues regarding what is

[184] Stephan Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", 8.
[185] Abbott, "Story, plot, and narration", 55.
[186] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 221-222.
[187] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 193-194.
[188] Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", 9.

'right' and 'wrong'. There is no real doubt about who the heroes and villains of the story are, and what actions are depicted as morally wrong.

Ṭāhir writes in Arabic, almost exclusively in *fuṣḥā*, but uses a simplified variety. This fact was described by the author when asked about the language use in his novels and short stories: "I as a writer strive to use a simple writing style with a language that any ordinary reader understands." (*ʾanā ka-kātib ʾasʿā ʾilā kitābat al-ʾuslūb al-basīṭ bi-l-lugha allatī yafhamuhā ʾayy qāriʾ ʿādī*.)[189]

fuṣḥā is used by the narrator/protagonist even when he speaks with Ibrāhīm, who is an old Egyptian friend. The only exception to this use of language comes when he speaks with his children, Khālid and Hanādī. The phone conversations between the protagonist and his children are rendered in the Egyptian dialect. Normally, the use of a standard variety, when this is mixed with a 'lower' variety, would signify a more formal and detached situation, whereas the other variety would be used in a more informal and intimate one.[190] If this was correct, then all the conversations the protagonist participates in, except for the ones with his children, would be more detached ones, even those in which he speaks to his old friend about intimate matters. An exception here is his conversations with Brigitte, with whom he speaks in another language. Their conversation may therefore be regarded as being 'translated' from the language they use together into Arabic, and the use of the standard variety therefore seems appropriate.[191] If the use of the standard variety is supposed to signify a more detached situation, the language use may tell us something about the protagonist's general attachment to his surroundings and his present condition. The only time he is able to connect and be intimate, if one disregards his relationship with Brigitte, is when he speaks to his children, despite a feeling of being increasingly removed from them both mentally and physically. Reem Bassiouney argues that the protagonist's children are the only ones who are able to "touch his heart in irrevocable ways".[192] If the feeling of being removed from his children is deliberately conveyed, it may be seen as a literary technique giving the reader a clue that says

[189] Ashraf Shihāb, Ṣifā Saʿīd, "Bahāʾ Ṭāhir: lā sayṭara li-l-kātib ʿalā l-ʿaml al-ʾadabī" *Diwān al-ʿarab* (1th April 2007) http://diwanalarab.com/spip.php?article8479 (first accessed 07.10.2010).
[190] Bassiouney, "Redefining Identity Through Code Choice in al-Ḥubb fī ʾl-Manfā by Bahāʾ Ṭāhir", http://www.lancs.ac.uk/jais/volume/docs/vol10/v10_05_Bassiouney_101-118.pdf, 114.
[191] Ibid, 110.
[192] Ibid, 112.

something about how detached the protagonist is from his surroundings. When reading the novel, at least, it does, intentionally or not, add an additional layer to the feeling of being detached versus that of being intimate.

4.6 Analytical result

In this paragraph, the main features of the novel will be summarized. In order to do this as systematically as possible, the main features will first be described.

As the analytical section describes, the novel tells a story that has many of the traits found in fairytales, such as the hero's receiving a task and confrontation with a villain. At the same time, it is a much more complex story than a typical fairytale. One of the differences is the use of parallel functions. Quite often, an event has more than one function. This is an example of the degree of complexity displayed by the novel as compared to a typical fairytale, as is its use of *ambivalence* as an important structural feature – a feature which fits the hero's dilemma in which, on the one hand, individual emotional fulfillment means neglecting a moral duty towards society and, on the other, commitment to a political cause seems to demand giving up the (legitimate) hope of personal happiness. It would not be possible to remove one of these functions, as they seem to be necessary phases for the hero to go through.

The fairytale elements are also evident when one looks at who is the agent of the different functions. The characters also have many similarities with 'fairytale figures', but their roles and attributes do not correspond exactly with Propp's character spheres.[193] The roles in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* still form logical spheres that have many similarities with fairytale characters, such as the presence of a hero, a princess, and a villain. It is interesting, however, that the role of the princess is given to a European girl who – sometimes simultaneously - performs the role of a temptress. The hero of the story is the Egyptian intellectual protagonist described above. He performs many 'hero-like' functions, such as trying to fulfill a task. He previously had many more 'hero-like' features, but they are no longer present in his current situation. He is therefore a sort of 'anti-hero'. The role of "the villain" is performed by an Arab prince. He is not only performing "acts of villainy", but also tries to deceive the hero of

[193] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 79-80.

the story. As this role is performed by an Arab, he tries to hide behind his 'Arabness' when deceiving his victims. An additional type of villainy is the apolitical attitudes and general ignorance ascribed to the hero's contemporaries.

The protagonist debates the role of the intellectual through the many glances into the past, and by reflecting on the circumstances he has to face at the present time. He tries to figure out how he should act as an intellectual living in a globalized world where he feels people have stopped being committed to political issues.

Some of the reasons behind the situation the protagonist finds himself in, and which cause the feeling of a *lack* of purpose, are his political background, and the exile that leaves him with *closed horizons*. This term has been used by Sabry Hafez in order to characterize "the narrative of the new generation of Egyptian authors".[194]

> It is an exile from History that takes the form of the impossibility for the characters to be active actors within their social contexts, and implies their internment in a space compressed within closed horizons, where it is not possible to project one's existence towards any imaginable future.[195]

The era of 'Abd al-Nāṣir, 'the height' of Arab nationalism, has had a huge impact on the protagonist, and he has been personally affected by the political turmoil in Egypt resulting from the succession of al-Sādāt.

One of the problems that are raised is that of being faced with a demand for commitment as an Arab intellectual. The problem becomes evident when the protagonist is unable to meet this demand in the face of conflicting expectations. He has to take into account the different situations and aspects of his life. Some of these are his life in exile, his loss of influence in society, and the different expectations he faces as an Arab intellectual and as a partner in a love relation. The hero attempts to solve the problems this conflicting situation poses by meeting all the different expectations. Of course, this is not possible, and now the question of how to deal with his inability to act becomes a further problem. As a result, a number of 'solutions' are forced upon him, such as his being forced to give up on commitment on several occasions.

[194] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 7.
[195] Ibid, 7.

In addition to being in a difficult situation, the hero is presented with alternative methods for how to solve his problem through Khalīl Ḥāwī and Yūsuf. Khalīl Ḥāwī ended up committing suicide when faced with similar problems, and Yūsuf gave up his principles and joined the prince. The protagonist receives the opportunity to follow their method, but chooses not to.

Another problem is the power of the prince, a representative of society's power elite who will do anything in order to gain more power and money. They are 'everywhere', it is not possible to hide from them, and they will not think twice before ruining the life of others if they can thereby reach their own goals. Their power is an overwhelming force that turns out to be unbeatable.

An important moment in the story is the Proppian "marriage". If this was a fairytale, the story would end at that point. Instead, the marriage is placed in the middle of the story. Its function is to make the hero forget his task, and it intensifies the dilemma the hero finds himself in. This function has a double coding that is typical for this story.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon is regarded as the turning point of the story, as this "act of villainy" turns the hero's world upside down. It is a decisive moment in his life, and forces him to follow the demand for commitment. The same thing happens when he learns about the massacres in the Ṣabrā and Shātīlā refugee camps. These points in the plot represent important historical events in the story. They also serve as a framework for the story as it, like the invasion and the massacres, takes place in the summer of 1982.

The death of the hero at the end of the novel is significant. It is described almost like a 'martyr death', and the hero reaches a sort of 'nirvana'. The fact that he dies at the end is not portrayed as a defeat, but rather as his reaching his goal.

The descriptions of the experiences of the protagonist and the events of the novel are "external-oriented". They do not openly criticize or take a firm stand, but present the incidents in a rather 'neutral' tone. This style leaves it to the reader to interpret and make up his or her own opinion. At the same time, if one 'reads between the lines', the attentive reader is given some clues regarding what is 'right' and 'wrong'.

The relation between the East and the West is an important part of the novel because of the cultural background of the story's characters and because of the hero's life in exile. The novel may be read as continuous with a literary tradition which focuses on this theme.

4.6.1 List of the story's main features

- The story has many functions typical of fairytales, but has a more complex structure.
- "The princess" of the story is a European girl who simultaneously fulfills the role of a positive giver of a "magic potion/gift" and the negative one of a temptress (despite how good-natured she may be).
- "The hero" is an Egyptian, an Easterner, who lacks the normal 'superiority' of a fairytale hero.
- An Arab prince fulfills the role of a "villain".
- Apolitical attitudes and the general ignorance of people fulfill the role of a "villain".
- The protagonist debates the role of the intellectual in a globalized world.
- His political background and his life in exile contribute to the feeling of a *lack* of purpose.
- One problem is the demand for commitment an Arab intellectual faces.
- Another problem is how to meet conflicting expectations.
- A final problem is how to deal with one's inability to act, and with forced solutions.
- Khalīl Ḥāwī and Yūsuf present alternative solutions to the protagonist's dilemma.
- The undefeatable power that will do anything in order to gain more power is an obstacle to a solution.
- The marriage is placed in the middle of the story.

