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**The Representation of Amman in the Arabic Novels from Jordan 1989-2017**

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# Acknowledgements

# 1. Chapter I: Introduction: Methodological Issues and Objectives of the Thesis

1.1 Overview of the Research

Amman has been a central theme in Jordanian literary production for the last three decades. The purpose of the thesis is to trace from where "this" representation is coming in the particular moment of its publication as a novel, and how these representations adopt and adapt discourses on what is Amman, or what it is to be Ammani.

Representations, "can never be completely divorced from political and ideological questions" (Mitchell 1995: 15), and in this sense, the representation of Amman cannot be detached from political and ideological questions. These questions are based on configurations of citizenship, identities, geography, and city governance.

The temporal framework of this thesis starts with debates on identity, citizenship, geography, and Amman intensifying at the end of the 1980s (Massad 2001; Layne 1994). At the same time, Amman started to appear unprecedentedly prominent in the Arabic novels written from Jordan. Therefore, it is worth investigating how the city of Amman has been depicted in the novel. Hence, the purpose of the thesis is to analyze the representation of Amman in the Arabic novel from Jordan and at the same time, to show how the novels participated in urban processes from the late 1980s to the late 2010s. This thesis will engage with the novels, leaning mainly on geocriticism and deep locational criticism, and will arrange the analysis mainly at intra-textual, inter-textual, extra-textual, and meta-textual levels.

On an intra-textual level, a key concept to be analyzed is how Amman engages in the novel's plot, and what attitudes the characters have toward the city. On an inter-textual level, it is important to see how the texts engage with other discourses, and other novels that dealt with

Amman. On an extra-textual level, it is useful to locate the novels in the broader ongoing urban processes. On a meta-textual level, this thesis will trace the representation and emergence of Amman as a theme in the novel. Finally, in some cases, the paratextual elements of the novels, such as acknowledgments, book covers, or bibliographic information will be taken into account, to better understand the circumstances of production.

1.2 Problems and Questions of the Thesis

The city of Amman is also the capital of the state. Amman, despite its newness, was re-founded even before the establishment of the Jordanian state – this, perhaps, is the case for most modern state capitals. The city of Amman has what many call an "identity crisis" in which, it seems, its features are undefined and bland. At the same time, many of its inhabitants identify with places elsewhere. Amman's identity crisis called the attention of scholars at least since the mid-1980s, in which Eugene Rogan once discussed the physical Islamization of the city (Rogan 1986) – until virtually the present day, when researcher Annabel Evans in 2021 also addressed the "Identity Crisis" of Amman in her piece of research on Palestinian Christians in Amman (Evans 2021).

One of the frequent explanations for Amman's crisis of identity is the relative newness of the city– if compared with the major capitals of the neighboring countries– coupled with the fact that it was re-founded on the ruins of cities established on the same territory as present-day Amman and that were of considerable importance in past times (such as Umayyad Amman, Hellenistic Philadelphia, or Rabbath Ammon of the Ammonites). This makes narratives about the city's history of particular interest in explaining the genesis of a city, and thus legitimizes the city as a historical or even trans-historical entity.

In this sense, Hāšim Ġarāybah in an interview states that in his novel *al-Šahbandar* he wrote the story of Amman, not its history, since the history of all cities resemble each other, while the stories or narratives are what give a specific particularity to the cities. In his words:

هنا حكاية عمان، لا تاريخها، فتاريخ كل المدن يكاد يشبه تاريخ غيرها من المدن، أما حكايتها لا تنازعها فيها مدينة أخرى، إنها لها وحدها

*Here is the story of Amman, not its history. The history of all cities is almost the same as the history of other cities. As for her story, it is not disputed by any other city, it is hers alone.* (Ġarāybah in al-ʿUqaylī 2011: 199)

And indeed, in the context of present-day Jordan, many cities emerge from the same historical circumstances, which are the *tanẓīmāt* reforms and the post-Egyptian conquest of Greater Syria by Ibrahim Pasha in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the construction of the Hejaz Railway in the early twentieth century. For example, an often emphasized fact is that the city of Amman was refounded by the Circassians, but it should be noted that Amman is not the only city refounded by Circassians, nor is it the only city founded by a group coming from elsewhere settling in a particular territory in the Jordan of nowadays. Thus, in Jordan, one can find urban centers refounded by Chechens such as Zarqa– one of the major cities in Jordan.

The Ottoman Empire was losing territories, and in turn, tried to create settlements in the territory of present-day Jordan, to secure the route to Mecca. As mentioned above, these migratory movements are part of the territorial context of the late Ottoman world. In short, the history of Amman is not particular per se, but its particularity stems from how its history is told, when, and why it is told in this way.

The non-qualification of Amman as a city implies the non-qualification of Amman as identification, or in other words, for those who claim to be from Amman, their answer is often deemed insufficient. At the same time, this disqualification is politically produced.

Despite all this, it is remarkable that these novels are referred to in journalistic literary criticism as *"Riwāyah ʿAmmāniyyah"* [*Ammani novel*][1].  And, likewise, many writers are epitomized as "*ʿAmmānī*" such as Muʾnis al-Razzāz, Ziyād Qāsim, Ilyās Farkūḫ, Qāsim Tawfīq, Jamāl Nājī etc. In this sense, there is an "Amman boom", which, as far as this thesis is concerned, will deal with the literary boom specifically, to the novel. Still, nevertheless it can be observed that there is a growing interest in the city and its spaces in other cultural products, such as visual arts, performing arts, music, etc., which, in turn, is paralleled by intellectual debates about Amman. In this sense, an inverse proportionality can be observed. That is, while the city is under-recognized and therefore under-represented politically, this translates into a response in which Amman carries more weight in the literature.

This thesis is going to refer to novels that have Amman as their main theme as "Ammani novels", since as Franco Moretti said, "Each genre possesses its own space, then- and each space has its own genre" (Moretti 1998: 35), and hence, it will also consider the Ammani novel as a genre or subgenre– depending on the scale. And so, the novels have Amman, but in turn, Amman has its novels, as its urban context has produced a literary genre. It is

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[1] See for example (Batrā 2018), (al-Quḍāh 2016), (Ḫrīs 2010).

noteworthy then, to explore how the city and its urban issues are represented in these novels. The representations of cities are in constant oscillation. In the case of Amman in the Jordanian novels, the representations were interlinked with the ongoing urban processes of that time. These representations were strategic and tactical means over the struggle over the city as it is lived, understood, and felt.

Given that the representations are not fixed and are in constant fluctuation, to have a comprehensive view of a complex literary phenomenon, the thesis elucidates the following literary and urban phenomena through a geocritical lens. Since Amman starts to appear late in the novel, it is worth asking when the trend of writing about Amman begins, and in what ways this trend continues in subsequent decades. Likewise, it is important to examine what were the processes that accompanied the emergence, and the trend that followed. Similarly, to understand the trends, it is pertinent to analyze in what ways the city is represented in the Arabic novels written in Jordan over three decades. And at the same time, it is pertinent to see what the political, urban, and moral claims are present in the selected novels. In this regard, it is worth asking, in what ways do they interact and participate with the different urban processes carried out in the city, and likewise, it is worth also to ask how the novels interact with other Ammani novels and their urban discourses.

1.3 Objectives of the Thesis

This thesis aims to understand the urban processes in Amman, and how they shape the Ammani novel. And in turn, to understand how the novels participate in these urban processes, producing, adopting, and adapting discourses. And in this sense, it is intended to explain a literary phenomenon, which is the novel of Amman, and place it in its historical, socio-political, and urban context. Similarly, the thesis will show how identifying with Amman, and feelings of belonging to the city take shape in the novel. With a diachronic perspective, one can see how identifying with the city remains a central issue in Amman's novels, but takes different forms, and has different political and urban claims.

The novels discussed in this thesis show the rapid urban transformations. These novels provide a historical record of the history of the production of space and locality. Moreover, the novels participate in these processes, in which either directly, or indirectly, the views or claims were constantly negotiated. The novels, regardless of the representation that they may carry, show us that there is anxiety concerning the city, and how it is lived, understood, and felt. Furthermore, since the thesis covers approximately three decades, it will act as a history of the production of space over the last thirty years, in which the attitudes and affections towards the different urban transformations carried out in Amman will be seen. A good

example is to see how some places in Amman have changed their class composition. Another example is how Amman was shown earlier as a "domestic" city – that is, a city with little urban and intellectual life, but at the same time a quiet city with a slow pace – yet later it becomes a city where the power of capital is destructive, and makes the city an inhospitable place to live in.

1.4 State of the Art

The following section will explain scientific production that addresses the most relevant topics for this thesis. The thesis has a multidisciplinary character, and thus, different academic productions concern the object of study of this thesis, which is Amman in the novel. Talking about "Amman" and the "Novel" implies several things. On the one hand to talk about the city, and on the other hand to talk about cultural production, and more specifically a literary one. For this reason, the works that are of interest to us are those that have been carried out that have a focus on either the city, or the cultural practices and productions in general, and in particular those that have focused on an urban context. In this sense, the studies will be presented by zooming in, examining some works that have placed the novel and the city in the general Arab context, and afterward focusing on Amman in literature, as well studies on cultural production, Amman's urban history, and the ongoing urban transformations of the last twenty years.

1. 4.1 Arab Cities and the Novels

As far as the city and the novel are concerned, it is worth noting that over the last decade there has been a growing interest in looking at the representation of Arab cities in Arab novels. Among the works that have looked at the city and the novel, some have looked at the Arab city in general, and others have looked at a specific city. In the case of the first group, we can find '*The City in Arabic Literature: Classical and Modern Perspectives'* edited by Nizar Hermes, and Gretchen Head. The book has contributions from scholars who have contributed scientific articles with case studies from different periods, from early Islamic times to the present day. Of the sixteen contributions, none deals with Amman, or with novels written by Jordanian authors (Hermes and Head 2018).

ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Raʾūf, an Egyptian architectural critic, wrote a book, *Mudun al-ʿArab fī riwāyātihim,* in which different Arab cities are discussed in different Arab novels.. In one of his analytical chapters, he deals with the novel and Arab cities, where he brings examples

from different Arab countries and regions, such as Greater Syria, the Gulf, Iraq, North Africa, etc. In the other analytical chapter, he focuses specifically on the architecture of Cairo in contemporary Arab novels. Apart from collecting a wide and varied sample, his work has not collected any examples from Amman (ʿAbd al-Raʾūf 2018).

However, perhaps Beirut is the city that has attracted the most attention of researchers who have had literature and the city as an object of study. Among the most relevant works is Ghenwa Hayek's *"Imagining the City: Space and Place in Lebanese Literature."* In her research, she analyzes how spaces, whether those of the mountains or the city of Beirut, are interrelated and negotiated with the processes of the configuration of Lebanese identity (Hayek 2015). Another book published in the same year and devoted to Beirut is Samira Aghacy's '*Writing Beirut: Mappings of the City in the Modern Contemporary Novel*' in which she explores how the space is used by writers in their literary production (Aghacy 2015). A year later in 2016, another book in which the space of Beirut has an important place is Felix Lang's *The Lebanese Post-Civil War Novel: Memory, Trauma, and Capital* (Lang 2016) in which building on Bourdieu, he analyzes the literary field of the Lebanese writers in post-war times, and how trauma and remembrance come into play in the Lebanese post-war novel. Although his work is more concerned with memory, given the centrality of Beirut in the civil war, the city is given special attention by writers, and thus by the researcher investigating the writers and their writings.

Egyptian spaces have also attracted researchers; cities like Cairo are the protagonist of two edited volumes by Samia Mehrez *The Literary Life of Cairo: One Hundred Years in the Heart of the City* and *The Literary Atlas of Cairo: One Hundred Years on the Streets of the City* (Mehrez 2011; Mehrez 2016). Another book published in the last few years is Yasmine Ramadan's *Space in Modern Egyptian Fiction* (Ramadan 2020), in which she explores the spaces of Cairo, Alexandria, rural Egypt, and exile.

As for Baghdad, architect Iman al-Attar wrote *Baghdad: An Urban History through the Lens of Literature*. In her book, she provides an urban history of Baghdad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the writings of Iraqi poets and scholars of the time. Unlike the aforementioned city scholars, Attar is an architect who delves into literature, and in that sense, her research sees literature as a "complement" to historiographical sources (Attar 2019: xi).

## 1.4.2 Amman in the Novel

One of the most ambitious studies is the monograph devoted to Amman in the Jordanian novel by the Jordanian literary critic Šafīq al-Nūbānī. *ʿAmmān fī al-riwāyah al-ʿarabiyyah fī al-Urdunn* [*Amman in the Arabic novel in Jordan*]. In his work, he analyzes how Amman was depicted in fourteen novels from Jordan. The book is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to Amman as a central theme in the novel. The second chapter is devoted to Amman and the novels' structure and classifies them according to their style and structure. The third and final chapter is dedicated to the dimensions of Amman as a place in the novel. His book achieved a comprehensive multifocal view of Amman, but it missed looking at Amman outside the novel, and how it interacted with the novels. In other words, it missed the sociopolitical and urban context of Amman, and hence misses the literary context, since, in his way of expounding the novels, they are left as if they were independent of each other, leaving aside, or at least not implicitly expounding the inter-textual and urban discursive relationships that exist in these novels (al-Nūbānī 2013).

A recent piece that relates Amman with its literature is Fernanda Fischione's contribution to the edited volume "*Minorities and State-Building in the Middle East: The Case of Jordan*". In her contribution entitled "'A Village That Harbours the Oppressed'? Amman and the Jordanian Novel (1980–2000)" she brings up three literary texts, the memoirs of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf *Sīrat madīnah* and Hāšim Ġarāybah's *al-Šahbandar*, and Ġālib Halasā's *Sulṭānah*. In her study, she discusses Amman's inclusivity, minorities, and how they adapt to the official discourses of the monarchy, in her words, "The city-focussed novels advocate a pluralistic national ideal that lends itself to voicing the official ideology of the Great Jordanian Family" (Fischione 2020: 252). The departure point seems to be problematic, which is to see the novel as a predetermined product by the Hashemites. In the same way, the affirmation disregards the urban space, since it is relegated, or reduced to purely national space. For example, for her "the space and demography portrayed in the Jordanian novel have always gone hand in hand with the political concerns of the Hashemite monarchy" (Fischione 2020: 251). Such a reading of the city novels in a national key, without taking into consideration the relations between the referent and its representations, makes the reading somewhat stilted, and the amalgam of complexities of a literary phenomenon– writing Amman's history– is not appreciated.

1.4.3 Recent Studies on the City of Amman and Jordan

It is worth mentioning that in recent years, some books dedicated to Amman, or Jordan, have been published that are relevant to this thesis. The following publications engage with different aspects that are relevant to the thesis, such as Amman's history, urban processes, and cultural policy, and at the same time, the thesis will try to fill the existing gaps in these subjects.

Majd Musa's monograph *Amman: Gulf Capital, Identity, and Contemporary Megaprojects* dealt mainly with the economic capital of the Gulf and its effect on the neoliberal drive Amman has been taking since the 2000s. Although his work is more in the realm of urbanism, she has pointed to the issues of image, identity, and the discourses that accompany the process of leaping to being a global city (Musa 2017).

Lina Khamis' *Cultural Policy in Jordan: System, Process, and Policy* provides an overview of cultural policies in Jordan from the establishment of the state in 1921, to 1992. In her book, she dealt with the era of martial laws, and democratization, and also pointed to some aspects of the history of literature in Jordan, such as the literary boom after the defeat of the June 1967 war, and also the censorship that existed until the end of the 1980s. However, she did not go into detail on the literary field, nor on Jordanian literature in general.  In addition to this, as far as this thesis is concerned, an important agent in cultural policy is not dealt with, which is the Greater Amman Municipality's cultural directorate, since it is outside its time frame, as it was established in 1994 (Khamis 2018).

Another work is Ḍirġām Štiyyah's *al-Faḍāʾāt al-ʿāmah fī madīnat ʿAmmān: bayn al-tanawwuʿ al-ḥaḍarī wa-l-tabāyun al-ijtimāʿī* [*Public Spaces in Amman: Between Urban Diversity and Social Disparity*].  In this book, the author makes a comparative study of the old downtown and the new downtown, examining the production of space, type of business, as well as offering demographic and social analysis of the passers-by in both places. In his study, he points to some of the cultural initiatives, such as cafes, galleries, and social entrepreneurship that take place in Downtown, and Jabal al-Luwaybidah. It does not, however, take a qualitative approach to the phenomenon (Štiyyah 2021).

Harrison Gurhorn's book studies the Amman of the British Mandate period. While his research is historical, Guthorn explores a rather innovative aspect, taking into account the trend of the study of Jordanian literature. In his book, he devotes a chapter to the figure of ʿArār (1899-1949), who for many is considered the "national" poet of Jordan, one who was known for his Bohemian lifestyle and his animosity toward the city.  In his book, he discusses how Amman is established and becomes the center of power. Guthorn brings in ʿArār as a

counterbalance, in which his attitudes toward the city provide another perspective on colonial power, the monarchy, and Amman's urban merchant elite. In his chapter, he analyzes the figure of ʿArār as a flâneur and brings his urban and cultural criticism, which he practiced by walking in the city, as well as through his poetry, in which he resisted the power of the Palace, the British, and the Ammani bourgeoisie in his challenging attitude as a stroller, and by mocking them in his verses (Guthorn 2021).

The works mentioned here that have had Amman as an object of study, and have dealt with different epochs, have been in the territories of history, sociology, and urbanism. In the case of *Amman: Gulf Capital, Identity, and Contemporary Megaprojects* it is an exhaustive investigation, but nevertheless it does not deal with any aspect from a literary point of view. The second and third chapters will follow the temporal arc of Musa's research and will show how these discourses took shape in the novels, and how some novels challenged the discourses that accompanied the urban transformations of the last two decades. In addition, Chapter 4 will focus on the literary productions that accompany the moment of cultural fervor at the end of 2010 and the following years that were pointed out by Štiyyah, and it will provide a point of view in which these cultural and urban initiatives that come hand in hand with the neoliberalization of the city are viewed with suspicion.

Moreover, from the point of view of cultural policy, the thesis in this aspect will point to the Greater Amman Municipality, which was an important cultural agent that has had a dynamic cultural and urban agenda from the mid-1990s until the end of the 2010s, focusing on the year 2002 as one of the high points of its cultural activity, which was the year in which the city of Amman was declared the capital of Arab culture. Although this thesis does not deny that the municipality is a state apparatus, shifting the gaze towards the literary outcome of the municipal cultural policy reveals the complexities of the different social fields and networks that exist at the city level, as well as the complexities of the literary field. Additionally, although this thesis does not deal with the history of the city at the time of the British Mandate itself, Chapter 4 will show how that period of Amman is represented in the novel, and how the discourse of the GAM takes shape, especially in the novels published on the occasion of Amman being named the Arab Capital of Culture in 2002.

It should be noted that the thesis will look at the literary phenomenon as a social phenomenon as well as an urban one, emphasizing the complex relationship between the city and its novelistic production. Therefore, it will be seen not so much as a mere national product, in which the institution of the monarchy is overemphasized at the expense of other agents that are much more important in literary production. This thesis recognizes that the top-down,

statist perspective prevents a literary appreciation of these novels while underestimating any political potential that these novels may have.

The following chapters will contribute to the scholarship with different outputs. On the one hand, it will show the interrelation between urban processes and a literary phenomenon, which is the Ammani novel. On the other hand, as far as knowledge production related to Amman is concerned, it will present the literary and affective point of view on the urban transformations, as well as the city's identity, and thus on how the city is understood, lived, and felt. In this regard, literature offers an affective view of how urban processes are experienced from the perspective of the citizen on foot. Moreover, the thesis will also show how institutions adopt the novel, and how a narrative is created by municipal policies. In this sense, the thesis will put the focus on an agent that is usually quite ignored, and that is the municipal cultural policies in general, and in particular, the proclamation of Amman as the capital of Arab culture by UNESCO. Furthermore, the thesis will show how the representation of Amman became an object of dispute after 2011, where on the one hand it subverts the narrative that shows Amman as a hospitable city, but on the other hand, the authorities tried to ban one of those novels.

In addition to the above-mentioned, the thesis will provide a new view of a type of city that has its particularities. On the one hand, it is a relatively new city, being the largest in Greater Syria, and also the capital of a state. But at the transnational level, among the Arab countries, it is perceived as a secondary, or peripheral city. Similarly, the same is true for its literature, which in general has received less attention than literature from elsewhere. In short, the thesis will explain the relationship between the referent, and the representation in the context of Amman in the novels, and with this, the research intends to contribute a piece to the urban studies of Amman and the processes of image and identity creation. At the same time, the thesis will address literary production in Jordan, and how what could be considered a literary genre is born.

## 1.5 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

### 1.5.1 Geocriticism and Deep Locational Criticism

The thesis takes a series of influences as a theoretical and methodological frame of reference, the most relevant for the present study being geocriticism and deep locational criticism. Geocriticism, according to Westphal, "probes the human spaces that the mimetic arts arrange

through, and in, texts, the image, and cultural interactions related to them" (Westphal 2011: 6). Hence, the place is inter-related to its representation, as Robert Tally puts it:

[A]geocritical approach understands and demonstrates the degree to which a given "place" is formed through the interrelations of multiple forces and representations. The mythic stability or static identity of a particular city, region, nation, or continent is belied by the diverse literary representations of such apparently identifiable geographical ensembles (Tally 2019: 59)

Given this interrelationality, the thesis will consider the "conflicting forces" that accompany a given representation of Amman. For example, as will be seen, various political and urban factors come into play depending on how Amman is represented at any given time. To be able to make a joint reading, it is necessary to oscillate between the inside of the text and its exterior, to see how the referent and its representation are interlinked and interact with each other. As Jason Finch notes:

[T]he principles of the approach are an oscillation between the narrative insides and the located outsides of literary texts, Deep Locational Criticism a focus on interdependence and interactivity, the attempt to establish a poetics of scale, and an approach to literary and non-literary places that is topographic or local rather than synoptic, symbolic or top-down. This involves, a heuristic assertion of locatedness over a text's other qualities (Finch 2016: 40)

In this sense, the thesis is concerned with the position of the city in the text, rather than with other questions related to the literary text, such as the structure of the novel, style, mode of narration, or language used. In addition to this, both geocriticism and deep locational criticism put place–or location to use Jason Finch's terminology[2] – on the fore, to the detriment of one single author's subjectivity. Westphal defines the main characteristic of geocriticism in the following way:

The specificity of geocriticism lies in the attention it pays to a place. The study of the viewpoint of an author or of a series of authors, which inevitably posits a form of identity, will be superseded in favor of examining a multiplicity of heterogeneous points of view, which all converge in a given place, the primum mobile of the analysis. A multifocal dynamic would be required for this analysis. Without hesitation, I would say that multifocalization is the chief characteristic of geocriticism (Westphal 2011: 122)

In a similar line, for Jason Finch, "no writer has total control over the placed existence and unique character of his or her writing. Instead, what needs to be stressed is the interdependence between the person and placed situation, both always in temporal change" (Finch 2016: 39). Although the emphasis is always placed on geo-centeredness, this does not mean that the figure of the author does not have its consideration. Authors are an important

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[2] For Jason Finch "location" is an all-encompassing term that includes space, place and landscape (Finch 2017: 7)

agent in literary production and occupy a position in a literary network that is shaped by multiple forces, and their literary production comes into play alongside these forces, and in their production, he or she makes decisions about what is omitted and what is emphasized in their novels (Finch 2017). In the same way, writers have a role in shaping the city, Bertrand Westphal argues that, "the writer becomes the author of the city" (Westphal, 2011, 156). He points to the fact that many writers, such as Dostoevsky, Joyce, and Kafka among others shaped the imaginaries of their cities. In the same way, in the case of Amman, there is a noticeable number of writers located in the Jordanian literary field dedicated to Amman as an important place in their oeuvre. Writers such as Samīḥa Ḫrīs, Ilyās Farkūḥ, Muʾnis al-Razzāz, and Jamāl Nājī,to name a few, pointed out different aspects of the city of Amman in their novels. For example, Samīḥa Ḫrīs, who will be discussed in the second chapter, brought out the history of Amman, emphasizing the women of Amman. Jamāl Nājī wrote about socio-economic issues and subalternity in Amman. Ilyās Farkūḥ and Muʾnis al-Razzāz, two friends and comrades in their youth, gave special attention to their belonging to Amman as well as to the shifts and failures of the pan-Arabist political projects.

Although the thesis does not focus primarily on the representation of the city's space, but rather on its identity and belonging; it is worth noting that the thesis understands the city as a socially produced entity, as Henri Lefebvre pointed out in his seminal text *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991). Another important aspect of this thesis is spatial practice, especially the ideas of tactics and strategy according to De Certeau. In this sense, the thesis will show that in many cases writing is a tactical instrument to claim the right to the city. For De Certeau, the tactic is the weapon of the weak, in contrast to the strategy which is a tool through which the authorities or institutions create a place of their own, by which relationships with the target population are generated. The tactic hence unsettles the strategies. Although De Certeau speaks primarily of tactics in walking through the city, he also mentions writing as a tactical tool (De Certeau 1988), and this thesis will refer to the latter aspect.

In the case of Ammani literature, the thesis argues that the lack of political representation and the scarcity of spaces for participation has generated a way of writing the city that claims the right to the city. However, novels are not always tactical means, and sometimes, on the contrary, they can be strategic tools for the creation of narratives, which aim to create a differentiated place. For example, the Greater Amman Municipality has tried to use novels as part of its vision and agenda in the context of the change of image, and therefore of the city model carried out since the 2000s.

Writing about Amman often contains a lament, calling for the reappropriation of a city that one feels is being taken away, disregarding its inhabitants. Such writing may focus on the everyday life of the city, or on how the characters feel confronted by political and urban issues, such as the place of the citizen in his or her city, and his or her belonging to Amman Therefore, writing is a tactic claiming the right to the city, which in David Harvey's words is:

> The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationships to nature, lifestyles, technologies, and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization (Harvey 2008: 23)

From Harvey's definition, and through the readings of the novels, it can be said that in the ways in which Amman has been addressed, there has been a discussion of how things would have to be, or else, how things would not have to be. They have talked about how they would like to see the city in which they dwell, and, ultimately, to feel recognized in it. In this regard, it is worth exploring the relationship between the novel and the city, and how the novel can provide a critique, and can even affect the experience of a place.

## 1.5.2 The Approach to the Novel and the City

Theorists such as Franco Moretti, or Henri Lefebvre, consider that space is an active force, and not a passive container, but it is socially produced, and at the same time shapes human societies (Lefebvre 1991). In this sense, the city is not a container or a mere scenario, and when it is represented in the novel, it is not a reproduction but rather, a re-creation or a reconstruction of the city, and the authors, either as individuals or as writers, participate in the making of the city. In this sense, Finch gives an example of how Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice affected Venice, which made it a global tourist destination for centuries (Finch 2016: 83). The power of the novel is that it has the potential to shape the city, and it is not, as Robert Tally said, "a mirror to reality, but shapes and molds the images, characters, events, and places it represents" (Tally 2019: 115). Therefore, the relationship between the novel and the city is an intimate, complicated, and interdependent one. In this regard, Jordanian literary critic Fayṣal Darrāj affirms that:

لا رواية بلا مدينة ولا مدينة بلا رواية

[ *There is no novel without a city, and there is no city without a novel*] (Darrāj in ʿAbd al-raʾūf 2017: 106)

Based on this premise, through the analysis of Amman with its novels, and the novels with their Amman, the thesis tries to engage critically with the city and its literature. The thesis would trace how Amman– understood as the set of social, political, and urban processes– takes form in the novel, and how both the novel, and the city interact. Moreover, the literary production can foreground the experience of places, and at the same time, it can provide a critique of the ruling ideology (Westphal 2011: 31-32). In this regard, for Andrew Thacker, critical literary geography is, "to raise more complex questions about space and power, and how space and geography affect literary forms and styles. It is a strategy which self-consciously works in an interdisciplinary fashion" (Thacker 2017: 33). Thus, the study of the representation of Amman seeks, among other things, to show how Amman has produced a literary genre and, in turn, how that literary genre allows questioning the discourses, the governance of the city of Amman, and opens a space in which the city is reappropriated

1.5.3 Selection Criteria for the Novels

The research started with an observation of an aesthetic break in the way of representing Amman in the novel. This leads the author of this dissertation to survey the existing critiques of the novels, and to engage in conversations in the field with researchers, practitioners, and readers.

It should be noted that Jordanian literature in some circles is arguably undervalued, and not perceived as authentic, or worthy of reading or studying. Many were surprised that there is a literary scene in Jordan, or even that Amman has its literature. Although it is not the purpose of this thesis to analyze this phenomenon, it is worth conjecturing that the city literature's poor recognition is the other side of the coin of the lack of acknowledgment of the city. These observations come from the experience during the research process, and not from a methodical and active analysis of these encounters since this thesis is not delving into the sociological or anthropological aspects of literature.

In the process of investigating and selecting the novels, the author of this dissertation has proceeded in different ways. On the one hand, there were novels that the author of this thesis was already familiar with before undertaking the research work. On the other hand, other works came to the knowledge of the author through the research process. For this, it was necessary to read through existing criticism, get to know new works, and become acquainted with the debates and currents existing in the literary field. Moreover, especially before the global pandemic started, the author of this thesis tried to be present in spaces of debate in which aspects of the city and space were discussed, and above all, the recommendations of

some booksellers in Amman, as well as the recommendations of some writers, were of great help especially when it came to having a mental mapping of the different novels and their position in the market and the reading community. Similarly, platforms such as Goodreads were useful when approaching texts, either to find new novels or to test the position of a novel in the reading community. The latter, for example, helps to prevent the biases that traditional criticism can have, in which for example, younger or debutant writers tend to be neglected. In addition to the approximations, looking at para-textual elements has led the author of this dissertation to explore and see the relationships between literary production and institutions such as the Greater Amman Municipality.

To carry out a geocritical analysis, the question of the corpus becomes indispensable. Creating a corpus brings many questions on the criterion to follow. Geocritical scholars acknowledge the impossibility of covering all the representations of a single place. In relation to cities that are "mythical" such as Paris or Venice, Westphal states that, "to attempt a full-scale geocritical analysis of these hotspots would be a madness" (Westphal 2013: 127). Amman is not comparable to Venice or Paris, but the author of this thesis found it hard to cover all the novels that he found that deal with Amman in one way or another. Nevertheless, by letting the city speak for its novels, and letting the novels speak for the city, it has been seen that a central theme in political and urban debates is the question of belonging and the identity of the city.

For example, the Muʾnis al-Razzāz's novel *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* has provided the first clues, and that is the fact of belonging to Amman. Both in the same novel, or others by the same author, it has been seen that there is a correlation between the atmosphere of the new democracy, and the lifting of martial law, with the feeling of belonging. On several occasions, the loss of power of the political parties and the scarce representation of the city politically were insisted upon. Afterwards, in the early 2000s, two novels were published that present the history of Amman as a theme, such as Samīḥah Ḫrīs'*Dafātir al-Ṭawafān* and Hāšim Ġarāybah's *al-Šahbandar*. In these novels, not only the contemporary history but also the ancient history of the city is dealt with. At the same time, the city's hospitality, inclusiveness, and multiculturalism are celebrated. In so doing, Amman was being given a genealogy to the city that is often said to be a city that "has no origin". It is worth highlighting that both novels were published in the framework of Amman's declaration as the Capital of Arab Culture in 2002. It is worth noting that at the same time, Amman was undergoing a radical rebranding that would enable it to become a global city.

Moreover, it has been seen that novels appearing after the Arab Uprisings continue to have the theme of belonging as a central issue. In these novels, Amman appears as inhospitable, and it is impossible to belong to it since Amman belongs to oligarchies and corporations.

Having seen these novels, it has been established that it is necessary to trace where the discourse of belonging comes from, the identity of the city, and the other questions that accompany how the city is lived and understood.

One of the important criteria for the selection of the novels in the corpus is toponymic accuracy. That is, on the one hand, Amman is explicitly mentioned, and on the other hand, the places mentioned exist on the ground. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, it is helpful when it comes to tracing the urban transformations, and thus contribute historiographically to understanding how the people felt these transformations, as well as their attitudes towards them, and at the same time, to identify the discourses that accompanied these transformations. On the other hand, since the thesis deals with struggles over territory, it is important to have a common referent, in this case, the toponomy. As will be seen in Chapter 4, Amman appears vaguely in novels published before the 1990s. Similarly, and as will be seen in Chapter 4, Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī's novel was banned, and one of the reasons for its banning is toponymic accuracy. Another aspect to take into account about toponyms that are field-locatable is that they are extra-textual references (Finch 2016). These can propose perspectives with the community of readers and city insiders for further research.

Another criterion is the date of publication. As was said earlier, the lifting of martial laws in 1989 and democratization gave an opening, which in part made some exiles return since there was relatively less censorship compared with before. And most importantly, in the eighties, as will be seen in Chapter 4, an unprecedented debate began on citizenship, motivated mainly by the de-annexation of the West Bank. In this sense, it is worth remembering that the thesis traces the emergence of a literary genre, if it can be called that, since the Amman novels emerge in this precise context.

Another important criterion is Amman's role in the novel. In the process of selecting the novels, it was paid attention to ensure that Amman is not a mere container of happenings or a mere setting that does not affect the plot of the book. Therefore, the novels that have been selected have sought to give Amman a consequential role in the novel, in which the characters deal with one of the urban aspects of Amman, either the physical city, the city, and its discourses, or the memory of the city.

Yet with all these criteria, there have been more novels than those that have been selected for discussion and analysis in this dissertation. In this case, the novels not selected for analysis

were referred to in order to see the points in common or the points of divergence with the novels under discussion and analysis, as well as to emphasize the intertextual network and the literary context of the moment. With these criteria, an attempt has been made to focus on problems and discourses that have marked the urban agenda, and that in turn, have had and still have an effect on how the city is understood, and how it is lived. A solution cannot be found in a thesis, but it highlights what those problems are, and how they are being posed in the novels. The place-oriented approach can be oriented to other problems and issues that are present in the city, such as gender issues, social inequality, or even architectural aspects of the city. However, these issues, despite their immense importance, are outside the scope of this thesis. Similarly, place-oriented approaches can be realized with different literary and artistic productions. This thesis, as far as possible, refers to these productions, intending to emphasize that these discourses are inter-textual, that they make references to existing problems outside the text, and therefore their political potential, and at the same time as a part of a broader cultural phenomenon.

## 1.6. Structure of the Dissertation

Each chapter of this thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part provides the sociopolitical and urban context, while the second part is dedicated to analyzing the novels, which are discussed according to the main themes of the novels to be analyzed. It should be noted that each chapter covers the transitions from one decade to the other, since the vision of the thesis is a procedural vision, in which there are turning points throughout the different processes, and which in turn carry with them visions, discourses, and agendas that directly influence the city as it is lived and understood.

From the methodological point of view, as already mentioned, the place comes first and is privileged over the representation of a single author. In this sense, the only exception in the thesis is the first chapter, which is devoted to analyzing two novels by Muʾnis al-Razzāz. The main reason for this is that Razzāz, especially since the 1990s, begins to actively employ Amman in his novels. Before the 1990s, Razzāz tended to hint at, or allude to the city but did not usually mention it explicitly. In this sense, we could say that Razzāz is an initiator of a novelistic and discursive practice in Jordan given his position in the Jordanian, and Arab, literary fields.

It is worth noting, that in the early 1990s he was not the only one to depict Amman and its socio-political and urban issues. From the same year as *Jumʿah al-Qifārī*, we can mention

Ziyād Qāsim's *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah*, which was a novel "rediscovered" later, as will be shown in Chapter 4.

The second chapter deals with the alienation of the Ammani in his city, and it will explicate an emergent trend in Jordanian literature and the representation of Amman in two novels published in the 1990s. The first part of the chapter will deal with the lifting of martial laws, and how the process of democratization has taken away the weight of the political parties - mostly newly legalized at the time. Likewise, the emergence of Amman in the novel, which, as indicated, had a relatively late appearance, will be discussed.

The second part of the chapter will proceed to analyze *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* (1990) and *al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ* (1994). The two novels, despite their differences in style– the former with a satirical tone, and the latter a political fiction, in which disenchantment with the new democracy and the collapse of pan-Arabism are shown, have key elements in common. These are the belonging to Amman and the feeling of alienation, the nostalgia for the 1950s, and also, the translocal aspect of Amman is shown especially in *al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ*, which shows how translocality interferes with how the city is felt and experienced.

