

## ARD AL-SAWAD

### A NOVEL FORMULATION OF PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF IRAQ

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History, and its transformation into fiction, has contributed to the rise of the Arabic novel. The Lebanese Jurji Zaydan (1861-1914) popularized the historical novel by focusing on dramatic events in Arab-Islamic history. He wrote more than twenty novels presenting heroes and romances drawn from chronicles. Though the Egyptian Nobel Laureate, Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), is not known for his historical novels, he did start his fictional career with novels situated in ancient Egypt and based on Pharaonic history. Within the last decades, the historical novel has flourished in the Arab World and is showing technical and structural sophistication as well as a variety of strategies and modes of appropriation of history and even re-writing of history. The works of Gamal al-Ghitany, Salwa Bakr, Bensalim Himmich, 'Abd al-Rahman Munif as well as works of such Anglophone and Francophone writers as Ahdaf Soueif and Amin Malouf attest to a wealth of experimentation with the subgenre of the historical novel. In this essay, I shall explore how one of the most prominent Arab novelists has innovated by writing a historical novel of epical stature highlighting "people's history" – to use a term that has been popularized by the work of Howard Zinn -- of Iraq.

#### THE AUTHOR

'Abd al-Rahman Munif (1933-2003), novelist, economist, historian, art critic and an oppositional intellectual, turned to fiction after his disappointment and frustration with party politics.

His last monumental work, *Ard al-Sawad*, in three volumes covering 1500 pages, narrates imaginatively an obscure but indicative era of Iraqi history – that of the early nineteenth century during the reign of the enigmatic Daud Pasha.<sup>1</sup> It is, as the novel asserts, in the author's prologue, a love hymn to Iraq. It reproduces the Iraqi dialect in its dialogue, the variety of Iraqi ethnic groups and classes, and above all those political passions that constitute both Iraqi dynamism and doom.

Munif is Iraqi on his mother's side and Saudi Arabian on his father's side though he was stripped of his Saudi nationality in his life time for his involvement in leftist politics. He was born in Amman and he documents in *Sirat Madina (Story of a City)* his childhood and the impact of his maternal grandmother on him.<sup>2</sup> In *Ard al-Sawad*, Munif is writing about his motherland rather than his fatherland.<sup>3</sup> A patriotic attachment to Iraq is unmistakable in this novel as well as in his non-fiction book published in 2003, *Al-Traq: Hawamish min al-Tarikh wal-Muqawama* (Iraq: Notes from History and Resistance), written after the occupation following the second Gulf War, and in which he makes use of the historical texts he read in preparation of *Ard al-Sawad*.<sup>4</sup> Fictional as *Ard al-Sawad* is, he does not paint for us larger-than-life portraits of his compatriots. The Iraqis we encounter in this epic work have the strength and weaknesses of people everywhere yet their destiny is shaped by geo-

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politics: Iraq as a crossroads of different civilizations, coveted by imperial powers. Medievalist geographers referred to Baghdad as the navel of the earth, as if it were the center of the universe. He who possesses her possesses the rest. In many ways, Baghdad is presented in Munif's work as the target of worldly ambitions paralleling and contrasting to the position of Jerusalem in the spiritual realm.

## THE TITLE

Though *Ard al-Sawad* is first and foremost an artistic endeavor, one is often surprised -- when researching the subject -- how many of the characters are actual historical figures and how many of the events did take place. To start with the title: it is both poetic and historical. Iraq was called "ard al-sawad" in the middle ages. Literally, *ard* means land and *sawad* means black but also green. Iraq was called the black land because coming from the desolate desert, the immense stretches of fertile land and palm trees seemed dark green to the observers, thus the epithet, *ard al-sawad*, the land of blackness or greenness. That is why in rendering it in English, translators have wavered between calling it "Land of Darkness" and "Fertile Land" (Abdel-Qadir) The title itself carries within it the possibility of both, an intersection of opposites, since black stands for mourning and death and green for fertility and life. Add to the above that "al-sawad" in Arabic refers to common people as opposed to the elite, to the masses and specifically to the dispossessed, and the richness of the title begins to overwhelm the meticulous reader.

