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Homebound Travelers: The Return's Destabilization of Homeland in Arabic Literature

From the tripartite pre-Islamic poems to the modern-day Arabic novel, the Arab world and the Arab diaspora have dealt with the issue of travel for millennia through the medium of literature. Throughout this long history, the idea of the *riḥla* has come to possess numerous meanings: it has taken the form of a personal departure from society, a spiritual journey in Islam mirroring that of the Prophet, and a scholarly journey for either religious or academic intellectual pursuits. This literary form traces its origins to the Arabic *qasida*, in which the *riḥla* becomes a rite-of-passage experience that leaves the participant forever transformed. Suzanne Stetkevych details how these rituals unfold through pre-Islamic poetry in her work, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*. The *riḥla* starts with an individual's departure from the norms of his society, which compels him into a marginalized status that he holds for the duration of his absence. In the end, as depicted by this poetic genre, the individual returns to his society of origin, presumably permanently altered from the experience (Stetkevych 56).

In its present-day form, the *riḥla* as a literary genre builds upon this history of travel literature introduced in pre-modern Arabic poetry while also taking shape within new political and cultural realities that necessitate a shift in the understanding of the role journey plays in Arab society today. Indeed, in her book titled *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, Caren Kaplan positions the notions of travel and displacement within the setting

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of colonial discourses, a context through which this new genre of *riḥla* is conceived in modern Arabic literature (Kaplan 2). Several other scholars have depicted the results from the *riḥla* as it exists in its modern form. While the transformation of self-depiction in pre-Islamic poetry remains at the core of this modern genre, scholars have described how a host of other themes have now emerged, such as the consequences of East-West encounters and the aftermath of colonialism and post-colonial legacies (Allen 237). For the characters in these novels, their journeys, propelled by the circumstances of colonialism and its repercussion, ultimately complicate their identities as Arabs belonging to the land upon their return. This return from *riḥla* and the consequent dislocation that ensues becomes the basis of the storylines of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, Soleiman Fayyad's *Voices*, and Ghassan Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*. In the case of Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the narrator comes back to his small Sudanese village after pursuing seven years of education in Great Britain, only to return to the rigid social order of his community and the haunting story of Mustafa Sa'eed, which lingers with him even years after his return. Hamid al-Bahairi in Fayyad's *Voices* finds himself returning to an Egypt quite different from the fantasized homeland pictured in his head in his years of success as a businessman in France, a disconnect that becomes blatantly apparent in his and his Parisian wife's behavior during their visit to the rural village from which he left as a boy. For Said S. and Safiyya in Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa*, on the other hand, going back to their original home in Haifa after twenty years of exile reveals not only what they lost in the aftermath of the 1948 war, but also what happened to the homeland they were forced to leave behind. All of these texts narrate a story of return to a location once considered to be familiar, but these homebound travelers find the return to be fundamentally fraught, and that home and

their belonging to it diverge greatly from their own preconceptions developed during their time away.

The authors employ various literary strategies in their treatments of this return. For one, each of their works presents literary foiling of main characters, coupling a character who has experienced a period away from home with his counterpart who remained. The characters in these pairs represent distinct ideological sides which, due to the return, confront each other in oftentimes perilous ways. Additionally, the authors present multiple perspectives in their texts, forcing conflicting viewpoints together during this return and disorienting both characters and the reader alike as a result. Along the same lines, these authors disrupt the chronologies of their texts not only through shifts in points of view, but also through shifting of tense, which serves to further destabilize the continuity of their storylines after the return journey. From these portrayals of return, the texts pose hypothetical scenarios in which characters did not return home or did not embark on a *riḥla* to begin with. As such, this paper will argue that the return journey in these works undermines and subverts the *riḥla* by exposing its inherent flaws—be they at the personal, communal, or national scale. At the same time, this experience abroad elicits the counterfactual of what could have existed had the pretextual journey not taken place from the start. In doing so, these works call into question the stability of one's belonging to a homeland, and if such a place even exists after a period of displacement.

First, in discussing how Salih constructs the consequences of coming back home to Sudan for the main traveler in his novel, one must first understand the background of the storyline in which this return occurs. Published a decade after colonial rule in Sudan, Salih's novel follows the story of an unnamed narrator who returns home to his small village by the Sudanese Nile, Wad Hamid, after having spent several years pursuing his education in Europe.