The third chapter deals with the representation of Amman in two novels that were published in the arc of the declaration of Amman as the capital of Arab culture. The two novels are Hāšim Ġarāybah's *al-šahbandar* (2003) and Samīḥah Ḫrīs' *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* (2003). The first part of the chapter will discuss the role of the GAM in supporting literature through its cultural department, which was established in the mid-nineties under the mayoralty of Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī. This section will also comment on the further proclamation of Amman as the Capital of Arab Culture by UNESCO. The second part of Chapter 4 will show how the 2003 novels have the vision of the municipality, which at that time was carrying out a rebranding campaign aimed at putting Amman on the tourist map, as well as framing it as a global city. The novels have shown Amman as a city that has deep roots in history, that it is a welcoming and hospitable city where different ethnicities and creeds live together, and they emphasize the market as the generator of the city that gives the cosmopolitan character to Amman.

The fourth and last analytical chapter will deal with the representation of Amman after 2011, or in other words, after the Arab Uprising. The two novels to be analyzed will be Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī's *al-Inḥināʾ ʿala Jiṯṯat ʿAmmān* (2014) and ʿAbd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ's *Akṯar min wahm* (2017). Like the novels of the 1990s, not belonging to Amman is a central theme. However, it

is shown in these novels as a much more violent phenomenon, with a much larger scale than that of the 1990s. In the same way, they also subvert the narrative of the 2003 novels, in which the city is shown as a hospitable city, since, in the novels, the city does not belong to the Ammanis, and those who are destroying it are the oligarchies and corporations. The chapter has two parts, the first contextualizes the city and the cultural moment. On the one hand, Amman was undergoing a radical makeover, intending to be a global city, and on the other hand, the creative class was rediscovering the city, where new online media dedicated part of their publications to urban issues in the city of Amman. The second part analyzes the two novels, and what they have in common: the question of belonging to the city, and the loss of collective memory. This part also points out who are the agents in the destruction of the city.

Finally, as a whole, it would be seen how Amman is represented in the different transitions between decades, and how these have interacted with the different urban processes. Likewise, the political nature of writing in reclaiming the right to the city will have been seen. With all this, and from a diachronic perspective, one can also see the history of the production of space and the different attitudes towards the different urban transformations.

# 2. Chapter II: Questioning the Ammani: Identity, Belonging, and Alienation

Amman is an often-questioned city– its identity is interrogated, and its urbanity is frequently negated. In the specific case of Amman, when it comes to the relationship between place and identity, some of the most relevant variables include the novelty of the city, and the origin of its inhabitants being from elsewhere. Generally, in the different novels analyzed, the protagonists feel unacknowledged and frustrated when they present themselves as Ammani. This way of feeling is produced by different factors affecting the Amman of the 1990s. Among these factors is the misrepresentation of Amman politically by the regime after martial law was lifted. The misrepresentation of the large urban centers had a double

objective. On the one hand, it was done to reduce the power of the new political parties, most of which had been banned and persecuted since 1957. At the same time, a second goal was the reduction of the Palestinian presence in the parliament. Despite the lack of official statistics, it is believed that Palestinians population constitutes more than half of the population in Jordan.

This chapter will show that the alienation and non-acknowledgement of the "Ammani" is politically produced. It is important to note that the novels addressing Amman are coeval with the democratization process. The political, economic, and intellectual atmosphere of the 1980s and 1990s provoked a myriad of affects and emotions. There was a short-lived optimism, as seen through the democratization, openness, and economic ups and downs that affected the social and urban fabric. There were also disappointments, most notably through the collapse of the pan-Arabist projects. All of the above contributed to the production of new forms of expression, either at a personal level –the Ammani identifying as from Amman– or as a literary expression- the emergence of novels talking about the city of Amman as well as its urban issues. This chapter will stress the relationship between a city and its literary representation, and how these representations are part of the political and urban processes that shape the city. And so, this chapter explores the following topics: the idea of belonging to Amman, the presence – or lack thereof– of this belonging among other dwellers of the city, and the feelings that all this entails. The chapter will ask the following: who are the main protagonists of these novels, and how do they understand their relationship with Amman? It will also investigate the political dimension of this non-belonging, and how these feelings are produced and reproduced at different political and social scales through the interconfiguration of the field of power and the social fields in the context of Amman. In this regard, this chapter tries to trace a way of representing the city and recompose its political and urban context. For this, it is necessary to understand the political weight of Amman after the lifting of martial law and democratization, the urban history of Amman, and the city's debates around its identity. Also, there needs to be an understanding of the literary field of the 1980s-1990s transition, and the place of Amman in Razzāz's oeuvre.

Amman has linkages with other locales, and this affects how the city is lived and understood. Another aspect is discursive, in which Amman tends to be compared with other models, and this makes it so that state and urban policies try to shape Amman through metanarratives, rather than a local or national narrative (Evans 2021; Rogan 1986; Sawalha 1996; Shami

2007). However, research has highlighted the translocality of Amman, or in other words, how experiences and feelings of other locales produce a locality, focusing more on diasporic communities (Sawalha 1996; Evans 2021), or the cosmopolitan imaginary of the urban bourgeoisie (Shami 2007). In this regard, the translocality that will be displayed is bifold. On the one hand, the economic and consequently urban growth due to the oil boom, and the remittances of the Jordanian expatriates, contribute to producing the city. This aspect produces a sense of dislocation in the Ammanis of Razzāz, who see their city growing spatially and the class composition of their neighborhoods altered. Another manifestation of the translocality of Amman is found in the moment of the collapse of the pan-Arabist project, and consequently, its interurban links. In this regard, Beirut, or Baghdad, is lived and experienced in and from Amman, through the protagonist's experience of those cities.

This research will analyze, nuance and contextualize the alienation of the Ammani in a particular transitional moment, and will show how the political misrepresentation of the city acted against the acknowledgement of Amman as an identity, reducing its political weight. This aspect of living and understanding Amman is seen in how the main characters are questioned for being Ammani, and at the same time, the nostalgia they carry towards a more active and politically engaged Amman of the 1950s, in contrast with the laments of a less politically engaged, and more fragmented society in the 1990s, according to the novels.

Both Razzāz's oeuvre and the Ammani characters of his novel attracted the attention of Jordanian scholars and literary critics such as Ālāʾal-Ẓāhir and Šafīq al-Nūbānī. Ālāʾal-Ẓāhir in her research studies the figure of the intellectual in crisis in Razzāz's novels. In her understanding of the alienation of the characters of Razzāz's novels, she bears a modernist understanding of alienation, in which the city is an entity that produces alienation (al-Ẓāhir 2012: 119-124). Moreover, al-Ẓāhir acknowledges the place of Baghdad, Beirut, and Amman in Razzāz's different novels. Nevertheless, her reading presents each city as detached from the other one (al-Ẓāhir 2012: 123-129). However, what this chapter will try to provide, is to show how the different cities participate in how Amman is experienced and understood by the protagonist of *al-Šaẓāyā*. Especially in light of the moment of collapse of the grand narratives of pan-Arabism, which on the ground are represented by the Lebanese Civil War, and the wars of Saddam's regime in the 1980s and 1990s.

Šafīq al-Nūbānī in his analysis of *Jumʿah al-Qifārī,* in his monograph dedicated to Amman in the Jordanian novel, carries a similar view as Ẓāhir in what regards alienation. In his view,

the main character of the novel, *Jumʿah*, suffers from alienation due to his condition of being an "innocent" in a time where individualism and opportunism are the norm, and in his understanding, this comes from the "rural" virtues that *Jumʿah* bears from the former smaller town of Amman (al-Nūbānī 2013: 129). The reading that this chapter will provide will show that his alienation is not a moral-based one, but rather an alienation produced politically. In this sense his "innocence" is not a "bucolic" one, but rather, for being loyal to an older, yet collapsed, system of values, as well as for his social position, belonging to a declined bourgeoisie whose power is fading in face of the political and economic transformations.

This chapter will proceed "via an oscillation between readings (inside texts) and assessments of places (outside texts)" (Finch 2016: 19). By letting both the novels and the city speak, the chapter will provide an understanding of the issue of the aforementioned non-belonging. The chapter will show the particularity of the Ammani alienation as it was represented in the 1990s novels, which is not the dichotomic modernist alienation that bases its understanding on the nature vs culture duality, but rather, the alienation of the Ammani is more a byproduct of the political, urban, and intellectual transformations in the transition between the eighties and the nineties. The reading of the novels shows an important aspect that was addressed by political sciences scholars; the misrepresentation of Amman and the larger urban areas in the parliament (Schwedler 2006; Rath 1994; Robins 2019). However, it did not highlight the belonging or identification of those who live in Amman, and how they understand the new environment of democratization with their felt identity. In addition to this, the chapter approaches the city and literature dialectically. It understands that the belittling of the larger urban areas was a "strategy" that aimed at reducing the political potential of the larger cities (De Certeau 1984). Meanwhile, the acts of writing about the city in the novels discussed here are understood as "tactical" (De Certeau 1984). This is the result of an absence of place outside the text, that is produced inside the text.

As a temporal framework, this chapter explores the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s and interrogates the belonging to Amman as it appeared in two novels of a renowned Ammani writer, Muʾnis al-Razzāz (1951-2002). This chapter will discuss belonging to Amman, and how it was represented in *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* (1990) *al-Šaẓāyā wal fusayfisāʾ* (1994) [*Shrapnels and Mosaics*]. Yet Amman takes an important place in the oeuvre of Muʾnis al-Razzāz, the two novels focus on what being an "Ammani" entails, from political, urban, and identity points of view. The two novels have different styles, but both have the common

denominators that show how the Ammani understands himself, and how Amman is lived and experienced, especially in the context of the democratization and lifting of martial law in Jordan. On the one hand, the political openness of this period opened up new debates about the city, and on other hand, misrepresented Amman politically as it will be explained further. In addition to this, it should be noted that the selected novels are toponymic, and spatially precise, in contrast with Razzāz's works in the 1980s, where he insinuated Amman, but did not mention it explicitly.

In 1996, Razzāz was considered "l'un des rares auteurs littéraires à s'être inspiré de Amman dans son œuvre" (Hannoyer 1996) [*one of the rare literary authors to have been inspired by Amman in his work*] (Hannoyer 1996). It should be noted that the appearance of Amman as a motif in Jordanian literature is rather a relatively recent phenomenon, as will be explained further on. It is important to note that this chapter, as well as the whole dissertation, does not pretend to provide an "ego-centered" approach, but rather aims to provide a place-centered analysis, such that the "geo" is privileged over the figure of the author (Westphal 2011; Finch 2016). In this sense, this chapter will be the most "ego-centered" of the whole dissertation. This choice has two main reasons, with the first one being due to the emergence of Amman as a theme in the late 1980s. The novels of Razzāz were among the first novels exploring questions of belonging to the city, as well as the different associated issues as put forth in his oeuvre, especially from the 1990s until his death, by highlighting concerns such as collective memory and belonging to the city. A second reason is due to his position in the Jordanian literary field, in which he can be considered as an "initiator of a discursive practice" (Foucault 1979), despite the discrepancy that this thesis has regarding the Foucauldian view on the novelist who, "is never more than the author of his text" (Foucault 1979). For the author of this thesis, Razzāz in a way was an author of his city or cities, since in his writings, Beirut or Baghdad were also present. Bertrand Westphal argues that, "the writer becomes the author of the city" (Westphal, 2011, 156). He points to the fact that many writers, such as Dostoevsky, Joyce, and Kafka among others, shaped the imaginaries of their cities. And so, Razzāz contributed to shaping an image of Amman, as well as presenting the main urban and political issues and transformations of Amman in the early 1990s. In this regard, as Eric Prieto suggests, "geocentered study of authors or works should lead away from the individual author and work and toward a more general kind of knowledge, one that breaks through the aesthetic frame that sets works of literature off from the world and seeks to use the study of literature as a way to better think about the world around us" (Prieto, 2011, 25).

This chapter will narrow the gap in the scholarship which addressed the question of belonging to Amman, by arguing that the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s constituted a turning point in cultural production, and at the same time, Amman began to appear as a debate and as a literary motif. It will show the claims present in the texts and the causes of the malaise that Ammani suffer from. Similarly, the novels will put in context, and try to explain the origin of the "Amman boom," or the presence of Amman in public debates as well as its unprecedented presence in Arabic literature from Jordan and in other cultural products. In these spaces, the city, the urbanity and the identity of both the city and the city dwellers are a matter of debate. In addition to this, it will foreground a history of the social production of space in Amman (Tanoukhi 2009), as well as the affective archive of both the city and its discourses in the transition between the eighties and nineties.

This chapter has two sections. The first section will provide an introduction to the political, urban, cultural, and literary context of the transition between the eighties and nineties. With respect to the political aspect, the chapter will address the lifting of Martial Law and the arrival of democratic openness. On the one hand, despite a democratized form of government, the electoral system was structured in a way that belittled the bigger cities, and this affects how citizenship and belonging are configured. On the other hand, the openness decreased censorship and control over literary production, which allowed Amman to appear with more distinctive features in the novels. Moreover, the section will address some scholarly debates on cities and belonging to Amman. It will also address the emergence of Amman as a theme in Arabic literature from Jordan.

The second section of this chapter will bring into discussion the selected novels by Muʾnis al-Razzāz, at the same time paying attention to the city of Amman and the question of belonging to it in his different works. The novels were published in the nineties, and despite the difference between the aesthetic and stylistic aspects in the text, they both carry urban and political concerns, claims, and laments. The novels will be presented separately, and afterwards, both novels will be discussed through the common debates present in both novels. The main issue is identifying as an Ammani or belonging to Amman, which is frequently non-acknowledged and produces a feeling of alienation. From the reading of the novels, three main aspects enter into play when the Ammani subject, or at least the Ammani of Razzāz's novels try to express their identity, as well as how they understand and experience the city. These main factors are the translocal character of Amman, the political misrepresentation,

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and in this regard, a nostalgia for former times in which urban life, political engagement, and democracy were perceived to belong to better times.

2.1 Questioning the City, Questioning the Ammani

Amman today is the biggest city in Bilād al-Šām, with around five million inhabitants. The city we know today was re-founded in the second half of the nineteenth century, after centuries of being depopulated, by resettled Circassians who fled from the Turco-Russian wars. The Ottomans with their resettlement policy, tried to extend their effective control in the peripheries of the Empire, especially after the Ottomans lost the monopoly of the maritime Hajj route via the Red Sea due to the presence of the British colonial interference in Egypt and the construction of the Suez Canal (Abu Dayyeh 2010). Hence, Amman today, despite being a new city, has ancient ruins which attest to its importance in the past. Amman in a sense is as Jean Hannoyer suggested "Il apparaît que Amman serait l'héritière d'une histoire qui ne lui appartient pas" (Hannoyer 1996) *[It appears that Amman would be the heiress of a history that does not belong to it*] This fact is of interest to understand some of the discourses regarding the city, its identity, and its historicity, which will be seen in the dissertation. These are some of the elements which participate in what different scholars over the last decades have pointed out as the "identity crisis" which Amman suffers from (Rogan 1986; Hannoyer 1996; Horani 1996; Shami 2007; Kassay 2011 Daher 2013; Sakr 2013; Evans 2021).

Amman experienced a rapid transculturation process, where one of the most important factors is that the city- in addition to the fact of being the capital of a country- suffered massive growth in a short period of time. Amman, due to its condition of capital and center of economic and administrative activity in a new post-Ottoman state, attracted numerous merchants who were seeking to open up new markets, as well as bureaucrats mainly from Syria and Palestine who were called to work with Emir Abdullah to establish the state apparatuses. Nonetheless, the most important factor of the aforementioned rapid growth is forced displacements, where the majority of the refugees and survivors of the ethnic cleansing and occupation of Palestinian lands in 1948 and 1967 by the State of Israel, settled in Amman. Moreover, Amman received in 1991 around 300,000 Palestinians who were expelled from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as well as different waves of Iraqis, from before the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, and after. It should also be noted, that in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, Amman was also the destination of a

considerable number of Circassians (who were the re-founders of the city) as well as Chechens and Armenians.

In a city like Amman, where most inhabitants trace their origins elsewhere, especially because the inhabitants have social and affective links to their place of origins –bearing in mind that Amman was re-founded, and grew up with different waves of forced displaced people who left their lands in traumatic circumstances. In this sense, different localities affect how the city is lived, experienced, and understood, which entails how the city is conceived, and how belonging to it is expressed and articulated. For this, an important notion and lens for the whole dissertation is the notion of translocality, which pays attention to the importance of place in people's lives, rather than the emphasis on mobility or travel which is often highlighted.  One definition of translocality could be this one provided by Katherine Brickel and Ayona Datta: "a simultaneous situatedness across different locales which provide ways of understanding the overlapping place-time(s) in migrants' everyday lives" (Brickel & Datta 2016, 4). As an example of the translocal character of Amman, the urban anthropologist Aseel Sawalha describes the identity of Palestinian refugees living in East Amman, whose situation could be understood as the aforementioned "simultaneous situatedness". She states that: "Palestinian refugees in Wadi al-Rimam emphasize their peasant origin to demonstrate that they do not belong to their urban setting. They are "physically" living in Wadi al-Rimam in the city of Amman, but the images and thoughts of being peasants from specific villages in Palestine are articulated in their everyday practices in a completely urban context" (Sawalha 1996). Moreover, another example of the "simultaneous situatedness", is that neighborhoods, streets, and shops are named after the villages of origin of their inhabitants and proprietors.

Diasporas are not the only element providing Amman with its translocal character. There are a myriad of translocal factors which affect how the city is lived and understood. One of them is epistemological, where for example, scholars, stakeholders, and city dwellers reproduce certain discourses and taxonomies regarding how a city should be. For example, orientalists built the idea of "the Islamic city," building upon a few examples of major cities from the Islamicate. Since Amman doesn't fit in this scheme (Rogan 1986; Shami 2007), other cities in the region project over Amman how a city should be like. The idea that there is an ingredient missing to fit under a certain category i.e "Islamic", "modern", "cosmopolitan" or "global" affects the relationship between the city dwellers and their city, as well as the imagination of the architects, urbanists, and stakeholders. For Seteney Shami, the Amman malaise comes from "the lack of fit with presumptions of a progression from tradition to modernity and globality" (Shami 2007: 211), and adds that Amman, "belabors under the weight of the

region's many historic cities. This is a region that hosts the oldest still-inhabited urban centers of the world, aged capitals of powerful past empires, major religious sites, and centers of learning as well as notable colonial creations." (Shami 2007: 212). In this regard, Eugene Rogan explains how in the late eighties there was an "Islamization" of the city, where government and private efforts were conducted to give Amman an "Islamic" layout, and states, " by no means intended to recreate the medieval urban environment, these and other current trends in Amman reflect a malaise which may well be rooted in the absence of such forms" (Rogan 1986, 38). In the same line, Jean Hannoyer states that:

[C]ertains pourront même dire que Amman n'existe pas, que Amman n'est pas ou pas réellement une ville. Et de fait, Amman nous dérange car ce que nous en savons ne ressemble pas à l'image que nous nous faisons d'une ville comme on le dirait de Beyrouth, Damas, Bagdad ou Le Caire, pour ne parler que de capitales voisines (Hannoyer 1996)

[*Some may even say that Amman does not exist, that Amman is not or not even really a city. And in fact, Amman bothers us because what we know about it does not resemble the image we have of a city like Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, or Cairo, to speak only of neighboring capitals*] (Hannoyer 1996)]

The presumption of "not fitting" in a certain ideal of a city affects how the city is envisioned and experienced. For example, in the eighties, there was an "Islamisation" (Rogan 1986) and in the last two decades, several high-end urban projects were carried out, where Gulf capital as well as the image of Dubai influences the city (Ababsa & Daher 2013; Khirfan & Momani 2013; Musa 2017). To start exposing the lack of fit, and the consecutive negation of its cityness, it is worthwhile quoting Seteney Shami who points out that:

Amman is a much-maligned city. Its inhabitants complain endlessly of its dullness and lack of charm. The elites complain of the lack of cosmopolitanism and nightlife intellectuals complain of the lack of artistic or literary movements, merchants complain of a lack of market, university students complain of the lack of campus life, and ethnic groups complain of the lack of ethnic neighborhoods. Expatriates complain about the lack of authenticity. The poor, of course, have a great deal about which to complain. Each segment of urban society appears to be complaining about its failure to realize itself. The inhabitants of Amman offer various political, economic, social, and cultural explanations for their malaise. However, they commonly agree on the underlying problem and explanation: that Amman is not a city. (Shami 2007: 209)

The negation of Amman as a city is quite present when Amman is discussed. Jordanian writer Hisham Bustani, and the Italian scholar Fernanda Fischione describe Amman as a Non-city (Bustani 2015; Fischione 2020) each one giving different arguments. In the case of Bustani, he exposes some of the problems of the public space, where according to him there is an absence of the idea of the common, affecting the behavior of the citizen concerning his city. According to Bustani, the expropriation of individual space leads to the expropriation of public space, so in a way, the non-cityness is produced through authoritarian mechanisms.

However, Fischione, in her paper exploring the nation through Jordanian novels published between the 1980s and 2000s, considered that "in a sense" Amman is a non-city since "no one belongs to Amman" (Fischione 2020). Seteney Shami, in what regards the negation of the urbanity of Amman, affirms that "it is crucial to realize that the 'negative' discourse and its associated practices are quintessentially urban as well as distinctively Ammani, and historically situated" (Shami 2007: 209). Hence, part of the idea of non-cityness comes from the disqualification of social and ethnic heterogeneity, and at the same time the fact that Amman is constantly compared with cities that are perceived as homogenous and enrooted in history (Daher 2008). It is of importance to understand and contextualize the misrecognition of both, the city, and of the identity of those who identify as Ammani. The misrecognition or assertion of Amman is a product of urban, political, economic, social, and cultural processes. Amman is a city that is a key-city in nation building, but at the same it is excluded from the national identity, in part because of its heterogeneity.

For Horani, the indefiniteness of Amman is correlated with the indefiniteness of the Jordanian identity, whose meaning is not consensual. Moreover, Horani adds that the detachment of place is a result of how Amman is a victim of the regional happenings and upheavals, where most of its inhabitants are migrants (either by forced migration or not) and see Amman as a temporary residence, and at the same time with constant newcomers, the city constantly loses its distinctive features (Horani 1996). Hence, part of the indefiniteness of Amman, is what Daher describes as a "too inclusive city" (Daher 2008). Hence one of the reasons for this non-definition of Amman is that it is made by migration, making it so the city is felt as a temporary destination. Kassay stated that, "on the official, social, and even individual levels, the population of Amman appears to regard life in this city either as transient or as unreal. They do not recognize Amman as a component of their identity", and thus, Amman is excluded from the national identity (Kassay 2013). The negation of the cityness of Amman is interlinked with the negation of the Ammani subject, and in this double negation, the Ammani subject is born.

In addition to the notion of translocality, the notion of Topophrenia, suggested by the geocritic scholar Robert Tally, is of great interest for this affective relationship with place. Meanwhile, Yi-Fu Tuan's topophilia in a few words is, "the affective bond between people and place" (Tuan 1990: 4) which focuses on the human appreciation of their environment. Tally's topophrenia, instead, carries on the one hand, place awareness, and on the other hand, the feelings of anxiety and disorientation that a place can produce. Similarly, topophrenia enables us to think about the interrelation between places, and at the same time between subjects and

their places, and for this it is required to consider the "objective structures and system that condition, not to say determine our perception and experiences of space and place (Tally 2019: 9). With a nuanced understanding of the interrelations of a city with other locales from the same region (and not only through North-South or West-East interactions), as well as the intra-national, and the intra-urban dynamics, we aim to provide a multilayered understanding of the city, and the belonging to a city or cities. In the case of Amman and its translocal urban context, cities are becoming increasingly more separated due to several factors, and at the same time, the regional poles are shifting. The horizon and the boundaries are mutating in a multitude of ways. One of the most important examples of this is the Israeli occupation, which detached Palestine from its neighbors, entailing on the one hand the prevention of the return of Palestinians to their land, as well as the privation of Palestine's neighbors of accessing some of the historical major urban centers in the region. Similarly, it is also of importance to note other processes which affected the linkage between Amman and other cities in the region, such as the Lebanese Civil War and the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the further alliance against Iraq, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, and even the Syrian civil wars. In addition, while a link with a city is broken, the other links and poles emerge, as was the case with the major Gulf cities. With all these processes, the city and the discourses around it, as well as how the city is experienced and understood are affected, since the idea of local is contextual, and this is produced through local and global linkages as well as their disruptions (Massey 2005; Brickell and Datta 2016).

In addition to the translocal character which is produced by intra-urban and intra-national dynamics, the topophrenic literature of Amman bears with it the misrecognition and devaluation of the symbolic capital of the Ammani, which is the effect of the strategy of skimmed democracy carried out by the regime, where the political parties were weakened to the detriment of tribalist and clientelist politics. In this sense, the novels under examination will show how the new democracy acted against an Ammani identity by reducing the ideological parties' power.

Amman is growing up dramatically, meanwhile, its public spaces, as well as the political spaces are shrinking. At the same time, the last three decades witnessed that the Amman-focused texts increased. These novels and discourses are a byproduct of Amman, which at the same time produced in some way the city, since novels shape how the city is understood, experienced, and projected. As Bertrand Westphal describes, "the fictional text returns to the world and settles in comfortably" (Westphal 2011: 6).

2.2 The Lifting of Martial Law and Democratization

The lifting of martial law and democratization are of great importance to understanding the political and economic dynamics which marked the future decades hitherto. These dynamics and the configurations which came with these policies affected the public sphere, the way of identifying with a place, and how collective identity is understood.

  The economic crisis of the eighties has forced Jordan to seek aid from the International Monetary Fund (Satloff 1991; Massad; 2001; Harrigan et. al 2006; Robins, 2019). In this regard, the Jordanian government had to capitulate and adjust the economy according to the IMF and the World Bank diktat. These new economic reforms triggered massive popular protests in Maʿān and Karak, which quickly extended to other areas in Jordan. The geography of the uproars coincided with the areas used to be considered regime strongholds. The bigger cities, which contain the vast majority of the urban dwellers in Jordan, did not participate actively in these riots.  As Robert Satloff stated:

> What was especially notable about the rioting was that Transjordanians, not Palestinians, had risen in protest. Indeed, in Amman and Irbid, where much of Jordan's Palestinian population lives, the days of rioting passed virtually without incident. Palestinians, along with Jordan's liberal and left-leaning professional organizations, did little more than send petitions to the King urging him to reconsider the austerity measures (Satloff 1990: 60)

The 1989 riots could be understood as a crisis of legitimacy of the monarchy, which pushed for the democratization process (Rath, 1994; Massad 2001). The protesters did not protest only against the austerity measures but also asked for the lift of martial law, freedom of the press, and political openness. (Rath 1994). Some days after the riots, King Hussein announced the call for elections before the end of the year, and at the same time, released all the arrested during the uprisings. In addition to this, the government enacted a general amnesty, relaxed the surveillance of the press and allowed the re-opening of the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA) which was banned since 1987 hitherto (Robins 1991; Robins 2019).  In the November 1989 elections, the government did not intervene in the electoral process which was considered a sort of a poll (Robins 1991; Rath 1994). The elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Islamists, especially in Amman and Irbid. For example, in Amman, the Islamists gained 14 seats out of 18 seats reserved for Arab Muslims (Rath, 1994, 545). The 1989 lower chamber was uneasy about the government, raising questions of human rights, political prisoners, and the role of the *Mukhabarat* (General Intelligence Department) (Robins 1991). What is popularly known as the "one man one vote" system, where the voter cannot vote for more than one candidate, was instituted in the 1993

elections. With this system, they must choose between a candidate from a political party, or an independent who is from the same area or belongs to the same tribe. This led to the belittling of the political parties and favored the tribal areas over the urban centers, which reversed the optimism for democratic openness, resulting in the new voting system being perceived as a setback (Schwedler 2006; Robins 2019). Thus, elections were a political strategy of control, which manipulated the district size, the timing of the elections, and the exclusion of leftists and Islamists, as well as Palestinians (Schwedler 2006). Therefore, the regime legalized the political parties, but this system prevented their access to power. As Kathrine Rath explains:

> The parliament consequently represented the will of a minority of the Jordanian electorate. Then there was the controversial 1986 Election Law, which was believed to be biased towards bedouin and rural areas. For instance, the three largest urban centres - Amman, Irbid City and Zarqa - represented about 65 per cent of the total population but were allocated only 45 per cent of the parliamentary seats. The trend becomes even clearer when contrasting the populous Second District of Amman, which had over 73,000 registered voters and was allocated three seats, to the Governorate of Ma'an with 28,000 registered voters and an allotment of five seats. The fact is that a deputy from Ma'an represents 5,600 voters while a deputy from the Second District of Amman represented an astonishing 24,333 voters (Rath 1994: 547)

Political misrepresentation is a strategic means to disorient an already dislocated populace and skim and sterilize any revolutionary tendencies or other challenges which could potentially harm the interests of the regime and the status quo. Voting is an act of self-definition (Layne 1994, 120), and by these mechanisms –as the novels will show– that the misrepresentation of the cities, devalued the symbolic capital "Ammani" in confrontation with other ways of affiliations such as tribal, religious, ethnic, or national, which became stronger. These interventions made that "Amman is virtually absent from the Jordanian national identity on the individual, social and even official levels" (Kassay 2011). And thus, to understand the place of Amman in the electoral system, it is important to understand how this system is configured, as well as the processes and discourses which lead to this configuration.

The geography of the discontent in the 1989 riots conditioned the electoral system afterwards, as well as dichotomic debates such as centre-periphery, Jordanian vs Palestinian, North vs South, etc., which are still present hitherto. For example, in an article published in 2011 in 7iber magazine, Jordanian journalist and writer Lina Shannak asks "من هو المهمش؟" [*Who is the marginalised?*] where she exposes that quite often in Jordan, different groups complain about their marginalization. Ammanis complain about their political misrepresentation, which makes them less interested in politics. One example mentioned is that children in school are

unaware of who the Prime Minister is. Jordanian citizens from other provinces, poorer in services with high unemployment rates, complain that "Jordan is not only West Amman". Shannak refers to the contradiction that, on the one hand, a university professor claims that there is a marginalization of citizens of Palestinian origins, and that at the same time, a political commentator claims that all the political reforms happening in Jordan aim at excluding the Jordanian tribes and implementing the "alternative homeland" project (Shannak 2011).

The alternative homeland comes together with the statement launched by Ariel Sharon "Jordan is Palestine", provoking anxieties about the transfer of the Palestinian population to Jordan, and thus Jordan becoming the "alternative homeland" for Palestinians. Jordan had already started to assert the Bedouin culture in the seventies, but in the case of the eighties, it also had the goal of defying the Israeli claim of "Jordan is Palestine" (Layne 1994: 103; Massad 2001: 74). The alternative or substitute homeland or the Jordanian option is a thesis held by Ariel Sharon and the Likud party, where they see as a solution the transference of Palestinians to Jordan. Ariel Sharon stated in a 1989 for Times magazine:

> Jordan is Palestine. The capital of Palestine is Amman. If Palestinian Arabs want to find their political expression, they will have to do it in Amman. The land west of the Jordan River, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, is Israel. Judea, Samaria -- the so-called West Bank -- and Gaza are Israeli. We will never give them up. There will be no second Palestinian state west of the Jordan River! (Gart and Sharon 1989)

Both the Israeli claims and the Jordanian and Palestinian fears are still current. The "Jordan is Palestine" also known as "The Jordanian option" keeps ringing frequently, and more intensely after Trump's "Deal of the Century", and the wave of normalization agreements between the Arab States and the State of Israel. To discuss the "Jordanian option", or the Jordanian confederation with Palestine is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is relevant to understand the cultural and identity anxieties in a country where a vast part of the population has Palestinian origins, which in turn shapes the understandings of belonging, attachment to place, and identity.

The aforementioned debates became stronger with the democratization, and disengagement from the West Bank. In the eighties, the nature of Jordanian society- whether tribal or not,was a public debate (Layne 1994: 96), but it was not the only debate which was sparked. With democratic openness, nationality and belonging were put into question. Joseph Massad states that, "one of the most pressing of the debates that occupied the Jordanian public sphere since then has been the question of Jordanian national identity and whether East Bank Palestinian Jordanians can be part of it" (Massad 2001: 264). And so, for example in this regard, the

Palestinian-Jordanian writer, Ibrahim Naṣrallāh, in his book كتاب الكتابة [*The book of writing*] - a collection of interviews and essays that revolve around his experience in writing, and producing literature, and the condition of being Palestinian. Among other topics, he considers that Palestinians "cannot love" Arab cities. They are always looked at with suspicion since they are considered to be aiming at stealing the cities of other Arabs. In what concerns his relationship with Amman, he shares his formula, which is to love Amman but to dream of other cities (عمان مدينة أحبها وأحلم بسواها) (Naṣrallāh 2018: 54).

To sum up, the centrality of Amman in Jordan is a matter of political and nationalist debates in Jordan. Amman in this context is considered to be excluded from the national narrative (Horani 1996; Shami 2007; Kassay 2011; Ababsa and Daher 2013; Evans 2021), or on the contrary, as an entity –an artificial one– that eats up the country's resources (Ḥattar 2003). Moreover, the attachment to Amman could be interpreted as renouncing one's origin and heritage, and therefore assimilating and renouncing the right of return, which in the context of the Palestinian diaspora, as well as the Zionist "alternative homeland project" can provoke misgivings.

2.3 The Literary Field of the 1980s and 1990s and the Emergence of the Ammani Novel

Different scholars and practitioners pointed in one way or another to the quietness and domestic character of Amman (Razzāz 1994; Horani 1996; Shami 2007; Sawalha 2018). Anthropologist Aseel Sawalha described Amman when she was beginning her career as "Relatively sleepy and lacking cultural activities like those in neighboring cosmopolitan centers." (Sawalha 2019). Another example is that one of the characters of the novel *al-Šaẓāyā wal fusayfisāʾ* (1994) describes Amman as "عمان مدينة المتقاعدين" [*Amman is the city of the retirees*]. Nonetheless, Amman was concentrating most of the cultural, artistic, and literary scene in Jordan (libraries, publishing houses, bookshops, theatres, public and private cultural institutions, art galleries and museums, etc.). Although, in the 1980s many cultural and literary institutions that began in Amman opened branches in other provinces. Amman has the lion's share of cultural spaces and institutions in Jordan, and there is a wide gap between Amman and the other cities and towns in Jordan. And within Amman, West Amman concentrates the vast majority of the cultural infrastructure (Horani 1996). Horani suggests that there is a correlation between the economic growth of the 1970s and the proliferation of cultural centers and institutions. And hence, 1970-1980 has the "شروط موضوعية" [*objective*

*conditions*] to conform to an urban society (Horani 1996). The democratic openness strongly favored Amman's cultural dynamism (Horani 1996; Khamis 2018). The survey conducted by Hani Horani shows that there was a rise in the number of cultural institutions operating in Amman since the beginning of the nineties compared to the late eighties, due to the government's openness policy (Horani 1996).

The cultural spaces in Jordan were surveyed and persecuted by the authorities, and in 1987 the Jordanian Writers Association was closed by order of the military governor, and it was re-opened in 1989. Nonetheless, The new openness and the legalization of political parties belittled other organizations such as the Jordanian Writers Association, as Razzāz mentioned in his two novels discussed in this chapter, and the buzz was transferred to the newly legalized parties  (Razzāz 1991, 1994; Khamis 2018, 37). In 1989 political prisoners were released by a general amnesty granted by King Hussein, and the elections of the same year, despite still being under martial law, were a major event, where the elections were received with optimism in the streets (Khamis 2018: 36). In this context, the transition from the eighties to the nineties opened up new configuration at different scales. On the one hand, this occurred with respect to identity and citizenship, and on the other, the openness enabled and opened up a space of debate on these issues in the novel. In this regard, it is worth exploring the context in which the Ammani novels appear.

Globally, the transition from the eighties to the nineties brought up many debates about modernity and postmodernity, which in their nature were concentrated on three main issues: "the relationship between time and space, the potential of politics, and the construction of identity" (Keith and Pile 2005, 2).

By zooming in over Jordan and Amman, it can be said that the transition from the eighties to the nineties triggered a localized form of these debates, motivated by the instauration of neoliberalism. What this thesis calls the "Amman boom" is the assertion of Amman in literature and arts, where the time and space, the policies and politics, and the identity of the city and its inhabitants are central to this boom. This boom is the result of discursive, political, urban, and cultural processes, which are inter-contextual with the broader debates brought by the Spatial Turn of the late twentieth century, such as the neo-liberalization, the fall of the socialist bloc, and the new unipolar world order. On a Southwest Asian scale, we can see a variety of coeval happenings, such as the occupation of Kuwait and the further Gulf War, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Palestinian intifada, the neo-liberalization processes in Egypt and Jordan, etc.

According to Joseph Massad, the 1988 disengagement from the West Bank, "acted as the inaugural moment for the release of the new and exclusivist Transjordanian nationalism" (Massad 2001: 272). Since then, the "Jordanianness" of many groups was raised into question by these nationalists. This questioning was not only addressed against the Palestinians who hold Jordanian citizenship, but also against other groups such as Chechens, Circassians, and others where their belonging was questioned (Massad 2001: 273). Questioning identity and belonging became a renewed trend. Similarly, regarding the city of Amman, the Jordanian architect Yasir Sakr pointed to the fact that in the early nineties there was "an unprecedented debate on 'Amman's Identity'" taking place in Jordan (Sakr 2013: 325), and these debates will become very present in the Jordanian novels as well in other cultural productions.