In some sense Iraq "the dark land" is simply an ironic inversion of its ancient name.<sup>5</sup> It is said that "Iraq" comes from "Uruk," the Sumerian word (and city) that means shining and light ('Ali Sa'di). Thus, *Ard al-Sawad* is both the dark land and the light land. If I dwell on the title it is because it points to a certain complexity that colors the work by tapping on different meanings, ranging from the actual and historical to the imaginative and playful. The verbal irony and rhetorical play of the title are based on historical names of Iraq.

## THE PROLOGUE

Munif opens his work by citations from a Mesopotamian literary text -- a Sumerian epic -- in which the poet sings:

"O Sumer, the great country among all countries  
You are immersed in penetrating and constant light".

Just as the novel of Munif is based on history, the title is based through evocation on different epochs of Iraqi history and ways of naming Iraq. *Ard al-Sawad* opens with a citation from a Sumerian ode for Iraq then moves to an excerpt from a Babylonian poem in which the poet bemoans the losses that have befallen his country.<sup>6</sup> After "strangers have destroyed Ur" another excerpt laments the city in words that could very well have been written by contemporary Iraqi poets describing the devastation that has befallen present-day Iraq:

"O Lord Anana, the city has been destroyed  
like shattered pottery. Its people fill its corners.  
Its ramparts demolished and the people are wailing;  
They wail at the lofty gates, where they used to stroll,  
and in the streets, where they used to have festivities -- their  
bodies scattered.

In its squares where they celebrated, the corpses of the  
murdered are in heaps."

Just as in the finale of the novel, where a glimpse of hope is based on the Iraqi governor managing to oust the imperial viceroy, so do these excerpts selected

by Munif from the extant ancient literature of Iraq. They end with an uplifting hymn to the city and its resurrection:

“The city wears light  
And gets the heads of the arrogant to bow.  
Strong are thy hands, and generous is thy chest:  
No sooner does your terrible beauty shine  
than the wrong doers and the wicked fall  
into the cracks of the earth.”

Finally, in this prologue, Munif cites an ancient Iraqi narrating his dream to his mother and asking if the geomancer would interpret it. Is this an invitation to decipher *Ard al-Sawad* where the locals overcome in the end the arrogance of the empire?

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*Ard al-Sawad* is essentially about the rise of Daud Pasha to prominence and power and his confrontation with the British Resident in Iraq, Claudius James Rich, “who behaved much more like a local potentate than a foreign diplomat”.<sup>7</sup> Daud Pasha (ruled 1817-31) was the last of the Mamluk leaders of Iraq, who initiated modernizing programs similar to those of Muhammad ‘Ali of Egypt, including founding industries and schools, training an army, and starting a printing press. Though Iraq was then part of the Ottoman empire governors of different parts were practically autonomous. The governor of a given province had to consult with Istanbul and get its agreement to his policy and had to pay taxes. The conflict between the tribes and semi-autonomous central government in Baghdad was an issue that often caused strife. Furthermore, the Ottoman empire was weak and the European colonial powers had their eyes on its possessions. There was a colonial scramble for the Middle East before there was a scramble for Africa in the nineteenth century. The rivalry for Egypt and the Fertile Crescent was between France and Britain. Thus Napoleon’s victories and defeats were of instant relevance to politics, not only to European politics, but to Middle Eastern politics as well. It had implications for the people in the Arab world as there was a struggle between powerful European countries over their control. All of that is reflected in this historical novel of Munif: issues such as which consul general is more influential, and who speaks better Arabic among the foreign consuls and who throws the bigger party, are not random conversational curiosities. These exchanges are indicative of certain success in the competition between Powers to whose hegemony the natives were subjected.