- The Israeli invasion of Lebanon is the turning point of the story.
- The massacres of Ṣabrā and Shātīlā are important historical and narrative events.
- The hero dies a martyr death and reaches nirvana.
- The events are described externally with a neutral tone.
- The relation between the East and the West is present as a topic, but is not developed as a conflict between, or clash of, civilizations or cultures. Rather, there are alliances between East and West along other lines –commitment to humanitarian causes vs. indifference, or even alliance with the enemies of humanity – as well as intra-Western and -Eastern oppositions and conflicts.

5 Interpretation

In this section, the results of the analysis will be contextualized and interpreted. The section will be divided into five subsections dealing with, respectively, the crisis of the Arab intellectuals in a globalized world, a historical and political historical contextualization, a literary historical interpretation, Arabs in exile, and finally the East/West theme.

5.1 The Crisis of the Arab Intellectuals in the 1990s in the Arab World

The first subsection will be further divided into two sections dealing with the role of an Arab intellectual as it is understood in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. What is significant is the expectations faced by an Arab intellectual, and what impact globalization has had on this role.

5.1.1 The role of an Arab intellectual as portrayed in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

The characters in a novel are "shaped by their authors to attain certain ends and effects".[196] Because of this it is reasonable to further investigate the characters' features, ask why the author gives his/her characters these features and what they are supposed to signify. As was described in section 4.4.1, the protagonist is the "hero" of the novel. He has lost his formerly important position in society, only to be replaced by a feeling of being outside society and not being able to act upon his political convictions, as described in the story's initial situation (α). He is aware of his position as an intellectual and the demands that follow this role, requirements which he reflects on how he should fulfill during the novel. The demands are of such importance that the protagonist experiences a personal crisis when he is not able to act upon them. He indirectly asks what the contribution of politically committed literature is, and what role it has today. The protagonist gives no answers, but only compares the apolitical attitudes of his contemporaries with the politically active, idealistic time of his youth. He asks himself: "and who remembers Neruda today?" (*wa-man yadhkur al-ʾān Nīrūdā?*).[197] Neruda

[196] Uri Margolin, "Character", in David Herman (ed.), 2009: 68.
[197] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 14.

seems to have been an important part of the protagonist's politically committed youth. The poet is therefore important for how the protagonist understands his intellectual role.

Commitment, *iltizām*, has long been a demand presented in Arabic literature,[198] and it is expected that the intellectual engage in important political debates and is contributing to Arabic unity. The Arabic community is, as described in section 4.3, presented as the protagonist's "family". When the "villain" of the novel harms the hero's "family", event number 19, he gives him a task – commitment. The demand for commitment, *iltizām*, was especially strong during the height of Arab nationalism, the period that was also the height of our hero's life. He used to occupy a significant position during the reign of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, but lost this position when al-Sādāt took over and reformed the Egyptian political system. The ability to commit is therefore a duty that forms part of his very identity as an Arab nationalist and Nasserist. Being non-political is not considered an option. Badawi draws a parallel between political commitment in the writings of Arab authors and authors who live or have lived in authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world. He describes this commitment as the individual's opposition against the authority.[199] As described in the introduction, the involvement in everything that concerns the nation has been present from the times of the *nahḍa*, since the intellectuals have always had a voice in the processes of nation-building and modernization.

The intellectual author is considered an important contributor to the art of writing, and is expected to use his dual role as intellectual and writer to act politically. [200] This double role poses a great challenge. The theme and events of the novel under consideration also reflect this double role through its central question: commitment or not? The protagonist debates whether he should commit, as is expected of him as an Arab intellectual, or if he should give in to his personal needs. The conflicting expectations remain in focus and are a problem the protagonist in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* tries to solve during his "journey" toward reaching a higher consciousness.

[198] Pflitsch, "The End of Illusions", 29.
[199] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 137.
[200] Jacquemond, *Conscience of the Nation*, 105.

During the "journey" of the protagonist he receives alternative methods of dealing with the abovementioned conflicting expectations. The first incident where he receives such a method is event number 16, when Yūsuf "joins" the prince's side. However, the protagonist does not seem to consider this a serious alternative, as it is in conflict with his fundamental beliefs. It is rather presented as an alternative that some might choose, and a characterization of the general ignorance of the people of the world. Yūsuf's miserable background is described, and serves as an explanation of his 'morally blameworthy choice'. The protagonist seems to have internalized the demand for commitment, and is therefore unable to even consider this alternative. In this case, it may be described as standing in too strong an opposition to what he used to believe in. When he is later forced to make a choice between personal happiness and commitment, however, it is more difficult for him to decide. The proposed solutions, and how the protagonist reacts to them, may give the reader some clues as to what the author wishes to convey. The protagonist does not consider choosing what he thinks of as morally wrong, but debates whether he has the right to enjoy personal happiness. Even though the protagonist is unable to be committed, he is not allowed to act morally wrong. The debate concerns how he should act, and how to deal with being unable to act, not what is morally right and wrong.

The description of the hero of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* reveals that he is lacking something, as described in section 4.3, namely a 'lack of purposefulness' or being unable to commit. The hero thus *lacks* the usual 'superiority' a fairytale hero should possess. There are several reasons for this feeling, among them his life in exile, his work situation, his family situation, and his social position after the fall of Nasserism. In the story, the *lack* also turns out to be a burden, and the hero needs to come to terms with it. The invasion of Lebanon causes harm to a 'member of the family', or the Arab community, and as an intellectual he feels the need to act. The hero therefore sets out to find what he is lacking. The *lack* in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is a precondition of what is considered the main storyline: a formerly committed intellectual coming to terms with his (powerless) situation.

The previously significant role the protagonist used to hold as an intellectual seems to have faded into nothing. The protagonist tries to grasp the realities of this change and come to terms with his lost position in society. The disillusioned state he finds himself in is a result of past political change that has altered the social structure of the Egyptian society. Because of

the loss of grand narratives and the subsequent fragmentation of society, it is more difficult to understand who the 'enemies' are. In addition to this, it is no longer apparent who will succeed in the end. In fact, in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* the enemies are undefeatable, and the intellectual protagonist dies.[201] When the hero confronts the villain, he is unsuccessful. The function of confrontation thus has a negative outcome. What is interesting about this result is that the expulsion and confrontation have a parallel outcome, namely a *transfiguration*. Both transfigurations turn an actual defeat into a moral victory, but the hero does not find the moral victory he achieves the first time around to be satisfying. When he in the end reaches a higher level of consciousness, however, he seems satisfied with the moral victory he has thereby reached. On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that the villain conquered the hero, and not the other way around. The victory of the villain is a clear indication that the novel is not a fairytale: the *evil* of the world conquers the *good*.

The analysis takes the main storyline of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* to be the process a formerly committed intellectual goes through, which ends with him reaching a higher level of consciousness. The emotional makeup of the protagonist changes over time, and is modified through the process of dealing with the moral dilemma – personal happiness or political commitment. In the end the hero reaches 'nirvana', as described in section 4.3. The novel's ending is particularly interesting, as the ending can often tell the reader something about the novel in its entirety: "Endings are interesting. Writers obviously devote special care to their composition and readers, not only professional critics, probably give them particular attention. We expect endings, much more than beginnings, to show what the story was about, what special effect was to be achieved."[202] If the novel was simply a traditional fairytale, it should have ended at an earlier stage in the story. A natural ending would have been the *marriage* between the hero and his princess. Instead, the marriage is in the middle of the story, and is a complication of, rather than an ending of, the story. It makes the hero forget his task, and it enhances the dilemma the hero finds himself in.

The hero's situation at the actual ending of the story may be compared with the situation of heroes of other novels. Hafez describes how the suffering of the heroes or the "frustrated

[201] It seems at least logical to understand the description at the end of the novel as his death.
[202] Quoted in Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*, 255.

outsiders culminates in some of the novels in a catastrophic defeat, as a result of their alienation and continuous struggle with themselves, and the callousness and grimness of the world, with which they interact".[203] Hafez argues that "when the writer feels the weight of defeat and the loss of both faith and the ability to put forward his own view, he returns to the past".[204] The writer turns to the historical events that have affected writers and intellectuals, and "raises in the reader's mind the perplexed question: what has happened to us nowadays? through presenting the image of the past as it casts its shadows on the illusory existence of the present".[205] The heroes of these novels *lack* a higher consciousness, and they experience both an inner conflict and a confrontation with the hostile forces of the external world.[206]

The description of the protagonist's death is similar to that of a martyr's death, and the reader may wonder if his death signifies the death of the old Arab intellectual. At least it shows that the hero who follows in the tradition of Arab intellectuals is experiencing a crisis. This 'martyr death' gives reason to why the novel was published, and why it was published at the time it was. It tells us something about the current position of the Arab intellectual, and reflects upon his background. It gives the impression that the intellectual has arrived at a crossroads. Considering the major effect globalization and life in exile have had on Arab intellectuals in general, the present time seems a natural one to deal with both the current conditions and the past of the intellectual. Roger Allen suggests that the intellectual's role is to serve as "a mirror and critic of the society within which it is conceived".[207] In the light of this quote, the 'martyr death' of the hero in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* may represent the death of the old days and be a way of telling intellectuals and society in general that it is time to let go of the past. The intellectual protagonist uses almost all of his energy on reflecting upon the past, and this makes him want to reach a place of peace and quiet. The road ahead is not described, but the past seems as if it is a burden too heavy to carry.