Generally, Amman as a topic has only been relatively recently explored in Jordanian literature. In what specifically regards Amman in the novel, a literary boom may be considered to have begun in the late eighties. This period is especially relevant when considering the martial laws that existed in Jordan before this literary boom: hundreds of books were prohibited in the country. For example, the works of notable and exiled Jordanian writer Ġālib Halasā (Khamis 2018: 102) were prohibited, yet, in the next decade, after he died in exile, they were celebrated and incorporated into the national canon.

Since then, and in the more contemporary age, Amman has become a leitmotif among different Jordanian writers, artists, journalists, and literary critics. During the conduction of this research, novels published before the eighties explicitly defining Amman were scarcely spread, pushing different novelists and researchers to point at the same phenomenon: Muʾnis al-Razzāz surveyed Amman, which states that before the nineties Amman did not have any clear distinctive features (Razzāz 1996: 349-357). Artist and thinker Hani Horani agrees with Razzāz, since despite the number of cultural institutions located in the capital of Jordan,

فعمان، كمدينة، غير حاضرة لا كموضوع، ولا كمكان، ولا كجماعات سكانية عمانية محددة الملامح في الخارطة الثقافية لعمان

*Amman is not present neither as a city, nor as a topic, as a place, or as a populace in any of these cultural activities* (Horani 1996)

And so, the city of Amman was presented without features in Jordanian Literature:

صورة عمان في الأدب الأردني غائمة غير محددة المعالم كما لو انها مجرد خشبة مسرح عارية من اي معالم مميزة تجري الاحداث فوقها، دونما احساس بالمكان وجماليته وتاريخه

*Amman's image in Jordanian literature is cloudy and featureless as it is a stage deprived of any landmark where things happen over it, without feeling the place, its beauty and its history* (Horani 1996).

For Horani the lack of features is a by-product of حالة اللانتماء (*Ḥālat al-lā-intimāʾ*) [*the state of non-belonging*] making it that the citizens of Amman feel detached from the place انفصام عن المكان (*Infiṣām ʿan al-makān*) in contrast with the pride and distinctiveness that the inhabitants of the neighboring countries might have (Horani 1996). What Horani described was referring probably to pre-nineties literature. As the chapter and the whole thesis will show from the novels discussed in this dissertation, the city of Amman is quite recognisable, and the novels use precise toponymy and take into consideration the history, the memory, the debates, and places in and around the city of Amman. The novels of Amman discussed here are more of a topophrenic nature, where the belonging to a city is is merged with anxieties, such as the uncertainty of transition times, the feelings of dislocation, and the misrecognition of the identity of those who present themselves as Ammanis.

It is first relevant here to point at certain political and urban conditions that accompanied the emergency of Amman in the novel. Razzāz himself in one of his novels from the late eighties did not mention Amman explicitly as will be discussed further in this chapter. Following the same general theme, the late Jordanian novelist *Jamāl Nājī* in an interview said that

لدي مسودات في الثمانينات قام الرقيب بشطب فقرات وعبارات وأسماء وأماكن بعمان كي يبدو المكان عائما وبعيدا عن التخصيص الأمر الذي أدى لتوقفي مؤقتا عن ذكر عمان إلى أن حدث الانفراج الديمقراطي عام 1989

*I have drafts from the eighties where the censor crossed out paragraphs, phrases, and names of places in Amman in order to show the city featureless, and far away from being specifiable. This led me to stop temporarily mentioning Amman until the arrival of the democratic openness in 1989* (ʿĀbid 2009)

And added that:

هذا ما جناه الرقيب فقد غيب عمان عن الرواية الأردنية بسبب الأرثوذكسية الإدارية والرقابية بما في ذلك منع الروايات العربية التي تذكر الأماكن من التداول بالأردن

*This is what the censor achieved, he made Amman absent from the Jordanian novel due to the administrative and surveillance orthodoxy, that even banned Arab Novels that mentions places from being in circulation in Jordan* (ʿĀbid 2009).

Jordanian literary critic Šafīq al-Nūbānī in his book devoted to Amman in the Jordanian novel points also to the fact Amman had a special protagonism in the novels published in the last three decades (al-Nūbānī 2013: 24), however, he doesn't give an explanation to this trend.

Nonetheless, in more recent decades the trend has been increasing, for example, Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, in his book *Kitāb al-Kitābah* recounts that there is much written about Amman, and criticizes the "lazy critics" that say that "Amman is absent from the literature written in Jordan" (Naṣrallāh 2018). This literary phenomenon in cultural production over the course of a relatively short period is a coeval of urban and political transformations in the city and the country. It is complex to carry out a complete and exhaustive analysis of this phenomenon, and this thesis may not completely define and answer all the questions that may arise, especially regarding the absence of Amman in the pre-eighties novels of Jordan. Nonetheless, this dissertation will point at some of the elements that participated in this literary phenomenon- interlinked with urban events and characteristics- and will explicate and contextualize this more clearly.

Yet complaints or debates about centre-periphery, regionalisms, competing nationalisms, or sectarianism are quite an extended phenomenon in Jordan and elsewhere. What makes Amman of theoretical interest is how a capital city that often is disregarded as a city, and at the same time politically misrepresented through the lack of participatory political spaces, opened up a space in literature, in which Amman as a theme became quite present in the Jordanian novels of the last three decades. Hence, the emergence of Amman as a literary trope could be understood due to a total change of the "ecosystem" in the sense that Franco Moretti explains:

> When one genre replaces another, it's reasonable to assume that the cause is internal to the two genres, and historically specific: amorous epistolary fiction being ill-equipped to capture the traumas of the revolutionary years, say— and gothic novels being particularly good at it. But when several genres disappear together from the literary field, and then another group, and so on, then the reason has to be different, because all these forms cannot have run independently and simultaneously into insoluble problems— it would be simply too much of a coincidence. The causal mechanism must thus be external to the genres, and common to all: like a sudden, total change of their ecosystem. Which is to say: a change of their audience. Books survive if they are read and disappear if they aren't: and when an entire generic system vanishes at once, the likeliest explanation is that its readers vanished at once. (Moretti 2005: 20)

The shift from the nonsignificant presence of Amman to the increasing trend of asserting Amman (The Amman Boom) is due to the "causal mechanism" that at the same time is also "external to genres" as Moretti suggested. The nonpresence of Amman in the years and

decades before the democratization became "ill-equipped" for the Amman of the late 20th century. Whereas the regional, economic, and class crises were conceiving a new identification, and consequently a new literary theme. The Amman novels – understood as the novels which bring an identifiable Amman as a topic – replaced the undefined Amman novels, in which the features of the city are loose, or undefined. This happened due to a change in the ecosystem, in which different factors and actors intervene. On the one hand, more openness in Jordan, but on the other hand, Amman and belonging to Amman started to become a concern among some sectors of society, especially among artists, writers, and intellectuals. The authenticity, originality, and the urbanity of the city is debated, and at the same time, those who identify as Ammani, quite frequently are the subject of the query as it was mentioned before.

There are more than a few examples of artistic and literary works from the late eighties to early nineties transition that have Amman as a topic. These different works in different media show how intertextuality has a weight in shaping the city, and at the same time, how the city is a text producer (Westphal 2011; Tally 2019; 2011; Finch 2016). For example, "Man and Mask" is an emblematic sculpture by the Iraqi artist Ismail Fatah al-Turk. The statue is a human figure, located in one of the gardens of Darat al-Funun– a notable artistic institution based in Amman. The sculpture is placed such that it gives its back to the city, while, in its hand, there is a mask– either being removed, or being worn- from a faceless head. This work was built in 1983 and erected in a Darat al-Funun yard in 1993. The figure, as displayed in the yard, is both close to the city, as per its vicinity and visual continuation, yet simultaneously detached from the urban fabric. From the front, no matter where one can look, there the city lies behind the figure. The cover of *Jumʿah al-Qifārī: yawmiyyāt nakirah* (1990) by Alberto Giacometti, reminds us of similar common aesthetic traces between the sculpture and the portrait, which are the feelings of detachment and alienation. Another book cover that bears similar aesthetics is the first edition of *Ḥāris al-madīnah al-ḍāʾiʿah* (1998) by Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, which was illustrated by his brother, Muḥammad Naṣrallāh, where a thin, depersonalized silhouette- which carries some resemblances to "Man and Mask"- is seen in the corner of the frame. Meanwhile, in the rest of the painting we can see a fence made up of people. The novel, similar to the first novel discussed in this chapter, has humourous overtones, in a key of magical realism. The protagonist, *Saʿīd*, works as a proofreader for a newspaper, and one morning, when he was commuting to his workplace, he notices that there is nobody in the city. In his walk toward the newspaper headquarters, he tries to find out

where the inhabitants of the city are, and when he notices he is the only one left in the city, decides to become the guardian of the city. In his walk to his workplace he gives precise descriptions of the city along his walks and in his exploration of the city, revisiting personal memories, in which his personality is portrayed. The protagonist, unlike the protagonist of *Jumʿah al-Qifārī*, has a socio-economically impoverished background and lives in Eastern Amman, but just as in *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* is a reflective and socially misfit person.

2.4 Amman and the "Ammani" in Two of Razzāz's Novels

Muʾnis al-Razzāz (1951-2002) was born in an intellectual family, his father was Munīf al-Razzāz, thinker and ideologist of the *al-Baʿṯ* party, and his mother is Lamʿah Bsīsū, a political and social activist and writer. In his youth, due to his father's political commitments, he had to live in exile between Damascus and Baghdad, and moved to London to pursue his university studies, but decided to leave and went to Beirut, where he studied philosophy at the American University of Beirut. Due to the civil war in Lebanon, he left for Baghdad, where he continued his studies. After the imprisonment and assassination of his father –Munīf al-Razzāz— while under house arrest by Saddam Hussein's regime, Muʾnis al-Razzāz detached himself from the party, and went back to Amman in 1982, where he lived until he died in 2002. In Amman, he worked in the ministry of culture as a counselor, and he was president of the Jordanian Writers Association for a short time. In addition to this, he founded a political party in Amman in 1993, called "الحزب الديمقراطي العربي" [*The Democratic Arab Party*] from which he resigned shortly after. The characters in Razzāz novels bear some similarities with the author's biography. For example, *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* suffered and was treated for depression in a clinic abroad, and so was Razzāz, or the fact that both lived in Jabal al-Luwaybidah. Similarly, at the reception for the novel, some of his acquaintances felt that he was describing himself through *Jumʿah* (al-Maṣrī 2022).

Razzāz is one of the few Jordanian writers who caught the attention of English-speaking scholarship. He was discussed by Muhsin al-Musawi and Samira Aghacy. Al-Musawi brings Razzāz as an example of his use of experimental techniques in recounting his traumatic experience when his father, Munif al-Razzāz was imprisoned under house arrest in Baghdad in *Iʿtirafāt kātim ṣawt* [*Confessions of a Silencer*]. In addition to this, Al-Musawi also brought *Muḏakkirāt dīnāṣawr* [*Memoirs of a Dinosaur*] as an example of writers who "grant unmediated space to women's voices" (al-Musawi 2003: 247). Samira Aghacy in her book *Writing Beirut* brings a novel by Razzāz – *Aḥyāʾ fi baḥr al-mayyit* (1982)– as an example in

which "Arab writers view the city as belonging to them" (Aghacy 2015: 16). By reading these novels, and other books by Razzāz, such as the novels discussed in this chapter, it shows that the characters are inhabited by places that affect in a way or another how Amman is perceived or experienced. It should be noted that in this novel studied by Aghacy, Amman is not mentioned explicitly, but rather insinuated. Razzāz insinuated Amman in his eighties novels. For example, in *Aḥyāʾ fī baḥr al-mayyit* (Razzāz 2003: 42) Amman, مسقط الرأس (*Masqaṭ al-raʾs*) [The birthplace]. In *Matāhat al-aʿrab bī nāṭiḥāt al-sarāb* (1986) for example, the protagonist refers to Amman either as "مسقط رأسي" [*my birthplace*] (Razzāz 2003: 504) or as "ملاذ المستجيرين" [*the haven of the protection seekers*] (Razzāz 2003: 504). As Muhsin al-Musawi pointed out, Muʾnis al-Razzāz, "negotiates some convergence of postmodernist and postcolonial poetics and politics" which "inscribe political engagement to undermine neo-patriarchy, the evils of the modern police state, along with the New World Order and its globalization strategies" (al-Musawi 2003: 56). In this sense, the novels under examination in this chapter could be considered politically engaged, as his assertion of Amman, goes hand in hand with the assertion of pan-Arabism, and democratic plurality.

In his assertion of Amman in his oeuvre, he could be considered one of the "authors of Amman" in the sense of Bertrand Westphal (Westphal 2011). For example, in February 2022 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of his death, a mural painting in his childhood neighborhood –*Jabal al- Luwaybidah*–was inaugurated in which he appears portrayed on the covers of his books. The mural was given the name "لا زال مؤنس حارس المدينة" [*Muʾnis Al-Razzāz still being the guardian of the city*] (al-Raʾī newspaper 2022). Similarly, 7iber, a Jordanian online magazine, dedicated a dossier where his oeuvre was being revisited, and it emphasized his relationship with Amman. In the same dossier, an obituary was re-published by the late poet Amjad al-Nāṣir where he wrote:

أنني أتحدث عن العمانيّ مؤنس الرزاز.

شيء ما سيتغير في عمّان.

شيء ما، لا شكّ، سينقص فيها.

[*I am talking about the Ammani Muʾnis al-Razzāz*
*There is something it will be changed in Amman,*
*Something, no doubt, something will be missing*]

The figure of Razzāz is celebrated as an Ammani figure, and his novel *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* had a considerable reception in Jordan. For example, Samar Dudin, a Jordanian theatre director conducted a group performance reading of *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* in the places mentioned in the novel. Similarly, the novel was also converted into a script for a TV series by Nazīh Abū Niḍāl, before Razzāz's death. Perhaps the wide reception of the novel is due to its non-complex plot and language, and above all, its humorous character. However, Razzāz's Ammani characters tend to be alienated from their surroundings, and this is the case of *Jumʿah* ,the protagonist of the novel who keeps asserting his belonging to Amman.

Yet alienation and estrangement about cities and their representation in arts and literature is a vast phenomenon discussed widely among scholars, and these feelings are often experienced about migration, exile, gender, or the voracity of capitalism. In the case of Amman, the city shows a different kind of alienation. The alienated individuals as shown in the novels of the 1990s are located in their city, they are not migrants nor refugees, and they are not facing a corrupted city putting it in confrontation with an idyllic countryside. Here, the Ammani feels disqualified, and his belonging is questioned. The factors that affect the feeling of alienation and detachment concerning Amman are varied– the rapid growth of the city, the political misrepresentation of the citizens of Amman, the facts of the diasporic population, and the alterations in the regional urban systems are among the most important factors which provoke this malaise. For example, Samira Aghacy points out that: "[T]he majority of Arab writers and intellectuals have idealized the city as a place of freedom, pleasure, resistance, and culture, others have felt disappointed and disenfranchised coming face to face with the city" (Aghacy 2015: 17-18). Amman, in the novels of Razzāz, as well in other Jordanian novels, is neither "idealized" nor disappointing, in the proper sense, but rather, Amman constitutes a home, and a place where to feel that one belongs to it is either questioned or misrecognized. Despite the popular claim of "nobody is from Amman" that we mentioned before, in the novels we discussed we could see that there is an "Ammani", and this Ammani sails over political structures and spaces, memory, discourses, and narratives. The characters of the novels, despite their social misfitness, depressive patterns, and apathy, are critically independent rather than conformist; their alienation doesn't come from a mere existentialist or modern kind of alienation, but rather from the misrecognition by the others, and the disruption of the geographical referents, due to the accelerated multiscalar geopolitical, ideological, economical and urban transformation. In this sense, the alienated characters of the novels by Razzāz point to the main conditions of their situation.

Moreover, Razzāz provides a counter-memory of Amman: The different characters of the three mentioned novels bring in one way or in another the political memory, which is defenestrated from the official history and memory. In the following, both novels are presented separately, highlighting the plot of the novel, the relation of the main characters with the city, and afterward discussing the Ammani urban issues through the two novels. The main issues are belonging to Amman and identifying as an Ammani, and through the novels we can point at some of the aspects which produce such feelings. These aspects are the translocal character of the city, the lifting of martial law, and the nostalgia for the fifties.

a) *Jumʿah al-Qifārī: yawmiyyāt nakirah* (1990)

*Jumʿah al-Qifārī: yawmiyyāt nakirah* is a novel written in diary format. The book is interlaced with humorous references and undertones. The main protagonist, *Jumʿah al-Qifārī*, according to the novel, occupies both time and space: his first name means "Friday" in Arabic, and his last name, "*Qifārī*", is a spatial reference, denoting a space or territory– a wasteland, specifically. The protagonist belongs to a socially and economically downgraded Ammani bourgeoisie. To add to the protagonist's characteristics, he has lived all of his life in Amman, although he made some trips to Europe,and identifies himself as an Ammani. Also, he usually does not fit very well in his interpersonal relationship, and keeps daydreaming about writing a novel, which he sometimes fantasizes about calling "*ʿAwn al-Kayāšṭah*" (In allusion to Don Quixote) or *Yawmiyyāt al-Nuʿmān fī šawāriʿ ʿAmmān* .The protagonist of this imagined novel, named *Nuʿmān al-ʿammūnī [Nuʿmān the ammonite]*, comes back to Amman after having an adventurous life living in different countries, and when he comes back to Jordan he revisits key figures from the political history of Jordan.

The novel covers a wide variety of different topics: various urban aspects of the city, the decline of the affluent neighborhood and the proliferation of new neighborhoods (due to the economic boom of the seventies and first half of the eighties), aspects of political life, the new democratic openness, collective memory (both urban and political), and belonging to the city.

Jumʿah al-Qifārī's personality may be described as naïve, eccentric, and immature. He often clashes with his cousin *Kaṯīr al-Ġalabah* [*so much hassle*], who is often also referred to as *al-Ġalbāwī* [*the overbearing one*]. The nature of the clashes is mainly taunted by al-Ġalbāwī towards Jumʿah: he pokes at his social awkwardness, as well as his lack of knowledge of Jordanian geography, history, and everyday interactions. *Kaṯīr al-Ġalabah* is depicted as a

pragmatic and opportunistic intellectual who in the end accedes to a position in the government. *Al-Ġalbāwī, Jumʿah*'s pragmatic cousin, frequently discourages him:

ولكنك لن تستطيع كتابة روايتك مغامرات النعمان في شوارع عمان اذا لم تتعرف على عمان الشرقية. أنت لا تعرف من الأردن سوى عمان، ولا تعرف من عمان سوى عمان الغربية. وهذه جريمة بحق شخص يطمح في أن يكتب رواية بعنوان مغامرات النعمان في شوارع عمان.

> *But you will not be able to write your novel "The Adventures of Al-Nuʿmān in the Streets of Amman" if you do not know East Amman. You know only Amman from Jordan, and you know only West Amman from Amman. This is a crime against a person who aspires to write a novel entitled The Adventures of Al-Nuʿmān in the Streets of Amman.*

Amman is shown to be inauthentic (Shami 2007; Evans 2021) and in this regard, it cannot be representative, or capable of being a place to be identified with. *Jumʿah* suffers from a double alienation. On the one hand his inability to map his own city, nor country, and on the other hand, the non-acknowledgment of the others of his Ammani identity. Moreover, his alienation is related to how he considers Amman his geographical origin, and not somewhere else.

It is worth noting that *Jumʿah* gives some hints about how he embodies both place and time; his constant feelings of misfit or dislocation. For example, *Jumʿah* on more than one occasion is described as "مقطوع من الشجرة" (*maqṭūʿ min al-šajarah*) (lit. cut off the tree), which could mean either uprooted, left alone, or to describe that somebody has no support of his family or tribe. He experiences in his skin the effects of the collapse of grand narratives, which at the same time leads him to create his own narrative. This is a narrative in which there is a fellow Ammani, who walks along the streets of Amman, retakes the political and intellectual cultural memory of Amman, and above all, is an Ammani, who is described to be "ابن عمان المدلل الوحيد" [*the only spoiled son of Amman*] (Razzāz 1990: 141).

The following paragraphs will trace the main bonds that tie *Jumʿah* with Amman. On the one hand, he starts with mapping himself in Amman, shows how he embodies the city, and how he resists alienation with spatial tactics– in the sense of De Certeau. It will be shown how the main character is depicted, and how his relationship with the city is affirmed. Since he constantly feels alienated, he keeps asserting his belonging to Amman and engages in practices and tactics that help him to resist the alienation, such as writing, and walking in the city.

The novel begins with *Jumʿah* introducing himself and asserting his bond to Amman. In his introduction, the protagonist exposes his spatial capital: he is a son of the more affluent Amman. Similarly, he addresses himself as a " نكرة", as a "nobody" or in other words, someone without a specific identity (Razzāz 1990: 5). He is a prototype of the Ammani, a "nobody" – since no one is from Amman– in a "non-city" as it is often described. He continues by defining his spatial habitus in the Jordanian spatial field whereas:

بوسع الانسان في الاردن أن يولد في عمان الغربية ويموت فيها، دون ان يكتشف مجاهل جبل النظيف الذي تحتاج شوارعه الى حملة تنظيف. ولا جبل النزهة الذي لا يصلح للنزهة. بوسعك ان تعيش من المهد الى اللحد في عمان الغربية، دون ان تضطر لزيارة الشوبك، أو معرفة المفرق، أو المرور بالطفيلة. (أحيانا أذهب الى فندق العقبة بالطائرة وأقضي في الفندق وعلى رمال الشاطئ وفي البحر أياما، دون ان أخرج الى الشارع. فأنا أعرف فنادق العقبة.. لا العقبة نفسها

*A person can be born in West Amman and die there, without discovering the mysteries of Jabal al-Naẓīf, whose streets need a cleaning campaign, nor Jabal al-Nuzhah a hill that is not suitable for a promenade. You can live from cradle to grave in West Amman, without having to visit al-Šawbak, knowing al-Mafraq, or going through al-Ṭafilah. Although sometimes I go to a hotel in Aqaba by plane and spend days in the hotel, on the sands of the beach, in the sea, without going out into the street. Therefore I know Aqaba hotels, not Aqaba itself* (Razzāz 1990: 5).

Thus, the "West Ammani", due to their spatial capital, ignore the impoverished and decadent neighborhoods of the eastern part of the city, and at the same time, the other Jordanian towns, where the only exception are the heterotopic resorts of Aqaba. Razzāz in this work highlights the spatiality of his novel, in which Amman appears to be detached from the rest of Jordan, excluded from the national identity (Kassay 2013), and delegitimized as a "space of national authenticity and representation" (Evans 2021).

Afterward, the narrator-protagonist continues presenting himself by drawing some of the traces of his personality. He is a dreamer- he fantasizes about writing a novel. Furthermore, he seems to be detached from everyday knowledge: for example, he does not know how much *samnah* (clarified butter) costs. Similarly, the narrator-protagonist defines himself as the "دون كيشوط هذا العصر" [*The Don Quixote of this er*a] (Razzāz 1990: 6). Like Don Quixote, Jumʿah al-Qifārī is a product of the collapse of an older system of values, which creates for him a sense of anomie and disorientation. He lives in a time in which there are no longer big figures such as Mao Zedong, or De Gaulle, so he wonders how he shall adapt with himself

and his own surroundings (Razzāz 1990: 7). The idea of being a socially misfit individual is highlighted with the spatiotemporal character of *Jumʿah al-Qifārī*

اسمي جمعة القفاري. ومع ان اسمي الأول يوحي بزمان، واسم عائلتي يوحي بمكان الا ان هذه الحوارات التي سجلتها في مذكراتي تحمل دلالات أكثر اهمية من الدلالات التي يحملها اسمي

*My name is Jumuʾah al-Qifārī, although my first name suggests a time, and my family name suggests a place, these dialogues that I recorded in my diaries bear more important connotations than the connotations that my name has* (Razzāz 1990: 8)

The embodiment of space here reminds the reader of what Celeste Olalquiaga pointed at in her book *Megalopolis,* where she is explaining the new postmodern cultural sensitivities:

*Bodies are becoming like cities, their temporal coordinates transformed into spatial ones. In a poetic condensation, history has been replaced by geography, stories by maps, memories by scenarios. we no longer perceive ourselves as continuity but as location, or rather dislocation in the urban/suburban cosmos* (Olalquiaga 1992: 93)

Another example of "becoming like cities", is that the personality of *Jumʿah* is described through urban metaphors where it appears that the personality of *Jumʿah* has a polyrhythmic urban character:

ثمة ما لا تعرفون عن جمعة، لقد كان مزدحما بالمعضلات مثلما تزدحم شوارع وسط البلد ايام الخميس بالمارة والسيارات، ومقفرا من الصداقات مثل الاحياء الراقية ايام الجمعة

*There is something you do not know about Jumʿah al-Qifārī. He was crowded with dilemmas, as downtown streets are crowded on Thursdays with pedestrians and cars, as well as without friends, like in the high-end neighborhoods on Fridays* (Razzāz 1990: 18)

There are other urban metaphors, although in a jocular tone, such as when he described himself shivering like "a dog poisoned by a municipal employee" (Razzāz 1990:74), or breathing like an old bus climbing uphill (Razzāz 1990: 97). *Jumu'ah* lives in the city, and embodies the city, in the same sense as Juhani Pallasmaa stated: "I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me" (Pallasmaa 2012: 43).

Jumu'ah hence, other than embodying the city, engages in practicing and experiencing the city. Jumu'ah who presents himself as Ammani, and regardless of his alienated condition, he has some affective and spatial coping mechanisms in which he can assert his relationship with the city. One of the coping mechanisms is walking, which for De Certeau constitutes an "act of speech" whereas "[t]he act of walking is to the urban system what the speech at is to

language or to the statements uttered" (De Certeau 1988: 97). In this sense, with his practicing of walking he reaffirms his belonging to the city.

*Jum'ah* has an intimate relationship with his neighborhood. He goes frequently to the "منتزه جبل اللويبدة" [*Jabal al-Lūwaybidah's park*] or walks along the streets of his neighborhood and Amman's downtown as a way of relief (Razzāz 1990: 74; 96). At the same time, he recovers part of the urban memory by using Prince Muhammad street's older name instead of the street's newer and official name (Razzāz 1990: 96). *Jum'ah* in his journey through the city, asserts his belonging to it. Moreover, he finds consolation in certain spaces in the city, such as a small traffic island that he frequents on Fridays, on the day when the shops close, and feels unwelcome and forgotten by people and by the streets:

باختصار يوم الجمعة ينبذني الجميع. المحال والشوارع والناس. تنساني المدينة. إنه يوم عطلة. فتستقبلني هذه الجزيرة الصغيرة. تؤنس شجراتها وحشتي.

*In short, on Friday, everyone rejects me. The shops, the streets, and the people. The city forgets me. It is a holiday. But this little traffic island receives me and its trees give me consolation* (Razzāz 1990: 12)

Despite this little urban haven he has, he still feels powerless. One day, a municipal engineer comes to the traffic island while *Jum'ah* is sitting there and tells him that he should leave since the Greater Amman Municipality decided to remove the traffic island and put traffic lights there instead, which would favor speed. Another aspect is the discourses of the technocrats who govern Amman- The removal of the traffic island happens because it was part of the past, meanwhile traffic lights are modern and contemporary (Razzāz 1990: 18)[3].

*Jum'ah* seems to be engaged in a struggle with the newer times. In part, the alienated misfit relies on his resistance to adapt to the newer times. The city's rapid spatial, and demographical transformations constitute one factor of alienation. The economic boom in the seventies affected the urbanism of the city. The city extended its fabric to the west, which led to a mutation in the class configuration of the older neighborhoods. The more affluent then moved to the newer areas and built luxurious villas and apartments. The spatial boundaries of the city, are expanded, and within this expansion, the spatial referents shift, and the class composition is altered, where in the case of *Jum'ah*, he stays in his "جبل المتقاعدين" [*the hill of the retirees*] as a metaphor for the process that did not only change its class composition but also its age demographics, since the younger moved more to the Western part

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[3] The dialogue with an engineer shows an aspect of the governance of the city– that of the shrinking of public spaces, which began in the late eighties and early nineties, and that took an accelerated and dramatic rhythm in the 2000s as it will be shown in Chapter 4. Moreover, the engineer bears an idea of what would Amman need in order to fit in the contemporary and dromologic times

of the city, and at the same time the ex-inhabitants of the poorer neighborhoods moved to *al-Luwaybidah*. Hence, this process produced a generational overlap in the neighborhood, which affects the perception of the collective memory of both the city and the neighborhood, as well as reiterates the battle of *Jumʿah* against the new times. For example, his anomie is manifested when he remembers his mother lamenting the bygone Amman when it was a small city in which everybody knew each other, and his childhood neighborhood was one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Amman. *Jumʿah* explains the growth of Amman:

<div dir="rtl">

البلد صغير. وجبل اللويبدة وجبل عمان وجبل حسين من أرقى الجبال.

ثم انبثقت عبدون والصويفية وقبلها الشميساني بغتة.. فانتقل الجيل الجديد ابن طفرة السبعينيات الى هذه المناطق الباذخة. وظل الشيوخ والعجائز يلازمون بيوتهم القديمة في اللويبدة وجبل عمان القديم وجبل حسين... وبقيت أنا معهم

</div>

*The country is small. Jabal Al-Lūwaybidah, Jabal ʿammān and Jabal Ḥusayn are among the finest hills. Then ʿAbdūn and Ṣuwayfiyyah emerged, and al-Šmīsanī before them out of a sudden. So the new generation, the children of the seventies boom, moved to these lavish areas. The old men and women stayed in their old homes in al-Lūwaybidah, the old Jabal ʿammān, and Jabal Ḥusayn... and I stayed with them* (Razzāz 1990: 7)

In this sense, his neighborhood became an aged one, and he remained with the older generations. The memory and nostalgia affect how he locates himself in the city, as well as emphasize his struggle against the newer times.

However, he has another tactical undertaking in which he asserts his belonging to Amman in writing (Razzāz 1990: 7). He resists his feelings of alienation by daydreaming about writing a novel. The protagonist of the novel in his mind is his own alter ego. Part of the novel is a metafiction, where the protagonist of his imagined novel was about to be named *ʿAwn al-Kayāšṭah*. However, in the end, *Jumʿah* makes up his mind and names him *Nuʿmān al-ʿAmmūnī* [*Nuʿmān the Ammonite*]. *Al-Nuʿmān* is a well-travelled person who comes back to Amman, where he settles and retires (Razzāz 1990: 64), and his *nisba* is *al-ʿAmmūnī*. His *nisba* emphasizes his embodiment of Amman's territory and ancient history, and with the title and plot of the imagined novel –*Muġāmārāt al-Nuʿmān fī šāwāriʿ ʿAmmān* [*The adventures of al-Nuʿmān in the streets of Amman*] relocates both himself via his alter ego, and his city, by walking, as it was pointed out earlier, an act of speech in which he resists tactically what alienates him from his bond with his city.

b) *al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ* (1994)

This novel talks about political and urban life in the context of the new democracy, the social field of political parties, intellectuals, and political and ideological disappointments. As in the previous novel, it tackles different Ammani issues, such as the question of belonging, the question of its political misrepresentation, and the promotion of political tribalism and regionalism by the government. The title of the novel combines a twofold fragmentation, and ordered, still, and harmonic one- *fusayfisāʾ* (mosaics) and *al-šaẓāyā* (shrapnels), impetuous, dispersed, and erratic. This novel bears special importance to the disappointment of the pan-Arab left in a new political and geographical reality. In Jordan, a process of democratization was carried out, and at the same time, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait could be understood as the coup de grace of the pan-Arabist political project.

The time arc is set in the transition from the eighties to the nineties, which in the case of Jordan, was the transitional period between the martial law era and the era of the democratic openness. With the democratization, many exiles returned to Jordan, and regarding Amman, they faced urban and political transformation. The political field was becoming fragmented by the government strategies of castration of the doctrinal political parties, and at the same time, the city was growing spatially, and the social class composition was altered.

There are two main protagonists in the novel, *ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm*, and *Samīr Ibrāhīm*, ex-militants, who struggle with the novel processes, where many of their ex-comrades become opportunistic and are coopted by power, causing them to carry selective amnesia of their militant past. The crepitant and accelerated political transformation, together with the devaluation of the cityness under the new democratic system, provoke feelings of dislocation, alienation, and powerlessness.

The novel begins with the description of the return of *ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm*, as an exiled returnee:

عاد الى الأردن بعينين تتوهجان بالجنون وذاكرة ملغومة. لا يعرف أي
حظ عجائبي أنقذه من مراصد الموت. كان مدمرا مثل سندباد عاد من رحلة
مغامرات في بحار من الألغام والألغاز القاتلة. ارتمى على يابسة عمان

*He returned to Jordan with eyes that glowed with madness and a mined memory. He does not know what miraculous fortune saved him from death. He was as devastated as Sinbad, returning from an adventurous journey into seas of deadly mines and riddles. He ran aground on the land of Amman*
(Razzāz 1994: 6)

The idea of Amman as a city of refuge is present in the novels of Razzāz as we mentioned at the beginning of this section. The main character, as well as *Jumʿah,* or his alter ego *Nuʿmān,* have in a way a cosmopolitan character, but their home is Amman. In part, the rediscovery of Amman is due to the returnees, who after living and experiencing other cities try to negotiate new meanings of what Amman is as a city. Hence, Razzāz sometimes is described Amman as a city of refugees, some other times as the city of the retirees, which carries in it a sort of defeatism, but also a sort of comfort zone. *ʿAbd al-Karīm Ibrāhīm* leaves Beirut, and despite being reproached by a fellow Jordanian that "عمان مدينة المتقاعدين" [*Amman is the city of the retirees*] (Razzāz 1994: 6), and at the same time, his neighborhood, Jabal al-Luwaybidah, is the "جبل المتقاعدين" [*hill of the retirees*]. In Jordan, he sought calmness after a life of madness. In Amman, he becomes addicted to TV series, and before leaving Beirut, he burns his books which he refused to take with him back to Amman. The books he mentions show some of his intellectual references, which range from existentialism (Dostoevsky), Marxism (Marx), Pan-Arabism (Sāṭiʿal-Ḥuṣrī), and Sufism (al-Niffarī). If in *Jumʿah* the "giants" do not exist anymore, and again here, the books of the mentioned authors were burnt. The loss of intellectual and geographical referents characterizes the transition from the eighties to the nineties. In the novel is stated:

نعم.. سقوط المعسكر الاشتراكي.. وحرب الخليج، وغزو الصحون اللاقطة لبيوتنا.. هذه كله أدى.. الى.. أعني ..

> *Yes... the fall of the socialist bloc... the Gulf War, and the invasion of satellite dishes into our homes... all of this led.. to. I mean..* (Razzāz 1994: 32)

The referents are being effaced, provoking a sense of dislocation in the protagonist, who had a pan-Arabist past. The collapse of such discourses and projects materialized in the destruction of the cities as well as the disruption of the link of Amman with the other poles. However, the protagonist insisted in identifying as Ammani, as could be seen in the following dialogue with his landlord:

- هل تعلم يا جار.. انني لم اسألك حتى هذا اليوم عن أصلك؟ التفت الي وزأى:
- من أي بلد أنت؟
- قلت وأنا احتسي قهوتي:
- من عمان
- قال وهو يلوح بيده قرفا وكأنه يطرد ذبابة:
- طيب.. والداك؟

<div dir="rtl">

- قلت باقتضاب:

- من عمان

- قال بلهجة تنم على نفاذ الصبر

- جدك؟

- قلت بإصرار

- من عمان

قال وهو يتداعى مستسلما مستيئسا

- لا أحد أصله من عمان سوى الشركس. عمان مدينة بلا أصل. أصلك... من أين؟

- وقفت منتصبا أتميز غيظا. لم أجفف العرق المتفصد من جبيني.

- تركته في الصالة وغادرت البيت. همهمت قبل أن أخرج:

- عربي

- لم ألب فضوله الوحشي. صرخ:

- عربي؟!؟ أين تصرف هذه الكلمة؟

</div>

*Do you know, my neighbor, that I never asked you about your origin? And then he turned to my side and said:*
  - *From which town are you?*
*I said while I was sipping on my coffee: from Amman*
*He said waving his hand in disgust as if he was expelling a fly:*
  - *ok.. and your parents?*
  - *From Amman*
*He said in an impatient tone:*
  - *Your grandfather?*
*I said insistently: From Amman*
  *He said disappointed and deceived:*
  - *No one is from Amman except the Circassians. Amman is a city without origin, where are you originally from?*
  - *I stood up and annoyed, without drying the sweat dripping from my forehead, and I left him in the living room, and I left the house. I whispered before I left: I am an Arab! but it didn't satisfy his wild curiosity, and yelled:*
  - *Arab?!? How does that track!* (Razzāz 1994: 46)

In this dialogue, appears the dissatisfaction of the landlord. Amman is not considered a valid answer since it has "no origin". And at the same time, the despair of the protagonist, who leaves and reasserts his belonging to Amman- at a para-national or sub-national level, and at the same time, his arabicity at a supranational level. Hence, the diminishing of Amman's capability to be a valid identification.