Equally important in this period (early half of the nineteenth century) in the Arab world is the attempt by local rulers, from whatever background (Albanian, Georgian, etc.), to assert a measure of autonomy not only from the Ottoman empire but also from the colonial powers. This attempt was accompanied by efforts to modernize and be, if not self-sufficient, at least not dependent entirely on one source for its welfare and security. Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha of Egypt is a prime example and model for Daud Pasha of Iraq, and later for Ahmad Bey of Tunisia. Thus references by the common people to Muhammad ‘Ali and his Press that published the Gazette are not simply conversational and anecdotal. It is indicative of the push to modernize and to find one’s place in the sun. Daud Pasha in his own way tried to achieve power, control the rebellious tribes, establish a local army, and guarantee access to goods without reliance on a foreign power. The British in the person of their representative Resident tried to wage an economic war against Daud Pasha, foment trouble for him by encouraging opposition, and offering him weapons that will invariably cause him trouble with Istanbul. As for their method of attracting ordinary people, it was through offering them material and social

privileges, using intelligence and spying, and above all dazzling the masses with pomp and technology.

The real life of Daud Pasha was as melodramatic as a life could be. He was kidnapped from his Georgian family when he was twelve years old and was taken to Baghdad. There was a political need to have such slaves who would not have any family connections except that of their patrons and thus they would be loyal clients to their masters. Daud was sold in Iraq and moved from one owner to another until he ended in the palace of Sulayman Pasha the Great, Governor of Iraq – himself a Mamluk and an ex-slave. Having been brought up as a Christian, Daud soon converted to Islam and developed interest in theological issues. As a Mamluk he could only excel by proving himself: he showed practical sense, a gift for languages, and an inquisitive mind. He progressed in the Seraglio of the Governor until he became the seal bearer of Sulayman-the-Great and ended up marrying the daughter of his master. All the historical details known of the life of Daud Pasha have been incorporated in the novel, including reference to extant letters he dictated in Georgian to his secretary Pietro, addressed to his mother Mariam in Tiflis in 1821 in which he referred to himself as “King of Happy Babylon.” His name was originally Davit (Daud) son of Giorgi Botsholashvili. His interest in his original family continued and he supported them financially.<sup>8</sup>

As for the antagonist Claudius James Rich (1787-1821), he is equally real and had an equally melodramatic life. He figures with his wife Mary prominently in Munif’s novel. Mr. Rich wrote a 2-volume description of his travels and stay in Iraq under the long title of *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan, and the Site of Ancient Nineveh; with Journal of a Voyage Down the Tigris to Baghdad and an Account of a Visit to Shirauz and Persepolis*, edited by his widow and published in 1836. Rich’s life is no less amazing than that of Daud Pasha.

Born in Dijon, France, he was taken as infant to Bristol, England. He got interested in Arabic at a very young age, and by the time he was fifteen, he knew it well along with Hebrew, Syriac, Persian, and Turkish.<sup>9</sup> He was assigned to the civil branch of Indian Service but was allowed to go to Egypt with the Consul-General. But there was a shipwreck, and instead he went to Constantinople, and visited other places before ending in Egypt.<sup>10</sup> He perfected his Arabic when he was in Egypt and then went to Palestine and Syria and later Iraq “in the guise of a Mameluke” and then sailed to Bombay.<sup>11</sup> There he gained the trust and admiration of Sir James Mackintosh and married his daughter Mary. He was appointed a Resident (equivalent to a Consul) in Baghdad. There he chose a place to live which was central for his political maneuvering and intelligence.<sup>12</sup> Around 1813 he suffered bad health and left Baghdad for a while then again when his health failed him. He went to Kurdistan and wrote about his impressions while collecting antiquities and manuscripts. After the clash he had with Daud Pasha, he went to Basra and from there to Shiraz (in present-day Iran) where he caught cholera and died.