The discussion of the role of the intellectual is an important discussion in Arab politics, and has been ever since the *nahḍa*, when the intellectual first gained a solid footing in society. An

[203]Sabry Hafez, "the Egyptian Novel in the Sixties" *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 7 (1976): 68-84, http://www.jstore.org/stable/4182965 (first accessed 18.11.2010), 81,
[204] Ibid, 81.
[205] Ibid, 81-82.
[206] Ibid, 82.
[207] Allen, *The Arabic Novel*, 68.

important function of the novel is both to continue and to provide a new perspective on this discussion. It also changes the discussion by ending with a 'martyr death' – sacrificing the intellectual hero – thus suggesting that the past be left behind. al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ also sacrificed the hero representing the past in his novel *Mawsim al-Hijra ʾilā l-Shamāl*, but he left the 'new intellectual' to figure out what the future was to hold. In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* there is no such character left to figure this out, as he has been defeated by the 'evil forces' of society. In *Mawsim al-hijra ʾilā l-Shamāl*, the conflict is not between love and political commitment, but between two other seemingly irreconcilable aspects of the Easterner's identity: a native (Arab/Sudanese) and a foreign (English) 'half'. The identity of the native is split as a result of colonization, the colonized having internalized the system of values of the colonizer. This conflict does no longer exist in the world of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā.* The fact that there is no longer a dividing line between East and West can be shown via Propp, by asking who performs the role of helper and of giver. As was described in section 4.4, the positive forces of the characters are distributed across the former East/West divide. The same goes for the oppositional forces, where both Westerners and Easterners commit acts of villainy. The Westerners are represented by an indifferent society and a consumerist culture, and the Western countries that support Israel. The Easterners are represented by the Arab regimes, their missing reactions to the slaughters of Ṣabrā and Shātīlā, and the Prince.

Several of the non-Arab authors Badawi uses as examples when discussing political commitment in literature, as described above, are also present as examples in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, among them the Nigerians Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka. In addition to this, Casini mentions the poet Federico Lorca and the assassination of the former Chilean president Salvador Allende,[208] who are important figures in the novel and important symbols of the intellectual background of several of the main characters. Arab intellectuals also have their place in the novel, such as Khalīl Ḥāwī, whose role was described in section 3.3. The poet's suicide is an important incident in the novel. The protagonist relates the death of the poet to both political and historical questions, and asks why people like Khalīl Ḥāwī have to die while others whom he dislikes survive.

[208] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 13.

قفزت من الفراش وخرجت مرة أخرى إلى الصالة ووقفت أمام عبد الناصر. سألته لماذا يعيش غسان حمود[209] ويموت خليل حاوي؟ .. لماذا يموت نت صدقك وصدق الرؤيا؟..[210]

> I jumped out of bed and went to the living room and stood in front of Abd al-Nasser. I asked him why Ghassan Mahmud was alive and Khalil Hawi dead. Why do those who believed you and your vision die?[211]

The fact that the author emphasizes Khalīl Ḥāwī's actions helps build a feeling of desperation – the feeling that the people with the 'right' understanding of humanity and politics disappear while persons with the wrong motivation – i.e., without idealistic motivation – remain. This is also what happens in the novel, where the prince with the *wrong motivation* is able to obtain what he wants while the protagonist and Brigitte are forced to give up in the face of an overwhelming power. Ḥāwī was also an intellectual author in a situation similar to that of the protagonist, feeling the need to commit himself to a humanist cause but without being able to change his surroundings. Paul Starkey describes the suicide of Khalīl Ḥāwī as his "ultimate gesture of protest":

> Ḥāwī was powerfully affected by the political setbacks in the Arab world, and the collapse of the short-lived union between Egypt and Syria in 1961 had a powerful effect on him; his ultimate gesture of protest against the course of contemporary Middle Eastern politics was to shoot himself in his Beirut flat on 6 June 1982, two days after the Israelis had invaded Lebanon.[212]

To mention 'the icon' Khalīl Ḥāwī's way of dealing with his own powerlessness *vis-à-vis* an overwhelming reality, is also putting forward a powerful example of how the protagonist could react. It provides an important point of reference against which the protagonist has to profile himself: why not do the same as Khalīl Ḥāwī? This underlines the crisis in which the protagonist finds himself. He is not able to act in order to change the circumstances, and the question he therefore asks himself is what he *can* do. The protagonist's learning about Khalīl Ḥāwī's suicide has a huge effect on him, and receiving the news about the suicide is also the last thing that happens before he collapses and is hospitalized.

[209] [sic].
[210] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 168.
[211] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 148.
[212] Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature*, 89.

5.1.2 The significance of globalization and its impact according to *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, life in exile is an important connecting factor for intellectuals, and has made the outside world more accessible to them. The protagonist himself lives in exile and is therefore forced to interact with the community in which he lives. There are also several other characters living in exile, such as Ibrāhīm, Yūsuf and Brigitte. Exile and globalization has changed the identity of the characters. The protagonist, for example, does not have the possibility to go back to his own country, and is thereby left with a closed horizon.

The role of the intellectual and the question of commitment are affected by globalization. The Arab intellectuals have easier access to what happens in the world than before, thus changing the picture of the world and expanding their horizons. The expansion of horizons may create the feeling that something has to happen, both because the injustice of their world becomes more apparent (when compared with the rest of the world) and because they are able to reach other intellectuals across borders. In our analysis, this is reflected in the task the hero is given, and by the moral dilemma he consequently finds himself in – commitment or not? The intellectuals have become a group of 'world intellectuals' focusing on more general issues and their intellectual basis has accordingly become more general. The focus on human rights has also increased the pressure on Arab states, and this, in turn, has caused a change of identities. There are groups all over the world reaching out to each other not because of their national affiliation, but because of their belief in similar causes and politics. These groups may have common symbols connecting them, symbols that are important for the historical background of the group. *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* presents some of the symbols of left-wing politics in general, such as the Spanish Civil War and the coup in Chile. It also presents common cultural symbols, such as Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and the poems of Lorca:

الحلم بعالم جديد. عالم متّحد ضد الديكتاتورية وضد الظلم.. الحلم الذي انهار وإن بقيت لنا منه الرموز: همنجواي ولمن تدق الأجراس.. ومالرو والأمل.. وبيكاسو والجويرنيكا.. أشعار لوركا.. تلك الرموز التي ألهبت خيالنا في مطلع الشباب[213]

> The dream of a new world, one united against dictatorship and injustice, the dream which collapsed leaving behind a few symbols: Hemingway and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Malraux and *L'Espoir*, Picasso and *Guernica*, and Lorca's poems, the symbols that fixed our imagination in our early youth.[214]

[213] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 65.
[214] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 55.

The changes of consciousness that has resulted from the globalization process[215] are important for the discussion of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* and Arab intellectuals. The consciousness of the intellectuals did indeed change after the instatement of al-Sādāt and the increasingly globalized politics in Egypt. This is an important part of the dilemma the protagonist faces. In fact, the main storyline of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* describes the protagonist as setting out on a journey toward a higher level of consciousness. He longs for this goal during the story, as evidenced by his wish for peace and quiet. He is also left in an unresolvable moral dilemma because of the changing political circumstances of the world, and because of globalization and exile.

A part of the same dilemma is the general reaction to a globalized world, as perceived and described by the protagonist. He sees the reaction as consisting in apolitical attitudes and indifference towards politics. The disinterest in politics is described as one of the *villains* of the story. In fact, Bahā' Ṭāhir has complained over the new generation of writers' "complete indifference to politics".[216] The fact that there is a more general type of *villainy* present in the novel also supports the view that it is not a fairytale in the traditional sense, despite containing many fairytale elements. It is not possible to confront this general type of villainy in the same way as one would a more concrete representation of villainy. There is no *event* in the analysis whose function is to engage in direct battle with this general villain, as the hero's position makes this impossible. This indicates that the author wishes to describe how such a general type of "villain" is impossible, or at least extremely hard, to fight against because of its overwhelming force. The 'old intellectual' does not possess sufficient, or the right type of, powers to take up the fight, but is still not allowed to "join the other side" and forget his principles. The fact that the intellectual lacks the power to fight against the general type of "villain" may be a reason why the novel was written at the time it was. The globalized world, with its pressing difficult situations, such as living in exile, the population of the world becoming more ignorant of politics, makes it impossible to fight using the same weapons as those of the 'old intellectual'. At the same time, the author does not present an alternative suggestion.

[215] Mary Louise Pratt, "Comparative Literature and Global Citizenship", in *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, 58-66, edited by Charles Charles Bernheimer (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 59.
[216] Kendall, *Literature, journalism and the avant-garde*, 109.

5.2 Political and historical background: the Arab intellectual

This section will try to explain central events of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* with regards to their political and historical background. This background is important both because of the events that take place during the story, and because of the effects of previous historical and political incidents. By explaining these events in the novel through reference to the general background presented in chapter 3, the results of the analysis will be contextualized. This will also make it easier to understand where the themes of the novel come from and where in the developing history we find ourselves at the present time.