 In different novels by Razzāz, he affirms in the mouth of the main protagonists either the belonging to Amman, or the belonging to a pan-Arab identity. For him, belonging to Amman

is the antagonist of a tribalist identity, which as it is seen in this novel, he feels as a fragmentary identity that acts against a collective and inclusive identity such as the Ammani identity, or the pan-Arabist one in his understanding. For example in *Matāhat al-aʿrāb fī nāṭiḥāt al-sarāb* [*The labyrinth of the desert dwellers in the mirage-scrappers*] Amman is not mentioned by its name, but rather insinuated by being called "المدينة الملاذ" [*The haven city*] (Razzāz 2003: 505) with the descriptions of Amman's history and society, as well as his biographical information seems to be embodied by *Ādam al-Ḥasanayn* –one of the protagonists of the novel. For example, the father of the protagonist is Syrian, and his mother is from Gaza (Razzāz 2003: 504). The protagonist has frequently been mocked in his school for the fact that his family is small, unlike the other classmates that belong to bigger tribes. The father of the protagonist keeps telling him that they belong to a way bigger tribe than those tribes, which are tribes united by "الأحلام الكبيرة" [*The big dreams*]– about the pan-Arabism (Razzāz 2003: 504).

2.4.1 Translocal Amman, the New Democracy, and the Nostalgia for the Fifties

In both novels, a central element is belonging to Amman, and identifying themselves as Ammani. This answer was never accepted, and it was seen as insufficient. Moreover, in addition to the diminishing of how they present themselves, they feel misfit in their social setting. However, where there is a misrecognition, there is an ideal recognition and an assertion of an elsewhere which is considered valid in the case somebody identifies with. And so, when it is said "Nobody is from Amman" there is a silenced "somebody". *Jumʿah* presents himself as a *Nakirah* (undefined or nobody) and at the same time emphasizes his belonging to Amman in several ways, such as how he interacts with others, as well as in his unwritten novel. ʿAbd al-Karīm, the protagonist of *al-Šaẓāyā*, is unable to adapt and is not able to overcome the times of Nasser. The collapse of such discourses and projects materialized in the destruction of the cities as well as the disruption of the link of Amman with the other poles. In both novels, Amman comes into play together with the ongoing processes in the transition between the 1980s and 1990s.

In the following, some factors contributing to the dislocation of the protagonists will be exposed. These are the translocality of Amman, which in turn is due to economic, geopolitical, and ideological factors: The collapse of the pan-Arabist discourses and projects materialized in the destruction of the cities and the disruption of the link of Amman with the

other poles. In this sense, the novels, although more systematically in *al-Šaẓāyā*, showed to be translocalist, which in Lena Mattheis's words, "translocal stories take specific local ties, experiences and behaviours and layer them with ties, experiences and behaviours belonging to another place" (Mattheis 2021: 6).

Similarly, another aspect is the lifting of martial laws, democratization, and the arrival of identity politics which the state formed in that process. In addition, there is an aspect that is worth looking at, which is the nostalgia for the 1950s mainly, but also there is nostalgia for the Jordanian Writers Association during the martial law period. This nostalgia is addressed towards Amman's political agency, geography, and other cities outside the territory of Jordan. As regards political agency, as it will be shown later on, the streets were active politically and had to some extent agency to revoke political decisions, meanwhile geography-wise, in the fifties the occupation of Palestine was recent, but the occupation was not fulfilled until 1967. Moreover, the pan-Arabist discourse and project were at their peak, and the different urban poles were interconnected.


a) Translocal Amman

In both novels Amman is home. However, the characters feel alienated in their home. The alienation they were experiencing was not that of an outsider migrant, but rather of an insider, but at the same time, other locales have an effect in one way or another on themselves and over the city. As we could see, both novels have different styles but both of them share similar anxieties. However, both *Jumʿah* and *ʿAbd al-Karīm*, belong to Amman. but at the same time, they embody other locales- The question remains, how do other cities contribute to the making of Amman? How do the protagonists locate themselves in the city? How do they engage with the city, and how do they give meaning to it?

It is of importance to recall the different translocal aspects in the making of Amman, to understand how Amman can make sense or not either as a city or an identification. For this, it is worthwhile quoting Robert Tally:

> The experience of a place is therefore no simple matter. Any proper orientation or "sense of place" is definitively connected to and complicated by a seemingly infinite network of spaces and places that not only serve as shifting points of view or frames of reference but also affects the situation of the subject itself. A place is apprehended subjectively, but it is also only understandable as such when located within or in reference to a non- or suprasubjective ensemble of spatial relations, sites, networks, circuits and so on. (Tally 2019: 10)

The novel suggests that identifying as Ammani is a matter of habitus. As it was shown, the protagonists of both novels have cultural capital- both of them make references to historical,

political, and literary characters. As to economic capital, they are sons of a declined bourgeoisie, both live in the *Jabal al-Luwaybidah* – a neighborhood that was founded in late 1920 by the first Ammani bourgeoisie. Despite all of this, they defined themselves as Ammani and did not renounce this identification despite this identification always being questioned and not taken as a sufficient answer. As Leonie Sandercock explains:

> Habitus is a field of social relations defined structurally, but that 'field' also has its spatial component, the spaces of the city, as well as the social spaces in which one feels 'at home', where we experience both a positive sense of belonging, as well as a sense of knowing where we belong, in the social order which is also a spatial ordering of the city. (Sandercock 2016: 222)

The oil boom, for example, altered the city, and the class composition of the neighborhoods. The older neighborhoods were left behind by their builders, and these were replaced by poorer newcomers. The oil boom -which is a translocal phenomenon- shaped the city. Arjun Appadurai pointed at that:

> "[C]ities are especially sensitive to the peregrinations of capital and labor. When these produce sharp increases in socioeconomic inequality, they affect citizenship profoundly because they provoke new notions of membership, solidarity, and alienage. That is, they generate new morphologies of social category and class" (Appadurai, 1999: 196).

In the case of Amman, Gulf capital- either the subsidies of the Gulf states to the Jordanian governments or the remittances of the Jordanian and Palestinian migrants in the Gulf- did not generate only a new morphology of social category and class, but also generated a new morphology of the city in *al-Šaẓāyā*

الجبال السبعة القديمة انتقلت الى وسط عمان. تراجعت المزارع واختفت الأشجار في بطن الأرض. وقامت مناطق جديدة أنيقة بلا بقالات، ولا صبي بقال، بلا حارات، ولا عصابات من الصبية.
الجبال تومئ نحو وسط البلد وخاصرتها. كأنها تقف على حافة لحظة التداعي. لكنها تميل ولا تتداعى. السماء خفية عجائبية خارقة تتشبث بخيوط التماسك الهش.

*The seven old hills have moved to the center of Amman. The farms retreated and the trees disappeared into the belly of the earth, and elegant new districts arose with no grocery shops, nor a shopkeeper boy, without alleyways, nor gangs of boys. The hills beckon towards the center of the country and its waist, as if it is standing on the edge of the moment of collapse, but it tends and does not collapse. The sky is invisible, strange and supernatural, clinging to the threads of fragile cohesion* (Razzāz 1994: 39)

Hence, what once was the periphery of Amman, is now the center of the city, and the agrarian and fertile lands were eaten by asphalt and concrete buildings. Moreover, the new neighborhoods, with neither "grocery shops", nor "gangs of boys" couldn't create a sort of a communal space, and hence identity. In what regards Amman, Hisham Bustani in

his article "عمّان: السلوكُ «المدنيُّ» في مدينة ليست مدينة حقًّا" [*Amman: A "civil" behavior in a city that is not a city*] (Bustani 2015), discusses the disappearance of public space which entails the disappearance of the individual, and hence the city becomes a non-city. Bustani considers that between the fifties and the eighties there was a middle class, which was replaced by the nouveau riche, who appeared with the collapse of the dinar, and the treaties with the World Bank. For him, Amman in the fifties, with significantly fewer inhabitants than today, was a city-, while today it is not properly a city. In *al-Šaẓāyā* there is a record of this rise of the nouveau riche, at the expense of the older Ammani bourgeoisie:

كان يسمع بأسرتنا منذ زمن بعيد. عائلة ارستقراطية عريقة مثقفة.. ما شاء الله.
ونحن كنا من طبقة اخرى.. شبه معدمة. ثم فتحها ربك. وسافرنا الى السعودية.
وسبحان مغير الأحوال. نحن صعدنا الى فوق.. فلوس مثل الرز. بعرق الجبين
طبعا. وانتقلنا من الجوفة الى عبدون.
أما نحن فقد هبطنا طبقيا. بقينا في جبل اللويبدة حيث زحفت عليه عائلات عمان
الشرقية. وهرب أبناؤه الأصليون الى تلاع العلي والشميساني. بعنا معظم أراضينا.
وها نحن نجلس على الحديدة. أو شبه الحديدة.

*He used to hear about our family for a long time. An old, intellectual and aristocratic family. We were from another class… almost destitute. Then God eased it, and we traveled to Saudi Arabia. Praise to the changer of conditions! We climbed to the top… money is abundant like rice, of course from the sweat of the brow, and then we moved from al-Jawfah to ʿAbdūn. As for us, we suffered from social decline. We stayed in Jabal Al- Luwaybidah where East Amman families crawled over it, and the original sons of the hill, fled to Tlāʿ al-ʿalī and Šmīsānī. We sold most of our land, and here we are bankrupt or quasi-bankrupt* (Razzāz 1994: 67)

In *al-Qifārī*, there is a similar record that describes the ageing of his neighborhood due to the oil boom (Razzāz 1990: 172). In ten years, between 1972 and 1982 the surface area of Amman doubled and provoked speculation about land (Shami 2007: 217). Moreover, Shami explains the general dynamic of the growth of the city, which contributes to the feeling the city is in constant change:

Many of the bourgeois neighborhoods that had been forming in the hills around the valley of the original settlement of Amman became the site of the "temporary" refugee camps, eventually leading the older inhabitants to abandon them to form new neighborhoods to the west. This became an Ammani pattern reinforced by the constant in and out migrations that followed; new neighborhoods would barely last ten years before new ones would spring up, more desirable and more indicative of wealth and status. As wealth was accrued abroad, it was invested in larger and larger dwellings always pushing the city westward into agricultural lands. As those owning the lands sold them at huge profits, they too became part of the creeping urbanization and villa colonization of the lands west of Amman (Shami 2007: 222)

These transformations contributed to the shift of centers. The seven hills around the downtown became the center, and al-Šmīsanī became back then the place of reference for the youth (Razzāz 1990: 127-128). It should be noted that the economic factors are not the only manifestation of translocality in Amman– although it is an important one worth exploring. Another factor is that of the exiled returnees, which is of importance for the period studied here, which is the transition between the eighties and nineties. On the one hand, translocality can be manifested not only through the linkage between locales, but also due to the break or disruption of these linkages between them. This affects how the subjects locate themselves in the world and how the city is lived, perceived, and understood. As *al-Šaẕāyā* shows, the returnee carries with him the experience of other cities to Amman:

كنت أراقب السيارات المزدحمة وأردد في سري أنني في عمان لا بيروت. وأنني ورانية في أمان: لن تنفجر سيارة ملغومة.

*I was watching the crowded cars and I was repeating to myself secretly that I was in Amman, not Beirut, and that I and Rania are safe: a car bomb will not explode* (Razzāz 1994: 98)

Afterward, a child walked past holding a balloon, and *ʿAbd al-Karīm* entered into a state of panic and imagined that he and *Rāniah* died in the explosion. The urban experience of the Lebanese Civil War was re-experienced in a way by someone like *ʿAbd al-Karīm*– who lived in both places. Moreover, in addition to this, this way of it should be recalled the importance and the nostalgia for the "destroyed cities" mentioned by Shami in her paper analyzing the Ammani bourgeoisie and their discourses about the city (Shami 2007: 224). The "destroyed cities" such as Jerusalem, Beirut or Baghdad carry a high symbolic capital in the pan-Arabist worldview, that of a borderless Arab World. The Immobility came with the collapse of the pan-Arabist political project, which with the 1967 defeat constituted the "twilight" of the project creating a united sovereign state (Dawisha 2003). But in addition to this, the civil war in Jordan in 1970, also known as Black September, the Camp David Accords, the Lebanese Civil War, and its consequences, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the Oslo and Wadi Araba accords constituted the accumulated disappointments. Apart from making a whole ideology fall apart, these events led to the configuration of the space and the interconnectedness of locales becoming more and more dispersed. Razzāz brings up a few locales in a collapsing and fragmented world full of uncertainties:

فسيفساء مشظاة. عالم تخترقه ملايين الشروخ. لا يقين سوى الأطياف. الحواس
مشوشة. والذاكرة مرضوضة. شوارع بيروت المحدودبة تفضي الى شوارع عمان
المنهارة من رؤوس الجبال، الى شوارع البصرة المنتفضة رفضا وهولا. ورانية
تراقب هذا الزلزال المدمر والأرض التي تميد.. على شاشة التلفزيون.. وتصفن

*Dispersed mosaics. A world pierced by millions of cracks. No certainty but only spectra. The senses are distorted. And the memory is frayed. The narrow streets of Beirut lead to the collapsing streets of Amman from the tops of the hills to the streets of Basra, which are revolting in refusal and fear. Rania watches this devastating earthquake and the earth that lays... on the TV screen mentally absent* (Razzāz 1994: 98)

The translocality is multidirectional. As it is seen from the previous example, Beirut is simultaneously present in Amman through the lived experience and memory of the protagonist of the city who lived in Beirut, as well as lived in Iraq, bringing Basra riots against the Ba'ath authority in 1991. Another direction of the translocality of Amman is that it received forcibly displaced people, who provide this character of refugee city which Razzāz appreciates.

شوارع تضطرب في الزحام. لاجئون يلوذون بعمان. عشرات الالاف
بسياراتهم وأحلامهم المتكررة وكوابيسهم المتنقلة كمرض موروث من سلالة الى
سلالة.

*Streets tumble in crowds. Refugees seek refuge in Amman. Tens of thousands with their cars, recurring dreams, and mobile nightmares as a disease inherited from generation to another* (Razzāz 1994: 98)

The link with neighboring countries made Amman at least a station for the refugees if not a state of permanent temporality as architect Saba Innab described the situation of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan (Innab 2016). However, there is another aspect that is important to recall. The dreams and nightmares are about the collapse of the pan-Arabist worldview, which aimed at achieving emancipation, and a borderless and united Arab world. In this context of collapse is where Amman begins to appear. In this novel, references to other cities and Arab countries are frequent. For example, in *al-Šaẓāyā*, despite the geographical pessimism, *'Abd al-Karīm* suffers from hallucinations, in which the internationalist and anti-imperialist solidarity are recovered. One of these hallucinations comes in a public poetry reading in the Roman Amphitheatre of Amman. He envisions the masses shouting slogans against US imperialism and in favor of Iraq, Palestine, and Somalia. From where he goes in front of the intercontinental hotel, which he refers to by its older name – Jordan Hotel– and yells and protests in front of the building which was once the US Embassy in Amman. He is

told there that the Embassy moved to ʿAbdūn one year before – one of the newer high-end neighborhoods in West Amman– and then he recovers his awareness (Razzāz 1994: 132-134). Amman hence is shown to have a bi-directional link with other locales, in which the novel's character projects that Amman is engaged with the anti-colonial struggle, and at the same time, receives the forced migrants and exiles. The novel recounts a story of a highly respected intellectual and political figure who finds Amman as a refuge. Although this character is not named by his name, there are a few examples of renowned non-Jordanian Arab intellectuals who lived in Amman at that time. Such is Mahmoud Darwish, who lived between Amman and Ramallah from 1995 until his last days. Another example is the Iraqi poet ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī who lived in Amman for some years in the nineties, *al-Ustāḏ al-ʿimlāq* after long years of activity in political struggle finds in Amman a haven after moving around:

هذا ما تبقى من أحلامي النبيلة الفارعة. لا وحدة عربية، ولا تحرير فلسطين ولا اشتراكية. فقط.. ركن صغير الوذ به كي أنفق اخر سنتين من عمري بهدوء وسكينة (...) لكني تلقيت من عمان اشعارا يقول انه بوسعي الاستجارة بها من دون مقابل أو ثمن

*This is what remains of my lofty dreams. Neither Arab unity, nor the liberation of Palestine, nor socialism. Only.. a small corner in which to spend the last two years of my life in peace and tranquillity (...), but I received a notice from Amman saying that I can find shelter in it without paying or giving anything in exchange* (Razzāz 1994: 119-120)

Hence, Amman is a sort of a last resort, with which the openness made that exiled Jordanians come back to their country, as well as other exiled people from neighboring countries. The rediscovery of Amman as a city, and as a debate is coeval to the fall of the political pan-Arabist project, and the new openness. It is worth recalling that in *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* the protagonist of *Jumʿah*'s metafiction– *Nuʿmān al-ʿAmmūnī*– is a returnee as well, who finds refuge in Amman, after his long travels faraway, who at the same time, tries to re-engage with Amman's political history and memory, which is engaged with pan-Arabism (Razzāz 1990: 20).

b) The Lifting of Martial Law, and Democratization

After decades of banning political parties, democratic openness created momentum in which political parties proliferated. In *al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ* it is said that "عمان تعج بمشاريع الأحزاب" [*Amman is teeming with party projects*] (Razzāz 1994: 20-21). Nonetheless, more parties didn't mean a better democratic life. According to Kathrine Rath, the democratization

process that Jordan achieved "is not a democracy but a democratized form of rule" (Rath 1994: 553). The regime worked to debilitate the political parties through several stratagems -on the one hand, and on the other, to avoid a Palestinian majority in the lower house. As Jilian Schwedler stated:

> [E]lections were seen as a mechanism for political control is evidenced not only by the direct testimony of those involved in the decision, but by subsequent debates concerning the particularities of the elections, including timing, the location of district lines, district magnitudes, and the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups, such as Leftists and the Muslim Brotherhood. Of particular concern was how Palestinians, who by all but official counts constituted more than half of Jordan's population, could be prevented from gaining a majority (Schwedler 2006: 50)

Many scholars looked at the tribalization of politics as if it were a Jordanian sign of identity, which aimed to reduce the political agency of Palestinian and strengthen the tribes which are often considered one of the pillars of the regime. Despite this argument being valid, it is not sufficient, since it doesn't take into account the sociological, urban, and political processes involved in this phenomenon which at the same time are intercontextual. In regards to the weakening of the political parties in Europe, Enzo Traverso describes the crisis of the traditional party model of the nineties in Europe, where the parties lost their political identity and became more of an electoral machine, and at the same time, the left lost its social and cultural basis. This process described by Traverso leads to a conservationist turn (Traverso 2017: 9). In the case of Jordan there are similarities with the processes described by Traverso, whereas both tribalism and Islamism became in vogue, displacing the pan-Arabist and leftist parties. In *al-Šaẓāyā*,it is brought as an example of this loss of political identity, which came when the persecuted parties became legalized and coopted:

إنه المؤتمر العلني الأول للحزب الشيوعي الأردني. الشيوعي يعقد مؤتمره في الملكي.

> *It is the first public assembly of the Jordanian Communist Party. The Communist held his assembly in the royal cultural centre* (Razzāz 1994: 86)

In the mentioned meeting a Syrian Communist leader spoke under a portrait of the King, while he was praising Hafiz al-Assad. ʿAbd Al-Karīm recounts that the communists were divided between those who were favourable to alliances with the Islamists and those who saw in the Islamists a retrograde force that should be combatted (Razzāz 1990: 87). ʿAbd al-Karīm himself experiences this change, where he constantly struggles and sticks to Nasserism, but at the same time, he starts to lean towards religiosity and political Islam.

As anticipated before, democratic openness is important for this study for two main reasons. The first is that cultural production was less surveilled, and the second and most important, is

that the political misrepresentation of Amman, contributed to the exclusion of Amman as valid identification, and perpetuated its misrecognition. In other words, the electoral system contributed to the devaluation of the symbolic capital of Ammani, and in contrast, arose the symbolic capital of the tribes and the other Jordanian towns. Hence, the electoral laws as we mentioned earlier, diminished the bigger cities, and at the same time, promoted identity politics, where kinship loyalties were stronger than the militant ones. For example, one of the characters of *al-Šaẓāyā wal fusayfisāʾ* wonders if:

هل يخفي رفاقنا المرشحون انتماءهم الحزبي عن العشيرة؟ بعض العشائر ترغب في أن تحتكر مرشحها لا أن تتقاسمه مع الحزب

*Will our comrades and candidates hide their party affiliation from the tribe? Some tribes want to keep their candidate to themselves and not share him with the part*y (Razzāz 1994: 73)

However, in regard to the ministerial configuration, which is not elected-the King appoints the prime minister and he takes charge of choosing the ministers. It is usually considered that it tends to take into account the different geographical backgrounds of the ministers. As Ryan Curtis explains:

[T]he Hashemite strategy is not a matter of divide and rule, but a deft royal policy of pluralism and inclusion. This can be seen in the appointment of prime ministers and cabinets, in which Palestinians will be included; however, East Jordanian majorities will usually be maintained. Royal cabinet appointments are also usually mindful of geographic differences and tend to carefully include figures from different regions of the country and from various influential tribes. (Curtis 2011)

Pluralism and inclusion according to Curtis, is not coming out from inclusivity, but rather is a system of favouritism, where the different groups shall compete to obtain slices of power, reinforced by a pluralist identity discourse that centralizes the institution of the monarchy in the everyday life of people. In *al-Šaẓāyā*, he geography of the ministerial configurations and the different regions' competitivity is brought up. Amman, as a geographical spot is inexistent, since "nobody is from Amman," it is not taken into consideration. Amman is absent not only on an individual level but also officially (Kassay 2013). The following excerpts show how Amman "remains outside of geography":

وسمير طار عقله حين شكلوا الوزارة الجديدة. بلغه أن رئيس الحكومة راعى المسألة الجغرافية والجهوية والعشائرية. عمان.. طبعا.. تبقى خارج الجغرافيا والعشيرة والجهوية. ولا محل لها من اعراب التشكيل الوزاري. لأن عمان لا أصل لها، انها مدينة القومية العربية الفاضلة!

*Samir got mad when they formed the new ministry. He got to know that the Prime Minister had into consideration the geographical, regional, and tribal question. Amman, of course, remains outside geography, tribe, and regionalism. It has no place in the ministerial configuration; this is because Amman has no origin, and it is the utopian Pan-Arabist city* (Razzāz 1994: 13)

The disregard of Amman is a political byproduct coming from the configuration of a sort of a "market" where different identities compete to have better positions and political influence. This Jordanian version of identity politics has an impact on the different identities, and geographical origins, making them compete with each other, and re-centering the power of the monarchy, at the expense of a "civic unity". Appadurai explains the divisive effect of identity politics which could be applied to the Jordanian case:

Identity politics of this sort is having a major impact because the identities of difference are competing more successfully for people's time and passion than the tired identity of formal, national citizenship. Without doubt, this impact is divisive. Identity politics tends to disrupt established ideologies of civic unity and moral solidarity in ways which often make people angry and anxious (Appadurai 1999: 195)

The government's misrecognition of Amman enhances other identifications. The novel recounts how one character, despite living in Amman, negates the city. Amman hence is considered to be "مقطوعة من شجرة" (lit. cut off the tree) [*maqṭūʿah min al-šajarah*] (Razzāz 1994: 8-9). The expression is usually referred to describe somebody who has no family, is unprotected, or forsaken. Hence, Amman in this system is not able to provide benefits to those who claim to be Ammani. According to architect Yasir Sakr, Amman fails to protect its citizens, in contrast to the tribe or town of origin (Sakr 2013). Hence, the dysregulation of Amman at a political level causes disaffection of the citizens with their city. In this regard, as we mentioned in the introduction, schoolboys and girls in Amman do not know who the prime minister (Shannak 2011) is, and at the same time as Luigi Achilli points out, the refugees have a lack of interest in politics, since the political participation is "patron-client" based (Achilli 2014).

Moreover, another aspect of the disregard for Amman is that it is considered to have no origin. However, despite its novelty as a city, it remains older than the Jordanian state, and the Hashemite presence in Jordan. Arjun Appadurai and John Holston state that:

Although one of the essential projects of nation-building has been to dismantle the historic primacy of urban citizenship and to replace it with the national, cities remain the strategic arena for the development of citizenship (Appadurai & Holston 1999)

Hence, the misrecognition of Amman and the big cities as a strategy, where the different identities and geographical origins compete, and this becomes a contest of victimhood, where the different groups claim to be excluded, if not materially- such as though denial of services

and resources– but symbolically as it is with the large cities. In the following example from *al-Šaẓāyā*, a militant in a party- whose last name is a nisba to the Palestinian city of Safad – suggests redoubling the seats of Zarqa and Amman. This suggestion has a negative reaction from his colleague- whose *nisba* to Shawbak, a town in southern Jordan– who reproaches the need of being overrepresented since the south is impoverished and underdeveloped.

إذ اقترح الرفيق ناصر الصفدي مضاعفة عدد مقاعد الزرقاء وعمان التي تضمان مليوني نسمة، مع مقاعد الجنوب التي يقل عدد سكانها عن مائة ألف نسمة. انتفض أحمد الشوبكي كالملسوع وزعق:

- أكاد اتنشق رائحة إقليمية في هذا الكلام. صحيح ان مدن الجنوب تفتقر الى كثافة سكانية. لكن فقرها وحاجتها الى خدمات والحرمان الذي تعانيه تحتم زيادة عدد نوابها. (ثم هاجم العاصمة عمان واتهمها بالتهام حصة الأسد من غنيمة الوطن) وذكر أن أهل الجنوب هم الذين ساهموا في الخيار الأردني نحو الديمقراطية.

> *Comrade Nāṣir al- Ṣafadī suggested doubling the number of seats in Zarqa and Amman, which both have two million people, with the seats of the south which has a population of less than one hundred thousand people. Aḥmad al-Šawbakī rose up madly and exclaimed:*
>
> - *I can almost smell a regionalist odor in this speech. It is true that southern cities lack population density, but its poverty, its need for infrastructure, and the deprivation that it suffers from, justifies the need for the increase of its representatives. (Then he attacked the capital, Amman, accusing it of devouring the lion's share of the spoils of the nation) and he mentioned that it was the people of the south who contributed to the Jordanian option towards democracy (Razzāz 1994: 30)*

The accusation of Amman of having the "lion's share of the spoils of the nation" shows this aspect of competitiveness whereas a group or a location has more legitimacy to govern and access power and be representative of the whole country. Moreover, as we mentioned before, the disregard of Amman is not only because of the majority Palestinian population, but also to keep away doctrinal political parties. In *al-Šaẓāyā* it is said that:

القبائل أشد بأسا وشوكة من الأحزاب المشظاة

> *The tribes are stronger and tougher than the fragmented parties (Razzāz 1994: 91)*

In the novels, there are several examples showing a sort of mutual exclusivity, whereas Amman is antithetic to Jordan- hence not national, and the tribes and other towns are shown as antithetic to modernity. For example, *al-Šaẓāyā* makes a comparison which shows that while in the nineteenth century Cairo was receiving Sarah Bernhardt at the opera, the Bedouin tribes –in what is today is Jordan– were assaulting the Hijaz Railway since they considered it

a threat to their livelihoods, that depended on accompanying pilgrims on their way to Mecca (Razzāz 1994: 11). To this affirmation he comments:

<div dir="rtl">القبائل والطوائف بديل أحزاب الطبقة</div>

*Tribes and sects are an alternative to class-based parties* (Razzāz 1994: 11)

c) Nostalgia for the fifties and selective Amnesia

Nostalgia could be understood as fear or loss of status. but it is also a defence mechanism, as Svetlana Boym stated, "[n]ostalgia inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (Boym 2001: XIV). Both novels were published in a moment of turbulence in Jordan and the region, and both retook a political, intellectual and urban memory of Amman.

In the novel, *Jumʿah* fantasizes about writing how he will walk through the streets of Amman and recover Jordanian political memory, by meeting political figures and pan-Arabist and leftist intellectuals who had an active political life in Jordan in the mid-twentieth century. The recalling of the political past is also present in *al-Šaẓāyā wal fusayfisāʾ* as well as in *al-Ḏākirah al-Mustabāḥah* whose protagonist recognizes his inability to overcome the fifties, the Nasser days, and refuses to acknowledge the present days (Razzāz 1994: 14). Nostalgic and depressive characters could be seen in other of Razzāz's works, especially in the intertwined relationship between the assertion of Amman, and the fall of pan-Arabism.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning *al-Ḏākirah al-mustabāḥah* by Razzāz (1991) [*The profaned memory*]. It recounts the story of ʿAbd Al-Raḥīm, a retiree who lives in *Jabal ʿAmmān* in the time of the democratic openness in 1989. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm has barely any contact with people except with ex-militants, and partisans who fought in different revolts and wars such as, in *Hayyat al-Karak* (1910), the battle of *Maysalūn* (1920) the Druze Revolt (1925) and the Palestinian revolt (1936) to mention a few. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm and his friends, according to the neighborhood's shopkeeper, have in common "الهزائم والملل والشيخوخة" [*the defeats, boredom and the eld*]. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm feels nostalgia for the 50's and complains about the loss of memory and about the difference between 1989 politics and the politics of the fifties. The plot is set during the 1989 elections in Jordan. The novel shows the ideological shifts, and how these ex-combatants face the contradictions of what they fought for with the newer times, which are characterized by capitalist societies and consumerist lifestyles, the co-option of the intellectual by the authorities, and the shifts in geographical

horizons, where the US and the Gulf countries become the new hegemonic powers after the fall of the socialist bloc and the Pan-Arabist project.

An example of the feeling of loss is that one of the characters laments: "بلدنا بلا ذاكرة" [*Our country has no memory*] ( Razzāz 1991:8). An example of the loss of symbolic capital, is that one of candidates in the 1989 elections did not ask for the support of *ʿAbd al-Raḥīm* in the electoral campaign– who had a long history of political engagement in the fifties (Razzāz 1991: 40). After complaining that no new candidate looked for his help, he who was a "star" in the streets realises that:

"لم أكن نجما، كنت مجرد شهاب ومض خطفا في سماء الوطن.. ثم اختفى في العتمة"

*I wasn't a star; I was just a shooting star that flashed quickly in the sky of the homeland... and afterwards disappeared in the darkness* (Razzāz 1991: 33).

The nostalgia for the fifties is not a mere lament over the past, but it is about the loss of a political momentum, where the leftist and Pan-Arabist parties reached the parliament and formed a coalition government in 1956, which had a short life, to be replaced by the proclamation of martial law until its lifting in 1989. The 1956 elections carry a symbolic value since it constituted the rise of the urbanite middle classes together with the nationalist parties to the detriment of the sheikhs (Anderson 2005: 174). According to Kassay "As late as the fifties, people were aware of one another's geographic background, but they were divided over socio-economic status and political outlook, not geographic origin" (Kassay 2013). The fifties thus constitute a sort of a democratic and a less bordered Arab World lost paradise for many Jordanians.

Part of the nostalgia is also geographical. Back then the West Bank was not occupied yet, and mobility between the two banks was easy. This was highlighted by different writers such as *Ilyās Farkūḥ* who stated that he belongs to the "الجيل الأردني الفلسطيني الذي عاش جغرافيا واحدة، ونما وعيه على جغرافيا واحدة" [*The Jordanian-Palestinian generation who lived one geography, and his consciousness was raised into one geography*] (Ṣāliḥ, 2016, 61). It is also frequently remembered as a sign of democratic quality, and non-parochialism in politics, that the communist Yaʿqūb Zayyādīn, a Christian from Karak, obtained a seat through the Jerusalem circumscription in the 1957 parliament.

For Razzāz, the nostalgia for the fifties is recurrent in his works: It is central in *al-Ḏākirah al-mustabāḥah, Jumʿah al-Qifārī and al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ*. However, Razzāz is not the only novelist nostalgic about the fifties. The streets of Amman and the other cities and towns

played a very important role in the political life of the country. The streets of Amman were very engaged with anti-colonial domestic and Arab politics as some authors ʿ remember in their "city-memoirs" (Munīf 1994; al-Najjār 2018 ), or as it was recreated in Ziyād Qāsim's novel *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah* (1990), a novel which gives protagonism to the political hustle of the streets of Amman in the fifties and sixties. This historical novel has a time arc set between the post-World War II period until the 1967 defeat, where Amman was interconnected with other Arab cities, hosted different political formations, and the masses were engaged politically. Nostalgia for the fifties hence, is not only a nostalgia of a past time but also of the space and its political potentialities, as well as a longing for the interconnectedness between Arab cities. As Enzo describes the "Left melancholy":

> Left melancholy does not necessarily mean nostalgia for real socialism and other wrecked forms of Stalinism. Rather than a regime or an ideology, the Lost object can be the struggle for emancipation as historical experience that deserves recollection and attention in spite of its fragile, precarious and ephemeral duration. In this perspective, melancholy means memory and awareness of the potentialities of the past: a fidelity to the emancipatory promises of revolution (Traverso 2017: 52)

In this regard, the nostalgic aspects of the novels are loyal to "emancipatory promises", and at the same time, are aware of the "potentialities of the past" as Traverso pointed out. For example, in *al-Ḏākirah al-mustabāḥah, Munqiḏ* asks his father about how the Baghdad pact fell from Amman (Razzāz 1991: 44). Either it is *Munqiḏ* from *al-Ḏākirah al-mustabāḥah,* or the protagonist of *Jumʿa al-Qifārī: Yawmiyyāt Nakirah,* by revisiting the memory of the fifties they are bringing back the "lost object", the city and its politics.

However, some of the characters of the different novels present a defeatist tone, and some of them bear a sort of selective amnesia, whereas their militant past is hidden, due to the aftermath of the eighties-nineties transition and crisis. In the transition, the new rules of the market political militancy are more of a stigma, a past to be hidden. There are some cases where selective amnesia is present. An ex-comrade who held a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from London, isolated himself, boycotting the external world, and the "tragic militant past" by working hard as a mechanic under the cars. He was asking to not be reminded of the "old days" (Razzāz 1994:19). The repudiation either of a past of militancy, or militant belonging are signs of an alteration in the symbolic and social capital in the field of politics, and instead, belonging to the tribe is taking over from militancy.

Another lament over a more recent past appears in both novels. It is a nostalgia addressed towards the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA) during the period of martial law. The Association constituted a political space of resistance under martial law. Nonetheless,

according to Hattar, the association lost its literary component, in favor of being a political platform. Hattar adds that with the "democratic transformation" of 1989, the JWA "lost its bright", and nobody needed it anymore (Hattar 2002: 106). The nostalgia in the novels comes from its loss of power and the dispersion of its members in the political parties.

For example, *Jumʿah* had a depressive outbreak after the military governor ordered the shutting down and confiscation of the Jordanian Writers Association (Razzāz 1990: 61). Meanwhile, in *al-Šaẓāyā*, once the Association is reopened, ithe fact that it has become empty, in contrast with the days of martial law, is constantly mentioned. For example, a character laments that before the democratization he used to work better. Similarly, on more than one occasion in *al-Šaẓāyā,* the secretary of the JWA appears complaining about its emptiness, in contrast with the martial law days in which the Association was always crowded and busy (Razzāz 1994: 6). The democratization strategically fragmented the potential challenges to the regime, by easing the creation of new parties that at the end of the day already lost their power due to the electoral system.

With democratization, the political parties proliferated. In *al-Qifārī* entering politics was a means to kill boredom (Razzāz 1990: 21) and in *al-Šaẓāyā*, joining a political party was a means of socialisation and killing time (Razzāz 1994: 27). But in neither case, was it a platform to participate in politics.

The nostalgia for the fifties is a triple nostalgia, one for political agency, the other for the city being a tool of political transformation, and for the interconnectedness between Arab cities. As Betty Anderson in the case of the fifties, "throughout the decade, the opposition influenced government decision-making from outside, via street politics, and then from inside the halls of government itself" (Anderson 2005: 11). The street politics of Amman were interlinked with the politics in the region and was a "sign of identity" of the Amman of the fifties and before that it is related to the political moment, in addition to the mobility within the region, as Seteney Shami recounts:

> [T]he political demonstrations and protests that took place in response to events in Syria, Iraq, and especially Palestine. In addition to the influence of ideologies such as Arab nationalism and Islamism, the identification of the people of Amman with regional events had a personal nature since they were often recently arrived from those very cities and countries in which significant events were taking place (Shami 2007: 221)

To sum up, the nostalgia in the presented novel is multi-layered. It is an urban nostalgia, but it is also political, and geographical as well. This nostalgia is triggered by a moment in which the urban, and the political are belittled, and in addition to this, a political-geographical configuration– as such it is the pan-Arabist project. In any case, the nostalgia is addressed to a

space where it is possible to engage in politics and in the public sphere, whether it be the streets of Amman, or in the JWA under martial law. The shrinking of spaces of political participation has opened up a textual space, in which the bygone spaces are recovered. In this sense, bringing nostalgia to the novels is a tactical operation that challenged the new urban, and political configurations of the transition of the 1980s and 1990s.