The clash between Rich and Daud Pasha is commented on from the point of view of Rich’s relative (great-great nephew) in a chapter in a book entitled “Final Dispute Between Rich and the Pasha 1820-1821”.<sup>13</sup> This version insists on the heroic stature of Rich:

“Rich found himself virtually a prisoner . . . the Pasha intimated very strongly that he was not to leave, and Rich imagined he was kept in hostage. . . . [Rich] was feeling far from well; the affair had strained his nerves considerably and brought back his feverish symptoms. He knew he could escape . . . but if he did, it would have looked like flight, which was not to be thought of.”<sup>14</sup>

Rich himself comments on some of the events he witnessed in his diaries. After he describes how thriving Baghdad was under the rule of the Mamluk governor Sulayman Pasha (the father-in-law of Daud Pasha), he writes:

“He left three sons, who were much beloved by the people of the town for his sake; and much respected, therefore, by his successors in the Pashalik. The two remaining ones live with their respective mothers, affluent . . . the eldest, had made himself very formidable, and finally succeeded, through much treachery and falsehood, in becoming pasha. He enjoyed his dignity but a very few years, and was overpowered by his own brother-in-law Daoud, who put him to death, and afterwards received from the Porte the firmaun confirming him in the government.”<sup>15</sup>

## FROM HISTORY TO FICTION

The first volume of the saga of Daud Pasha starts at the deathbed of Sulayman the Great with his three sons Sa‘id, Salih, and Sadiq and his four sons-in-law one of which is Daud Pasha. Early on we recognize how calculating Daud Pasha is and how politically astute. Knowing that his opportunity is not yet ripe, he leaves Baghdad for Basra and immerses himself in literary and theological studies. Palace intrigues of that period were made worse by the Wahabi conquest, which blamed the Governor of Baghdad for the assassination of Saud ibn Abdul-Aziz. Feuds and assassinations followed ending with Sa‘id the eldest as the Governor. When the tribes revolted Sa‘id called on his brother-in-law Daud for help. This annoyed his mother Nabi Khatoun who had refused in the first place to have Daud marry her youngest daughter. As observed by historian and social anthropologist Tom Nieuwenhuis, “another factor in the formation of factions within Mamluk-dominated circles [is] the role of some influential women in the haram”.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter exposes the setting and the characters and presents the theme of political struggle and fratricide, the role of women in courtly intrigues, the homosexuality of Sa‘id and his infatuation with Hamadi, and the competition between the two Jewish bankers for the title of *sarafbashi* (prime financier). The subsection of the book by Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq*, entitled “The Sa‘id-Dawud Struggle (1815-1816)” show how faithful Munif has been to historical records including names of minor characters and agents.<sup>17</sup> The relation between Hamadi and Sa‘id in the historical text is rather a personal friendship where Hamadi enjoys “almost unlimited protection by Sa‘id” -- without any insinuation of an erotic partnership.<sup>18</sup> Rather it is somewhat a political alliance between Sa‘id and Hamadi -- chief of ‘Aqil tribe -- as Said “came to build his power upon tribal forces more than upon Mamluk guardsmen and the ‘Aqil were the most loyal and useful of the former”.<sup>19</sup> Other historical texts insinuate, however, the debauchery of Sa‘id but not in any detail. Clearly, what Munif did is combine the two historical reports and thus created of Hamadi a partner and not simply an ally.<sup>20</sup>

Munif provides further details about the household affairs of the palace intrigues and scandals including the insanity of Nabi, Sa‘id’s mother, after she witnesses the cruel beheading of her own son. Such domestic details are probably the imaginative additions of the novelist who turns dry chronicles into a literary work. But many of the characters even the minor political figures are historically real such as Sayyid ‘Alaywi, Halet Effendi, Jasim Beg al-Shawi, Rustum Agha, Hamud al-Thamir al-Sa‘dun, etc. The competition between the two major Jewish bankers, Sassoon and Ezra, and the role of the latter as Daud’s major finance Controller is partly attested by historical records. The famous Sassoon family of Iraq established its networks as far as India, partly because it had to seek fortune elsewhere as it was not favored and some of its members came under the wrath of Daud Pasha. Munif incorporates certain historical reports about Jews of Baghdad in the nineteenth century and weaves them in with the story of Sassoon and his rival Ezra in *Ard al-Sawad*.<sup>21</sup>