5.2.1 The *nahḍa*

In a wider perspective, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* can be seen as continuing a tradition that emerged during the *nahḍa*. The novel continues the debate concerning collective identity that was described in section 3.1. The protagonist debates the effect of the perceived 'membership' in the group of Arab intellectuals, an idea which emerged during the period. His intellectual roots contribute to the feeling of being obliged to commit to the causes of the group, as this has been an important part of the intellectual role. The collective identity of the group has been shaken and fragmented, and there is no longer an obvious common path for the intellectuals. As a result, the protagonist does not know how to handle the new realities he is facing. He still feels the obligation to commit, but do not know how to fulfill this obligation. The world is at once both smaller and more easily accessible, but without obvious answers to questions of how to act. The fragmented identity of the group is not only contrasted with the European 'other', but with different 'others', or different views. These different views are no longer depicted as 'right' or 'wrong', as the black-and-white picture of the world disappeared together with grand-narrative nationalism.

The question of collective identity is important when the protagonist deals with the question: commitment or not? As an Arab intellectual, he has internalized the moral obligation to

devote himself to the collective Arab "imagined community",[217] to sacrifice personal and individual needs for the sake of the "family" – the nation – but it is no longer apparent what he is able to do, or what the use is of even trying to do anything. When the protagonist faces this situation, he is haunted by bad conscience, which makes his situation even more difficult.

5.2.2 Arab nationalism

"The hero of Arab nationalism",[218] Gamāl ʿAbd al-Nāṣir, plays an important role in the life of the protagonist in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, as a representative of a successful period in his life. In fact, one of the few things the reader learns about how the protagonist's apartment looks like is that there is a picture of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir on the wall.

عندما فتحت باب الشقّة أطلّ عليَّ عبد الناصر مبتسماً من صورته الملوّنة على الحائط.[219]

> When I opened the door of the apartment a smiling Abd al-Nasser looked at me from his color photograph on the wall.[220]

The protagonist reflects on the period when Arab nationalism was at its peak, but the novel does not present the period as exclusively positive. The downside of the period is presented through the character Ibrāhīm who was an active communist during ʿAbd al-Nāṣir's regime, which led to his arrest and detention, and to *his* exile.

As described in section 3.1.2, the June war of 1967 is regarded as a turn for the worse for Arab nationalism. Accordingly, the important reference point this movement formerly represented now appeared as a delusion.[221] In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* ʿAbd al-Nāṣir appears as a representative of the past; a past where the protagonist's contribution as an intellectual seemed important and meaningful. The loss of grand narratives after the decline of Arab nationalism is connected to the lack of meaning in the protagonist's life, and the resulting fragmented self. There no longer exists one solution, and the fragmented reality and new economic circumstances turn out to be difficult for the protagonist to handle.

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[217] A term elaborated by Benedict Anderson. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised 3rd edition (London: Verso, 2006), 7.
[218] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 1.
[219] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 106.
[220] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 95.
[221] Neuwirth, "Introduction", 42.

The period of Arab nationalism is important for the emotional makeup of the protagonist, who values its ideas and secular world view, a view that has occupied an important place amongst Arab intellectuals since the *nahḍa*.[222]. When he is confronted with the presence of Islamic fundamentalism in his closest family, through his son Khālid and his former wife Manār, it is therefore something of a shock to him and portrayed almost like an attack on his beliefs.

The presence of ʿAbd al-Nāṣir is important both as a verification of the political system under and after his presidency, and as a symbol of what is lost to the protagonist and those like him. The picture of the former president hangs on the wall in the protagonist's apartment, serving as a symbol of his beliefs and his past. The grand narratives of the nationalist ideologies described in section 3.1.2 play an important part in the protagonist's political makeup. After he has been confronted with the brutalities of the world through the description of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, given to him by the Norwegian nurse, event number 10, it is therefore telling that the picture of ʻAbd al-Nāṣir falls down from the wall. The picture, or the picture frame, is crushed, and the protagonist does not repair it completely afterwards. Instead, it hangs on the wall, broken, as a symbol of a broken past and loss of an overall ideology.

5.2.3 Economic liberalization

The political change after the instatement of al-Sādāt described in section 3.1.3, which led to the social marginalization of the intellectuals, exactly parallels the fate of the protagonist in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. He is an intellectual whose convictions and political attitudes were formed in the Nasserist period; he is a child of this formative period of Egyptian (and Arab) history. He believed in ʻAbd al-Nāṣir, and he still does, despite the 1967 setback and the regime's repressive attitude. At the same time, he does not deny these things, and is in fact quite critical of the result of the setback and how the regime subsequently acted. Compared to the era of al-Sādāt, however, it seems that he considers ʿAbd al-Nāṣir as a kind of victim of circumstance. The situation of the protagonist is a symbol: a historical representation of a person who has experienced the social change that occurred in Egypt when al-Sādāt took over after ʿAbd al-Nāṣir. Casini describes this with the following words: "the protagonist's

[222] Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Though: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 258-259.

marginalization in the family and the newspaper goes along with his feeling of belonging to a generation that has been defeated by History and that has lost any citizenship in the present."[223]

The political change that took place in Egypt during the reign of al-Sādāt is one of the most important building blocks in the foundation of the novel, and an important reason for the *lack* that is described in the beginning of the story. The *infitāḥ* politics and the following globalization also have a huge impact. In fact, the political change that occurred, with globalization as a result, seems to be blamed for the development of the apolitical attitudes described as one of the "villains" of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* in section 4.4.4. The development which took place after the instatement of al-Sādāt is also blamed for allowing Islamism a foundation in Egyptian society.

5.2.4 Ṣabrā and Shātīlā

The invasion of Beirut and the Ṣabrā and Shātīlā massacres are important historical events in *al-Ḥubb fī l-manfā*.[224] The story takes place in the same period: the summer of 1982. The events in Lebanon prior to and during the invasion serve as a framework for the story as a whole, and the invasion itself marks a turning point in the narrative.

The invasion also causes harm to the protagonist and his 'family', the Arab unity or society, and may therefore be regarded as an act of villainy. This is an indication of the intellectual protagonist's attachment to the central idea and major narrative of the 20th century which the idea of Arab unity represents. The massacres in the refugee camps are also regarded as an act of villainy in the story, represented in event number 20 in the schematic overview above. This is also an important deviation from the Proppian fairytale, since Propp describes the function *villainy* as the first 'real' function of the tale. *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* also has two main acts of villainy – the invasion and the massacres. Both injures and causes harm to his 'family'. The seven functions that according to Propp are introduced before this function (in event number

[223] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 11. (For more on the historical defeat of the generation see Casini).
[224] For more information about the invasion and the massacres see Hourani, *The History of the Arab Peoples*, 431.

20), are regarded as making up the "*preparatory part*" of the story.[225] In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* there are several functions introduced prior to the act of villainy that have to be considered as part of the main story. What, 'on a strict Proppian analysis, would be considered the preparatory part would then be an extended introduction compared to a Russian fairytale. The introductory part is also full of details and germs of conflict. This is perhaps one of the most significant deviations from the Proppian scheme, and it underlines the fact that the story is *not* a traditional fairytale.

The conflict with Israel is, and has been for a long time, a principal theme in Arab literature.[226] In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* the invasion of Lebanon is systematically associated with other confrontations. One of the "villains" of the story, the prince, and his business companion Davidian, are both in close contact with Israel. By using both an Arab and a Western collaborator, the author is able to criticize support for Israel in several different ways. He describes the obvious support from Western businessmen, but also that of Eastern businessmen. Through the character of the prince, he effectively criticizes Arab leaders and other significant Arab persons who place economic interests above human concerns. By using both Eastern and Western representatives, he transcends the usual East/West opposition as described in section 5.1.1.

The author also criticizes the lack of reactions to the 1982 invasion both from Europe and from the different Arab countries. This criticism is also apparent when the protagonist tries to commit himself to the cause by writing newspaper articles, with no consequences for international reactions whatsoever. TV is described as nothing but a conveyer of entertaining information, as opposed to a method of engaging people. The only time television is able to engage anyone beside the protagonist, is when the massacres in Ṣabrā and Shātīlā are described and Brigitte sees it. As a result she actually participates in a demonstration along with the protagonist, event number 20. However, she does not change her mind about the realities of the world. As described in the analytical section, this event functions both to indicate that there might be a way to harmonize the contradictory forces, presenting a momentary solution, and to indicate the culmination of the clash of the two forces – personal

[225] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 30-31.
[226] Allen, *The Arabic Novel*, 69.

happiness and the obligation to commit. Brigitte's statement suggests that she still does not believe in political commitment, but she nevertheless allows the protagonist to be so committed, and even participates in the demonstration. Were it not for the "villains" of the story, this could have been a solution to his moral dilemma. He is here able to act like he once used to, and believes in change. Even though the demonstrations and the speeches concern a terrible act of villainy, he has a sense of the ability to act and be committed which is meaningful, and the event is described in a positive manner, as inspiring hope. The overwhelming power of the "villains", however, hinders this positive outcome and possible solution to the moral dilemma. In fact, when the protagonist makes an attempt to solve his dilemma, the prince interferes, and the function of this event, event number 21, is that the hero and his princess are expelled.