2.5 Conclusions of Chapter II

Misrepresenting Amman politically reduced the participation of ideological political formations at the expense of strengthening clientelistic and identity politics. This political misrepresentation entailed belittling the symbolic and social capital of those who claim to be "Ammani". However, in a sense, the political misrepresentation of Amman contributed to an over-misrepresentation of Amman in the novels as well as in other cultural productions. These novels highlighted the alienation of the Ammani, as well as the political life of the new democracy, and the urban nostalgia. In the case of Amman, the alienation of Amman in the novels is not that of the modernist alienation, but rather, is an alienation which is produced via a political strategy, which is the misrepresentation. Belonging to Amman is not only a matter of territorial attachment alone but it is produced politically. As Shami puts it:

[I]n the Jordanian case the regime has undertaken to create itself at the expense of the nation and the city at the expense of urbanism. The historical contingency that is Amman, therefore, has to be understood in a particular context of economy, state-building, and cultural production (Shami 2007: 230)

In this sense, among the "expenses" that Amman had to take during the democratization process that reduced the political parties' power also affected. The misrepresentation of Amman in that context was a strategy in the De Certeau sense which is:

[T]he calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clienteles," "targets," or "objects" of research) (De Certeau 1984: xix)

Hence, the political misrepresentation of Amman, writing about Amman, and pointing at its identity, political engagement, as well as history and memory, could be understood as a "tactic" used by the weak and disempowered who struggle with making sense of his world. In De Certeau words, tactic is:

A calculated action is determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power (De Certeau 1984: 36-37)

In this case, writing about Amman is "determined by the absence of a proper locus"; whereas the absence was produced politically, however, the presence of the locus is being regained textually, in which the political weight of Amman is remembered, its urban life recomposed, and its interconnection with the regional poles are strengthen.

As this chapter showed, Amman started to appear in the transition of the 1980s to the 1990s, and Amman was present in the debates of that processual turning point at different scales. The presence of Amman came up with the discussion of citizenship, political participation, the place of Amman among other cities, the cityness of Amman, and the identity of the city and its inhabitants. In this sense, it could be considered that the emergence of Amman in literature, as well as bringing its urban, and political issues to the fore, as a "literary boom of Amman". The literary boom of Amman is not a self-referential one. This chapter has shown that speaking about Amman, entails speaking about other cities. The re-appropriation of Amman and bringing it as a theme either artistically, or intellectually in the literature in part relies in part upon the returnees such as Razzāz himself, Ilyās Farkūḥ, Hānī Ḥūrānī, Jamāl Nājī among others.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the novels provide an archive and historicized the production of space in a city (Tanoukhi 2009), and hence attitudes and effects could be mapped in different periods of ongoing urban processes. The discussed novels, for example, showed how the older neighborhoods were changing their class composition, while the agrarian westward areas of the city were experiencing a massive urbanization process due to the oil boom. At the same time, the novels reflected on how this process was felt by the different characters.

# 3. Chapter III: The Narrative of the Urban Genesis of Amman

This chapter will point at the cultural policies of the Greater Amman Municipality (henceforth GAM) and more specifically, the proclamation of Amman as the Capital of Arab Culture in 2002. It will also analyze the representation of Amman in two novels published in 2003- *al-Šahbandar* [*The Chief Merchant*] by Hāšim Ġarāybah and *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* [*The Deluge Logbooks*] by Samīḥah Ḫrīs. Both novels deal with the late 1930's and emphasize Amman's hospitality, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism, which welcomes different people from different geographical origins, beliefs, and ethnicities. Similarly, there are several thematic axes of these two novels. Most notably, the two works highlight mercantilism as an enabler of the urbanity of Amman. On the other hand, the city of Amman is emphasized as a hospitable city, where people of different origins and creeds coexist in harmony and find in Amman a haven. Similarly, Amman is shown as a city inter-connected with the cities of its geographical environment. Moreover, both novels not only refer to the past of modern Amman but also make references to the caliphal Amman, Hellenistic Amman, and Amman in the pre-Hellenistic period, which gives a transhistorical character to a city usually described as a "city without origin" (مدينة بلا أصل) as Razzāz recorded in his novel (Razzāz 1994).

As seen from the publishing date, as well as the theme of the novels, there is a noticeable correlation between the speeches of the town hall and those of the novels. It should be noted that the support and sponsorship of literary works was one of the tasks carried out by the cultural department of the city council since the mid-nineties, meanwhile, the 2002 Capital of Arab Culture was one of the highest moments of the activity of the municipality through its cultural directorate. In this context, the aforementioned novels appear.

However, it should be noted that these novels are not the only novels or literary texts dealing with the past of the city. It is of interest to point at the differences they have by comparing them with the historical novels published in the late eighties such as *Sulṭānah* (1988) by Ġālib Halasā and *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah* (1990) by Ziyād Qāsim, as well as pointing at non-fiction literature which has Amman as a theme is what will be labelled as "city-memoirs" – whereas

the author recounts how the city was during their childhood and youth. The 2003 novels carry with them the GAM visions of Amman. Both the GAM and the 2003 novels foreground a narration of Amman's history and memory, which gives the city a transhistorical character that is the hallmark of the Ammani identity.

The cultural directorate of the GAM had the objective to "to undertake the Municipality's newly self-imposed role of shaping Amman's missing identity" (Sakr, 2013: 331): One of the main tools of this directorate included the sponsorship of cultural events with a large emphasis on literary works, and secondary interests included, but not limited to, a public space which holds cultural buildings such as a museum, theatre, art gallery, and a conservatoire.

This chapter will show how the novels were part of urban policy, and at the same time, how these urban policies were conditioned by previous discourses that the novel adopted in the previous decade. It will trace the cultural support of literature by the GAM from the mid-nineties until 2002. By doing this, the institution contextualizes a literary trend that deals with Amman's history while simultaneously showing how the GAM took an active role in promoting the novels, a narrative, and an identity for the city during the transition from the nineties towards the 2000s. Similarly, it is important to point to some other novels which received the attention of the GAM by republishing them.

This chapter will argue that the idea of the "lack of origin" of the city, or Amman's identity crisis conditioned the municipal cultural policy as well as how Amman is represented in the 2003 novels. The novels claimed that Amman is a city, contrary to the common opinion that "Amman is not a city" by highlighting the interconnection of Amman with other cities. A city that is open and welcoming, and so it always was in history. It will be shown that the novels interconnect urban transformations and have an effect on how the city is lived, understood, and experienced.

This chapter will show how the novels took part in an urban process, at the beginning of the 2000s, when the major Neoliberal urban transformation began to be carried out, and at the same time, these novels tried to create, enhance an urban identity, which is widely miss-acknowledged. Both visions, of the GAM and the novels, re-centered the city of Amman. Amman began to be present on the tourist map, and the older and central

neighborhoods in Amman began to receive the attention of Ammanis, and at the same time, these neighborhoods started a gentrification process that is ongoing up to the present day.

A geocritical reading will show how Amman is represented in the 2003 novels, and how these novels  engage in the broader urban debates regarding the city of Amman such as its historicity, authenticity and "lack of identity". Through geocritical reading, the chapter will show the  aspects of Amman's history and memory that were celebrated, such as the market, multiculturalism, and hospitality. The chapter will argue that these novels were part of an ongoing urban process, which was creating a narrative that qualifies the city to be a city, specifically, a global one, and rooted in history. Similarly, the chapter will  show how Amman's past in the last decades produced a number of fiction and non-fiction works, and with this, to locate the 2003 novels in the broader intertextual network.

Methodologically, the chapter will be centred on Amman, oscillating between Amman in the novel, and the Amman outside the novel. The city of Amman at the beginning of the millennium, was looking to its past, or better said, to a skimmed version of its past, in which the hustle and bustle of the political street is rather muted, and yet the hustle and bustle of the market persists. Moreover, it was noticed that paratextual elements of the novels stated the sponsorship of the GAM, or even directly published by *Manšūrāt amānat ʿAmmān*, the publishing house of the municipality such as the first edition of *Dafātir al-ṭawafān*. And at the same time, while researching the literary texts that deal with Amman's past, it was noticed that the 2003 books carried discursive, and structural similarities, and in the same way, Amman's past is celebrated. In this regard, it was necessary to move inside and outside the novels, and see what position they had in the intertextual network as well as within the urban processes of Amman.

The urban transformations of the 2000s called the attention of many scholars. However, it is worth explaining some of the works which pointed at culture, identity, and their discourses in these processes. Although the link between city and novel was present in the scholars' discussions, it lacked a more intertextual, contextual and extratextual critique of them. In Western academia, literature from Jordan, generally speaking, did not receive much attention. Similarly, the cultural policies of the Greater Amman Municipality and the 2002 Amman Capital of Arab Culture are scarcely researched. Moreover, it is worth noting that "Cities of culture" is a widely researched topic in the context of Europe and other regions. However, despite the fact that UNESCO together with the Arab League have launched the program

since 1995, the scholarship in the context of Arab cities is rather scarce, of which, Deborah Stevenson's *Cities of Culture: a Global Perspective* could be mentioned as an exception in which she points at cases of Baghdad (2013), Damascus (2008), and Jerusalem (2009) but not Amman (Stevenson 2014). In the following pages, this chapter will discuss the existing literature on the cultural policy of the GAM, the 2002 Amman Arab Capital of Culture, and the historical novels set in Amman.

Anthropologist and scholar Seteney Shami points out that for "the first time" the municipality made efforts in writing the history of the city in the context of the 2002 Amman Arab Capital of Culture and mentioned the re-edition of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf's book Sīrat Madīnah. For her, it is a paradox that:

> Amman begins to find its specificity and to write its history, not to emphasize its uniqueness but rather to claim a legitimate place among the array of Arab cities that continue to provide the norm and set the standard of city life and culture (Shami 2007: 229-230)

In her study, she does not analyze the novels under discussion in this chapter, but the chapter will show how the novels emphasized Amman as what will be described further as a "city among cities". Nonetheless, unlike what was stated by Shami, in 2002 the particularities of Amman were not emphasized. The chapter will show that Amman, apart from being a city among cities, has its uniqueness in that it is a welcoming city.

Architect Yasir Sakr provided a critical analysis of the GAM municipality policies both in terms of culture and infrastructure, and how the construction of the city hall and a network of tunnels in the city fragmented the city, and hence, defeated the purpose of the cultural directorate, that aimed to create a cohesive identity for the city (Sakr 2013). In his account, he pointed at literature as one of the significant components of the cultural policy of the Municipality and pointed at the survey conducted by Muʾnis al-Razzāz which shows that Amman was absent generally speaking from the Jordanian literature before the nineties (Razzāz 1996; Sakr 2013). Moreover, his paper points to an important aspect of the GAM's governance that is worth mentioning, which is that mayors are not elected by the citizens of Amman but appointed by the Prime Minister. Mayors do their best to be remembered through the infrastructure monumentalization such as bridges, tunnels, and bypasses, and in the case of Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī, the city hall complex. As Sakr put it "the tunnel or bridge serves as an expedient means to monumentality that would appeal to the unelected mayors whose office terms may end at any moment" (Sakr 2013: 341). This aspect acts against the policies that aim at creating a collective identity, which he calls "cultural amalgamation" (Sakr, 2013: 331). According to him, these policies failed in their objective due to the monumentalization

of the City Hall and infrastructure, which according to him accelerated the urban fragmentation of Amman (Sakr 2013: 342). Sakr also states that the conferences about Amman carried on during the nineties influenced the cultural urban policies of Amman, such as the nostalgic drift of the municipal views (Sakr 2013).

Khirfan and Momani's paper aimed at researching the image of the city among the urban dwellers of Amman as well as the image of Amman's brand in two branding exercises: the 2002 Amman as Capital of Arab Culture, and the 2009 centenary of the establishment of the first municipal council in 1909. According to them, the 2002 branding campaign highlighted the ancient history of Amman, while the 2009 campaign focused on the contemporary one (Khirfan & Momani 2013). According to the two researchers, the interest of the GAM in the city is unprecedented. As the two researchers observed, the 2002 campaign focused on the Roman, Greek, and early Islamic heritage of the city (Khirfan & Momani 2013). This interest had an objective of putting Amman's downtown on the touristic map. The chapter will show the re-appropriation of Amman's ancient history in the novels, but it is connected to modern Amman and its market. As will be further explored, the 2003 novels adopt Amman's history and link it to modern Amman, and hence we can talk about "2002 novels" as a label differentiated from other literary texts which have Amman's past as regard, such as other historical novels, or what will be referred to in this chapter as "city-memoire" or "city-biography".

Najib Hourani's paper pointed at the touristification of Amman's downtown, and the involvement of international entities such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). For JICA, the State, and the Municipality Amman, "lacked a historical centre to market to the global travel industry" (Hourani 2016: 36). In their projections which did not take into consideration the inhabitants and business owners in downtown Amman, they attempted to create a transhistorical identity of what is Amman and its oldest area (Hourani 2016: 36).

While some of the urban scholars pointed at Amman's literature to a greater or lesser extent, they did not engage in textual analysis. Rami Daher wondered if the Amman literary phenomenon is, "a major shift and transformation in this crisis of identity" (Daher 2008: 44). Similarly, Daher considers that, "This increasing interest in Amman's urban and social history is taking place against a background of neoliberal urban transformations and restructuring which are having a major impact on the people of the city" (Daher 2008: 45) In this chapter, in contrary to Daher's assumption, I will argue that the novels were part –to some extent– of these neoliberal transformations, especially by foregrounding the importance of the market as

well as liberal notions of peace and coexistence. On the other hand, Sakr pointed to the investment in literature carried out by the GAM, as well as to the novelty of Amman as a theme in the Arabic literature from Jordan (Sakr 2013). In this regard, I will show how the GAM projections were matching with the novel's one, which both were carried out during the same time period.

Nūbānī in his monograph dedicated to Amman in the novel acknowledges the importance of the market in *Dafātir al-ṭawafān*, as well as the transculturation process of Amman. And points to the fact that the novel matches with Muḥammad Rafīʿ *Ḏākirat madīnah* (2002) which is a transcription of archival documents, with a fictionalized reading done by the author who is an urban historian, novelist, and employee of the GAM (Nūbānī 2013: 32). However, despite the fact that Nūbānī points to the intertextual elements between Rafīʿ's research and Ḫrīs's novel, it neglects the influence of Muḥammad Rafīʿ's *Ḏākirat Madīnah* and Ġarāybah's novel. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the common points between *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* and *al-Šahbandar*, which have a focus on the diversity, and the market as the enabler of urbanity. Another aspect he misses is that he neglects the GAM policies and views, and the 2002 Amman Capital of Arab Culture events. In short, although Nūbānī carried out valuable work studying the representation of Amman in the Arab novels from Jordan, he did not treat the representation extra-textually – as a part of an urban process (Nūbānī 2013).

As previously mentioned, one of the few examples of research produced by Western academia which treated historical novels is one written by Italian scholar Fernanda Fischione. In her contribution, she chooses and analyzes three texts. The first one is *Sulṭānah* (1986) by Ġālib Halasā, a Jordanian who lived in exile in different Arab capitals until his death, and whose books were banned in Jordan. The second is *Sīrat madīnah* (1994) by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf, a non-Jordanian citizen born to a Saudi father and an Iraqi mother in Amman, who spent most of his life in exile. And the third, and last, is *al-Šahbandar* (2003) by Hāšim Ġaraybah who is a Jordanian, who did not experience exile, but rather experienced the regime's repression and was imprisoned on more than one occasion during the martial law years for being a communist militant. Although Fischione acutely raises interesting points in her paper, her conclusions fall into some simplifications, which probably result from a top-down approach to both the city and literature. For Fischione, "the city-focussed novels advocate a pluralistic national ideal that lends itself to voicing the official ideology of the Great Jordanian Family" (Fischione 2020: 252). This conclusion did not take into account much the contextual and extra-textual aspects of the novels, and hence, it fails to see the

novels as a part of urban and social processes, and also misses locating the novels in the literary context of the Ammani novels.

Yet her contribution acknowledges the different positionalities of the authors, but for her their novels are not in dissonance with the discourse of the great Jordanian family. In this regard, one may ask, is it enough that the narrative of the novels is not in dissonance with the "great Jordanian family" does that mean that the novel's discourse is teleological to the monarchy? The problem hence, is rather an epistemological problem that already Betty Anderson pointed out two decades ago, which is that, "Scholars writing about the politics, history, and economy of Jordan have had a difficult time overcoming the view, whether implicitly or explicitly, that the Hashemite royal family is Jordan and Jordan is the Hashemite family" (Anderson 2003: 197).

Similarly, Fischione considers that there is an Amman in the text which is a "mirror of the nation" (Fischione 2020). This affirmation seems to consider that there is a threshold between Amman textually, and Amman outside the text, and thus, misses the real-and-imagined aspects of both the urban and the literary. Moreover, another non-dialectical consideration is that of understanding the Ammani novels as a mere "mirror of the nation". Both ideas are unsophisticated, since on the one hand, novels are not passive recipients which reflect a "reality" outside of it, and on the other hand, her paper understands the literary phenomenon as a "national" one, in which a part of the idea of a "national literature" is an obsolete one, as it misreads the transnational elements of both the novel and the city. Moreover, in her contribution, the Amman outside the text is rather absent, and Amman is treated as practically a metonymy of Jordan. The contribution frames the novels as if they represent the identity of the nation. As it will be shown, the novels celebrate the city, and the identity of the city, where there is hardly any reference to the monarchical institution, nor to the national space, and if anything, a transnational space is celebrated, where Amman is in tune with the decolonial struggles of neighboring countries, and at the same time, is embedded in the territory of Greater Syria (Fischione 2002).

Another piece of research that points at literature and the GAM cultural activity is Harrison Guthorn's book dedicated to the Amman of the British Mandate dedicates a chapter to the prominent Jordanian poet ʿArār (1899-1949) and his relationship with Amman as a poet and as a flâneur. Guthorn points out that in 1999 the Greater Amman Municipality collected ʿArār's poems in a book in honor of his 100th birthday and considered him an " honoured son

of Amman" (Guthorn 2021: Ch.6, para. 4)[4]. The volume however did not collect his poems in which he shows his animosity towards the city of Amman. His hatred of the city stems from the fact that he sees it as a center of colonial authority, and in turn, where the merchant class lives in a bubble isolated from the rest of the nation (Guthorn 2021). The suppression of the Anti-Amman poems is an example of the GAM's efforts to set up a positive narrative and an image of Amman. In the same line, Sulaymān al-Azraʿī a Jordanian short fiction writer and literary critic lamented that a short story he wrote in which he did not show his fondness for the city was not well received in 2002:

لم أستطع أن أحبها ذلك الحب كمدينة بحكم نشأتي القروية. ولهذا كتبت شهادة تشكل مخالفة مرورية في نظام سير شهادات المبدعين الأردنيين في العام ٢٠٠٢، عام إعلان عمان عاصمة للثقافة العربية

*I could not love it too fondly as a city due to my rural upbringing. For this reason, I wrote a testimonial that constituted a traffic infringement in the traffic system of the testimonies of the Jordanian creatives in 2002, the year Amman was declared the capital of Arab culture* (al-Azraʿī 2015: 101 )

His use of the metaphors of "traffic system" denote a trend or a current going on in 2002, and at the same time, the metaphor of infringement denotes an exercise of authority in which writers were allowed "to circulate", or otherwise to be "fined". This example shows an effort that the GAM conducted in order to recreate a narrative of the city that fits with the GAM's views. As seen from the examples, 2002 has been a key year in which a change of image has been carried out through literature, and in this context, the novels under discussion in this chapter should be read oscillating between intra-textual and extra-textual readings.

The 2003 novels have few common thematic axes: The two works highlight mercantilism as an enabler of the urbanity of Amman. Another important highlight in the novel is that the city of Amman is celebrated as a hospitable city, where people of different origins and creeds coexist in harmony and find in Amman a haven. Similarly, Amman is shown as a city interconnected with the cities of its geographical environment. Moreover, both novels not only refer to the past of modern Amman, but also, they make references to the early Islamic Amman, Hellenistic, and pre-Hellenistic period, which gives a transhistorical character to a city whose origin is frequently questioned.

Analyzing how novels operated in the transition from the nineties to the 2000's, and how these novels carry a specific view and imagination about Amman that is matching with the

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[4] The book in question is "*ʿArār šāʿir al-Urdunn wa ʿāšiquhu*" by ʿAbd Allāh Raḍwān

municipality's views in the context of the declaration of Amman as Capital of Arab Culture is key to the chapter, and at the same time, the chapter aims at narrowing the gap in this regard. The structure of this chapter begins with a general overview of key actors in the literary production of Ammani novels, and will now examine the municipal views. These views were influenced by the ongoing debates in the nineties of the last century, and at the same time, these debates generated an image of the city which qualifies Amman as a city and as an identification. In this regard, literature constituted an important element of the municipal cultural policy, and the cultural directorate supported Ammani literary production, especially that which had Amman's history as a focus. For example, did not only support new works, but also supported the re-edition of the complete works of Ġālib Halasā, as well as Ziyād Qāsim among others. In addition to this, an important event that will be pointed out is the proclamation of Amman as a Capital of Arab Culture in 2002, which had its own views on Amman, and the 2003 novels embrace these views.

The second subchapter will point at an interesting literary phenomenon that has Amman's past as a focus, which is what will be labelled as a "City-memoire" or "City-Biography", in which the personal biography or memory of the author is merged with the social memory of the city.

The third subchapter will analyze the common topics in the 2003 novels, which as we referred earlier match with the GAM's projections. I will show how these novels engaged with Amman's past, and how they tried to provide an image, and a definition of what is Amman as a city.

3.1 The Cultural Directorate of the GAM, Ammani novels, and the Amman as the 2002 Arab Capital of Culture

Amman's "crisis of identity" conditioned the cultural policy and literary production. Several efforts were made since the mid-nineties, such as promotion, sponsorship of research, and literary production, as well as public campaigns aiming at creating a collective identity for the Ammanis through the cultural directorate of the Greater Amman Municipality (henceforth GAM). The cultural directorate since its beginnings in the mid-nineties supported literary works, arts, and knowledge production related to Amman. The conferences discussing Amman`s identity influenced the stakeholders in the governance of the city (Sakr 2013).

Literature had a privileged place in the GAM cultural governance. The GAM publishing house edited two literary journals, *Majallat Tāykī* –named after the goddess Tyche, the protector of Philadelphia– which was devoted to women's poetry, and *Majallat ʿAmmān,* a cultural and literary journal[5]. The municipal publishing house, as well as the cultural directorate, promoted different kinds of publications centred on Amman. An example of the GAM's endeavour is the re-edition of Ziyād Qāsim's *Abnāʾ al-qalʿah* in 1996, which was an unknown novel for literary connoisseurs when it was published for the first time in 1990. After its "discovery", it became a widely celebrated novel and was converted into a television series in 2018.

The late Ziyād Qāsim (1945-2007) was an accountant who began to write novels in the mid-eighties of the late century. According to few testimonies, the writer was "discovered" some years after he published his second novel *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah*. The novel recounts the political life of Amman from the end of World War II to 1967. The title of the novel is named after one of the oldest neighborhoods in Amman – *Jabal al-Qalʿah*. At the same time, the different characters of the novels, who live in the aforementioned neighborhood, have connections with other neighborhoods and especially other capitals, such as Beirut, Damascus, or Cairo to mention a few. Similarly, the different characters have different geographical origins, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and at the same time carry different political ideologies. Moreover, the novel does not have fixed protagonists, since they are mobile, where some take more protagonism or lose it throughout the plot, which is affected by political upheavals and socioeconomic shifts.

However, what is interesting about this novel is that it is one of the first "Ammani" novels, and at the same time, the novel didn't have any success initially, to the extent that the author burnt the manuscript of a second part of the novel (Abū Niḍāl 2008: 36). The "discovery" of the novel was arbitrary. Jordanian literary critic Nazīh Abū Niḍāl recounts the anecdote of how he "discovered" it while he was traveling with another Jordanian writer– Faḫrī Qaʿwār– to the United States and asked the latter if he had any book to lend to him since he forgot to carry a book with him. He adds that he didn't know at that point who was the author, and at the same time, refers to the bad quality of the edition (Abū Niḍāl 2008).

In the same way, Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī – ex-Mayor of Amman, who established the previously nonexistent cultural directorate in 1994 – recounts how when he was appointed Mayor he was told about the book and he searched for the book diligently, to the point that even Abū ʿAlī–

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[5] Both journals are nowadays defunct.

one of the most renowned booksellers in Amman back then– told him that the book is out of circulation. Finally, the mayor could find a lonely torn copy in the municipal library (al-ʿAbbādī 2018: 130).

What is interesting about the testimonies is that in addition to Ziyād Qāsim not being so known in the Jordanian literary field, the topic of the book did not raise major interest in the beginning. The lack of initial "success" could be understood due to several actors and factors. The most important one could be that of the position of the author in the literary field, together with the literary infrastructure such as the marketing of the book, the book market, publishing houses etc. However, in addition to the aforementioned factors, it is worth thinking that the lack of initial success is due to the fact that Amman as a theme in the novel was not an appealing topic yet back then– in contrast with the following years and decades.

The novel, as anticipated earlier, gained institutional recognition, where the edition in circulation nowadays in the bookstores and libraries of Amman is the second edition published in 1996, which is a re-printed edition by *Manšūrāt amānat ʿAmmān [the greater Amman municipality editions]* – the publishing house which depends on the cultural directorate of the municipality. In the acknowledgements of the second edition, the author thanks the then-mayor of Amman, Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī saying:

*Had it not been for* [‟لولا تشجيع معاليه ودعمه الخير المشكور لما كان لها أن تولد ثانية„ *the encouragement and support of His Excellency, and his good support, the novel would not have been born again]* (Qāsim 1996: I).

The aforementioned examples showed how agents located in a network made caused a "forgotten" novel to be rescued, and became adopted by the GAM, which especially under the mayoralty of Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī the GAM invested in literature, and culture, since he believed that Amman lacked a "soul", and that culture is the "soul" of the people and the city(al-ʿAbbādī 1995, 2018; Sakr 2013). It is worth mentioning part of his inaugural speech at the ʿAmmān wāqiʿ wa ṭumūḥ (Amman realities and expectations)[67]conference where he mentions the lack of "soul" of Amman:

ان عمان المدينة الجميلة النظيفة، الشامخة تفتقد الروح التي من شأنها- اذا استطعنا استحضارها- إن تكمل صفاتها الاولى، اذا لا بد أن يقترن الجمال بالحيوية، والشموخ بالايقاع النابض المتجدد لحياة سكانها، وهو ما عملنا من أجل الاقتراب من بلوغه منذ اليوم

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[6] As translated by the organizers of the conference
[7] It is worth to recall here, that in this conference Muʾnis al-Razzāz presented a paper titled " ʿAmmān fī al-riwāyah al-urduniyyah" which he surveyed the presence of Amman in the eighties novels that it was mentioned earlier in Chapter 4.

الأول لتسلمي لمهام منصبي، وأخيرا هذا المؤتمر الذي نأمل أن يخرج بصيغ تفضي إلى

آفاق أكثر رحابة، وأكثر شمولية لما ينبغي أن تقوم به أمانة عمان على جبهات الثقافة

والتخطيط والتنظيم،والخدمات مسترشدة بافكاركم، مستلهمة علاقة العشق الحميمة بينكم

وبين عاصمتنا المدهشة الاخاذة، وستجدوننا-ان شاء الله- ممن يأخذ بأحسن القول، واصدق

النصيحة للعمل بهما. فعمان يليق بها كل الجميل

*Amman is a beautiful, clean ,and haughty city, which lacks the soul it deserves that, if we can evoke it, would complement its first qualities, beauty should be associated with vitality, and height with the vibrant and renewed rhythm of the life of its inhabitants, which is what we have worked to address from the first day I took up the position I was assigned, and finally this conference, which we hope will come out with formulas conducive to broader and more comprehensive horizons of what the Municipality of Amman should do on the fronts of culture, planning, organization and services, guided by your ideas, inspired by the intimate relationship of love between you and our wonderful and captivating capital. You will find us - God willing -among those who take the best of words, and the most sincere advice to act accordingly. Amman fits everything beautiful*

(al-ʿAbbādī 1995: 30-31)

According to Sakr, participants in these conferences[8] carried critical viewpoints towards the lack of interest in the cultural aspects of the city, and the municipal focus on services and infrastructure. In his opinion, the conference and the proceedings influenced the policies of the GAM (Sakr 2013: 326) Moreover, he considers that an important part of the proceedings dedicated their focus to "'Nostalgic' first-hand accounts of the 'old Amman'" (Sakr 2013: 327). And indeed, The GAM adopted the writings of Qāsim, as well as Ġālib Halasā– the complete works, which includes the second edition of *Sulṭānah*, which was sponsored by the GAM. However, the novels published in 2002, despite being historical like the aforementioned works, have adopted the GAM discourses and imagination on what regards the identity of Amman:  A city with a transhistorical identity, interconnected with other cities and hubs,  that was enabled to become a city by the Market.

Amman was declared in 2002 UNESCO's Arab Culture Capital, and it was widely celebrated by the municipality in the streets (Corbett 2014: 3). Part of the activities of the celebrations was the publication of books which had Amman as a topic; and at the same time, the campaign emphasized the modern and ancient history, and the collective memory of the city. Thus, the Municipality supported the production of publications about the history and

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[8] Two major conferences focusing on Amman were held in the mid-nineties. One of the conferences is "'*Ammān wāqiʿ wa ṭumūḥ*" – translated by the organisers as "Amman Realities and Expectations"– organized by Hānī Ḥawrānī and Ḥāmid al-Dabbās in 1995, and sponsored by the GAM. The other conference was "*Amman ville et societè*" organized by Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami in 1996.

memory of Amman (Shami, 2007:230). The 2003 novels emphasized the downtown area as an inter-class and inter-ethnic hub and celebrated the cultural diversity as well as the remote past of Amman. The novels' layout of Amman's downtown space has the market as the central spatial protagonist. It is noteworthy to point out that the authorities were carrying out a re-centralization of the downtown during the same period. For example, the municipal building complex was built over where the Amman River was, prior to its covering. In addition to this, downtown Amman, and the adjacent neighborhoods of *Jabal al-Luwaybidah* and *Jabal ʿAmmān* were put on the tourist map. Since the 2002 branding campaign was aimed at international markets, it focused on tourism (Khirfan and Momani 2013: 57). For example, a number of NGOs started to work on the preservation of the older neighborhood's heritage (Khirfan and Momani 2013: 58). The GAM conducted a series of refurbishments and rehabilitated some old houses which were built by the first Ammani merchant bourgeoisie and devoted them to cultural literary themes such as *Bayt al-fann al-urdunnī* [*The house of Jordanian art*], *Bayt al-šiʿr* [*The house of poetry*]; and *Bayt Tāykī* [*The house of Tyche*] devoted to women's literary and artistic productions[9]. Similarly, for the 2002 events the GAM re-edited Ammani novels such as *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* and the complete works of Ġālib Halasā to mention a few, and generously funded the conversion of ten novels into television shows by paying double the market price for a script back then (al-Wahdānī & al-Quḍāh 2017: 255). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that some of the Ammani historical novels were converted into television series such as *Sulṭānah* in 2008, *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* in 2010, Abnāʾ *al-Qalʿah* in 2018.

3.2 City-biographies: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Munīf ʿĀydah al-Najjār

A literary genre that deals with Amman's past and is worth mentioning is what will be called city-memoirs. Yet autobiographies and memoirs are a genre that drew the attention of scholars,in the case of Amman there is a literary genre worthy of note. These works are written by authors who lived their childhood and youth in Amman, and in which the memory of the city has more weight than the personal biography of the author. One of the most known examples is *Sīrat Madīnah* (1994) by the Amman born ʿAbd al-raḥmān Munīf (1933-2004)

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[9] None of the aforementioned spaces are currently operational. However, improvement works are being carried out in order to reopen *Bayt al-Fann* in the future.

and ʿĀydah Najjār (1938-2020) with her B*anāt ʿAmmān ayyām zamān* (Down memory lane: Amman school girls of long ago[10]) (2007).

In his book, Munīf defines it as a "سيرة مدينة" [lit. *A biography of a city*][11], and he nuances

"وليس سيرة ذاتية لكاتبه، وإن تقاطعت السيرتان، بسرعة وجزئيا، في بعض المحطات"

[*And not a biography of the author, even though both biographies intersect, rapidly and partially in some stages*] (Munīf 2004: 45).

The book could be considered as the most famous book where Amman is the protagonist. In 1992 Munīf went back to Amman for the first time after 37 years living in exile abroad. He was invited by the Shoman foundation to recount Amman's life during the forties. Afterwards, he was invited by the University of Jordan and by CERMOC. In the latter, organized by Jean Hannoyer and Seteney Shami, he was invited to recount his memories as a child in Amman (Munīf 1996; 2004)

The trajectory of *Sīrat madīnah* shows the process of production where several actors intervene. In this sense, *Sīrat madīnah* has multiple godfathers, which appeared in different spaces. On the one hand, Jean Hannoyer, director of Centre d'études et de recherche sur le Moyen-Orient contemporain (Cermoc), invited Munīf to give a talk at one conference organized in 1992– the time in which Amman began to be an object of inquiry after democratization. In 1996, a literary transnational translation project was carried out in collaboration with the European Union, translating *Sīrat madīnah* to European languages such as English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Catalan. Moreover, a new Arab edition was published in 2004 prior to Munīf's death, in which he adds expressionist sketches made by himself of some of the mentioned city residents of Amman, as well as events present in the book, and this was due to the insistence of his friend, the illustrious Syrian artist Marwān Qaṣṣābbāšī (Marwan Kassab-Bachi).

Another example of the city-biography is ʿĀydah Najjār (1938-2020) researcher and historian, who wrote *Banāt ʿAmmān ayyām zamān* (Down memory lane: Amman school girls of long ago). In her book, she recounts the memory and everyday life of Amman in the fifties. In the book the school is the epicenter of her city, where the way to the school and the relationship with the teachers as well as her classmates were the main recounted aspects of Amman's memory and history. It can be considered that this book has a sequel, which is *ʿAmmān bayn al-ġazal wa-l-ʿamal* [*Amman between gazal and labor*] (2019); in which she

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[10] To the knowledge of the author of this thesis, this book has not been translated into English. However, the translation used here is the one which appears on the cover of the book.
[11] The book was translated into english as "Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman" by Samir Kawar

continues her memories after the sixties, and compares the Amman of the present with the Amman she experienced in her youth.

As Jordanian critic Niḍāl al-Šamālī points out, Munīf's city memoirs are rather scarce in what regards remembering women. Due to his positionality, the women of his book are more of the intimate sphere, women of the family, and neighbors. On the contrary, in Najjār's book, the women of Amman have a strong presence in the book (al-Šamālī 2011: 88-89). For example, in Munīf's recount of public demonstrations held in 1947 protesting against the Zionist attacks on Palestinians, as well as the British complicity, he mentions around a dozen names of participants in the demonstrations. Meanwhile, in Najjār's book, the presence of women in public demonstrations is remembered in the book. Najjār recalls the demonstrations in revulsion against the Qibya massacre in 1953, as well as several demonstrations throughout the fifties, where even she personally led some of these manifestations and distributed pamphlets of the *Baʿṯ* party which she was a member of back then.

The memory of Najjār, which is more or less coeval to Munīf's memory, shows a different and neglected aspect of the political life of the streets of Amman. However, despite the stylistic and thematic differences between the two books and between the two authors, and hence their way of experiencing Amman- both books carry nostalgia and appreciation for the Amman of their childhood and youth, despite its modesty as a capital city. Amman then resembled more a town than a capital, but nevertheless, it is depicted as a democratic and inclusive city, where different people of different geographical, ethnic, and religious backgrounds lived, engaged with the city life, as well as with regional politics.

Other than the aforementioned writers, other authors wrote "city memoirs" such as Ṯurayyā Malḫas's *Arāqīm muʿallaqah ʿalā maqbarat al-kawn* [*The hanging books in the cemetery of the Universe*](1997), and Fuʾād Al-Buḫārī's *ʿAmmān: Ḏākirat al-zaman al-jamīl* [*Amman The memory of the belle époque*](2010); Bakr ʿabd al-Munʿim's *Ḏikrayātī fī ʿAmmān al-ḫamsiniyāt* [*My memories in the Amman of the fifties*] (2018).