Munif definitely had access to the journals of Rich (as edited and published by his widow) and thus he was less motivated to imagine his thoughts; he could

reproduce his minute reflections as when he renders the following reflection of Rich in *Ard* III:<sup>22</sup>

“In the colour of the horizon was that perfect black, that total absence of light, which Lord Byron has fancied in his horrible dream of the extinction of the sun.”<sup>23</sup>

Munif is also helped in depicting the psyche of Mary Rich by an appendix in the book of Claudius Rich that is entitled “Fragment of a Journal from Baghdad to Sulimania by Mrs. Rich”.<sup>24</sup> Other minor characters that Munif draws in the company of Rich are historical and add to the colorful cultural scene in nineteenth century Iraq: Cofa Ovanness, the native secretary, an Armenian by birth; Delli Samaan (mad Simeon), a Christian who bought antiquities for Mr. Rich; Jaafer Ali, one of Rich’s servants from Lucknow, India; etc.

### **THE PROTAGONIST**

While we can read Daud’s trajectory as that of a Prince, in the Machiavellian sense of the term, a ruthless ruler who does everything to guarantee his authority and control, the character is at the same time humanized. This is particularly so when domestic scenes portray him as a father and as lonely soul longing for his distant mother.

Munif informs us about Daud’s loneliness even though he was surrounded by admiring courtiers.<sup>25</sup> He realized that such admiration is not to be counted on and he needed to know the truth and what is being said even if unpleasant. He used two to tell him what is going on: Fayruz in the Salamlik (men’s quarters) and Naila Khatun in the Haramlik (women’s quarters). Daud came to know Fayruz when the latter frequented the shrine of Abdel-Qader al-Gaylani. Fascinated by the grave and learned personality of Daud, Fayruz agreed to be his servant and follower. While Fayrouz was attracted to Daud as a matter of personal choice, Naila -- older than Daud and like him brought up in the Seraglio of Sulayman Pasha -- came to be a trusted nanny for his handicapped daughter. Naila married twice but did not have children; she turned to worship and prayers.<sup>26</sup> She was particularly fond of Daud’s daughter Muhsina who was born just before Daud’s trip north. The child was loved dearly by her father but was unable to walk though she could speak well.<sup>27</sup> Munif describes Naila’s endeavors to cure his daughter, from taking her to various shrines to doing good in the hope that divine mercy would cure the child. She also took her to all the medical and pseudo-medical authorities she could find.

Daud Pasha is also humanized by presenting his longing for his Georgian family: he suffered insomnia and recalled his mother, Mariam in Tiflis, and his father and two brothers. He wrote them from time to time in Georgian that he could only dictate but not actually write.<sup>28</sup> But while paternal and filial passions mark Munif’s Daud, his love life is hardly touched on, though he had more than one woman in his life. Being married to Nazli the daughter of Sulayman Pasha -- his first wife -- did not prevent him from having others. When one of his concubines got pregnant he would marry her by divorcing one of his four wives, but never Nazli.

Daud, as portrayed by Munif, was a very private person. He did not want the common people to know about his intimate life or everyday life. Yet, he was talked about in the markets and the cafés -- how he fed his own gazelles in his mansion, how he had a Georgian wife, Mary mother of his son al-Mu’tasim, etc.