While much has changed during his seven-year journey abroad, the presence of a stranger in the village, Mustafa Sa'eed, particularly captures his attention. The narrator briefly asks his grandfather about Mustafa and he interacts with this stranger over drinks, but it is only after the narrator visits Mustafa's house that the narrator discovers Mustafa's many encounters in Europe that remain unknown to the other villagers, even though Mustafa has lived in the village for several years after his return from Europe and had married one of their own. It is during this conversation that the narrator and the reader alike learn Mustafa's background as a poor but gifted child, the details of his journey to England and his sexual escapades while there. Blurring lines between the two characters, Mustafa narrates these encounters with European women in patchy details. After the sudden vanishing of Mustafa, the story flashes forward several years, and also touches upon the narrator's struggles in reintegrating into Sudanese society resulting from the unyielding norms of the village and the bifurcation of his own identity.

In this context, the coupling of the narrator and Mahjoub, in particular, highlights the narrator's distance from the needs of the village upon his return, while simultaneously indicating who he could have become had he stayed. Mahjoub, though brighter than the narrator when they were children, decided to forgo education to follow the status quo of the village and deepen his connection with the land as a farmer. From here, their paths in life diverge significantly. The narrator leaves his homeland to pursue higher education in Europe and then—after several years of experiencing European society and adapting to European values—returns to work as a civil servant in the Sudanese Ministry of Education. By contrast, Mahjoub, despite never completing secondary school, gains prominence in the village through his work as a farmer, and eventually leads at a local level in the realms of agriculture and—after his country's independence—in politics. It is Mahjoub's nearness to the affairs of the village that prompts the narrator to state:

"People like you are the legal heirs of authority; you are the sinews of life, you're the salt of the earth" (Salih 98). Unlike the narrator's job as a civil servant—which distances him from tangibly improving Sudanese education and forces him to work within a corrupt governmental system, Mahjoub's work brings him nearer to the "earth" and its people. Not only does Mahjoub wield "authority" in the village as a prominent and respected political figure, but his work in agriculture directly contributes to the sustenance of his people. To this extent, Mahjoub, having forgone education to remain and serve his village, has contributed to the future of Sudan and his own belonging to this national identity. While the narrator gained an education during his time abroad, this does very little to enhance his capacity to serve his homeland upon returning and, if anything, distances him from the needs of the village to which Mahjoub remains well attuned.

These two characters' senses of belonging to the village do not only differ based on their occupations but also on their divergent views toward the village's social norms. The friction between the narrator and Mahjoub when discussing the deceased Hosna bint Mahmoud, for example, sheds light on how much the narrator has changed because of his *rihla*, to the point where he is no longer in touch with the social order of his homeland upon returning. After Hosna's husband, Mustafa, dies suddenly, the narrator assumes the responsibility of guarding her and her children; this does not, however, enable him to protect her from the unwanted approaches made by Wad Rayyes, who is many years her senior. Forced to marry the old man against her will, Hosna kills him and commits suicide shortly after he rapes her, which stirs an air of scandal in the usually calm village. Whereas Mahjoub views Hosna and her behavior with utter disgust and staunchly refuses to grant her a proper funeral, the narrator greatly sympathizes with Hosna's plight. When the narrator claims that Hosna was "the sanest woman in the village" and calls Mahjoub "mad" for his treatment of the deaths, Mahjoub responds by saying,

"Schooling and education have made you soft. You're crying like a woman" (132-133). This dialogue reveals a growing rift between the narrator and Mahjoub initiated by the narrator's time abroad and further aggravated by a contestation of his foreign-gained values when returning. Specifically, Mahjoub points to the narrator's "education" as the source of his weak approach to Hosna's death as unbecoming of a man. Though they are seemingly unrelated, Mahjoub's linking of the narrator's education with his compassion toward Hosna conveys the larger flaws Mahjoub sees in the narrator that, like his education, stem from his formative years outside of the community. In this way, Mahjoub exerts the "authority" previously attributed to him by the narrator to criticize the narrator's softness and imply that his *rihla*—instead of allowing him to better commune with his village—has actually made him a stranger to it and its standards.