The proliferation of this genre shows the claims of an urban class revisiting their city in the face of the exclusion of Amman and the urban transformations carried out in the 1990s-2000s- transformations that wiped out parts of older neighborhoods, and favored gentrification. In this regard, ʿĀydah Najjār states that she tries to recover the memory of Amman in order to protect it (Najjār 2008: 11).

## 3.3 The 2003 Novels

Historical novels may help in giving a sense of rootedness as well as historicity. In the case of Amman, the historicity is aimed at legitimating the city by giving it an identity and an origin, hence, making the city a valid identification. However, not all the Ammani historical novels had similar views on Amman's past. We can make three distinctions among the literary texts which dealt with Amman's history. The novels of the eighties such as *Sulṭānah* by Ġālib Halasā, or *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah* by Ziyād Qāsim[12], privileged the political and class struggle in their recounting of the city. Meanwhile, the 2003 novels privileged the market over the political aspect, where the market is the enabler of a city to be a city. Moreover, the novels under discussion narrate the beginnings of urban life in the city of Amman,in which it does not highlight the memory of any period, but a period in which an incipient Amman was leaving behind an agrarian mode of production and shifting to a market-based economy. Therefore, labeling these narratives as the "narrative of the urban genesis of Amman" is a more appropriate label for this group of literary texts that have the past of Amman as the core of their inquiry, and recount the beginnings of a city, at the moment it was becoming a city.

The 2003 novels recount extinct traditions, practices, and even namings in Amman. Some examples are the celebrations of the birth of the prophet Muḥammad in the streets, or for example the use of "*Daraj Firʿawn*" [*The pharaoh stairs*] for what today is known as *al-Mudarraj al-Rūmānī* [The Roman Amphitheatre] or "*Tiyatrū*" for the café-chantant. In the same way, the 2003 novels celebrate multiculturality and stress the diversity of accents and dialects, as well as the different clothing styles visible in the street.

It is worthwhile to point out that *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* and *al-Šahbandar* share similarities in the archival research done by Muḥammad Rafīʿ, who shed light on written records of commercial transactions as well rental contracts from the '30s of the 20th century. In his book, *Ḏākirat madīnah* [*The memory of a city*] (2002), he transcribes archival records of lease and purchase contracts from the 1930'-1950's. This book is of particular interest since it also provides a "reading" of those years of the documents, wherein the beginning of each chapter is dedicated to a docket, and the plot fictionalizes the events of those years.

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[12] Although the first edition of the novel was published in 1990, the colophon states that the novel's writing had been completed in the winter of 1988 (Qāsim 1996: 468).

a) Samīḥah Ḫrīs, *Dafātir al-ṭawafān*, 2003

The name of the novel *'dafātir'* (logbooks) alludes to the local micro-mercantilism where the neighbors could buy on credit from their trusted shopkeepers. The novel starts with the testimony of the silk, where it complains about how silk is often miscategorized as an example of the lack of expertise of the first Ammani traders and brings in its testimony the Silk Road. The different elements of the novel, from the title to the narrators, as does the plot, evoke mercantilism, trade, and interconnectedness with the world.

The novel is a historical novel that takes place in the Amman of 1938. The main narrators are goods, which on the one hand come from outside the boundaries of contemporary Jordan, but also bring together different people, for example, the silk brings together Trans-Jordanians, Syrians, and Armenians. Similarly, trade and goods are the nexus between the people of Amman, and at the same time, they are the nexus of Amman with other cities in the area such as Jerusalem, Tripoli, Beirut to mention a few. The narrators are silk, *ḥalqūm* (Turkish delights), shoes, ink, ropes, sugar, cigarettes, hair extensions, perfumes, lingerie, olives *inter alia*. The objects bring up different perspectives in which historical, social, and geographical aspects are narrated. For example, the *ḥalqūm*, originally from the Lebanese city of Tripoli, arrive in Amman via Jerusalem  (Ḫrīs 2009: 202). Meanwhile the ropes, for example, narrate the work of the market carriers, who usually originated from al-Ṭafīlah, a town in southern Jordan  (Ḫrīs 2009: 220). The sugar narrates the socio-economic changes, where it was produced on plantations in the Jordan Valley of which no trace remains, and that in 1938 sugar arrives from Turkey, invading the markets of Amman, relegating honey to the background, and that the Circassians were trying to resist, since they were engaged in honey production (Ḫrīs 2009: 226). A character of great interest is the space-time traveler, who talks about the history of Amman, which will be discussed later.

The novel also acknowledges Circassian heritage, in which Circassian myths as well as their uses and customs, e.g. the myth of *Sūsrūqah* (Sosruko) are mentioned, and the novel also mentions the difficulty of the  arrival of the Circassians to the territory of what is now Jordan, due to the animosity from the Bedouin tribes, who later came to live together thanks to the *mansaf*[13], and *šibs wa bāsṭah*[14]  (Ḫrīs 2009: 274). The different narrations have a common idea of Amman, which is that of the coexistence and mutual respect among different ethnic groups and geographical origins.

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[13] Traditional dish from the southern Levant, nowadays considered to be the national dish of Jordan, cooked and eaten in ceremonies and festivities, such as weddings and funerals.
[14] Traditional Circassian dish, not to be confused with either potato chips, nor pasta.

The novel also celebrates women, where female characters have a considerable presence. For example, the shoes tell of a wealthy merchant woman, who met weekly with other women from different backgrounds in her house[15] (Ḫrīs 2009: 206).

Similarly, the novel remembers the political bustle of the streets as well, where demonstrations against colonial and Zionist policies were frequent, as well as the popular aid and support to the anti-Zionist Palestinian resistance and anti-French Syrian resistance. The novel celebrates Amman, the Ammani houses, and the diversity and social harmony, and even the attachment and appreciation towards Amman.

b) Hāšim Ġarāybah, *al-Šahbandar*, 2003

The novel carries several similarities with the previous one. It emphasizes the market life in Amman in the late thirties, and as in the previous novel, *al-Šahbandar* is polyphonic as well– There are a variety of narrators some of them humans, and sometimes places, like *Ḥamdān* café, or objects such as clothes or goods, or even the month of Ramadan.

The title is the nickname of the protagonist; *Šahbandar,* a word of Persian origin that means the "Harbormaster." But within the Arabic context, and especially in the Ottoman sphere, it means "chief merchant" who was the most affluent merchant in the city and at the same time was in charge of regulating and mediating in the market (Rafeq 2011). As in the previous novel, the interconnections of Amman with other urban poles in the area emphasize the multiculturality and coexistence of people of different origins and creeds. Similarly, the novel brings back Amman from the Ammonite, Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic periods, where the hospitable character of the city is emphasized through these recountings. The novel like the previous one gives a narration of the beginnings of the city, and it was celebrated by governmental cultural institutions.

The main protagonist, *al-Šahbandar*, is a successful and merchant, and he bears a non-fundamentalist religiosity, in which he doesn't see an inconvenience with drinking some alcohol, going to the cabaret, or even having extra-matrimonial affairs with the cosmopolitan, Italo-Egyptian-Lebanese dancer and sex worker named *Lūlītā*. In his business, he trades with different cities in the region. He has good relationships with authorities, although he doesn't engage in politics. After he retired from his business, his elder daughter Salma, who owned

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[15] In *Malāmiḥ al-ḥayāh al-šaʿbiyyah fī madīnat ʿAmmān 1878-1958* [*Traits of popular life in the city of Amman 1878-1958*] there is a chapter dedicated to the weekly women meetings in Amman. Those meetings were held by the women of the neighborhood, in which each woman had a day of receiving the other women. These salons were inter-ethnic as well, in which the food and drink served differed from house to house depending on the woman's geographic origin (Rašīd 2002: 223).

her own business, overtook her father's place. Salma is depicted as an emancipated woman, who always was supported by her father, and she is the first woman who drove a car in the Amman of the novel.

An interesting character in the novel is *Lūlītā*, a cosmopolitan and Mediterranean mishmash, She is an Italo-Lebanese-Egyptian woman, who traces her roots to Sicily and Genoa, and she was born in Alexandria, to a Greek mother, and spent her childhood and youth in Sicily and Genoa. In her youth she settles down in Beirut, which she leaves in favor of Amman, where she works and opens up a café-chantant at some point in her career.

The city of Amman is celebrated by the main protagonists. Despite their diverse geographical backgrounds, they all found in Amman a place to live. Amman in the novel is depicted as a place which can bring together different people with different religious and ethnic backgrounds, and at the same time, all these groups live in harmony together. The tensions in the novel are more of interpersonal, or of class or political nature, but not as a clash of identities or way of living. For example, the Azhari sheikh shows his discomfort with the morality of the protagonist and of his way of living, but the sheikh is belittled and not taken seriously.


3.3.1 The Narrative of the Urban Genesis in the 2003 Novels

In both novels, Amman is appreciated and celebrated. In their appreciation, they defined Amman as a welcoming city and emphasized its cityness and urban life. In the novels, Amman became a city thanks to mercantilism. The becoming of a capitalistic society, came up with the becoming of a city. In the same way, Amman is frequently put together with other cities, most of the time located in neighboring countries. The emphasis of the connection between Amman and the other cities is bifold: On the one hand Amman is legitimized and recognized as a city among cities, which regardless of being an overshadowed city, it is at the end of the day a "city". On the other hand Amman is also legitimized by remembering the interconnectedness of Amman, and showing the proximity and the easiness of mobility the neighboring cities located outside the Jordanian territory.


a) Amman as a Hospitable and Welcoming City

Different scholars pointed out how the multilayered origins of Amman, as well as the different waves of refugees and migrants who came into Amman, are one of the reasons for Amman's crisis of identity. This, in addition to the identity politics we pointed out in the

previous chapter, worked against a defined Ammani identity. As Shami put it, "state policies and the multiplicity of identities do not serve to thicken an Ammani identity but rather to dilute it" (Shami 2007: 227). The novels, however, celebrated the diversity and made it a sign of the identity of Amman. Amman protected those who came to Amman seeking refuge, and at the same time, allowed them to live as they wanted, without renouncing their way of living. In this regard, in *al-Šahbandar* is stated that:

أهميتها تأتي من كونها تحمي سكانا من مختلف الأجناس أتوا من الغرب ومن الشرق، وتتصادم أكتافهم وكأنهم في مفترق طرق كثيف المرور..

*Its importance comes from the fact that it protects its inhabitants from different races who came from the East and the West. Their shoulders collide if they are at a crossroads of heavy traffic...* (Ġaraybah 2003: 51)

*Lūlītā*, a dancer and sex worker finds in Amman a refuge, and she states why she chose Amman, her preferences mainly are because Amman is a fair city to the stranger:

قالوا إنها بلدة تجير المظلوم، وتلم جراح المظلوم، وتنصف الغريب"

*They said that it is a town that protects the oppressed, heals their wounds, and is fair with the stranger* (Ġaraybah 2003: 120).

Another reason for her preference is that Amman is a city of transients:

"كنت أميل إلى صنف البحارة العابرين فهم الأمثل لمهنتنا...لا بحر في عمان، ولكنها مليئة بالعابرين"

*I was inclined to the category of transient sailors, as they are the best for our profession...there is no sea in Amman, but it is full of transients* (Ġaraybah 2003: 121).

From the examples, the distinctive character of Amman is a city that is able to provide refuge to foreigners and subalterns. In *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* there is a similar depiction of what Amman is like. In the narration of the traveler (حديث الرحالة), a time traveler explains that the people of Amman come from every single corner of the world, who are different in their traditions and habits but they share the same dream. He continues by naming the different nationalities and ethnicities who came to Amman. He recounts the Syrians, the Iraqis, the Circassians, the Palestinians, the Armenians, the Hijazis, and the Egyptians, who all live together in harmony, without having to compromise their ways of living, and at the same time, learn and incorporate from each other habits and traditions. This transculturation gave a characteristic to Amman according to the time traveller, which made that the people of Amman have a tolerant, and a mild character (Ḫrīs 2009: 191).

The diversity of Amman in the novels is also shown materially. Jordanian scholar and architect Rami Daher – inspired by Hāšim Ġaraybah– describes Amman as the "City of the many hats" (Daher 2008: 42). The headgear constituted not only an ethnic marker, but also a

social, and ideological one. A good example is the rise and fall of the *ṭarbūš* in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman states. whether in the case of ascent or the case of decline constituted a break with a previous regime considered authoritarian and obsolete. For example, when it started to become popular in the nineteenth century, it was considered a modern distinctive to the detriment of the traditional turban, and in its fall, whether in Ataturk's Turkey or Nasser's Egypt, it was a symbol of the elites of the previous regime. In the case of Jordan, the sixth chapter of *sīrat madīnah*, which Munīf dedicated to headgear, in the Amman of the forties, recalls how at the beginning of decade wearing a *ṭarbūš* was an ambition for many in Ammani society. In contrast, towards the end of the decade, the use of the *ṭarbūš* and of the Circassian calpac declined considerably (Munīf 2004: 181-182). In the same way, he recalls that in the case of Amman, it was frequent to see unveiled women in the street and his explanation puts it down to the fact that the Circassians and Bedouins were less strict with the women's *ḥijāb*, and this made it popular among Muslim women not to wear the veil then (Munīf 2004: 170-171). The image of the city streets and markets crowded by people from different origins is shown by the description of the dresses and headgears. So for example *Šams, al-Šahbandar's* wife shows her appreciation for diversity and says:

أدقق النظر فأرى الناس كأنما هم في حفلة تنكرية: سافرات ومحجبات، عباءات منوعة، وبدلات عصرية... أزياء البشر من كل الملل ممثلة في عمان.

ما أجمل عمان!

كأنما الناس في عرس دائم! ضجيج وصخب، أزياء الشرق والغرب تختلط: طرابيش وشماغات، قلبق شركسي، وفيصلية عراقية، عمامة عربية، وبرنيطة غربية، عباءات ودوامر، وبدلات داكنة بصداري زاهية..

*I look closely, and I see people as if they are in a masquerade party: veiled and unveiled women, a variety of abayas, modern suits... The people's dresses from all nations are represented in Amman.*
*How beautiful is Amman! It seems that people are in a permanent wedding! Noise and hustle, the dresses of the East and the West mixed Fezs with shemaghs, Circassian calpacs, Iraqi Fayṣaliyyah, Arab turbans, western hats, abayas and damer, and dark suits with colourful vests (Ġaraybah 2003: 161)*

The depiction of Amman as being in a festival was also brought by Munīf in his *Sīrat madīnah* where he states that:

فلو مر سائح في عمان خلال فترة الأربعينات- ولا شك أن مر الكثيرون- فإن الانطباع الأول الذي يخرج به أن المدينة تعيش في كرنفال دائم من حيث الملابس واللهجات والعادات، لأن التعدد الموجود يفوق أي مكان آخر

*If a tourist passed through Amman during the 1940s - undoubtedly many did - the first impression he would get would be that the city lives in a permanent carnival in terms of clothes, dialects and customs, because the diversity that exists outweighs any other place.* (Munīf 2004: 173)

The aforementioned examples show Amman as a cosmopolitan, welcoming, and modern city in which different people, classes, and ideological trends shared the public space in Amman. Similarly, this diversity is shown as a positive feature of a city that is frequently questioned, especially when it comes to how Ammanis identify since it is not perceived as authentic. In this regard, Christopher Parker states that:

> For some, this heterogeneity reflected a lack of authenticity; it confirmed Amman's status as an artificial entity created to serve the purposes of alien forces. But this diversity has also been a source of Amman's resilience in the face of the great shocks it has absorbed over the past 60 years. The city's disparate histories and spaces—each reflecting its own web of global entanglement—demanded constant negotiation. Its various tributaries were spun into a web of accumulated inertia, trapping a million trajectories of displacement and flight (Parker 2013: 112)

The diversity shows the translocal character of Amman that we referred to earlier in the preceding chapter. The novels also used the diversity to show the translocal connections of Amman with other cities, and hence showing it as a "city among cities". Amman is often compared to other cities. And often different aspects of urbanity are considered to be more developed or more authentic elsewhere. For Daher trying to make Amman compete with other neighboring cities, makes Amman lose its heterogeneity:

> Amman does not have to conform to a discourse that constantly attempts to compare it to cities like Damascus, Jerusalem or Cairo with a distant past and a perceived homogeneous beginning and point of origin. By emphasizing 'homogeneity' such discourses eliminate local difference and, in the process, the distinctive reality, that is Amman (Daher 2008: 42)

Since it is always compared and overshadowed by other cities, the representation of Amman in these novels emphasized that Amman is a city among cities. These bonds are a product of trade, of refugeehood, and of political commitment. In other words, how the characters either locals or refugees, engaged with the anti-colonial struggles outside Jordan. For example, the citizens of Amman engaged in the smuggling of weapons for the Palestinian resistance in the 30's, and hosted the heads of the anti-French resistance in Syria.

Trade is another activity that puts Amman in connection with other cities in the region. *al-Šahbandar* wonders about buying a truck and abandoning his family camel caravans and daydreams about a transnational journey:

لم لا أعمل سائقا يجول البلاد: يوم في الشام، ويوم في حلب، ويوم في بيروت، ويوم في القاهرة. أسافر إلى بغداد شرقا، أو إلى حيفا غربا. أصلي ألصبح في الأقصى، وأفطر كنافة نابلسية، وأتغدى قدرة خليلية.. وأتابع سيري إلى غزة فالإسكندرية!

> *Why don't I work as a driver who travels the country: One day in Damascus, one day in Aleppo, one day in Beirut, one day in Cairo. I travel eastwards to Baghdad, or to Haifa westwards. I pray the dawn prayer at*

*Al-Aqsa, and I eat Nabulsi Kunāfah as breakfast, and I have Hebron Qidrah for lunch… and I continue my journey towards Gaza and Alexandria* ( Ġarāybah 2003: 14)

In the aforementioned example the link of Amman with the neighboring poles is recomposed, and at the same puts Amman on the map, making Amman a city among cities.


b) Mercantilism as City-Maker

The Amman of nowadays is built over lands fertile and rich in water. The first Circassian settlers worked in agriculture. The proclamation of Amman as capital of the emirate attracted merchants in search of new markets, and at the same time, the Emir and the British authorities appointed bureaucrats from Syria and Palestine for running the Administration and the incipient state apparatuses.

The novels emphasized the role of the market as an enabler of the urbanity of Amman, which made the city leave behind agriculture, and merged the different people of Amman in a common space. *Dafātir al- ṭawafān* explains how the city became a city due to the market. The market diluted the monoethnic neighborhoods and created a common public space on the one hand and produced a class society on the other. Hence, the neighborhoods left behind their ethnicity, and became class-based and multi-ethnic. After recounting the numerous ethnic neighborhoods of then, such as the Circassians, the Tafilis, the Egyptians, the Bukharis, Yemenites, Moroccans, etc. it states that:

ولكن مصالح العباد، وحركة السوق تخلط الفلاح بالحضري، وشقران الروس بسمران البدو، والإنكليز بلابسي الطرابيش من الأفندية، والكوفيات البيضاء من الجزيرة، بتلك المرقطة بالمربعات الحمر أو السوداء، وتفرز المدينة طبقات تنتمي لثرائها، أو فقرها، فيخرج من أفقر الأحياء ثري يعتلي السيل مقيما مسكنه بين مزارع الفاكهة في حبل عمان الجديد، أو اللويبدة، ينقسم الأخوة، وأبناء العمومة، وأولاد القرية الواحدة إلى طبقات ومراتب، هكذا تعيد المدينة تصفيف أوراق الحياة، الريفيون في القرية يقولون (ما في قمح ولا شعير)، وكأنما الناس سواسية، ولكن للمدينة شأن آخر، شأن تقوله عمان على استحياء ، ولكنها كسواها من المدن تقوله، وتمعن في القول، كلما دخلتها مظاهر المدنية، تقول مثل سواها من المدن، للأثرياء حارتهم، وللمعوزين دنياهم

*The common interests of the people, and the market movement mixed the peasant with the urban dweller, and the Russian blonde hair with the brown skin of the Bedouins, the Englishmen with the fez dressers, and the white keffiyehs of the Arab Peninsula with the speckled with red or black squares. The city segregates*

*classes that belong to their wealth, or poverty. [...] The peasants in the villages say "There is no wheat nor barley" as if people were equal, but however, the city has an issue, an issue that Amman confess with shyness, but however it utters it as the other cities do and keeps saying -every time the civic manifestations come- says as the other cities: The rich have their neighborhoods, and the poor have their lives. (Ḫrīs 2009: 192-193)*

This example shows the role of the market in producing a class-based society, and hence making Amman a city. The "city", "society", and "market" triad is shown in another gender-based example, in which the women of Amman train and teach the merchants how to store fabrics, and with this, create a specialized market for each good:

في دكان أبو قاسم الحمصي، هناك حيث تخزن كل الأقمشة باحتراف يحترم الحالة، ولا يخلط الحابل بالنابل كما يفعل معظم مبتدئي عمان الذين قدموا اليها يجربون حظهم، حاشرين الأقمشة والملابس الجاهزة مع أخرى من البضائع في مخازنهم الصغيرة، من الصعب ادراك مسألة عشق الأقمشة للروائح، ولكن النساء سيدربن مجموع التجار الذين يجربون ويتعلمون سريعا، نساء عمان الشركسيات والشاميات والأرمنيات، والسلطيات والنابلسيات، سيرفعن أطراف الأقمشة الى أنوفهن، ثم يعدنها قي حركة نفور واضحة، وقد اكتشفن رائحة الزعتر والسمن البلدي، تلك أخطاء المبتدئين التي يتجاوزها التجار سريعا، وسرعان ما ينشئون مخازن للقماش وحده كمادة يحري تخزينها بتقدير عال.

*In the shop of Abū Qāsim al-Ḥumṣī, where all the fabrics are stored in a professional way that respects the situation, and he doesn't mix the goods in a disordered way as most of the beginners in Amman who came to it try their luck, trapping the fabrics and ready-made clothes with other goods in their small stores, it is difficult to understand the issue of the fabrics' love for smells. However, the women will train all the merchants who will try and learn quickly, the Circassian, Levantine and Armenian women of Amman, the Salti and the Nabulsi women, they will raise the ends of the fabrics to their noses, and then put them back in a clear movement of revulsion, and they have discovered the smell of thyme and clarified butter. The mistakes of the novices which merchants quickly overcome, and they will soon establish stores of cloth alone as a material to be stored with delicacy.*

(Ḫrīs 2009: 192-193)

For both novels, the market is essential to the city. In Ġarāybah's novel the main character states that:

كان السيل والزراعة سندي عمان لتكون، والتجارة سندها لكي تنهض فمنذ كانت عمان أيام العمونيين ثم الاشوريين ثم البطالمة علامة على (طريق الملوك) التي صار اسمها (طريق تراجان الجديدة) في العهد الروماني.. إلى أن صار إسمها (طريق الحج السلطاني) في العهد العثماني.. وعمان تنهض بنهوض التجارة من حولها، وتكبو بنكوص التجار عن المرور بها..

عمان تجارة! .. وداعا لقوافل الجمال، ومرحى لعربات القطار

*The stream and agriculture were the two pillars of Amman to be, and trade was its pillar to rise up. Amman since the days of the Ammonites, the Assyrians, the Ptolemies was a landmark in the king's road, which became the New Trajan road in the Roman era... until it became the Sultani hajj road in the Ottoman era... Amman rises with the rise of trade around it and decays when merchants stop passing by. Amman is trade! Goodbye to camel caravans, and welcome to the train cars! (Ġarāybah 2003: 41)*

In his recounting, apart from emphasizing the market as an enabler to cityness, it shows the interdependence of Amman with its surroundings, and hence, diluting the city as alien to a broader urban system. and on the other hand, it shows a transhistorical character of the city. Amman and the market need each other mutually. The importance of the market in the novels is coeval to the importance of the market in the Amman of the 2000's. Najib Hourani discussing the neoliberal urban transformations affirms that:

> While the new heritage tourism zone was to reorganize the suq to be a representation of timeless cultural identity, another project just outside the suq would become a hypermodern, globally connected, "new downtown" where wealthy tourists could stay, shop, and play (Hourani 2016: 36)

The downtown of Amman is central to the novel. At the time of publication of the novels, the downtown began to be subject to touristification, and at the same time, the market in the novels has been codependent with Amman for thousands of years. It should be recalled that in the mid 2000's in Amman, the construction began of one of the neoliberal mega-projects called the "New Downtown" which aimed at putting Amman on the global map (Musa 2017; Hourani 2014; 2016).

As was stated earlier, the historical novels of the transition from the eighties to the nineties such as *Abnāʾ al-qalʿah* (1990) or *Sulṭānah* (1986), despite dealing with Amman's past, takes a negative view of the city's mercantilism. An illustrative example is what the narrator of *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah* foreshadow about the celebration of the market:

سيذكر الناس فقط بأن السيل شارع. وأن جانبيه أبنية شاهقة وأسواق مزدحمة وأرصفة مكتظة ومحلات متنافسة متقاتلة. لن يعرف الناس بأن الشارع بدخانه وحمق عجلاته أشد رعبا من حد السيل، وان زواميره وصخب أسواقه أكثر ضجيجا من هدير السيل. وأن الدخان والزيوت والوقود أكثر تلويثا من أوساخ السيل. لن يذكر الناس بأن السيل كان سلة ممتلئة بالخضار والفواكه والبيض والحليب. سيذكرون فقط شارع السيل بأسواقه الممتدة وبضائعه الغريبة المستوردة.

*People will only remember that al-Sayl is a street. Its sides are tall buildings, crowded markets, and crowded sidewalks and shops competing and fighting with each other. People will not know that the street, with its smoke and the jam of its wheels, is more terrifying than the flood of a torrent, and that its hum and the clamor of its markets are louder than the roar of the torrent. And that the smoke, oil, and fuel are more polluting than the filth of the torrent. People will not remember that the torrent was a basket full of vegetables, fruits, eggs, and milk. They will only remember al-Sayl Street with its sprawling markets and exotic imported goods.*

(Qāsim 1996: 214)

The previous example narrates the siltation of Amman's river[16] in the late sixties of the last century, in which a commercial street was built over the pre-existent river.[17].

c) Historical Accumulation and the Trans-historical Character of Amman

The idea of "no one is originally from Amman" lies partially in the relative novelty of the city. Giving an "origin" to Amman which is rooted in ancient times is a way of legitimizing the city as an entity rooted in history, and not merely a contingent emplacement that appeared due to the absorption of the surplus of the disgraces happening elsewhere. It is a common belief that one of the reasons for Amman's crisis of identity is that the city is a new one, made up of newcomers. As Farouk Daher stated "[t]he fact that Amman did not have a distant origin or homogeneous ethnic composition disqualified the city from being a stereotypical Islamic city and may have led to the crisis of identity to which many of its residents subscribed" (Daher 2008: 42)

The 2002 campaign gave special attention to the historicity of Amman as we mentioned earlier. This historicity linked the city with periods in which it was a city, such as with the Ammonites, Greeks and Romans, and Umayyads. Hence, the periods where the site of the actual Amman was inhabited and populated –yet not in an urban set– by nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, were not taken into account. In contrast with the older historical novels such as Ġālib Halasā's *Sulṭānah* or Ziyād Qāsim's *Abnāʾ Al-Qalʿah*[18], the 2003 novels link the present Amman with its remote past. The 2003 novels brings Amman's history into the plot. In *al-Šahbandar* the protagonist recounts with his encyclopedic knowledge some episodes of Amman in different historical periods. In the case of *Dafātir Al- ṭawafān* a fictitious character who is both traveler and time-traveler called *Sayf al-Dīn al-Ġassānī* brings historical accounts of Amman by medieval Arab geographers as well as in hadith, and also narrates the history of Amman since the Bronze Age, and points at the different archeological ruins in Amman. Similarly, in both novels the deity Tyche- the protector of Philadelphia- is praised. It should be recalled that *Majallat Tāykī* (Tyche)-one of the magazines edited by the Cultural directorate of the GAM was named after her- as well as one of the different houses dedicated to arts and literature that we mentioned earlier.

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[16] Popularly known as "al-*Sayl* " [*the stream*]
[17] officially is called "*šāriʿ Qurayš*" [*Qurayš street*] but popularly known as "*saqf al-sayl*" [*the roof of the stream*]
[18] Although the novel mentions the ancient period of Amman ( Qāsim 1996: 1), it doesn't merge those periods with the contemporary Amman.

In the following paragraphs, we will bring up some examples from both novels, which show this transhistorical character that Amman had to live, and Amman's need to overcome the ancient geopolitical orders. Amman in the novels was not a mere recipient of geopolitical orders- i.e Ptolemaic occupation, but also the Ammani cultural substratum negotiated, preserved or even imposed socio-cultural orders:

ولأنه لا يمكن لأي نظام أن يكون كامل التطبيق..استطاعت ربة عمون أن تروض وتبيء وتكيف القوانين والأنظمة التي جاء بها الغزاة لصالح مخزونها الخاص الذي كان يستمد حضوره من امتداد سوري عريض

*And since no system can be fully implemented… Rabbath Ammon was able to tame, create and adapt the laws and regulations that the invaders brought for the benefit of their own stock which was derived from their presence in the wide Syrian expanse.* (Ġarāybah 2003: 49-50)

As in the example, Amman had the agency of negotiating, and kept imposing its character. Similarly, it is frequent that the transhistorical examples have a Tammuzist load, where the Semitic deities are celebrated, as well as linking Amman to a Levantine ecosystem- as opposed to a narrow nationalist Jordanian one. For example, the protagonist recounts that in the citadel of Amman there is an inscription of a prayer which says:

امنح شعب سورية الطمأنينة والكثير من الحنطة

*Provide the people of Syria serenity and plenty of wheat* (Ġarāybah 2003: 47)

In the different examples, Amman has an accumulated culture and history. It is frequently called by its ancient names, such as *Rabbat ʿAmmūn* or Philadelphia. And so this was another of the GAM municipality visions in 2002. According to Khirfan & Momani, the 2002 campaign "focused on Amman's ancient history particularly, its Greco-Roman heritage including its name at the time (that is Philadelphia) and its archaeological remains. (Khirfan & Momani 2013: 55). The following example shows how the Roman past is appropriated. The fact that is not completely appropriated is that Amman has a precedent essence that interacts with the new layers. And hence, this precedent essence, is what makes Amman have a timeless character:

انت (فيلادلفيا) مدينة نصف رومانية، توصف للمسافر على أنها تقع على حدود الصحراء، ومن الحق أن نقول إنها لم تكن يوما من الأيام مدينة رومانية خالصة، فقد استمرت صبغتها المحلية نابضة على مدى الأجيال، هذه هي المدينة الجبلية الضائعة في مسافات زمنية لا تقاس إلا ما ترك عليها الغزاة والتجار من بصمات. كانت تتكتل حولها قوى البلاد الروحية لزمن فيتجلى بهاؤها ويغزر عطاؤها، ثم لا تلبث دفعة واحدة أن تصير تقلصات اقتصادية

وسكانية تأخذها بعيدا إلى عالم النسيان، في إطار جدلية الخفاء والتجلي التاريخية التي يتقنها سيلها الحالم

*You, Philadelphia, are a half-Roman city. It is described to the traveler that is located on the borders of the desert, and we can say that it has never been a pure Roman city. The local tinge persisted through generations. This mountainous lost city in unmeasurable temporal distances except with what the invaders and traders left their fingerprints. The spiritual forces of the country were clustered around it for a time, so its splendor and abundance became evident, and then it soon became economic and demographic contractions that took it far into the world of oblivion, within the framework of the dialectic of historical invisibility and appearance that its dreamy torrent masters* (Ġarāybah 2003: 150)

The interplay between literature and municipal envisioning of the city could be seen inside the text and outside it. The City Hall was designed to represent a historicist national pastiche, by bringing elements of the Roman and Umayyad architecture, as well as bringing elements of the nomadic, rural, and urban architectures (Sakr, 2013: 337). The transhistorical character of the city as it is seen in the novels is also seen in the sketches of Rasem Badran-the Architect and designer of the City Hall. In his conceptual sketch appears what he describes as "Historical Accumulation through Time" (Steele 2005: 42) which is a succession of arches which represent different historical periods. By linking Amman with its remote past, a part of creating historicity for the city, it located and affirmed Amman on a spatiotemporal map. Amman hence became to be qualified as a city rooted in history, and hence trying to be legitimized among the neighboring capitals which brag of being older cities.

3.4 Conclusions of Chapter III

The chapter has traced different discourses about the history, identity, and culture of Amman, and showed how they took shape in the novel and in the city specifically in the 2003 novels, while also pointing to other literary genres that have had Amman's past as their main theme. As seen earlier, the emergence of Amman after the mid-nineties was in part due to contingencies of network in which different actors came into play, which at the same time, they were navigating in a certain urban moment, in an Amman which was experiencing more political openness, but at the same time more detached from its regional environment.

And so, the characters of the novels of the early 1990s discussed in Chapter 4 faced the questioning of their identities as Ammanis, and the disqualification of their city, since among other reasons, it has "no origin" Later, the novels from the beginning of the 2000s provide an "origin" to a "city without origin" (Razzaz 1990; 1994 ). In this regard, the proclamation of Amman as a Capital of Arab Culture, as well as the previous engagement of the cultural directorate of the GAM had an important role in the creation of a discourse about the origins, and identity of the city. One key difference, for example, is that the 2003 novels, in contrast

with the other historical novels, do not only engage with Amman in its beginning as a modern history of the city, but also connect it with its remote past, in other historical periods, such as Umayyad, Roman, Hellenistic, and Ammonite. This link with the past provided a narration of its origin which gave Amman a distinctive identity, which is stressed by its heterogeneity and its accommodating character. In addition to this, the interconnectivity of Amman with the other cities of the region showed it as a city between cities, and hence Amman was not put into comparisons which seem to have the worst share of urbanity and authenticity.

Much of the urban transformations in the transition from the nineties to the 2000's were aimed at the touristification of Amman. The ancient ruins were restored and fit out for tourism (Shami 2007: 229) , and at the same time Amman went through an ongoing process of creating a new image that combines antiquity and post-modernity (Hourani 2016: 37). The appearance of this specific way of representing Amman in the 2003 novels, with their emphasis on mercantilism and transnational fluxes, goes hand in hand with the leap to globalization carried out in the beginning of the 2000s. It could be fully said that the novels participated in an urban process. The discourses either of a picturesque hospitable city or the historical accumulation and trans-historical idiosyncrasy of the city could be seen materialized in the street, for example in the building of the Greater Amman Municipality (Sakr 2013), or in some cafés with Shami kitsch aesthetics, and the gentrification of some of the oldest neighborhoods of the city (Daher 2013).

It is necessary to read with an intra-urban, translocal, and multi-scalar lens in order to grasp how representations are produced. Reading the novel spatially as if it is a mere national literary product is incomplete. Both the city and the novel are engaged and embedded in local urban processes, in relation to other cities, and in relation to other texts. It is reductive to claim that the literary texts which had collective memory or the history of the city as topic reproduces the idea of official discourses, without taking into account that the official, extra-official, and counter-official discourses are subjugated to constant negotiation. Starting from a textual and extra-textual analysis of a certain way of representing the city of Amman, a step has been taken to emphasize the importance of an agent of great importance for the urban cultural production, which is the city council, and in turn, the importance of an event, such as the "Capital of Arab Culture", which is promulgated by UNESCO, a transnational entity.

# 4. Chapter IV: A Persistent Alienation: Belonging in an Inhospitable Amman

Amman is a leitmotif in different Jordanian cultural productions such as music, fine arts, and literature. In the case of the representations of Amman in novels published after the 2011 uprisings in the Arab World, the city takes a dramatic and dystopic dimension, initiating a trend that breaks and challenges other consolidated ways of representing the city of Amman in Jordanian novels: either as a welcoming city or even as a static and dull city. This chapter aims to study Amman's representation across the "post-Arab Uprising" novels in Jordan and examine two works, both of which take Amman as a scenario, and they are written in Arabic and published after 2011. The purpose of this chapter is to explicate how the city has been perceived in the last decade and why it is represented in a negative way, and to elucidate what are the political, social, and urban claims carried in the text.

For this chapter, a spatialist reading is applied to the banned novel written by Aḥmad Al-Zaʿtarī, *al-Inḥināʾ ʿala Jittat ʿAmmān* (2014) which narrates a fierce civil war in the city after the 2011 protests in Amman. The second work isʿAbd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ's work *Aktar min wahm* (2017), which tells the stories of two friends and their frustrations, disappointments and attitudes towards Amman. Moreover, the chapter will point at other works such as other novels and short fiction, and media that had Amman as a focus.

Both novels tackle social, political, and urban issues present in Amman; all these novels present the city as a fundamental element of the plot. Even though the authors and the plots are different, the novels not only have the city as a concern but also present aesthetic similarities; where the topic of violence, destruction, and loss of features of Amman together with the worn out bodies of the main characters is a common denominator in the three works. In addition, they have in common their moral, social, and political claims on Amman, a city that also experienced the 2011 protests in the Arab world. It must be mentioned that in parallel to the social transformations, Amman is a city that is experiencing abrupt urban

transformations as a result of the neoliberal urban processes affecting the urban space. The latter, in turn, coexists with a vibrant cultural scene.