### **PEOPLES’ STORIES**

Though *Ard al-Sawad* revolves around Daud Pasha, it presents in its unfolding lively characters from all walks of life who make up a social tapestry of Baghdad in yonder days. These common people frequented Shatt Café (River Coffee House) in a popular neighborhood in the heart of al-Karkh -- the more

popular section of Baghdad as opposed to Rasafa where the wealthier people lived, Munif is likely to have created these characters, and juxtaposed them to the characters in the mansions of the Governor and the British Resident.<sup>29</sup> The stories of the many characters that populate *Ard al-Sawad* are not narrated one after the other as in the *Arabian Nights*, but in bits and pieces. We read the incidents related to Muhsina, the handicapped daughter of Daud, for example, in different chapters of the book and it is for the reader to connect these scattered bits and pieces to make sense of this girl's predicament among the teeming characters of this work. On overhearing the conversations of these common characters as they interpret their surrounding world and as they gossip about the elite, we are introduced to the worldview of Iraqi people in the early nineteenth century.

Some of these common characters add humor to the predominantly tragic events of this era with its wars, strife, floods, and plagues. Zaynab Kushan is an example: she appears and reappears in the novel, always complaining about her small plot of land that had been confiscated by a former Governor of Iraq. Her obsession, coupled with her far-fetched ways to get it back – including positioning herself near the gate of the Governor's mansion so she can plead her case with anyone going in or out – is funny and particularly when her complaint and pleas are in a colorful Iraqi dialect.

One of the most interesting in terms of characterization is the one-eyed Hoby. He was a defender of the poor and used to work in leather tanning. When he differed with his boss, and his boss made fun of him, he stabbed him and killed him.<sup>30</sup> He ran and became an outlaw. His idea of religion is not orthodox: for him piety comes from the heart and is not a matter of rituals. He did not fast in Ramadan, for instance, but he did stop drinking in that month.

Another equally colorful character is Sifo who is the childless water-carrier. His quarrels with his wife, his stubborn character, his willingness to help, are all depicted sympathetically. As for Hasun, the groom, the simple and kind soul who was dazzled by Mrs. Rich riding a horse in a parade, he was egged on all the time. Having waved at the crowd and in the direction of Hasun, all his acquaintances in the Café teased him about Mary Rich's infatuation with him and he took that seriously with all the humorous consequences. The Barber, the Mulla, the Artist, have also their intertwined and entertaining stories. But the principal subplot that runs through the novel and partakes in the life of the Seraglio and the common people is the tragic story of Badri.

Badri Salih al-'Ulu falls in love with a dancer named Najma but is unable to possess her, much that he tried. In describing Badri's infatuation with Najma and her dancing as if she were dancing to express her pain and yearnings, Munif waxes lyrical in moving passages that contrast stylistically to the down-to-earth writing in the rest of the work.<sup>31</sup> He learns that she is in the Citadel, kept there by a jealous lover. He tries to get a glimpse of her and takes a boat in the Tigris, pretends to be a poet, and asks the boatman to stop right in front of the Citadel. The illiterate boatman in the meantime tells him about his travels to India, China, and Java, and informs him of a book that has been given to him. Badri reads from the book and the story is a variant of Sindbad's first voyage where the island on which the passengers disembark is in fact an enormous whale; and when it sinks the passengers drown. Later on when Badri has been sent to reside in Kirkuk, he discovers that Najma has become the mistress of Talaat Baqa, one of the officers there. As he saw her moving around from one man to another he lost interest in her.<sup>32</sup> Badri eventually gives in to his mother who finds him a bride. On returning to Kirkuk after Badri completes his "engagement" to Zakiyya, the girl selected to him by the family, he learns that Najma has been assassinated. He in turn is assassinated later on the very day when his bride arrives to join him. It is not clear who killed him at the time but it turns out later that it was a political crime. Badri had refused to join the opposition to Daud Pasha that was fermenting in north Iraq and led by 'Aliywi, the former army leader of Daud who was exiled to the north.<sup>33</sup>

In revenge for the reluctance of Badri to join in the opposition to Daud, though he was tempted by money and power, 'Aliywi sends two of his guards to kill him and then when they report that the mission had been accomplished, 'Aliywi shoots both of them to keep the person behind the assassination unknown.