As much as literary foiling makes the narrator seem like an outsider in the village, the constant changing of perspectives between the narrator and Mustafa internally disorients the narrator and further bifurcates his identity when returning. It is evident that the two characters—though differing in certain regards such as their experiences in Europe and connection to the village—share much in common, causing the viewpoint shifts to confuse the thin line between them. Both spend significant time abroad and away from Sudanese society, for instance, and return to their country fundamentally changed. While they apply their studies differently upon their arrival to the village, both are well-educated and, more importantly, European-educated. Both return to the village with a sense of unfamiliarity, Mustafa being a complete stranger and the narrator feeling estranged from the customs of his people. Although Mustafa vanishes from the village, presumably drowning during a flood, his stories of violent sexual encounters with European women still haunt the narrator's psyche and prompt him to desire a purging of this aspect of his own identity. After attempting to strangle Mahjoub for pointing out his

estrangement from the village, the narrator unlocks and enters Mustafa's private room with the initial aim of setting it on fire, stating: "The world has turned suddenly upside down.... I feel hatred and seek revenge; my adversary is within and I needs must confront him" (134). The narrator does not mention what exactly has caused the world to turn "upside down." While he may refer to Hosna's death, this claim can also pertain to returning to the village and encountering the personality of Mustafa, whose memories still linger in the narrator's mind. Indeed, Mustafa's voice fluidly seeps in and out of this chapter, oftentimes obscuring whether he or the narrator is the speaker, or whether a difference exists between the two at all. Moreover, the narrator's claim that his "adversary is within" and that he "needs must confront him" by entering Mustafa's room, full of memorabilia from his northward migration, bolster the likelihood that these two perspectives are really just two sides of one identity bifurcated from the experience of *rihla*. In other words, the narrator carries back with him another personality in his return journey to the village, which prevents him from fully belonging to the location he once considered home. He tries to correct himself and exorcise this Mustafa persona, but fails to fully do so. While he at first starts a fire in Mustafa's house and later attempts suicide in the river, he stamps out the fire and decides to live, both leaving him in an unresolved, limbo state of existence. Thus, these two viewpoints never reach a steady conclusion and, as such, destabilize the narrator's identity and his sense of belonging to the community to which he returns.

Fayyad's *Voices* reveals similar insights into the consequence of a traveler's return journey. Each of its chapters is told through the voice of a different character. Fayyad's work follows the return journey of Hamid al-Bahairi accompanied by his Parisian wife, Simone, to the small, rural Egyptian village, Darawish, of his childhood years. Hamid, whose father abandoned him at the age of 10, ended up traveling northward to France, where he established a successful

business and married a European woman. Three decades after his initial departure from Egypt, he decides to return home with his wife to satisfy his own curiosities about his homeland and those of his wife about a land and people she views as fascinating and exotic. However, when he returns, Hamid is completely revolted by the backwardness of his homeland, and the villagers, in turn, express a mixture of awe, envy and contempt for the couple and their strange European behavior. Simone especially attracts the desires of Ahmed, Hamid's brother; the jealousy of her sister-in-law, Zeinab; and the contempt of her mother-in-law, Um Ahmed. When Hamid parts from the village momentarily to tend to a business matter in Cairo and leaves his wife unattended, these sentiments of the villagers ultimately materialize into the tragedy inflicted upon his wife's body at the end of the novel. Encouraged by other village women, Um Ahmed, Hamid's mother, decides to "correct" the European woman by violently cutting her genitals with the support of other village women. This crude operation causes Simone to bleed to death and draws a great deal of scandal to the small Egyptian village, which has consequently become irrevocably changed from Hamid's return.