The studies on the city of Amman tend to focus on its urban, architectural, and social aspects and are less focused on the cultural practices and process of reconfiguration of social imaginaries and collective memory. The neoliberalization of Amman is one of those topics which were more discussed in the research community[19]. Meanwhile, on the aspect of cultural practices, scholarly production is far less than desired. The existing pieces focused more on the sociological and network aspect of these practices, and less on the outcome of these practices i.e novels, and artistic objects. For what regards the novels that are being presented and discussed in the present day, and as ar as the knowledge of the author of this thesis, there are no studies on Jordanian literature after the Arab Uprising in particular, nor is there any scholarship produced regarding the representation of Amman in literature produced in the last decade.

This chapter aims at understanding a literary phenomenon that took place in Amman after the Arab Uprising, that is interdependent and interlinked with an urban process ongoing in Amman. In addition to that, it will explore the practice of writing novels as a way to resist and contest the processes of fragmentation, privatization, and commodification of the city i.e neoliberal urbanism.

The image creation of a new Amman could be understood as a strategic device that aimed to make a new Amman and hence a new image for Jordan. De Certeau explains a strategy thus:

> I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. As in management, every "strategic" rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its "own" place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an "environment". (De Certeau 1988: 35-36)

In these strategic operations,an effort was invested in creating or remaking an image and identity of a city that would make it, on the one hand, the image of a new Jordan, and on the other hand, an attractive destination for business, tourism, and the creation of local

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[19] See for example (Abu-Hamdi 2017; 2018; Alhusban and Alhusban 2020; Hourani 2014a; 2014b; 2016; Musa 2017; R. Daher 2008; R. Daher 2013)

consumerist society (Musa 2017). However, the novels of Amman after the Arab Uprising did not echo the image that the authorities wanted to show. The novels resisted and challenged the strategic image-making of the city. In this context, writing the novels, and pointing at the different urban issues which make the city a hard place to live is tactical. For De Certeau, a tactic is "a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus" (De Certeau, 1988, p. 37). Therefore, the novels of Amman explained here, as well as other cultural production that pointed to urban issues, constitute a tactical means that resists the strategic image making of Amman, as well as its discourses, to claim the right to the city.

A good example of this, is the novel discussed in this chapter, *al-Inḥināʾ ʿalā Jiṯṯat ʿAmmān* banned in Jordan. For the censurer, one reasons of the ban was that the novel "تسيء لمدينة عمّان" [insults the city of Amman] (ʿAlī & Mūsā 2014). The idea of "offense" towards the city was repeated by ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṭawālbah,,deputy director of the media commission, an organism which belongs to the Ministry of Information repeated the same argument that the novel "offends the city" for the for the broadcast program devoted to extra-textual aspects of literature "خارج النص" [outside the text] that dedicated to Zaʿtarī's novel(Aljazeera Channel 2017). Moreover, the spatial precision of the novel was a reason that it was taken into consideration for the ban. 7iber, which had access to the report of the book ban, reports that the report took into account the spatial precision to ban the novel

7iber reported that:

إسقاطات خيالية على الواقع، ففيها تسمية للعديد من مناطق عمّان (..) حتى أسماء المعالم البارزة"

*It has imaginative projections over the reality, it has the names of different areas from Amman(...) and even the names of known landmarks* (ʿAlī & Mūsā 2014).

Parts of the censorship report could be seen on Al Jazeera's program, and mentions the different neighborhoods and landmarks present in the novel (Aljazeera Channel 2017).Moreover, in addition to the censor, different writers were also interviewed in the broadcast. One of the voices which stood with Zaʿtarī' was Hāšim Ġarāybah, who criticized the idea of custodianship over the city "مين وصي على عمان مشان يدافع عنها؟" [*Who is Amman's custodian to defend it?*] (Aljazeera Channel 2017). The arguments exposed by the censors, reminds of the arguments which Jamāl Nājī denounced about the censorship he suffered in his attempts to write Ammani novels in the eighties (ʿĀbid 2008). In this regard, it is evident that a struggle over the city is being waged in the literary arena. And it is here that the potential of writing as a tactical means of reappropriating the city could be seen.

By using city focused readings, mainly based on Geocriticism (Westphal 2011) and Deep Locational criticism (Finch 2016) this chapter aims at understanding this way of representing Amman. Geocriticism can, "reconstruct the intertextual trajectory that leads to this representation of space" (Westphal 2011: 153). To understand the tactical aspect of the representation of Amman after the Arab Uprising, it is needed to understand where these images, representations, and discourses are coming from. As will be shown in this chapter, the novels interacted and showed interdependence with the urban phenomena as Jason Finch argued (Finch 2016).

The chapter will show that the increase of interest in Amman that began at the beginning of the 2000s reached an unprecedented intensity after 2011 in the production of Ammani novels. This chapter will show that this increase in production is coeval to the neo-liberalization process, and to the Arab Uprising, which was addressed against the neoliberal policies (Bayat 2017).

This chapter is divided into five parts. In the first part, it will provide the illustration of the general urban context of Amman in the first decade of the century, in which a series of projects aimed at making Amman a global hub for business, and at the same time –as it was advanced earlier in this thesis– to put Amman on the international tourist map.

The second part will provide a brief contextualization of the Arab Uprising in Jordan. This will help to contextualize the different political, social, and urban claims in the novels.
The third part will point to a cultural and urban phenomenon happening in Amman during the first decade of the century. Amman started to have a vibrant artistic scene (Sawalha 2018). In this context, the city of Amman was a recurrent theme among the creative class of Amman.
The fourth part will point at other works which had Amman as a theme published in the 2010s. It could be observed that there are common aesthetic and thematic aspects when it comes to depicting Amman. Another similarity between the works is that more than a few numbers of the mentioned works were the debut novels of those writers, which could be understood as a generational shift in the literary field.
The fifth part will present the two selected novels separately, firstly it will show the general plot, and consequently will discuss both novels having as a basis of discussion the topic of belonging to the city. The first subsection will explain what is causing the feelings of alienation in the novel's characters. As it will be shown, the loss of landmarks is acting against having a sense of belonging to the city. Although ʿAbd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ's novel, did not

linger on this aspect of belonging, the same explanations are present in Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī's novel. The second subsection will identify those who invest in degrading the city, that is the oligarchic network involved in the neoliberal transformation of the city. Moreover, Abd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ's novel provides a counter-narrative to the "Urban Genesis of Amman" discussed in Chapter 4.

The last part will conclude this chapter by arguing that the novels of the Arab Uprising written from Jordan acted as a tactical means to claim the right to the city of Amman, by dissembling the glaring image of a global city.


4.1 Amman Becoming Global

The Amman of nowadays is a neoliberal city. It is planned and shaped more by market forces and their logic, than through any consideration of the needs of the city dwellers. With the neoliberal drive which began at the end of the eighties, several landmarks were easily effaced, making the city seem even more of an ephemeral place. The neoliberal projects were translated in few ways into the urban landscape, including the high-end buildings,the city infrastructure oriented to vehicles and speed, and the new heritage and consequent gentrification. The three manifestations of neoliberal urbanism share a common denominator, which is being global. The big and tall buildings evoke hypermodernity, the infrastructure evoke speed, and the heritage evoke a fetishization and consumption of the tourist imagination and the cosmopolitan urban bourgeoisie.

Although the neoliberal drive in Jordan started in the late eighties, it was not until the 2000s, with the accession of Abdullah II, that the neoliberalization process truly accelerated and intensified. Since then, Amman began to experience a Dubaization. The referents for Amman were mainly the New Solidere in the center of Beirut, and Dubai (Daher 2008; Elshheshtawy 2010). The Dubaization is characterised by a spectacular architecture which has little to no respect for the urban and architectural context (Elsheshtawy 2010). And in this context, international and regional starchitects and multinational corporations were involved in building the new image of Amman.

The question of the blandness of the city marked an agenda of identity and image making of the city. In reference to the naming of the project as the 'New Downtown Project', Jordanian architect and scholar Majd Musa states that:

> For the state, this name means Jordan can claim that its capital city has a downtown similar to
> downtowns in modern and global cities, a downtown that can support regional and international businesses and

host activities similar to those hosted in the downtowns of other prominent cities. Such a downtown will enhance the image of Amman, attracting businesses and individuals along with their capital and money, not least through the collective image it projects.(Musa 2017: 42-43)

As it is seen, the "image" of the city as a bland city triggered a shift in the city's projection. The state desired to see Amman as a city that is interconnected, fast, and a global hub[20]. In this stage, Amman shifted the gaze from looking to the older urban poles in the region to look to the hypermodern and spectacle-esque Dubai (Musa 2017). The image of the city was a crucial element in the process of the leap to become a global city (Daher 2008; Musa 2017). The image of a modern or hypermodern city was aimed at attracting business and foreign capital. Having the label of "global"provides the city with symbolic capital, which at the same time is converted into economic capital (Musa 2017: 42-43). In addition to this, the tunnels and bridges were part of the new image making Amman global and be "presented to investors as a new city that conforms to globalised benchmarks of speed, efficiency, and connectivity" (Parker 2009: 110).

However, Amman is also a secondary regional capital with a hilly orography, which makes it difficult to be a city dedicated to speed. The leap to globalization began with the massive building of the traffic network in the 1990s under the mayorship of Mamdūḥ al-ʿAbbādī, and intensified with the Dubaization of Amman at the beginning of the millennium. The building of traffic infrastructure is addictive, as Yasir Sakr pointed out, since on one hand, it is a quick solution for traffic congestion, and at the same time, makes the non-elected mayors be remembered by society (Sakr 2013).

In addition to all of this, another urban intervention that was carried out is the adaptation of the downtown of Amman to enable a touristic area with the aid of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as we mentioned earlier in Chapter 4. These undertakings aimed at providing a new image for the city, which is a transhistorical merchant character linked with the New Downtown, also known as the Abdali project. For the adaptation of the market, which until then was not a touristic area, many businesses had to close. The plan was to provide services oriented to tourists and visitors, and for this, the rental laws were changed, and the rents increased exorbitantly. Most traditional businesses disappeared, and with them,

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[20] One good example, is the "Amman message" a royal initiative in which a declaration signed by representatives of different Islamic denominations from around the world in 2004, advocating an Islam that rejects terrorism and Takfirism, and at the same time fostering inter-faith dialogue. Although analysing this declaration is beyond the scopus of this thesis, it can be said that the name of "Amman" in this declaration goes along with the efforts of putting Amman in the global map.

their working class clients, and in their place mushroomed cafés and other services for the tourists and visitors (Hourani 2016; Musa 2017).

The project focused on Amman's downtown, empty of its regular passersby and its long-standing businesses. In their place, restaurants and cafés took over the traditional businesses, and the more affluent Ammanis started to "re-discover" the core of their city (Abū Ḫalīl 2020). The reappropriation of the downtown, contrary to the rhetoric of the GAM of preserving the heritage of Amman, was commodified and presented to the desires and needs of the tourists.

The different undertakings carried out to change Amman's image, activated the real estate market (Hourani 2016). In this context of making Amman an attractive destination for businessmen and tourists, and leaving behind the image of the dull and bland city, comes what will be explained in the following subsections. Amman began to be rediscovered by locals (Daher 2013; Khirfan & Momani 2013; Sawalha 2018).

The image-making of Amman could be understood as a strategic device that brands Amman as a distinctive destination for investors and tourists, and on the other hand, the new king would legitimize himself by providing (hyper-)modernity and putting Amman on the map (Abu Hamdi 2016; Musa 2017). Moreover, as the example mentioned, capital distorted the image of the city, making it a more fragmented and polarized one. Many of the projects which were about to be carried out fell into bankruptcy, and couldn't be fully implemented at present. Hence, the projected image of the contemporary and glaring Amman has become a ruined one, in which most of the projects did not go ahead and were left half-completed. As Abu Hamdi puts it:

> [T]he city is based on a series of blurred developmental principles where the individual citizen is little recognized. The city has become a circulated theme of what Amman ought to be, without regard to the resident citizen and the workings of everyday life. Instead, the city appears frozen in time, in a perpetual state of interruption. The craters and cranes remain on the landscape, a fixture in the mind's eye – and a memorial to the failure of neoliberal, private-interest-driven development in Amman (Abu Hamdi 2016: 95)

As it will be shown in this chapter, destruction, ugliness, and distortion are frequent in the novels after the Arab uprisings.

4.2 The Arab Uprising in Jordan

The Arab uprising did not have an excessively dramatic aftermath in Jordan when compared

with other Arab countries, nor did it have any clear advances in political and economic reform. This makes it frequent to hear that Jordan did not experience the "Arab Uprising". In any case, Jordan experienced popular protests in which people from different social and political backgrounds participated, which challenged the monarchy and the economic system in Jordan (Hourani 2016b: 48). Discussing the adequacy of one term or another such as "Arab Spring" or "Arab Uprising", or any other term that describes the popular protests that sparked in different Arab countries, and what each of these labels entails is beyond the objectives of this chapter and the whole thesis. However, this chapter will use the term "Arab Uprising" as a generic term, and at the same time it will avoid the "optimistic" connotation that the word "spring" may carry.

However, and at the same time, this chapter considers that Jordan lived its own Arab Uprising at different levels, either internally with the protests- which are not so "internal" since both the motivations of the protesters, and the policies that they were protesting against were inter-contextual to the other Arab countries. The Arab Uprising can't be understood without acknowledging the transnational solidarity between the protesters in different Arab countries, nor the neoliberal policies that pushed the precarity that triggered the protests, as well as the oppressive reactions of the different regimes to these protests. In addition to this, Jordan received almost one million Syrian refugees, and to a lesser extent, Yemeni refugees. Hence, whether it be by local or transnational dynamics or by internal ones, Jordan experienced the Arab Uprising.

And in this regard, in the Jordanian moment of the Arab Uprising, the right to the city and the right to lands were central. According to Hourani, the Arab Uprising "enabled unprecedented criticism of the illiberal networks operating through the heart of the regime. Revelations of insider land deals involving the wealthy and well-connected came to light weekly. (Hourani 2016b: 45)". As it will be shown, the cultural production of the 2010s decade, the right to the city was a central theme, and the denouncing of the exploitation and commodification of the city and its neighborhoods. The post-Arab Uprising novels constituted an aesthetic and thematic shift. This could be considered as another "Amman boom" that did not only manifest in literature, but also in other cultural productions, and it also became a topic of debate among practitioners as it will be shown in the following subchapter.

4.2 Cultural Scene: The "(Re-)discovery" of Amman and Bringing the City into Question

In addition to the 2002 GAM campaign discussed in Chapter 4, there was another important campaign that aimed at changing the image of the city in 2009 celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the first municipal council of Amman, established in 1909. The logo of the GAM was changed- from the green and yellow logo in which appeared what resembles the Roman Amphitheatre, to a chain of colored hills with low-rise buildings. The 2009 GAM's rebranding campaign celebrated the everyday aspects of Amman (Khirfan & Momani 2013). The logo change, according to Khirfan and Momani, was a shift from an emphasis on the historical heritage of Amman as it was in 2002 and before, to an emphasis on contemporary Amman. (Khirfan & Momani 2013). For this task, the mayor of Amman, Omar Maani, commissioned Syntax-a marketing company- to re-brand the city's image. The company took Seteney Shami's "Amman is not a city" and worked on that basis. In her contribution, Shami pointed to the diversity of the origins of Amman which partially makes establishing a holistic Ammani identity difficult (Shami 2007). The re-branding campaign focused on the affective and nostalgic relationship with the city. In the focus group conducted by Luna Khirfan and Bessma Momani, Ammani youth were considering the older neighborhood as representative of Amman's identity, whereas in the case of Jabal Luwaybidah, it was considered an "Undiscovered treasure" (Khirfan & Momani 2013: 59).

What calls attention to the branding campaign is that it is coeval to several initiatives that had the city as a focus. This research cannot establish to what degree these initiatives were related to the 2009 campaign, however in the transition from the 2000s to the 2010s there was a rising interest in the city, which accelerated and intensified within the context of the Arab Uprisings. In that period of time, different artistic, cultural, and new media initiatives were arising. Bloggers were writing about their experiences and relationship with the city, and the creative class was "re-discovering" their city, and then several initiatives appeared that had the city as a focus. In this regard, urban anthropologist Aseel Sawalha stated:

Although Amman has been transformed by regional violence that resulted in the arrival of more than two million refugees, and the implementation of national neoliberal policies that widened the gap between the rich and the poor, the city managed to develop into a cultural hub where art and culture are circulated at unprecedented levels (Sawalha 2018: 459)

In the same line as Sawalha, the scholar and essayist Akram al-Dīk (Akram al-Deek) describes the cultural scene in Amman since the beginning of the millennium, which manifests in the opening of art exhibitions, libraries, alternative music, jazz festivals, cultural cafés, etc (al-Dīk 2020).

Among the initiatives that were born in the second half of the 2000s and that began to raise questions, and re-discover the city is the online magazine 7iber and the online Aramram TV Channel[21]. 7iber began as a citizen media platform in 2007, republishing selected entries from other blogs. Among the themes that were of interest to 7iber were belonging to Amman, citizenship, and social justice. In 2012, 7iber became a professional enterprise and followed the Arab Uprising protests in Jordan closely. And at the same time, 7iber gave special attention to urban issues and cultural production[22]. Ammani literature had the attention of journalists and literary critics who published articles on the platform discussing novels, authors, and other related subjects. In addition to this, 7iber carried out an initiative of public and collective readings of banned books called ''قراءات ممنوعة'' [*banned readings*] of which one of the readings was *al-Inḥināʾ ʿala jiṯṯat ʿAmmān,* read by Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī personally (7iber 2015).

Another similar enterprise in the exploration of Amman is Aramram TV, which is an audiovisual platform founded in 2008. As 7iber, they dedicated attention to spatial justice, labor, and citizenship rights, among other topics. In this context, the city of Amman was a recurrent theme in their programming. They covered the older neighborhoods of Amman as well as the areas of eastern Amman. West Amman as a part of the city was not much present in comparison with the aforementioned areas. The new media as well as other initiatives celebrated the diversity of Amman, but at the same time, pointed out issues of spatial justice in the city, such as inequality, poverty, and access to the city resources.

The creative class of Amman was an agent in shaping the city. The wealthier West Ammanis began to explore their city. Al-Zaʿtarī, who could be considered a member of this creative class, criticized the attitudes of this class about their city in his novel, which will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

## 4.3 The Amman Boom after the Arab Uprising (2010-2020)

The 2010s decade has witnessed an important increase in the novels focused on Amman.

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[21] Aramram tv's focus on the city has decreased in the last years, however, by visiting the sections of " *ṯaqāfah*" [*culture*] "*mujtamaʿ*" [*society*] or "*bīʾah*" [*environment*] on their site lately, https://www.aramram.tv/, the numerous video reports showing the daily life of the city's neighborhoods can be observed, as well as reports highlighting urban inequality or showing social justice initiatives as well. Similarly, on their Youtube channel– https://www.youtube.com/c/aramramtv–, they have re-uploaded those videos and created a playlist with the name *ḏākirat ʿAmmān* [*the memory of Amman*]

[22] 7iber's interest in the city remains in vogue, having a special section– *bīʾah wa madīnah* [*environment and city]* for articles that have the city as their subject. Notably, 7iber has lately been publishing articles on literary criticism that has the city as a focus in Jordanian literature– among other topics– written by Wafīqah al-Maṣrī https://www.7iber.com/author/wafiqa-almasri/

Analyzing each one of them is beyond the scope of this thesis, but this chapter will point at the common denominators among them, which are the city of Amman, and again, the topic of the alienation and the (non-) belonging to Amman. However, this alienation, in contrast with the alienation of the nineties, is a more dramatic and violent one.

One of the "Ammani" best sellers is Fādī Zaġmūt's *ʿArūs ʿAmmān* (The bride of Amman)[23] published in 2012. Although the book emphasizes gender issues over belonging to the city or any other urban issues, the title carries the name of the city in it. Also, in the plot, *Jabal al-Qalʿah* has some protagonism, since one of the protagonists, who commits suicide, is from there. The novel is translated into different European languages such as English, French, and Italian. It collects the stories of some fictional characters that had previously appeared in Fādī Zaġmūt's blog (Zaghmout 2011). The novel features a girl who excels in her studies, a Christian girl who falls in love with a Muslim, and a young homosexual man. In his announcement of the novel on his blog, he describes his characters as Ammanis, and that it "reflects the social reality of Ammani society" (Zaghmout 2012).

Another novel from 2012 is ʿUla ʿLiwāt's *qabl al-safar* [*before the departure*]. The novel is about a young woman from Amman who, after feeling disappointed, accepts a job offer to go work in Dubai. As well as with the novels to be discussed in this chapter, it becomes clear how difficult it is to stay in Amman. The novel begins with "من وين انتوا" [*where are you from?*] uttered by a civil servant while the female protagonist is renewing her passport (ʿlīwāt 2012: 9). The question makes the protagonist start a stream of consciousness reflecting on the meaning of the question and the possible answers, where she reviews her genealogy, and in the end, utters "أنا من عمان" [*I am from Amman*] (ʿLīwāt 2012: 10). Her answer is not considered sufficient, and the officer keeps asking about her origin (ʿLīwāt 2012: 10).

عمان الان ليست طفلة، بل هي تلك الحبيبة السادية التي تشعر الحاجة الملحة إلى تركها والابتعاد عنها مع إنك تعرف جيدا أنها لن ترحمك إن فعلت

*Amman is not a child, but a sadistic lover, which makes you feel the need to leave her and get away from her, even though you know well that she will not forgive you if you do* (ʿLīwāt 2012: 120)

In a similar way, in a more recent song released in 2021, the Jordanian songwriter Idreesi, sings:

حبك وجع

حبك إدمان

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[23] Translated by Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp who translated the novel into English in 2015

صعبة نضل بعمان

*Your love is pain*
*Your love is an addiction*
*It is hard to stay in Amman*

(Idreesi 2021)

The idea of a love-hate relationship with Amman, or a toxic and unhealthy love with Amman, in which it proves impossible to be at peace with the city, is a recurring theme, seen in ʿLīwāt's novel, and in *aktar min wahm*.

A novel that could be considered "Ammani" is *kull al-maʿārik* (All the Battles)[24](2016), which despite not mentioning Amman a single time, was received as an Ammani novel by cultural journalist Sārah Quḍāh who titled her article in 7iber as:

«‮"كل المعارك" روايةٌ عمّانية ترسم وجهًا للمدينة على حلبة الملاكمة‬»"

[*kull al-maʿārik" an Ammani novel that draws a face for the city in a boxing ring*] (Quḍāh 2016)

The places have fictitious names, but the city is depicted as a divided city between east and west, as is Amman, Beirut, or Jerusalem. However, those who are familiar with the city of Amman most probably would recognize the city in it as if it is Amman. This is not because the author himself is Jordanian, but because it portrayed the urban questions of Amman, such as social polarization, classism, and somewhat alienation. Another possible reason is that the protagonist is a Circassian. While not mentioning a single place name that could be found on the ground, the author mentioned an existent Circassian family name in Jordan- an atypical choice in Jordanian literature, where there is a tendency to avoid real Jordanian family name. The protagonist, *Sāʾid Ḥabjūqah*, is a Circassian descendent of the last wave of Circassians who came to Jordan, which fled from Vatican City in 1947 in the aftermath of the fall of the Axis in WWII, after having fought with the Axis powers against the Soviet Union. Both Maʿn Abū Ṭālib and Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī wrote the novels as an outcome of their participation in Muḥtaraf Najwah Barakāt, which was a creative writing workshop hosted by Lebanese author Najwah Barakāt, and funded by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture ( AFAC).

Another relevant Ammani work is Ziyād Maḥāfẓah's novel *Ufarhūl*, published in 2016. Ufarhūl is a word of English origin 'overhaul', which would mean in Jordanian Arabic the resetting of a car's engine. The protagonist, *Māzin*, is a Jordanian who lived in the United States and made his fortune. Upon returning, he invests his money in transforming one of

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[24] Translated by Robin Moger published by Hoopoe fiction (2017)

Amman's historic houses into a cultural café, which becomes a meeting point for intellectuals, politicians, artists, and diplomats. The title of the work comes from the fact that *Māzin* is told that in Jordan there is no hope, and that the country needs a tune-up In the novel, Amman is shown as an inhospitable city despite the protagonist's attempts to live in the city. The heritage house conversion into businesses is a phenomenon that comes with the making of heritage zones, touristification, and gentrification. One feminine character of the novel, *Suʿād*, who lives in Jabal al-Luwaybidah looks at the new business opening in her neighborhood with sadness,

شعرت بأن عمان تفقد رغما عنها الكثير من روحها، وبأن الفوضى وجشع الربح والبيع، والاستهلاك واقتناص الفرص الذي وضع يده على كل شيء تقريبا، قد شوه الكثير من ملامحها التي تشبه الأمهات الطيبات.

*I felt that Amman is losing much of her soul against her will. The chaos and greed of profit and sale, consumption, and opportunism that put his hand on almost everything had distorted many of its features that resemble warmhearted mothers* (Maḥāfẓah 2016: 87)

Among writers, it is worth mentioning Hišām Bustānī. His literary production is devoted exclusively to short stories, in which the city is a recurring theme. In his writings he provides harsh criticism against the degradation of urban life, and the loss of memory are recurrent features which will be explained further in this chapter.

What the novels show is that in this decade there was another literary boom in the Ammani novel, which breaks in the way of representing the city and contains harsh critiques against how the city is ruled. The claims and complaints existing in Ammani literature are not exclusive to literature. One can find similar claims in coeval rap songs such as Kazz al Ommam, and Emsallam, or in artistic works such as those done by Hani Alqam or Nidal Khairi.

There is a clear trend in which Amman is shown as a tough city to live in, although at the same time, in some cases, it produces a love-hate feeling as shown. The images of distortion and dislocation in the aforementioned novels and cultural productions that became a trend after the Arab Uprising could be considered as tactical undertakings that challenge the official ways of projecting and imagining Amman.


4.4 The Inhospitality of Amman in *al-Inḥināʾ ʿalā jiṯṯat ʿAmmān* and *Akṯar min wahm*

The novels which are to be analyzed here show an aesthetic break with the conventional representations of Amman. The novels of the nineties, such as *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* and

*al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ* by Muʾnis Al- Razzāz or *Ḥāris al-madīnah al-dāʾiʿah* by Ibrāhīm Naṣrallah addressed the topics of alienation and belonging to the city. The characters were Quixote-esque, lonely individuals, who carry a belief and understanding which is not echoed by others. The general tone of the novels, except for *al-Šaẓāyā,* is satiric and humorous. It is perhaps an interesting observation that in *al-Inḥināʾ* the city disappears, meanwhile in *Ḥāris Al-Madīnah al- ḍāʾiʿah,* the city stays but the citizens disappear. Another common point is that the protagonists of both novels work as proofreaders. Regardless of the intertextual relationship between both novels, this illustrates the aesthetic shift between the alienation of the nineties and the alienation of the 2010s. In addition to this, *akṯar min wahm* subverts the narrative of the urban genesis by saying that those who built the city were colonial collaborators and opportunists.

Life in Amman is unbearable. To survive one should either escape and go abroad like *Samāʾ* from *Akṯar min wahm*, or stay in Amman and become either a cannibal like the Ammanis of *al-Inḥināʾ* or apathetic like *Aḥmad* from *Akṯar min wahm.*

Moreover, the novel questions the narrative of the Urban Genesis of Amman that were pointed out earlier, which shows Amman as a welcoming city, where different people built a common space and place that respects their cultural differences. In the post-2010 Ammani novels, this narrative is subverted, since Amman is an inhospitable and harsh city, which is corrupted from its very beginning as *Akṯar min wahm* manifest.

a) Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī, al-Inḥināʾ ʿalā jiṯṯat ʿAmmān, 2014

The book is an epistolary novel where the protagonist, who has the same name as the author-Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī–, writes a letter to a friend abroad, narrating to him the aftermath of the Arab Uprising in Jordan which becomes a civil war that erases the city from the map. In the novel, barely any location external to Amman is mentioned, contrary to the different novels discussed in this thesis in which Amman in one way or another is interlinked with other cities. Apart from the name of the protagonist, it seems that there are hints of autobiography in the novel. His article published in Jadaliyya, titled ‏"البحث عن غابة في عمّان"‏ [*The search for a forest in Amman*], offers a testimony in which parallels can be found in his novel. For example, he describes how in his native neighborhood, in one of the neighborhoods of what is presumed to be East Amman, some boys from his school were raping others in the bathroom, and how he, later on, becoming emboldened –though not knowing who he was beating at the time– hit one of the most feared bullies, from whom as a result he gained respect and the

protection (Zaʿtarī 2014). Moreover, from a thematic point of view, articles in the newspapers *al-safīr*[25], 7iber[26], or Jadaliyya[27], show that the themes of memory, popular protests, and so-called "alternative" culture and Amman are topics that have aroused his interest.

In the novel, the protagonist recounts to a friend who lives abroad how the civil war began, and how this civil war has led to the disappearance of Amman from the map. The protagonist works as a proofreader who at the beginning doesn't take part in the warring groups. Although the novel shows that all in Amman fight each other, there are two main warring groups mentioned by name. These are the workers of the Abdali Project on the one hand, and on the other hand the heirs of the contractor of the ʿAbdūn bridge – which is one of the big infrastructure projects constructed to speed up the flow of traffic from the airport to the 'New Downtown', also known as the Abdali Project. The novel brings up, as in the novel of the '90s, the questions of belonging to the city, which is an even harder task since the urban referents are being removed and public space is shrinking. Similarly, the novel carries a critique against the creative class, and how they participate in the commodification of the city.

b) ʿAbd al-salām Ṣāliḥ, *akṯar min wahm*, 2017

The novel has two main protagonists who are friends *Aḥmad* and *Samāʾ*. Aḥmad is a reclusive and depressive person who is addicted to alcohol, and Samāʾ, in contrast, is an outgoing and active person, addicted to sex. Both of them have different life experiences but Amman becomes a constant theme in their talks, and they relate the city to their frustrations. *Aḥmad*'s situation comes from his past engagement in different political struggles, and his disappointments from their constant failures. *Samāʾ* is a social climber, that had worked in multinationals and interacted with the oligarchs from up close, who at the same time abused her. In one way or another, both are victims of Amman. In the case of the female protagonist, she has a hard, dry, sex-addicted character, formed from her life experience, in which she was abused in her early days in the world of finance, when Amman's elite swarmed in that work environment. In the case of the male protagonist, *Aḥmad* , along with the disappointments of political aspirations of liberation and emancipation, is condemned to stay in Amman, mired in depression and addiction to alcohol. Both constantly talk and reflect on their relationship with the city, which is harsh to them, despite their attempts at reconciliation with it.

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[25] https://assafirarabi.com/ar/author/author-500/ retrieved 25/09/2022
[26] https://www.7iber.com/author/ahmad-zatari/ retrieved 25/09/2022
[27] https://www.jadaliyya.com/Author/4657 retrieved 25/09/2022

In their conversations, one central topic is their belonging and their experiences in Amman. Amman is not a hospitable city and pushes *Samāʾ* to migrate to Canada. Meanwhile, Aḥmad stays doomed in Amman, a city that is described as a "stairway" where people interact with the city on an opportunistic and functionalist basis. The city is shown to be a corridor that is not a place to stay. Moreover, Amman is shown as an infertile city that works against authenticity and creativity. Similarly, the novel denounces the shrinking of public space and its privatization, and in this context, the oligarchs who built Amman are the culprit. Their history and links with Amman began with their relationships with the British in Palestine and the French in Syria, as merchants and bureaucrats who came to Amman with the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan.

4.4.1 Discussion: A Subverted Representation of Amman

The two novels bear stylistic differences. However, both, in one way or another, touched on the same urban issues that Amman has had since the beginning of the century. In the following, two of the main common themes will be discussed. The first one is the alienation and the non-belonging to Amman., and the second is the effort to expose the causes of the fragmentation of the city.

a) The Loss of Memory and the Impossibility of Belonging to Amman

The civil war happening in *al-Inḥināʾ* makes most of Amman's landmarks disappear. The skyline of Abdali, Le Royal Hotel, and Jordan Hospital become debris. Few landmarks resist, including the Abdoun Bridge due to its strategic importance for the logistics of the warring factions, and the Roman Amphitheatre and Nynpheum. The loss of landmarks affects how Amman is perceived.  In the novel, one of the causes that contribute to the non-belonging to Amman is the loss of memory. *Nawāl, who* is the protagonist's partner, explains what her relationship with Amman is. Amman is just a thought, but nonexistent in the "reality", such affirmations are repeated by Nawāl and the main character throughout the novel on different occasions. However, the following excerpt, shows what the reasons are for the non-belonging and non-existence of Amman in concrete form:

لا أنتمي الى عمان، عمان موجودة فقط في مخيلتي. عمان لا تكون الا عندما أفكر بها، تقول نوال. المدينة التي تستيقظ فيها وحيدا وبلا ذاكرة لا تستطيع أن تنتمي اليها. العمارات البيضاء والشوارع النظيفة لا تستطيع ان تعطيك ذاكرة. بعد يوم طويل، ندخل الى علبنا الجميلة، نغلق

الأبواب على المدينة، ننام ثم نصحو لنجد صفحات بيض ألقيت الى جانبنا. لا تستطيع أن تبني علاقة مع هكذا مكان. ليس ثمة ورشات تستطيع ان تصف هذا المكان

> *Nawāl says: I do not belong to Amman, Amman exists only in my mind. Amman cannot be except when I think about it. The city where you wake up, alone and without memory, you cannot belong to it. White buildings and clean streets cannot give you a memory. After a long day, we go into our beautiful boxes, we close the doors to the city, we sleep and then we wake up to find white pages thrown next to us. You cannot build a relationship with such a place. There are no workshops that can describe this place* ( al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 66 )

*Nawāl* shows the impossibility of belonging to a city without memory. In her assertion, one cannot have a relationship with a city without affectivity. The lack of memory provokes alienation that eliminates any sense of belonging, or community. The disappearance of referents makes disalienation an onerous task to different degrees: it makes orientation difficult, and provokes a sense of dissonance between the mental map with the materiality of the city which gives a sense of place to the individuals who live in the city. As Frederic Jameson states:

> Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories. (Jameson 199: 51)

Even more so in the case of Amman, a city that has undergone rapid urban change, that forces people to use tactics to orient themselves based on landmarks. As Regina Mamou explains:

> In the case of Amman, map production becomes a futile effort in a rapidly changing environment. If a permanent or temporary resident of Amman understands the important markers of the city from a subjective experience, it creates definition and character to an abstract and ambiguous mass of a map that may be slow to catch up with the current environment, whether this map is a paper or digital version (Mamou 2014: 143)

Hence back to *Nawāl'*s testimony, the lack of memory reduces the city to just a set of "clean streets" or "beautiful houses". Moreover, *Nawāl*'s assertion refers to the "Amman boom" which was pointed out earlier in this chapter. In this boom, as was explained earlier, different initiatives took the city as the object of their inquiry. Aramram TV, for example, conducted a series of coverages called "ذاكرة عمان" [*The memory of Amman*] in which they went to different neighborhoods, in most cases from the older historical ones and the eastern parts of the city. The topic of loss of memory linked to the loss of landmarks was discussed among other authors who wrote about Amman.

Amman without memory is an even more fragmented city, making the people of Amman live detached, and without a public shared space. Their world is reduced to their house or even the

room, as is the case of the protagonist of the novel who others Amman and equates it to a collapsed world,

جلست في الغرفة وسميتها منزلي، وسميت العالم الذي ينهار في الخارج عمان. وسميت نفسي أحمد الزعتري.

*I sat in the room and I called it my home, and I called the world collapsing outside Amman. And I called myself Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī.* ( al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 68 )

It should be noted, that the suppression of landmarks carried out in the city, does not have clear criteria most of the time. These suppressions were not carried on with the participation of the citizens, not even being announced beforehand to the public. For example, the destruction of the the Syrian Artist Rabīʿ al-Aḥras's Seventh Circle sculpture by, and putting in its place traffic lights in 2013; or the case of stone fountain sculpted at al-Husseini Mosque Plaza by the illustrious Jordanian artist Mona Saudi, donated by her to the city in 1993, which was destroyed by the municipality in July 2022, some months after her death. Up to this day, there is no official (or unofficial) statement clarifying the motivations for this act of suppression. In this regard, it is relevant to point out that the lack of consideration towards public space, and the easiness of suppression of urban landmarks is a frequent phenomenon that is different despite the utopian rhetoric of the State, Municipality, and corporations.