5.3 Literary historical context

5.3.1 *al-Ḥassāsiyya al-Jadīda*, or the generation of the 1960s

As described in section 2.1, Bahā' Ṭāhir belongs to the so-called 'generation of the 1960s'. Because of the social changes that occurred in this and the following decades, the belief in grand narratives disappeared, and literature began to present "competing representations of reality" (*al-tanāfus fī tamthīl al-wāqi'*).[227] Accordingly, the sixties have also been considered the period of or the starting point for the experimental Arabic novel.[228] The disillusioned atmosphere was reflected in literature, and after the defeat in 1967 the feeling of frustration was reflected by a fragmentation of and experimentation with narrative style.[229] The analytical section earlier showed that this is *not* the case for *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, however. The story rather follows a logical structure, and is less experimental and fragmented. It seems that the author has returned to a more structured and less experimental writing style. At the same time he focuses on new problems, or how the old problems look in a changing world. Commitment

[227] Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ, "jamāliyyāt al-riwāya al-jadīda: al-qaṭī'a wa-l-naz'a l-muḍādda li-l-ghinā'iyya" in *Alif: Journal of Comprarative Poetics*, vol. 21 (special issue): *The Lyrical Phenomenon/al-ẓāhira al-shi'riyya* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001) :184-246, available at http://www.jstore.org/stable/1350042 (first accessed 18.12.2009), 204.
[228] Stefan G. Meyer, *The Experimental Arabic Novel: Postcolonial Literary Modernism in the Levant* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 15.
[229] Ibid, 16, 39.

is a keyword, and the need to commit is discussed with a special focus on problems such as how exile and the new globalized world add limitations to the notion of commitment.

Bahā' Ṭāhir presents a nuanced picture of these themes, and shows us what happened to the characters of the "typical novel of the sixties" *after* the sixties – or what happened to the "typical *authors* of the sixties" after the sixties. The Egyptian society does indeed look different in this later period compared to the literary epoch described above, and the actions of the intellectuals of the time may be both criticized and viewed in a larger context. The author does exactly this: he critically examines the actions of the intellectuals of the sixties, but within a larger context, that of intellectual development over a longer period of time. The author is thus able to criticise their actions, and what happened after the sixties. As seen in the analytical section, this is what is considered the novel's main storyline, namely the development of an intellectual coming to terms with his lost position in society. The generation of the sixties did also have to come to terms with their lost position, but a difference may be that they had not yet lost all hope of reforming society.

As was seen in the paragraph concerning the literary devices used in *al-Ḥubb fī l-manfā*, the characteristics of the "external-oriented, things-in-themselves" mode of the 'New Sensibility'[230] described in section 2.1, are suitable for describing the novel's narrative style. Bahā' Ṭāhir refrains from describing the inner emotional life of his characters, and instead gives a detailed external description in a 'neutral tone'. This approach leaves it to the reader to draw conclusions based only on external 'data' or 'facts', and it does not give answers to what is or was the 'correct' interpretation on any particular occasion.

This literary current has another aspect which is especially fitting for the attempt to describe *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā,* namely "alienation", or "estrangement".[231] The heroes developed out of this literary trend also have features familiar from the protagonist of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. Since Bahā' Ṭāhir is one of the authors who is said to follow this trend, this does not come as a surprise.

> Their heroes [...] seem indifferent to life and the real world: They live in a world of their own [... ,] are insecure, estranged, and alienated, totally rejecting society, [...] or indifferent, living a superficial

[230] Cited in Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", 8.
[231] Ibid, 9.

> materialistic life. [...] In some novels, the hero is passive, unable to achieve any positive role. Furthermore, the hero's psychological inadequacy is manifested physically in the sexual impotence [...]. There are no physical reasons. He is in a constant state of inner conflict [...]. He experiences intense failure and self-accusation at the same time.[232]

This description suits several of the characters of *al-Ḥubb fī l-manfā*. There is the indifferent character who is experiencing a feeling of estrangement and alienation, and is in a constant state of inner conflict (the protagonist). There is also the character who totally rejects society (Brigitte), and a character who because of his psychological inadequacy experiences sexual impotence with no apparent physical reason (Ibrāhīm).

5.3.2 Postmodernism

Postmodernism has been described as "a new attitude and sensibility".[233] This "new sensibility" resembles the literary period that was described above, the *ḥassāsiyya jadīda*. It has been argued that the characteristics of the new sensibility, or postmodernism are "[...] disorientation, an extensive profanation, a critique of modernism's alleged elitism, including its totalistic tendencies, a positive revaluation of enjoyment based on consumerism, and the loss of faith in the liberating power of utopia".[234] The disappointment of the European generation of 1968 is also mentioned,[235] which is paralleled by the disappointment after 'Abd al-Nāṣir in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*.

According to Lyotard, the spread of capitalism and scientific and technological development that took place after the Second World War has ended the use of grand narratives.[236] The loss of grand narratives is described as a feature of postmodern writing. As has been described previously in this thesis, the loss of grand narratives is significant for *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. The grand narratives of nationalism are no longer valid, and the capitalist system that was implemented during the era of al-Sādāt has deeply affected the protagonist. The result is clearly visible in the part of the text which describes how he struggles to cope with this "new reality" of globalization, consumerism and apolitical attitudes.

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[232] Cited in Guth, "Literary Currents in Egypt since the Beginning/Mid-1960s", 9.
[233] Ines Kappert, "Postmodernism: Facets of a Figure of Thought" in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, 13-25, ed. by Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, Barbara Winckler (London: Saqi, 2010), 16.
[234] Ibid ,16.
[235] Ibid, 16.
[236] Simon Malpas, *Jean-Françoise Lyotard*, part of the series Routledge Critical Thinkers: Essential Guides for Literary Studies (London: Routledge, 2003), 28.

Postmodern writing, argues al-Musawi, is marked by the "disintegration of ideals on worldwide scale".[237] He continues by arguing that both "East and West participate in the feast to exploit people and nations alike".[238] This description of postmodern writing fits well with the themes and their presentation that are found in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. This also helps explain why the East and the West are depicted as ultimately alike, and the description of the loss of idealism and the spread of apolitical attitudes. The postmodern literary style, as it has been described above, is reflected in the choice of themes. What seems different from typically postmodern writing, however, is the narrative style of the novel. It has been argued that postmodern writing is characterized by "a fragmented narrative, discontinued time, and ambivalence".[239] The narration in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is not fragmented, but rather follows a logical and natural chronology, as described in section 4.5.

Even though the structure of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* follows a logical order, the rendering of time has another aspect which is, according to Heist, typically postmodern: "[...] in postmodern fiction, the past and the present become subject to the same uncertainty as the future, without resolution".[240] The idea of a coherent world is shaken, and the grand narratives are no longer valid. The protagonist in the story spends a lot of time pondering past events, and debates whether he acted correctly or not. He questions his past actions, and despite previously being convinced that his actions were the "right thing to do", he now asks what the intellectuals meant by them. Did they act out against the cruelties of the world purely because of their convictions, or did they do it simply in order to appear committed. Even though he poses more similar questions, he does not provide the reader with an answer. At the same time, the past is not as uncertain as the future, which just seems to fade into nothing. It rather seems as if the previously certain past has become more uncertain. As a result of the uncertainty of the past, the goals of the future previously believed in by the leftist intellectual elite in Egypt have faded into nothing.

[237] Muhsin Jassim al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2003), 145.
[238] Ibid, 145.
[239] Ibid, 145.
[240] Bridgeman, "Time and Space", 56.

5.3.3 The typical "hero" in Arabic literature

Characters in a novel often belong to certain types of people or groups, and it therefore makes sense to make a comparison with heroes that have been portrayed in other literary presentations. When one compares the different stages of development of the typical hero in Arabic literature as it has taken place through different literary periods, it becomes easier to describe and explain the role of the hero in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. The first literary period that will be described, the fifties, displays a hero who according to Sabry Hafez:

> ...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. But this sense of belonging does not imply acquiescence, for although he feels strong affinities with his fellow men, he may radically criticize the particular structures of society. Since he has not yet lost his sense of belonging to society, he continues to attempt to act directly upon his environment. Because of 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 acts 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..[241]

The typical hero of the fifties has not yet lost this sense of belonging, and believes in his ability to change society. He is, as described above, in harmony with society, something the hero of al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā is not. He is rather a social outsider, as described in section 4.4.1. He does not feel like he belongs – not where he now lives nor where he originally comes from. It is interesting to note, however, that the many flashbacks give the impression that he used to be similar to the abovementioned hero. He used to try to change society by acting directly upon his environment. At the present time he is not able to act in such a way, but still feels a sense of responsibility that forms part of the moral dilemma of the story – commitment or not?

[241] Hafez, "The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties", 71.