In the story of Badri, the mourning of his mother, the depression of his father, the insanity of his bride as well the initial steps in choosing a bride and the celebrations -- are all depicted in minute details. We learn from *Ard al-Sawad* about Iraqi customs, music and songs, kin relations, and death and wedding rituals as if we were reading a source book in social anthropology -- all woven artistically within the work.

## TYPOLOGY OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

The historical novel is not new but the kind of historical novel Munif wrote in *Ard al-Sawad* is an innovative formulation as it focuses on the *people* and how they mobilized to help when challenged by catastrophes such as the flood or rallied on the side of Daud Pasha when confronting the British presence. It has been said that history is written by the victors, and if that is so, then historical fiction is the re-writing of history from the point of view of the dispossessed -- at least in this case. Fiction permits the imagination to fill in the silences of history and it articulates the silenced voices of the subaltern. In that sense, Munif's magnum opus, *Ard al-Sawad*, is more than what is usually called "Documentary-Historical Novel".<sup>34</sup> It is also an anthropological novel as it depicts the human fabric in its micro-organization: the rituals, beliefs, prejudices, generousities, gossip, power confrontations, and gender relations of ordinary folk.

In other words, in addition to being a historical novel based on research and document, it is also a portrait of a people through a lens positioned below. When Midhat Al-Jayyar criticized *Ard al-Sawad* for its too numerous subplots and plethora of characters and their dialogues, he is really judging it by the expectation of an organic novel with a climax, where the minor characters are simply there to help further understand the main characters. In other words he looks for a hierarchical structure in which there is a definite center.<sup>35</sup> However, Munif's novel is closer to an epic where we find subplots galore and where an entire national fabric is exposed. The stories of minor characters and their conversations in Café al-Shatt might not add to the quest of Daud Pasha, but the novel is not only about the Governor of Baghdad. It is primarily about the people of Baghdad in the reign of a given Governor of Baghdad. The compact sequence that is missed by Al-Jayyar then is not indicative of literary weakness, but of a renunciation of a certain ideology of a form, characterized by the illusion of sequence centered around a hero.<sup>36</sup>

Hegel divided historical consciousness into three types: original, reflective, and philosophical. What he meant by his tri-partite division is the following. In original consciousness, the writer recalls the past as it was; in reflective consciousness, the writer considers the relation between past and present; and in philosophical consciousness, the writer concentrates on how to write history.<sup>37</sup> In *Ard al-Sawad*, we see Munif recalling the past in a documentary fashion, and thus we find original consciousness; insisting on the relation between the ancient past and the nineteenth century (time of narration) through his prologue (and possibly on present-day Iraq, if we see in Daud Pasha a mask for a contemporary ruler of Iraq who sought to consolidate his power and challenge colonial hegemony by modernizing his country), and thus we find reflective consciousness. Finally, there is an element of implicit philosophical consciousness in *Ard al-Sawad* as Munif focuses on how to write history that presents the voices of the common people of Iraq, using fictional techniques to restore their voice. His work is novel in the two senses of the terms: it is *a novel*, and it is also *a novel way* of presenting Iraqi history. Munif in this novel seems to anticipate the plea of Ranajit Guha -- the South Asian historian and one of the intellects behind *Subaltern Studies* -- to "recover the living history of