Not a few authors have held negative and reluctant views on these urban transformations. For example, in the context of the rapid expansion and transformation to a consumer-oriented city, the Jordanian-Palestinian author Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh in an interview states:

الآن أمر بعمان، وانا أعرف تماما، أي شجرة كانت تحت هذا البناء، وأي دكان صغير ابتلعه هذا السوبرماركت، وأي سوبر ماركت ابتلعه هذا المول تذكرني كلمة مول، بكلمة غول

*Now I am passing through Amman, and I know perfectly well which tree was under this building, which small shop was swallowed by this supermarket and which supermarket was swallowed up by this mall. The word "Mall" reminds me of the word 'Ġūl'[28]* (Naṣrallah 2019: 52)

In the testimony, despite the loss of references, Naṣrallāh challenges with his memory the rapid and exponential changes that the city suffered in its neoliberal and consumerist drive.

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[28] In levantine folklore Ġūl fem. Ġūlah pl.Ġīlān is a monstrous voracious creature, and the word is used as a derogatory adjective to describe voracity, monstrosity, and insatiability.

Nonetheless, in a more vehement and pessimistic statement, Hišām Bustānī in an article at 7iber titled:

"عمّان: السلوكُ «المدنيُّ» في مدينة ليست مدينة حقًّا"

[*Amman: The civic behavior in a city that is not a city*] denounced that the technocrats changed, destroyed, and built three times in less than two decades "*al-Sāḥah al-hāšimiyyah*" [*The Hashemite Plaza*] – one of the major public squares in Amman in front of the Roman Amphitheatre. He contrasts Amman with European capitals in which the urban landscape barely changed in the arc of a hundred years (Bustānī 2015).

In the same line, in his collection of short stories "مقدمات لا بد منها لفناء مؤجّل" (Inevitable Preludes to an Eventual Disintegration) a story titled "المدينة التي داخل صدري" "The city in my chest" points at the feelings of dislocations and detachment that the loss of memory brings to him.

> It's no wonder that the city has exhausted me as I chased its multiplying phantoms, just as it exhausts me when I summon memories of Amman, empty of phantoms. My city is one of those cities that hates itself and does not want to have a memory. My city erases its history as it happens, with a rag soaked in delusions of progress. Forging from an annihilated void to a void that annihilates. And so, it stays suspended in the air or falls into a bottomless abyss, weightless and without mass. And nothing weighs down on your lungs but the heavy traffic and the vileness of human beings (Bustani 2014).

Bustānī's account of a city that destroys itself with bad faith that works against history disorienting the subject by suppressing their geographical and temporal references, is one of the outcomes of the creation of the neoliberal subject, a detached individualistic one.

Similarly, the neoliberal drive in Jordan could be considered a Dubaization, which considers the city as a tabula rasa[29] (Elsheshtawy 2010). Contrary to Dubai which experimented a rapid growth by taking over non-populated lands, cities like Amman have a considerable urban fabric, thus instead of a tabula rasa, it constitutes a forced palimpsest, sacrificing the scale and needs of the neighbors and dwellers of Amman in pursuit of looking like a hypermodern and global city (Abu Hamdi 2016: 80; Musa 2017: 67). In this regard, Ḫālid Sāmiḥ – a Jordanian novelist– describes as following the forced importation of the Dubai model in his novel al-Hāmiš [*The margin*]:

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[29] For Elsheshtawy, the fact that Dubai did not have a clear urban core, coupled with the fact that there are expanses of desert, leads to the city being treated as a tabula rasa, in which the city appears as a site under permanent construction, as well as an urban laboratory (Elsheshtawy 2010: 13)

الجميع يتحدث عن مشروع جديد تزرع فيه قطعة من دبي في عمان حيث الأبراج
المتعالية تنشب اظافرها في السماء وتتعب رقاب المارين.

*Everyone is talking about a new project in which a piece of Dubai will be planted in Amman, where the arrogant towers erupt their nails in the sky and tire passersby's necks* (Sāmiḥ 2020: 38)

As Sakr points out in his research about the twofold policy of the GAM, their focus on infrastructure that enhances velocity worked against their policy of aiming at the creation of a collective identity for the city. In the case of Amman, the glass skyscrapers break the scale of a predominantly low-rise city. The creation of the "New Downtown"- also known as the "Abdali Project"- entailed a massive construction of infrastructure devoted to cars and speed (Parker 2009: Sakr 2013). These implementations fragmented, all the more so a city that has a hilly orography. As Sakr states:

> [T]he proliferating tunnel and bridge intersections continue to both expand and fragment Amman, physically and communally (turning its neighborhoods into fast-paced, drive-by areas), in such a way that deters the formation of a stable collective mental image and identity for the city (Sakr 2013: 342 ).

Hence, Amman has become a more dispersed and fragmented city. The question of destruction is linked with the loss of collective memory, and this in turn with a collective urban identity. The way in which Amman works against its memory with the neoliberal drive that is taking place, makes the already fragile and undefined identity of Amman become a more faded one, more than it was in the last decades. The previous examples show that there is an ongoing "destruction" and feeling of the loss of the city. Given the accusations and the anxieties, it is worth questioning who is destroying the city.

b) The Narrative of the Urban Genesis Subverted: The Destroyers of the City

Amman turned out to be an inhospitable city. The novels point at different agents that are committed to the degradation of the city. In ʿAbd al- Salām Ṣāliḥ's novel, the perpetrator of this degraded drive is the oligarchic network, that with the aid of the state institutions is committed to seeking its own profit and interests, without taking into consideration anything else. Moreover, the novel provides a counter-narrative of the Urban Genesis of Amman that will be explained in this section. Meanwhile al-Zaʿtarī points to the oligarchs who are running these massive transformations of Amman. According to the protagonist of the novel, it was already predicted that something hard was going to happen, and that the city was already burdened with polarization since 2004, the year in which the Abdoun Bridge was built (al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 112). For example, the tensions that lead to the war have their roots in the

building of the Abdoun bridge. It should be recalled that the massive construction of car-centered infrastructure came with the neoliberalization of Amman (Parker 2009). In either case, both novels point at the logic of profit and exploitation of the neoliberal city in which "The city is the means and material by which the local and regional oligarchies, (mis)represented within free market discourse as simply part of "the private sector," further consolidate their power within a larger imperial order" (Hourani 2014b: 653).

In addition to this, for the protagonist of the novel, each Ammani was taking revenge on Amman, himself included. Moreover, in the novel he practices self-criticism by criticizing the creative class of Amman, as well as their orientalizing gaze towards the other parts of their city. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, several initiatives focused on the city and in the practice of flânerie. However, these initiatives were monodirectional. What was under "discovery" was the core of the city which ceased to be the center of the city for several decades since the seventies, and the east of Amman, the less privileged part of the city. Al-Zaʿtarī of the novel participated in an urban initiative that aimed to explore the "under-explored" parts of the city:

أذكر عندما قمت بتأسيس مشروع أهلي وجيراني، ذهبنا الى أماكن مزدحمة لا يراها الناس في عمان، حيث مقابل استمناء السعادة اليومي في اللويبدة وشارع الرينبو، كان التجهم يقابله في تلك الأماكن. كانت فكرة غبية وقادمة من لا وعي طبقي أوجده في داخلي مجموعة من الأصدقاء جميلين ومصقولين ويبتسمون باضطراب مريب. قلت لهم بأنني أريد البدء بمشروع يخرجكم من عفنكم الطبقي

*I remember when I established the Ahlī wa jīrānī initiative. We went to crowded places that people do not see in Amman, where in contrast to the daily happiness masturbation in Luwaybidah and Rainbow Street, we were met with frowns in those places. It was a stupid thought coming out of my class unconsciousness that I embraced due a group of beautiful, polished, friends, who smile in a suspicious and disturbing way. I told them that I wanted to start a project that would get them out of their class rot* (al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 73)

The mentioned areas Luwaybidah and Rainbow Street are those areas that regained interest in the transition from the 2000s to the 20p10s. Both neighborhoods began as areas where the first bourgeoisie of Amman settled, especially after the 1927 earthquake. As seen in the example, the two areas became trendy among the affluent youth of Amman. The text shows two urban phenomena; on one hand, a gentrification process, and on the other hand, what Asef Bayat described as an "inside-outing" which is in Bayat's words:

[A] a massive number of urban residents, the subaltern, become compelled to operate, subsist, or simply live in the public spaces—in the streets, in a substantial "out-doors economy."  Here public space becomes an indispensable asset, capital, for people to survive, operate and reproduce life (Bayat 2012: 113). *Al-Zaʿtarī* albeit regretfully, continues to explain the fascination for the Amman rediscovery, in which he practiced street photography as a way of self-exploration seeking his roots in an orientalist and exoticizing manner:

لا أذكر من اختار هذا الاسم الغبي للمشروع، لكنني اكتشفت مع الوقت أنني أدافع عن شخص لم يعد موجودا. شخص يريد أن يتواصل مع جذوره من خلال تصوير لحظة ملحمية تبرز التناقض بين عالمين. لحظة تقحم لاعب تنس يرتدي اللباس المخصص لذلك ومضربا كبيرا مع جيوب منتفخة من الكرات في طابور سرفيس حي البطاريات بمجمع رغدان. أو سيدة ترتدي فستانا أسود قصيرا مع كعب عال تجلس في مطعم السنبل بالوحدات لتتناول الفول. أو شابة ترتدي ملابس وحقيبة نادي اللياقة تساوم بائع خضار على بكب في حي الطفايلة. لو تعلم كم شعرت بالخجل عندما عرضنا الصور في مساحة مكان أمام أشخاص ينظرون الى جبال عمان الشرقية كبوستر ليس أكثر. كخلفية من ضوضاء وأشخاص متجهمين وجهلة يريدون أن ينقضوا عليهم في أي لحظة. المشكلة في أنك لن تستطيع مس أي إحساس حي في أولئك الأصدقاء تجاه هذه الجذور التي تظهر على السطح بفظاظة.

*I don't remember who chose this stupid name for the initiative, but I discovered over time that I am defending someone who no longer exists. Someone who wants to get in touch with their roots by depicting an epic moment that highlights the contrast between two worlds. The moment a tennis player wearing a dress specially designed for the sport, holding a big racket, with inflated pockets of balls entering the Ḥayy Al-Baṭṭāriyāt collective taxi queue in the Raghdan complex. Or a woman wearing two short black dresses with high heels sitting in the Sunbul restaurant in Al-Wiḥdāt, eating Fūl. Or a young woman within her fitness clothes and bag bargaining with a vegetable seller in the Al-Ṭafāylah neighborhood. If you know how shy I felt when we showed pictures in the Makan art space in front of people looking at the hills of eastern Amman like nothing more than a poster? As a backdrop of noise, sullen and ignorant people want to pounce on them at any moment. The problem is that you will not be able to touch any vivid feeling in those friends about these roots that are crudely appearing on the surface* (al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 73-74)

Amman in the example is a commodified city, Eastern Amman is just a photographic landscape, where in the best cases, the East Amman people are figurants and *attrezzo* for the enjoyment and consumption of Amman's creative class. Photographic outings around Amman were a common activity in the transition between the late 2000's and early 2010s. The scene which is mentioned above resembles a photographic session conducted by the LGTBQI Arab online magazine MyKali. Another initiative that was trendy online and on social media was "Humans of Amman" in which photographers were taking portraits of individuals who shared

their "story".

The fictional Zaʿtarī blames and accuses the creative class for taking part in the destruction of the city:

تقول أن ليس لهم ذنب في ذلك؟ وأنهم ضحايا تجهيل مثلهم مثل البقية خضعوا لتصنيفات أصبح التهرب منها مع الوقت صعبا؟ وانهم يجدون أنفسهم في الدفاع عن امتيازات ورثوها ولم يصنعوها؟ اذا، لماذا كنا نعد جميعا لما حصل؟ ولماذا عندما حصل ذلك حملوا كل امتيازاتهم وأصبحوا قادة؟ أعلم أنك تريدني أن أتجاهلهم تماما. ألا أترك لهم حيزا يحتلونني من خلاله، لكن الأمر بدأ منذ زمن، وكلنا شركاء فيه.

> *You say they are not guilty of that? And that they are victims of ignorance, like the rest, who were subjected to classifications that became difficult to evade with time? And that they find themselves defending privileges they inherited and did not make? So, why were we all preparing for what happened? Why, when this happened, did they assume all their privileges and become leaders? I know you want me to completely ignore them. I should not leave a space for them to occupy me, but it began a long time ago, and we are all partners in it* (al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 74)

For example, they had inherited privileges and became leaders when the civil war began. And a similar point of view is found in ʿAbd al- Salām Ṣāliḥ's novel. *Aḥmad* from *akṯar min wahm* refuses to go out to Jabal al-Luwaybidah with *Samāʾ* because he felt excluded. For him, the new atmosphere of Jabal al-Luwaybidah was just an extension of "those families" (Ṣāliḥ 2017: 170-171). "Those families" are those whose history he was explaining to *Samāʾ*. She had her own experience working in the financial sector, where she was abused in her job (Ṣāliḥ 2017: 121). Those who were in charge of the companies where she worked belonged to a historical oligarchy that had links with the colonial powers upon the establishment of the post-Ottoman states (Ṣāliḥ 2017: 130-131). The urban anthropologist Najib Hourani, in his analysis of the neoliberal structures and assemblages in Amman, points at the genealogy of the urban elites and their links with colonialism:

> The intersection of diverse logics enabled the rise of Amman from a forgotten Roman town to the capital of a fledgling colonial state. Ottoman efforts to control and render products given its Arab provinces took up and altered existing patterns of power and practice. The British Mandate, in turn, took up the Ottoman order within the logic of colonial state formation. At both historical moments, external relations and contingency enabled and helped consolidate new internal relations central to the new orders produced. Under the British, Amman comes into its own, not simply as a product of these new relations, but also as an engine of the expansion and consolidation of Jordan's post-independence oligarchic order (Hourani 2016: 28)

Amman as it is described in the novel is an ugly city that serves alien forces, namely colonialism and their collaborators. And this is what made Amman doomed to be an exploited and exploitative city. For *Aḥmad,* the builders of Amman were opportunist Syrians who stayed in Jordan after they sought refuge in Amman escaping the French colonial authorities, and Palestinians who were collaborators with the British mandate in Palestine (Ṣāliḥ 2017: 148-149). *Aḥmad*'s explanation of the foundation of the city offers a counter-narrative for the Genesis of Amman:

الي بدي احكيه انه الي بنى وأسس عمان [...]انتماؤه الوحيد ارتباطه مع البريطانيين، عرفتي عمان هلأ لمين، بيوتها القديمة وشركاتها ومؤسساتها وأماكنها الراقية، رأسمالها وطغاتها وملاكينها الكبار الي فيها، غالبيتهم احفاد الي بنوا عمان في الأصل، وعبر السنوات الي مرت، تغلغلوا وسيطروا تحت رعاية وحماية، حتى سيطروا على كل شي.

*What I want to tell you is that the one who built and founded Amman [...] His only belonging was his connection with the British. Do you know to whom Amman belongs? The old houses, the companies, the institutions, and its classy places, its capital, tyrant and big landlords,in their majority are the grandchildren of those who built Amman originally. And over the years that went by, they penetrated and dominated under sponsorship and protection, until they controlled everything.*

The importance of debunking the narrative of the Urban Genesis of Amman is that it puts into question not only the beginnings of  Amman, but also the origins of the State as well, and how the city is governed. In the case of Amman, the urban neoliberalization process is a perpetuation of the colonial orders. Jordanian scholar Eliana Abu Hamdi observes that:

In cities such as Amman, Cairo, and Rabat—once colonized and subject to foreign interventions—The 'West' has returned, though, in this instance, as disguised colonialism, one inspired by regional, if not local aspirations toward modernity. In this case, the growing powers of private corporations have prompted developments that tend to serve the powerful, elite segment of society  (Abu Hamdi 2017: 105)

Both novels pointed at the oligarchy-state alliance and their role in the privatization and commodification of the city. If capitalism and neoliberalism rhetoric base their discourse on free enterprise, investments, and risk-taking, the oligarchs of Amman seem not to have risked much. As Eliana Abu Hamdi put it:

The process of neo-liberalization in Amman ensures financial success for the State and its oligarchic network, regardless of their failure, deeming them desirable and profitable to the State's appropriation of public and privately held lands as "domain", in turn, to sell properties to private developers at a premium (Abu Hamdi, 2017:103)

In this sense, it is worth recalling that according to *Zaʿtarī*, one of the actors in the destruction of the city is corporations, such as the heirs of *Kāmil al-Šabʿān* [*Kāmil the satiated*] who in the novel is the contractor who built the ʿAbdūn bridge. The name of the original contractor in the novel resembles the contractor of the bridge–Kamāl al-Šāʿir. It should be noted that the bridge, which is known popularly as "*Jisr ʿAbdūn*", was projected to be "*Jisr ʿAmmān*" [*The bridge of Amman*]. However, in 2010 its official name was changed to "*Jisr Kamāl al-Šāʿir*", as an exchange of favor in which the heirs of the contractor paid the GAM the price of fixing the lights of the bridge, which at the time cost 750,000 US dollars (Ammannet 2010). This example illustrates the privatization of the city, and the neglect of the collectivity in favor of the highest bidder, which shapes the city according to the interest of the oligarchs. It should be recalled that the GAM eased the implementation of these projects if not taking part directly in them. The GAM under the mayoralty of Nidal Hadid, who was dubbed as the mayor of the tunnels (Parker 2009), had technocrats and entrepreneurs on its team, coming from the "elite families" (Parker 2009:112).

With the exposed dynamics, Amman is shown as an inhospitable city, a city that hosts, and then betrays, making the different people be dehumanized, and hate each other, where individuals due to the accumulated chain of oppression can potentially convert into murderers:

كأن لا أحد يقرأ التاريخ، لا أحد يعرفه، أو كأن لا أحد يريد أن يعرف، هذه المدينة الصلفة المجنونة، التي أدمنتها، ألا من يخلصني منها، لماذا أنشؤوها، ومن هم الذين أنشؤوها ولأي سبب، وماذا كان دورها، وما هو دورها الان. من قحالتها، من عجزها عن الانجاب، عجزها حتى عن العناية بكل ما هو جميل وحقيقي وراق وفني وجمالي وابداعي، لا تحمل في داخلها الا القدرة الفذة على تعهير كل شيء، كم كثير من الرفاق والأصدقاء، حولتهم الى بغايا في عتمة ليلها، وكم أحالت منهم الى قوادين، حتى لتكاد تشعر أنك في ماخور ولست في مدينة.ليكون كل هذا منسجما مع الأساس الذي بنيت من أجله ولكي تلعب دورها في كل مشاريعهم.

عمان، وبصمت الجميع، رغم معرفتهم بكل شيء، ترى لماذا يصمتون عنها كلهم، سياسيون وثوريون ومعارضون، شعراء ومثقفون، لماذا يصمتون وهم يعرفون كل شيء، كل شيء تماما، هل في اسمها شيء سحري يلجم كل عنفوان أو فكرة أو جموح أو خطر، أم فيهم ما يلتبس علي ولا أفهمه؟!

حيث لا يوجد الفن، حين تغيب الموسيقى، السينما، القصيدة، الرواية، اللوحة والمسرحية، ينمو القتلة ويتكاثرون.

*As if no one reads history, no one knows it, or as if no one wants to know, this arrogant and crazy city,*

*which I am addicted to, no one can set me free from it. Why did they create it, who created it, for what reason, what was its role, and what is its role now? From her aridness, her inability to conceive, and her inability even to take care of everything that is beautiful, real, elegant, artistic, aesthetic and creative, she carries within her only the unique ability to prostitute everything. How many comrades and friends has she turned into prostitutes in the darkness of the night, and how many of them has she converted into pimps so that you can almost feel as though you are in a brothel and not in a city?*

*All of this is in line with the foundation on which it was built, and in order to play its role in all their projects.Amman, with everyone's silence, despite their knowledge of everything. You see why all of them are silent about it, politicians, revolutionaries and opposers, poets and intellectuals. Why are they silent while they know everything, everything completely? Does her name have some magic which ties down every bloom, idea, passion, or occurrence? Do they have something that I confused and do not understand ?!*

*Where there is no art, when music, cinema, poetry, novels, painting, and drama are absent, killers grow and multiply* (Ṣāliḥ 2017: 139-140).

The dehumanization of the city and its inhabitants is another aspect that is central in *al-Inḥināʾ ʿala jittat ʿAmmān*. At some point in the civil war, the inhabitants of the destroyed Amman ate each other's flesh. *Nawāl* for example kept getting infatuated with the corpse of a soldier from Mafraq and kept his dead body in her house. Cannibalism, if anything, can be interpreted as an unbridled voracity in which an entire cultural and social structure is collapsed, thus relegating it to the most absolute individuality. In the case of Nawal's infatuation with the corpse of a soldier from Mafraq, it could be interpreted as a fetishization, an exoticization of the Ammani towards everything that is not Amman and is within Jordanian territory. Thus, a sort of dissociation that oscillates between the scale of the individual with his city, and the scale of the capital with its provinces.

However, despite the dystopian aspect of *al-Inḥināʾ ʿala Jittat ʿAmmān*, where the entirety of the city is collapsing, there is an ephemeral exception of utopianism and appreciation towards Amman and the Ammanis. The appreciation comes when the protagonist accidentally joins a militia, which occupies the area of the Nynpheum and the Roman Amphitheatre of Amman, and they establish a sort of commune in which each works together with the others to put the commune in motion, which in the novel is described as:

كنا مجتمعا مثاليا، يحاول الإخلاص لهذه البقعة من مدينة خربناها، ولم نعد نرغب باستعادتها. كانت عمان تبدو من أعلى المدرج، حيث سهرنا باستمرار لنتحدث، مدينة هجرها الوحوش والبشر. مجرد خدش سطحي في ذاكرتنا.

*We were an ideal society, trying to be faithful to this spot from a city that we ruined, and we no longer wanted to take it back. Amman looked from the top of the Amphitheatre-where we stayed up constantly to talk-like a city deserted by beasts and humans. Just like if it were a mere superficial scratch in our memory. .*

(Al-Zaʿtarī 2014:134-135)

In the commune, al-Zaʿtarī of the novel becomes a botanist and pharmacist and cultivates the medicinal herbs making honor to his *nisba*[30]. What is interesting about this appreciation, is that they could do something other than destroy the city when they go back to the centre of the city– The Roman Amphitheatre and Nynpheum. By this positive regression, they could once again become Ammanis and work together with a community spirit. Although the novel does not make a specific reference to the Circassians, it is opportune to recall here that the re-foundation of Amman in the late nineteenth century came with agrarian Circassian settlements:

بدأنا بالتحول الى عمانيين مرة أخرى. كنا ننجز في شهر ما انجزه العمانيون في عشر سنوات، وبالتسلسل نفسه

> *We started to turn into Ammanis again. We were accomplishing in a month what the Ammanis had accomplished in ten years, and in the same sequence  (Al-Zaʿtarī 2014:142)*

However, this situation did not last long since all of them were alienated by their own choice, and at the same time fragmented the city ad infinitum. Hence, Amman is condemned to be a harsh place:

سنبقى جميعا غرباء باختيارنا. وهذا ما يجعل من المدينة مكانا قاسيا ومستفزا. وما حصل كان أكبر دليل على أننا كنا نعيش طيلة عمرنا في مدينة بأذهاننا فقط. إلى درجة كنا مستعدين للانزواء في أصغر بقعة منها وانشاء واحدة جديدة. وسيبقى الأمر كذلك. كل مكان خارجها يبدو أفضل وأكثر تسامحا والتصاقا بوجودك. هل تعرف لماذا؟ لأننا جميعا لم نولد في عمان، لكننا بالتأكيد سنموت فيها

> *We will all remain strangers by choice. This is what makes the city a cruel and provocative place. And what happened was the biggest proof that we lived all our lives in a city with only our minds. To the extent that we were ready to retreat to the smallest spot and create a new one. And it will remain so. Everywhere outside of it seems better, more tolerant and more attached to you. Do you know why? Because we were not all born in Amman, but we will die in it  (Al-Zaʿtarī 2014:142)*

What unites the Ammanis of the novel is their strangeness to the city, as well as their fate to

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[30] In Arabic, the nisba *Zaʿtarī* is relative to *Zaʿtar,* thyme, which is a wild plant appreciated in the Levant both as a home remedy for respiratory problems and as an appreciated ingredient in Levantine cuisine.

stay in it until their death. Although the question of belonging is central to the novel, *Zaʿtarī* explains the reason why he participated in the 2011 demonstrations in Jordan. He just wanted to defend a spot where he could be, and it was not a matter of belonging or not to the city. In his words,

الأمر يشبه المشاركة في مظاهرات 2011. أتذكر عندما اصطحبتك الى احداها؟ كنا ندافع عن بقعتنا الخاصة ليس أكثر. نضمن لأرجلنا مكانا في الشارع. لم يكن الأمر متعلقا بمدى انتمائنا أو تعلقنا بالمدينة. كنا فقط ندافع عن مكان أفضل للعيش.

*It's like participating in the 2011 demonstrations. Remember when I took you to one of them? We were defending a spot for us, nothing more. We wanted to guarantee a place for our legs on the street. It was not a matter of how attached we were or how attached we were to the city. We were just advocating for a better place to live* (al-Zaʿtarī 2014: 121)

Hence, the motivation for his participation in the protests was that he wanted to live in a better place and have a place in the streets regardless of his affiliation or how he understood his own identity. Amman with its neoliberalization, and privatization, is shrinking the public space which works against a collective identity.

4.5 Conclusions of Chapter IV

The chapter has shown how in the last ten years, different novels written by Jordanian authors gave special importance to Amman. The Arab Uprising brought the geography, space and urban questions into the core of intellectual and artistic productions, and such is the case of Amman, which was brought back into the scene. During the last two decades, Amman witnessed a cultural and literary boom which put it at the centre of different cultural products and debates. This chapter analyzed the representation of Amman through two novels: *al-Inḥināʾ ʿalā Jiṯṯat ʿammān* (bending on Amman's corpse) by Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī (2014) and *Akṯar min wahm* [*more than an illusion*] by ʿAbd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ (2017). The discussed novels emerged in the Arab Uprising period, and participated in it. The claims present in the novels had the right to the city as their main topic, and also the Arab Uprising in Jordan, which on the one hand entailed a harsh criticism against the oligarchies ruling the country, and at the same time, centered the land and the city wherein as being the core of the struggle (Hourani 2016b).

In these novels, Amman is not a hospitable city and it is not possible to belong to the city. Amman is not the only common denominator of the two novels, but also, the novels express various concerns towards the city. These are: the belonging to Amman and the effects of

neoliberal urbanism, the commodification of historic neighborhoods, privatization of spaces and the suppression of the features of the city and hence the destruction of collective memory. The two novels enter into dialogue with the novels discussed in the previous chapters. On the one hand, the topic of belonging and alienation of Amman is still present although more violent, and on the other hand, the discourse of the welcoming city is subverted, where those who built the city are oligarchs, opportunists and collaborators with the colonial powers. Similarly, this chapter refers to other novels and cultural products from the same period to have a more comprehensive vision of the neoliberal urban transformations. And in this regard, this final chapter showed that writers who discuss cities participate in urban and political processes by getting into the major debates and offering their own version of events and dismantling the image that is being created about Amman by the state. In the context of Amman, these novels constitute a tactical means for claiming the right to the city in a context where political participation and urban policies were and are very limited.

Moreover, the approach taken in this chapter, can foreground an affective map and archive of the production of space and locality in Amman departing from the novel. From a diachronic perspective, the neglect of Ammani literature in the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, the further adoption of it in the 2000s, and the rejection of it after the Arab Uprising show that there is an ongoing struggle, or at least, a negotiation over what is the place of Amman in the everyday lives of the Ammani subjects. The censorship of Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī's novel in Jordan illustrates the struggle over the city's narrative.

This way of representing Amman is tactical whereas the counter-claims present in the novels went into debunking the strategic image making of the neoliberal Amman, the cosmopolitan and interconnected one. Amman, to be turned into a global city, has lost a lot of its space in the process. The novels engaged in questioning, reflecting the belonging to Amman, and highlighting the collective memory as an enabler of a collective urban identity.The novels are part of the broader intertextual network. They engage in conversation not only with the current events and processes, but also with novels of the previous decades.

# 5. Chapter V: Findings and Conclusions of the Thesis

The research has sought to analyze the representation of Amman in a selected body of novels published originally in Arabic by Jordanian writers over three decades, from the late 1980s to the late 2010s. The study consisted in a geo-centered reading of Amman in six novels published during three turning points: The democratization, the branding of Amman and its image change, and the Arab uprisings. Over the course of the three decades, the city was undergoing rapid transformations, and at the same time, the city was subject to different debates, discourses, and agendas.

The research has engaged in an oscillation between intra-textual, inter-textual, and extra-textual readings of the city. This reading foreground, on the one hand, a history of the production of the space, and on the other hand, the history of the emergence of a literary genre, as well as a history of the representation of Amman in the novel.

The research has key findings that can at the same time bear theoretical implication, as well as open a new path in the study of literature and the city both in the Jordanian and Arabic contexts.

One of the findings of the thesis contextualized the emergence of the first Ammani novels, which began to appear in the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. In that transition between decades there was a change of geographic and political configurations, of which the following stand out: the disengagement with the West Bank in 1988, and the lifting of martial law and reestablishment of parliament and legalized political parties in 1989. In these democratic reforms, the power of ideological political parties diminished, and the representation of large cities in the lower chamber decreased in favor of a policy based on identity politics and clientelism. This climate of openness has led to less scrutiny of literary production, and it is in this context that Amman appears in the novel. As the thesis argues, Amman's underrepresentation in politics with the new democratized form of governance led to a greater representation of the city in the novel.

Chapter 4 has shown how belonging to Amman and the non-acknowledgement of the Ammanis is in part a political product. Through Razzāz's novels, belonging to Amman appeared together with pointing to the reduction of the power of the city and of the political

parties. In this sense, the chapter has shown the intricacies that come into play when it comes to feeling Ammani in Razzāz's novels: *Jumʿah al-Qifārī* (1990) and *al-Šaẓāyā wa-l-fusayfisāʾ* (1994). This causes disagreements with other characters, who are rooted on the tribal and provincial levels favoured by the new democratized form of governance, who did not take Amman as a valid identification, since they assert that the city has no origin.

In the case of Razzāz's novels, the feeling of belonging to Amman moves on two scales, which are: belonging to a sub-national entity, this is the city, and on the other hand belonging to a supra-national entity, which is pan-Arabism, believing in a geography that is broader than the national one. This aspect is evident in Razzaz's novel, which brings up the nostalgia for the 1950s for its marked urban character, as well as for it being considered the zenith of pan-Arabism.

Chapter 4 has elucidated how the political, ideological, and historical context of Amman has given birth to an Amman boom, in which Amman begins to be present in an unprecedented way in the novel. Therefore, it can be said that Amman has created its own literary genre, if one follows Franco Moretti's premise that says, "[e]ach genre possesses its own space, then- and each space its own genre" (Moretti 1998: 35).

One of the theoretical contributions may be to point to the potential of writing as a tactical, or strategic means of reappropriating the city.

In this regard, the tactical aspect of writing is one of the key findings of this thesis. This could be seen in the inverse correlation of Amman's underrepresentation in politics with the greater representation in the novel. For De Certeau a tactic is:

A calculated action is determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power (De Certeau 1984: 36-37)

The absence of a place of political participation has created a textual space that challenges how the city is placed in the political context of Jordan, and at the same time, plays within the imposed rules that the state has put either at a political scale, an urban one, or on the scale of literary production. These rules, fit in what De Certeau calls strategy:

[T]he calculus of force-relationships becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an

"environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (De Certeau 1984: xix)

Thus, the way in which the city is excluded from the national identity (Kassay 2013) isolates Amman from the environment which De Certeau pointed to. At the same time, the city is considered as belonging to the state, since it takes the custody of generating relations, such as politically over-representing or under-representing the city. In this sense, the tactic is used against the state's strategic undertaking. In the case of Razzāz's novels, the characters constantly lamented the political misrepresentation of both Amman and of the ideological parties. And tactically, the characters of Razzāz recomposed their relationship with the city through writing, and through remembering Amman and its politics nostalgically. As Enzo Traverso pointed out, the nostalgia and melancholy is more about "memory and awareness of the potentialities of the past: a fidelity to the emancipatory promises of revolution" (Traverso 2017: 52).

In the same way writing can be a strategic means in which an institution attempts to set its own narrative that matches their agenda. The thesis has also shown how Amman started to be reappropriated institutionally. In the mid-1990s, and in an unprecedented manner, the Greater Amman Municipality began to take an interest in the city's culture with a view to creating an image and identity for the city, as is shown in Chapter 4. The discussion includes different literary texts that have Amman's past as their subject, and has shown how the 2003 novels went hand in hand with the vision and plans of the municipality. It should be noted that the literary texts dealing with Amman's past can be divided into three categories. On the one hand, the novels prior to 2002, which were published in the late eighties, such as *Sulṭānah* by Ġālib Halasā (1986) and *Abnāʾ al-Qalʿah* by Ziyād Qāsim (1990), despite showing the cultural diversity of the city, gave importance to its political bustle, and in turn, there was no romanticized or nostalgic account of the city. On the other hand, there are what have been called city-biographies, which are auto-biographies that narrate more than the childhood or youth of the protagonist, narrating the city of that time. And finally, there are the 2003 novels, which emphasize Amman's plurality, hospitality, ancient history, and trade such as *al-Šahbandar* by Hāšim Ġarāybah (2003) and *Dafātir al-ṭawafān* by Samīḥah Ḫrīs (2003).

The visions present in the 2003 novels went hand in hand with different urban plans, the most important of which was to put the city on the tourist map while positioning Amman as a

global hub. In addition, an "origin" was being given to a city accused of having "no origin," thus the GAM was favoring a narrative of the urban genesis of Amman in which the political aspect is skimmed, in favor of the celebration of the market. This aspect of Amman's writing during the 2002 Amman Campaign shows the strategic potential of the novels as means of the reappropriation of the city by institutions.

The neoliberal transformations that began to accelerate in the 2000s went hand in hand with growing interest in the city, either by the state, or by its creative class. In 2010 and 2011, with the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings, issues of space and geography and the right to the city were raised. And in this context, the novels of Chapter 4, published after 2011, such as *al-Inḥināʾ ʿalā Jiṯṯat ʿAmmān* by Aḥmad al-Zaʿtarī (2014) and *Akṯar min wahm* by ʿAbd al-Salām Ṣāliḥ (2017), enter fully with the questions of the right to the city, thus showing their tactical aspect in the re-appropriation of the city. In these novels, the new urban transformations were pointed out as an impediments to the feeling of belonging to the city, since the destruction of landmarks was effacing the collective memory, and hence, further fragmenting the city. Moreover, the narrative of the genesis of the city was turned upside down, in which those who built Amman were colonial collaborators. At the same time, the oligarchies, corporations, and even the creative class were considered the causes of the death of the city, as in *al-Inḥināʾ*, or as causes of the city's infertility, since it is posited that they are unable to produce anything "beautiful" or "original," as in *Akṯar min wahm.* Thus, using a place-centered reading of a group of novels that had Amman as a main theme, the dissertation has shown the tactical and strategic potential of writing, in which political and moral claims and counter-claims were placed.

An important aspect that the thesis has emphasized is the importance of an important agent in cultural production, and that is the municipality. The culture of the municipality in the Arab context is rather understudied. At the same time, another aspect related to municipal culture is Amman's selection as the UNESCO capital of Arab culture. Despite being a program that is almost three decades old, it is equally understudied. The importance of looking at the municipal scale is that it would limit the reductionism of viewing literature through a top-down and state-centered lens and give greater depth and perspective to an entire urban, cultural, and literary phenomenon as Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 have shown.

Moreover, another important contribution of the thesis is that with its geocritical readings, it has provided a history of the production of space parallel to the history of the Ammani novel, thus showing the attitudes and anxieties present in the face of the urban transformations that have taken place in the last three decades. And at the same time, it has traced the radical

urban transformations carried out in the city. For example, it has shown the trajectory of a neighborhood which was left behind in the seventies with the oil boom, in favor of the newer and richer areas – Jabal al-Luwaybidah– which was once called " جبل المتقاعدين"[*The hill of the retirees*] (*al-Šaṭāyā* 1994:6). This greatly contrasts with the more contemporary neighborhood that became trendy and gentrified, in which many of its old houses and businesses were converted into cafés, art galleries, and even schools to teach Arabic for foreigners. The neighborhood attracts the Ammani creative class as well, that same group which *Aḥmad*, the protagonist of *Akṯar min wahm*, shunned.

This last example is quite illustrative of the changes in attitudes that exist around the same neighborhood, showing its urban transformations in a city that was already suffering from an "identity crisis". This shows that, Amman's contemporary novel is intimately intertwined with Amman's urban history. Therefore, this thesis has provided an archive of the city's urban and literary history over three decades, showing the anxieties, historical, geographical, urban references of Amman present in its novels.

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