After the fifties, the typical hero of the period was replaced by other heroes.[242] The sixties had new character types and themes, and Hafez also describes the new type of hero:

> The hero of the new novel is an anti-hero, hesitant, achieving only small victories, if any. He has a tendency to act without any awareness of the consequences, a trait which manifests his fragility or incompleteness. In fact, the only one to deviate from this rule is the perpetual rebel, 'Abdulla Nadim, portrayed in the novel Al-'Awda ilā al-manfā, whose persistent revolts display many of the traits of the hero of the new novel. Al- though, unlike the common hero of the new novel, he is fully aware of what he wants to accomplish, he is also full of rejection, frustration, despair, hesitation, fear, and discontent. He rejects many of the values of his society, and particularly the lack of the spirit of opposition, and he spends a good deal of his life as an alienated and wanted man. The new novels' anti-heroes, mostly frustrated, sexually or otherwise, are characterized by a sharp self-awareness which appears through their continuous struggle with themselves. This is primarily a struggle with the self rather than with external reality, even when it involves elements of external reality, stressing mainly its role as a contributor to the formation of the self, and mirroring those aspects of outside reality which are entangled with the anxieties and questions of the self. Indeed, the problems of the external world are reflected in the internal worries of the self, rather than in its activities. The struggle with one's self springs from an acute consciousness of the potentialities of the self and the anticipation of its fulfillment. These characteristics of consciousness and anticipation are inter-woven with the insufficiency, fear, loss of sense of security, and the lack of the necessary power to dominate, or at least comprehend, reality.[243]

The hero of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* shows many of the same traits as the heroes of the novels of the sixties, as described by Hafez. The hero, or the protagonist, is full of frustration and despair. He may also be described as an alienated man engaged in an ongoing battle with himself provoked by the problems of the external world which then spread to the internal world. The feeling of lacking the necessary power is also a dominant feeling throughout the novel when the hero debates his ability to act on his convictions. At the same time, he does not seem to be fully aware of what he wants to accomplish, as Hafez states that the hero of the sixties does.[244] In fact, the hero seems unable to understand what he wants, and the situation is characterized by the hero's lack of knowledge of his own situation and goals. The hero has withdrawn from the outside world and into himself, a withdrawal which Badawi describes as the "most momentous characteristic of the new anti-hero", and states that it is "...a recoil into and against the self".[245] Several authors from the generation of the sixties in fact went through a tough period as a result of political turmoil. The experiences of these authors are reflected in the new anti-hero, who displays a lack of belief in the utopia this generation once used to believe in. Badawi describes the reason behind this withdrawal, and the subsequent lack of a sense of the ability to make a change, as an exploration of "...the human psyche, or more

[242] Ibid, 71.
[243] Ibid, 79-80.
[244] Ibid, 79-80.
[245] Badawi, "Perennial Themes in Modern Arabic Literature", 325.

precisely, the impact of grotesque reality upon man. It is a recoil into the self, because outer reality is absurdly cruel and any movement to alter it is futile and condemned to impotence, so the hero has no choice but to become an anti-hero."[246]

The fragmented way of thinking is also apparent in the way the protagonist in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* acts. This is especially the case when he tries to use the method he knows best, journalism. He is uncertain whether he should use this type of method, and if he is able to use it. Later in the story he seems to have no choice but to make use of journalism, but he is unsuccessful.

5.4 The novel and the East/West theme

5.4.1 Europe in al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā

As was described in section 3.2, regarding the East-West theme, the contact and contrast with the West is an important theme in Arabic literature.[247] It is also important in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, where it is related to both the historical and political background, as well as the question of globalization.

The question of the relation between and the cultures of the East and the West has been a recurrent theme in modern Arabic fiction (and drama) since the *nahḍa*. Arabic literature and Arab intellectuals have presented different and developing approaches to the theme ever since. Compared to the approach of al-Ṭahṭāwī, who presented the Western culture not as unattainable, but nevertheless ahead of the Eastern culture, Bahāʾ Ṭāhir rather seems to regard the opposition between East and West itself as outdated. When Bahā' Ṭāhir has been asked about the relation between the East and the West in his novels, he has underlined that he does not believe in "the clash of civilizations", but that he is rather interested in human beings as such, without regard for their ethnicity. He adds that he is also interested in the *structures* of

[246] Ibid, 325.
[247] There is a monography on the topic in German, by Rotraud Wielandt (*Das Bild der Europäer in der modernen arabischen Erzähl- und Theaterliteratur*, 1980 – Beiruter Texte und Studien, vol. 23). Unfortunately, I have not been able to profit from Wielandt's findings because I have no command of the language.

domination and subordination, stating that: "It doesn't matter if the protagonist is black or white. What matters most is how some people subjugate others."[248]

The East and the West are not fundamentally different, and the 'enemies' may be both Easterners and Westerners. The solution is not to 'borrow elements' from the West. In fact, the novel does not present a solution to the problem in this form precisely because it is a problem that goes beyond the East-West opposition. As the analysis showed, the story does not present a solution, and instead ends with the reaching of 'nirvana' by the protagonist in event number 24.

Much of the same view as that presented in al-Ṭahṭāwī's *Takhlīs al-Ibrīz* is found in ʿAlī Mubārak's *ʿAlam al-dīn*, but the latter focuses more on the 'social ills' of Western culture. Some of the focus on these perceived social ills may be found in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* as well. The protagonist, at least, presents some of these negative prejudices when he speaks to Ibrāhīm for the first time. The protagonist tells his friend that he does not know many people from where he lives, but blames this fact on how other people behave rather than on how he himself has behaved. He does not appear to be well integrated into European society, as pointed out by Ibrāhīm:

أردت التهرُّب لكي لا تختلف مرة أخرى فقلت له إنني لا أعرف كثيراً من الناس هنا لأنهم لا يحبّون الأجانب ولا يختلطون بهم. فردّ بيقينه القديم الذي لا يتزعزع أنت لا تختلط بالشعب.[249]

> I wanted to be evasive so that we wouldn't have another argument, so I told him that I didn't know many people here because they didn't like foreigners and they don't mix with them. He answered with his old, unshakable conviction, "You don't mix with people. [...][250]

The protagonist is lonely, but does not make an effort to get to know other people; he characterizes the loneliness as part of a sentence he serves in exile. He is not pleased to be in Europe, but he does not wish to go back to Egypt. He seems to have internalized a Western point of on the Arab nations. The protagonist represents a new approach to the East-West theme. He is not doing what was described earlier, namely giving his views on the region he is visiting. In fact, he is not just visiting the West, as many of the literary representations have shown earlier – he has moved to the West for good. Even though he is not integrated in the

248 Anis, "The Unbearable Weight of History", http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/883/cu1.htm.
249 Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 47.
250 Taher, *Love in Exile*, 39.

society where he lives, he still presents it as his 'last stop'. He looks at Egypt, or the Arab nations, 'from the outside' as an émigré. This is a rather different approach from the ones described in the introduction. All of them described present Arab *visitors*, who have been living and studying for a period abroad. They have visited and experienced the West, but they all return East in the end. The protagonist of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* does not belong to a certain place, and thus feels at home neither in the European city where he lives nor in Egypt. He claims that he cannot return to Egypt, but is still miserable living in Europe.

Another character who lives in the same European city without the possibility to return is Yūsuf. He represents a character that experiences many of the same conditions as the protagonist, although Yūsuf has really been forced to leave Egypt, and is also from a younger generation. Yūsuf experiences the same moral dilemma as the protagonist, and the inability to commit, but reacts in a different manner – by joining the prince's side. In the same way as the presence of Khalīl Ḥāwī, Yūsuf's choice gives the protagonist an alternative solution to his dilemma – giving up his principles.

أطلق ضحكة من مقطع واحد كأنها زفرة: تظاهرت ضد السادات وحكم عليّ بالسجن, وهربت من بلدي ومن أهلي لأني كنت أعتقد أنه يفرط في مستقبل البلد, وضاع مستقبلي أنا الفقير في المبادئ, بينما الكبار والأغنياء.. أهلاً يا مبادئ![251]

> He let out a short laugh, more like a moan, "I demonstrated against Sadat and was sentenced to jail and I ran away from my country and from my family because I thought he was endangering the future of the country. And I, the poor one, lost my future for my principles while the rich and powerful... Hello, principles!"[252]

Ibrāhīm, on the other hand, is thrilled to be in Europe and to experience the political activities taking place there. Ibrāhīm's experience of Europe has similarities with earlier descriptions of the West, where Europe is depicted as superior or as having extraordinary qualities. He is also an Arab *visitor*. He lives abroad in exile, but in an Arab country, namely Lebanon.

أخيراً رأيت أوروبا الحقيقية! أخيراً عرفت أوروبا التي لم تعرفها أنت! تصوَّر أن الشرطة تلاحقهم وتراقب تليفوناتهم وأنهم يضيّقون عليم[253] في الوظائف والأعمال التي يجدونها بكل صعوبة, بل تصوَّر أنهم أحياناً لا يوافقون على إسكانهم في البيوت الرخيصة التي تبنيها الدولة لمجرد أنهم شيوعيون!
سألته في دهشة: ولكن ما الذي يسعدك في كل هذا يا إبراهيم؟
فرد بفخر: وجدت الرفاق هنا في منتهي الصلابة, رغم كل هذا الاضطهاد![254]

[251] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 220.
[252] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 192.
[253] [sic]
[254] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 121.