the quotidian” and to “recuperate the historicity of what is humble and habitual” and this can only be done when the historian becomes a creative writer.<sup>38</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 221-276
- <sup>2</sup> ‘Abd al-RahmanMunif, *Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman* Translated by Samira Kavar, (London: Quartet Books), 1996.
- <sup>3</sup> ‘Abd al-RahmanMunif, *Ard al-Sawad*. 3 vols (Beirut: Al-Mu’asasa al-‘Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, 1999).
- <sup>4</sup> ‘Abd al-RahmanMunif, *Al-Iraq: Hawamish min al-Tarikh wal-Muqawama* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-thaqafi al-‘arabi lil-nashr wal-tawzi’,2003), p. 7
- <sup>5</sup> In Arabic rhetorical traditions, naming can indicate the thing and its opposites (see Berque *L’ambivalence*), thus *darir* (blind), can be called *basir* (seer), or *salim* (safe) for some one who is hurt.
- <sup>6</sup> Munif, *Ard*, p. 12)
- <sup>7</sup> Saleh, Zaki *Mesopotamia (Iraq) 1600-1914* (Baghdad: Al-Ma’aref Press, 1957), p.123
- <sup>8</sup> Yusuf ‘Izz al-Din, *Dand Pasha wa-Nihayat al-Mamalik fi al-Iraq* (Baghdad: Dar al-Basri, 1967), p. 5-63
- <sup>9</sup> Claudius James Rich, *Narrative of a Residence in Koordistan, and the Site of Ancient Nineveh; with Journal of a Voyage Down the Tigris to Baghdad and an Account of a Visit to Shirauz and Persepolis*, edited by his widow, 2 volumes (London: James Duncan, 1836), Volume I, p. xv
- <sup>10</sup> Rich, *ibid*, p. xix-xx
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxi
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. xxv
- <sup>13</sup> Constance M. Alexander, *Baghdad in Bygone Days* (London: John Murray, 1928), p. 295-301
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 299-300
- <sup>15</sup> Rich, *Narratives of a Residence*, Vol. I, p. 4
- <sup>16</sup> Tom, Nieuwenhuis, *Politics and Society in Early Modern Iraq: Mamluk Pashas, Tribal Shayks and Local Rule Between 1802 and 1831* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), p. 23
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 16-24
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>20</sup> Munif does not mention his historical sources though he does mention in his book *Al-Iraq* that he consulted historical works. It is clear that he read everything available to him on Iraqi history of the first half of the nineteenth century in both Arabic and English.
- <sup>21</sup> David Solomon Sassoon, *A History of the Jews in Baghdad* (Letchworth: Soloman Sassoon, 1949), p.122-127
- <sup>22</sup> Munif, *Ard*, p. 155
- <sup>23</sup> Rich, *Narratives of a Residence*, Vol. II, p.10
- <sup>24</sup> Rich, *Narratives of a Residence* Vo. I, p. 331-375)
- <sup>25</sup> Munif, *Ard* I, p. 236
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 238
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 239
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 300-305
- <sup>29</sup> See plan of Baghdad in Jones & Collingwood *Memoris of Baghdad, Kurdistan and Turkish Arabia* (London, 1857) Map 884.03, p. 304.
- <sup>30</sup> Munif, *Ard* I, p. 136
- <sup>31</sup> On the different stylistic registers in *Ard al-Sawad*, see Al-Jayyar 249-50 and Abdel-Azim 267-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Munif, *Ard* II, chapter 57
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, chapters 78-84
- <sup>34</sup> See on the typology of the historical novel Joseph Turner, “Types of Historical Narration,” *Genre* XII: 3 (Fall 1979): 333-55.
- <sup>35</sup> Midhat Al-Jayyar, “Qina’ al-Sard fi *Ard al-Sawad*,” *Fossoul* 65 (fall 2004/winter 2005), p.258
- <sup>36</sup> See on this point, Hayden White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” *Critical Inquiry* VII: 1 (Fall 1980).
- <sup>37</sup> Ferial J. Ghazoul, “Al-Riwaya wal-Tarikh,” *Fossoul* II: 2 (January-March 1982) p. 296
- <sup>38</sup> Rosinka Chaudhuri, “Historicity in Literature: Subalternist Misrepresentations,” *Economic and Political Weekly* XXXIX: 42 (October 16, 2004) p. 4658