> "Finally, I've seen the real Europe. Finally I've come to know the Europe you haven't known! Can you imagine that here also they persecute the communists as they do in our country? Can you imagine that the police keep them under surveillance and tap their telephones and they give them a hard time in their jobs, which they find only with great difficulty? Can you imagine that they even deny them housing in the state-subsidized homes just because they are communists?"
> I asked him in surprise, "How can that make you happy?"
> "[255]I found the comrades here to be extremely steadfast despite all the persecution!"[256]

When discussing the East-West theme in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, it is natural to compare the novel with al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's *Mawsim al-Hijra 'ilā l-Shamāl*, that was described more closely in section 3.2. *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* may not have been intended as a continuation of *Mawsim al-Hijra 'ilā l-Shamāl*, but it can certainly be read as a follow-up text, both continuing and discontinuing some of the dilemmas of that novel. The colonial past has already been dealt with, and the question now concerns the aftermath of the confrontation. Though many of *Mawsim al-Hijra'*s central ingredients, such as the hero from the East and the woman from the West, are present, the old conflict where the East and the West are in opposition and the author attempts to offer a solution for how the East should deal with the West is no longer a pressing issue. In fact, it no longer makes sense to discuss the conflict along the same dividing lines, as the allegedly clear-cutdivision between the East and the West is no longer presented as problematic. As was shown in the analysis and described as a result of the loss of grand narratives, who the enemies are is no longer obviously apparent. The *main enemy* in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is in fact an Eastern prince. The analysis showed that the prince tries to hide behind the old conflict, giving himself an innocent mask by pretending to be a part of the imagined Arab community, believing in pan-Arab causes. The new conflict, as it is described in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, is now one between humanity and inhumanity. There is *goodness* represented by true idealistic persons, such as characters like Bernard and the Norwegian nurse Marianne Eriksen, and there is a *general evil* represented by the spread of apolitical attitudes among people. The enemies are no longer that apparent, and therefore more difficult to reveal and hinder. The *evil* of the world appears as a more general type of evil, and as a result people become more apolitical or use politics only as a means to achieve own personal advantages. The suffering most of the characters in the novel experience is in some way or

[255] The translator omits "he answered proudly".
[256] Taher, *Love in Exile*, 106.

other the result of this new type of evil that is presented as a result of a globalized world. The protagonist depicts Europe as a difficult place to live, where consumerism is the dominant trend, making people insensitive towards, and uninterested in, offenses against human rights and injustice all over the world. As a result of globalization, apolitical attitudes have also spread to the Middle East. This makes the novel and its message imperative, not only as a continuation of earlier literary representations, but as a picture of a new type of reality.

5.4.2 European women in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*

Europe, or 'the West', is often represented by a woman in Arabic novels. The encounter is often a sexual one, as in al-Ḥakīm's *ʿUṣfūr min al-Sharq* where the protagonist Muḥsin falls in love with a French woman. There are several European women in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, the most significant of them being Brigitte. The relationship between a Western woman and an Eastern man reminds one of the usual presentation of the East-West relation. At the same time, neither does Brigitte appear to be a typical representative of the West nor is the protagonist a typical Easterner compared to the usual presentation in Arabic literature. They do not have a typically Eastern or Western codification, and it seems as if they primarily represent themselves as individuals. Rasheed El-Enany argues that Ṭāhir's description of their relationship is

> [...]demonstrating that the cultural encounter is no different from any other; it is a meeting between minds and bodies, not between abstract sets of values, masses of lands or entire peoples, and by implication that any attempt at allegorising it in such terms as his predecessors have done is bound to be misrepresentative and defective.[257]

Brigitte and the protagonist's suffering appear to be one of the things that bring the two together, along with a common interest in poetry. In *ʿUṣfūr min al-Sharq*, the European woman leaves the protagonist for her *real* love, a Frenchman. The European girl (and so Europe) is depicted as materialistic, and the East, as presented by the protagonist Muḥsin, is presented as idealistic and, although it suffers a 'defeat', is said to be superior to the West and to have the answer to the real questions of life. *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* does not present such a black-and-white picture, and the reader is not left with an answer to what is correct, or what is the best solution. The focus on the individuals'suffering may also indicate that the author

[257] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 140.

wishes to shed light on a topic that is supranational rather than divided into an East-West opposition. This can be seen as a *positive* effect of globalization: the old East-West dichotomy dissolving in favor of an all-encompassing humanity where people meet on equal terms, without being 'culturalized'.

When the protagonist learns that Ibrāhīm loves Brigitte in event number 6, it is both a warning and a revelation of the protagonist's repressed love for Brigitte. The protagonist therefore says: May God help you (*kāna llāh fī ʿawnika ʾanta!* [258]). Ibrāhīm's words at the end of their conversation are a sort of warning or advice he gives the narrator after he has gotten the chance to try his love for Brigitte, but failed. The early seeds of love between the hero and Brigitte are threatened. This is an implicit function, dealt with in the text only indirectly. This is a major difference between Russian fairytales, where everything is explicit, and modern story-telling, where some functions may be represented by implication only. From one chapter to the next we may learn, from allusions or only by own conclusion, that something must have happened without this event having been described explicitly. The function also presents the first hint of Brigitte performing another role than that of the "princess". As was described in the analysis, she also performs, sometimes simultaneously, the role of a "temptress". By performing as the "temptress", she assumes a role usually assigned to European woman in Arabic literature. It therefore opposes the assumption described above, where the meeting between an Eastern man and a Western woman in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* was described as "a meeting between minds and bodies, not between abstract sets of values", [259] where people meet on equal terms without regarding their cultural background. As a "temptress", she distracts the hero from solving the task he has received, and is therefore also a hinder the hero meets on his journey. Finally, the fact that the princess is simultaneously a temptress further underlines the complexity of the story.

Brigitte's presence in the novel is of a more complicated nature than the usual presentation in Arabic literature. She is simultaenously satisfying the personal needs of the protagonist by giving him the "magical gift" of love and distracting him from fulfilling his task as an Arab intellectual. The situation is further complicated as their love turns out to be the only real gain

[258] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 130.
[259] El-Enany, *Arab Representations of the Occident*, 140.

that the hero can possibly achieve, but even so remains a distant and unreachable ideal. At the same time, it hinders his ability to perform his task, one which turns out to be impossible to fulfill because of his lost position in society.

Another aspect that makes Brigitte's role more difficult to understand is that there at times appears to be a disagreement between what she says and what she means, or different driving forces behind the things she says. An example of this is what is described as event 17 in the schematic overview and further described in section 4.3, namely the fact that she wants to have a baby with the protagonist. She wishes to have a baby, but understands that she will not be capable of protecting it. She lies to herself, and thereby to the protagonist, and this implies that she is an unreliable character, controlled by emotion. At other times, however, she appears as cold and in control, as when she tells the protagonist that the demonstration they participate in towards the end of the novel, event 20, will not make any difference.

5.5 Arabs in exile – *al-manfā*

One cannot ignore the vital role the *exile* plays in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. Even the title suggests how decisive the exile, or the consequences of exile, is for the novel. In the title, exile (*manfā*) itself is juxtaposed with love (*ḥubb*).The title raises questions concerning what kind of relation the novel will present: will it be a love story taking place "in exile" as a mere location, or a first indication of structural binarism where "exile" is a counter-principle of "love", the one excluding the other? Is it possible to keep *love* when in *exile*? The fact that the protagonist lives in exile does not release him from the obligation to commit himself to the humanist cause. The exile is rather to be seen as a challenge to the protagonist's identity as a committed intellectual. The protagonist himself describes the exile as banishment: "I was from Cairo, the city that had banished me to live as a foreigner/stranger in the north. (*kuntu qāhiriyyan, ṭaradathu madīnatuh li-l-ghurba fī l-shamāl*)."[260] He seems to experience a double exile: an outer, perhaps more concrete exile, and an inner exile that appears as a feeling of estrangement.

[260] Ṭāhir, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, 5.

In exile, the protagonist experiences a condition which leaves him with *closed horizons*. The protagonist is not able to maintain his relationship with Brigitte, the *love*, in exile. He is not able to develop the relationship with Brigitte, the *love*, into a future for the two of them. He also faces a 'wall' as a committed intellectual. He feels unwanted or suppressed by his own country's political leadership, ignored by contemporary society both in the West and at home because of consumerism, and jeopardized by the Prince. There seem to be only dead ends wherever he looks; there are only closed horizons. The only way out brought up by the novel as a possible alternative, the *love*, is eventually shown to be impossible too. This experience of 'closed horizons' may be likened to the way in which Arab intellectuals, perhaps especially those living in exile, experience their intellectual possibilities today. As was argued earlier, these intellectuals are left without a possibility to act upon their commitment. In this sense, therefore, these intellectuals are represented by the protagonist of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, who both lives in exile and is a formerly committed intellectual who has lost his important position in society.

Casini argues that the protagonist is trying to "overcome his exile" during the novel, and by doing this recover his role in society. Casini sees this as "the beginning of the end of the relationship" with Brigitte, and claims that this is what leads the protagonist to "a new personal and political defeat".[261] It is possible to see this attempt as the reason why the relationship ends, and as necessarily leading to a negative outcome. At the same time, the protagonist does not choose to give up, and is therefore successful to some extent. At least he obtains a certain moral victory, and in the end reaches a higher level of consciousness. It is nevertheless true that the protagonist does not reach his goal, and that he is not able to keep his love in exile.

The protagonist also experiences an intellectual exile. He has left Egypt partly because of his lost position in society, but has not gained intellectual space in exile. At the start of the novel, he finds himself in a position of intellectual stagnation. He faces a 'wall', and he does not see how to go on. This may be a reason why he, in the first part of the novel, looks back and reflects upon his past. The closed horizons makes it impossible for him to find his place as a committed intellectual in an imaginable future, and he therefore instead spends his time

[261] Casini, "Beyond Occidentalism", 12.

reflecting on the past. After the invasion of Lebanon, however, he tries to overcome his position, or "overcome his exile". The narrative therefore changes somewhat, and instead of dealing with his past, he proceeds to deal with his present stagnating position.

The protagonist also faces a problem of selfhood, or identity. He has been deprived of his former social position, and has been transferred to a faraway country, a situation he experiences as tantamount to being exiled. The exile is not forced upon him, as the above description may have sometimes given the impression of. Rather, he has chosen to move because of unbearable circumstances. These circumstances may be contrasted with the feeling of being obligated to commit himself to his people's cause. The protagonist still feels an affiliation with the Arab nations. At the same time he has been banished from Cairo. The obligation to commitment is challenged when he meets Brigitte, and he is not capable of combining his two wishes: commitment and personal happiness. What makes this even more complicated is, on the one hand, the fact that he lives in exile, a fact which weakens his ability to act on his commitment, and on the other hand, his ambivalent feelings towards Egypt or the Arab community.

The ways in which the characters of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* experience life in exile are different, but the protagonist himself compares his original situation with that of Brigitte. He finds himself tied to his present situation, with no other choice, whereas Brigitte has chosen this life in order to escape from a reality she could not deal with in her home country. Nevertheless, the protagonist is in a sense in the same type of situation as Brigitte, one of being "a victim of her social milieu".[262] Because of what happened with her and Albert she seeks complete isolation from the world, considering this the only way to protect both herself and the relationship with the protagonist.[263]

The protagonist also experiences exile in his closest relations, his family. His family is, it may be argued, symbolic of Egypt as a nation.[264] The family has characters that represent different sides of the Egyptian community of the period, and his family is also a reason why he is in

[262] Ibid, 12.
[263] Ibid, 12.
[264] Ibid, 11.

exile. After his divorce he found it too difficult to stay in Cairo without living together with his family, or at least with his children.

How the characters describe their present condition tells the reader something about how they experience life in exile. A method for determining each character's experience is to look at how close or how distant he or she describes his/her present condition, or how other characters describe it in those terms. An example of this is presented in section 5.4.1, where the characters describe what they think of living in Europe. The protagonist is described as having a 'distant' relation to the place where he spends his exile. Brigitte, on the other hand, seems to be integrated in society. Her relation to the physical place is described as a 'close' one, and she regards the place as her home.

6 Concluding remarks

The protagonist of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* debates the demands he faces as an Arab intellectual, which is reflected by his moral dilemma: commitment or not? His situation is presented as complex, and being an intellectual in a globalized world demands attention from him. The 'old intellectual methods' are no longer usable, and he tries to find a way of dealing with the new political realities that have resulted in a feeling of a *lack* of purpose. This is the result both of political changes, such as those that took place in Egypt after the instatement of al-Sādāt, and of life in exile. The intellectual is expected to be committed to Arab unity, but in a globalized world it is no longer possible for the protagonist to be so committed. These expectations result in conflict with the protagonist's personal emotional needs, and he has to find a way to be able to deal with his new powerless situation. The novel presents alternative ways of doing this, through Khalī Ḥāwī and Yūsuf, but the protagonist is not willing to follow these examples as he still clings to his old principles. When facing an undefeatable power, unable to neither commit nor succumb to the magical gift of love, he feels relief in finally being able to let his past and present go. He is not able to solve his dilemma, but he reaches 'nirvana', a higher consciousness, when he leaves it behind, and as a result it dissolves into nothing.

Another obstacle the protagonist faces is his exile, and both the exile and globalization have changed the identities of intellectuals, as described in section 5.1.2. The two factors bring the intellectuals more closely together, but at the same time leave them with 'closed horizons'. In addition to the latter, a result of a globalized world is the spread of apolitical attitudes described in the analysis as one of the story's "villains". The exile only underlines his feeling of alienation as he is a stranger both to his home country, Egypt, and in the country he is currently living in. He does not have the possibility of returning, nor is he able to fulfill the demands he is expected to as an Arab intellectual.

The exile also makes it imperative to relate to the place he currently lives in, a Western country. He also meets a European girl, and the relationship is similar to those presented in previous Arabic literature: a relation between an Eastern man and a Western woman. The description is both different and similar. Different because the characters do not have a typical

Western or Eastern ‘codification’, but rather represent a meeting of two individuals brought together by suffering and a common interest in poetry. At the same time, Brigitte performs the role of a “temptress”, as described in section 5.4.2. The main conclusion that may be drawn from this presentation is that the relationship is a complex one, involving both a traditional representation and new perspectives. Even though Brigitte is a “temptress”, she is not one of the main “enemies”, one of whom is, rather, an Arab prince.

Historical and political background and current issues are crucial to the life of the Arab intellectual as represented by the protagonist. It is because of the historical and political background, mainly the instatement of al-Sādāt and the implementation of *infitāḥ* politics, that the protagonist finds himself in a situation where he *lacks* a purpose and lives in exile. The effect of historical and political events becomes evident through the invasion of Lebanon and the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps, making the demands toward the Arab intellectual unavoidable.

The use of a Proppian analytical method has revealed many similarities as well as differences between the Russian fairytale and the analytical object of this thesis, *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. The novel has many functions that deviate from those presented by Propp. The existence of differing functions is not in itself a surprise, as the novel is not a traditional fairytale. However, the extensive use of fairytale elements is striking – several of the functions Propp describes are quite similar to the functions in *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*. Some of these functions are: The hero receives a task; the hero receives the magical gift (of love); the villain is exposed; the villain interferes and causes harm; the hero and his princess are expelled; the hero confronts the villain; the hero goes through a transfiguration.

An interesting difference between *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* and the Proppian fairytale, which tells us something about the level of structural complexity displayed by the novel, is the use of parallel functions and multi-functional events. The hero receives a task, but compared to the hero in the Proppian scheme the task is negotiated from the beginning of the novel. The hero of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* forgets the task when receiving the magical gift of love. When he is isolated and transferred to a different place he is unable to complete the task. During the story the hero even tries to ignore the task he has received because of contradictory forces. The

magical gift he receives therefore simultaneously has both a positive and a negative effect. The villain of *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā* is exposed, which is something that should happen in a fairytale according to Propp, but when he is exposed it does not have a positive outcome. As a result of the exposure, the hero and his princess are instead threatened and finally expelled. The expulsion is permanent, and as a result the hero goes through a transfiguration.

The ending of the novel – the transfiguration of the hero, his reaching 'nirvana' – underlines the fact that the story is not a [Russian] fairytale. If it was, it would have ended with the "marriage" between the hero and his princess. In *al-Ḥubb fī l-Manfā*, on the other hand, the "marriage" takes place in the middle of the story, in event number 13. In addition to this not being the end, the princess is not only a princess but simultaneously a temptress, as described in section 5.4.2.

It is interesting to see who performs the different roles in the story. The "princess" and "temptress" is a European girl. The "hero" is an Egyptian, or an Easterner, who *lacks* the usual 'superiority' of a fairytale hero. The "villain" is both an Arab prince (an Easterner) and apolitical attitudes and a general ignorance of humanist issues. The roles and the characters who perform them are different from the Proppian characters and their usual presentation in Arab literature: The princess is both a princess and a temptress, fulfilling but also transcending the usual presentation of a European woman in Arabic literature; the first villain is an Arab prince and not a representative of the West, who uses the expectations towards members of 'the Arab community' as a hideout; the second villain is a more general type of villainy, connected with the effect of globalization on political commitment. The roles are thus both more complex than in a traditional fairytale, and give a new picture of the globalized world.

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Appendix

كلمة ختامية

هذه رواية, أساسها الخيال. ولكن هناك مع ذلك أشياء حقيقية.

في الفصل الأول: قصة تعذيب بيدرو ايبانيز ومصرع شقيقه فريدو في شيلي. الاسمان حقيقان والوقائع حقيقية مع شئ من التصرف.

في فصل السادس: شهادة الممرضة النرويجية عما حدث في عين الحلوة شهادو حقيقية, وهي مزيج من أقوال منشورة وحوار شخصي أجراه المؤلف معها. وقد غيرت اسماها الحقيقي.

في الفصل العاشر: المقال المنسوب الى برنار, الشخصية الروائية. نص لمقال حقيقي.

في الفصل الأخير: شهادة الصحفي الأمريكي رالف حقيقية, الاسم حقيقي, الوقائع حقيقية.

هذا, ودم الشهداء.

بهاء طاهر

Author's note

This is a novel based on imaginary characters and events. There are however, some exceptions.

In the first chapter: The story of the torture of Pedro Ibañez and the killing of his brother Freddie in Chile: the names are real and the events are real with some emendation.

In the sixth chapter: The Norwegian nurse's testimony on what took place at the Ain el Helweh refugee camp I real. It is a blending of published testimony and a personal interview of her conducted by the author. Her name has been changed.

In the tenth chapter: The column attributed to Bernard, the fictional character, is the text of an actual, published column.

In the last chapter: The testimony of Ralph, the American journalist, is real. The name is real and the events are real.

That, and the blood of the martyrs.

Bahaa Taher

Geneva 1995[265]

[265] Taher, "Author's note" in *Love in Exile*, 279.