Similar to Salih's literary foiling of a character who returns from time abroad with one who remains within the community, Fayyad couples two brothers—Ahmed and Hamid—in his work in order to display the alternate reality outside the constraints of the village that Hamid's *rihla* affords him. These brothers, though similar at the surface—sharing a mother and having names from the same Arabic root—differ vastly because of the time Hamid spent away. For example, whereas Ahmed owns a local shop that barely makes him enough to provide for his family, Hamid has earned a fortune from the multiple high-end shops and hotels he owns and runs in Europe. This rift between the two characters caused wholly by Hamid's *rihla* not only makes Hamid an outsider upon his return like the narrator in Salih's work, but it also evokes a

deep-seated jealousy from Ahmed for what his life could have been had he left the village like Hamid. A violent enmity toward Hamid consumes Ahmed even before his brother's arrival, as he states: "Finally, one night I saw myself killing Hamid in a dream—happily" (Fayyad 28). This anticipatory sentiment that Ahmed feels reveals an underlying anxiety toward Hamid and what his *rihla* has wrought. Such anxiety manifests itself in a number of ways and, in the case of Ahmed, arises as an intense jealousy for the alternate reality that his brother inhabits. Furthermore, not only does Ahmed confess his dream of killing his brother prior to reuniting, but Fayyad also uses the allusion to the parable of Cain and Abel—in which Cain kills his brother who had gained more of God's favor—to illustrate how Hamid's good fortune also brings about his demise. In this context, Ahmed's thoughts even before his brother's return indicate a tendency to both desire and reject the prosperity gained through the *rihla*. Thus, this use of literary foiling constructs a similar tension that Salih depicts in his work between the one who stayed and the one who left.

The shifting of perspectives also indicates how Hamid's *rihla* has made him disconnected from his own village and the mindset of its people. By telling his story through the voices of multiple characters, Fayyad clearly portrays an irreconcilable divergence of the couple's opinions toward the village and those of the villagers toward them. On the one hand, Hamid looks down on the village in his chapter, and he has great difficulty coming to terms with the reality of this home he had fantasized in his head while abroad. Upon returning, he constantly repeats that this village is his "homeland" and that the villagers are his "people", as if trying to convince himself of the unbearable truth that he hails from such a primitive and destitute place (43). He is both embarrassed to identify as from the village and surprised by the fascination Simone has for it, since he cannot view past the backward lives its people live in comparison to his life in the West.

On the other hand, the villagers hold opposing views about Hamid and Simone, seeing their European mannerisms as strange and even wrong, and therefore in need of being corrected. From her revealing clothing to her inappropriate interactions with the village men, Simone, in particular, ignores all social rules of the village, which causes her to serve as a prime target for the villagers' anxieties. Though she is ostensibly near to the village through her journalism, the perspectives of these villagers stand as testimony to how truly distant she is from them and their customs, to the point that her presence in the village becomes a direct threat to their social order and consequently requires intervention. This sentiment comes out in full force in a conversation that Um Ahmed has with other women of the village. Their discussion ranges from questioning the religious permissibility of the couple's marriage to criticizing Simone for not shaving her body hair, and this chapter concludes with a determination to curb Simone's most egregious sin: her sexual promiscuity. With regards to this, Lady Nafeesa, Um Ahmed's friend, states: "She demands men and is never satisfied. She wears her man out every night and cheats on him at every chance" (98). Unable to reconcile the European ways of Hamid and his wife with the traditions of the village, these women unleash their anxieties at the face of this encounter on Simone and, more specifically, on her body. From their perspective, Simone's difference represents the European moral ills that have invaded their community and diseased Hamid, who was once one of their own. Their sole means of resolving this difference is by diagnosing it as promiscuity, whose only cure is her immediate humbling and correcting through genital cutting.

It is interesting to note that Simone does not express her own viewpoint in the novel, but rather serves as the body upon which warring ideologies come into conflict. She is the symbol of Hamid's assimilation into French society on one hand yet of his complete estrangement from his homeland on the other. Thus, the two larger perspectives actually expressed in the novel—one

that views the villagers as backward in their traditional ways and the other that views the couple as wayward in their European behavior—do not meet or fully come to terms with each other, but instead abruptly collide in the form of Simone's demise when Hamid returns to his former home. Consequently, the inclusion of multiple viewpoints helps to shed light on how Hamid's physical distance from the village has brought about an equal severing of his sense of belonging among its people.

The presentation of a counterfactual scenario in which Hamid had never returned to Darawish points to the return journey from the *rihla* as the cause of the ultimate catastrophe at the end of the novel that vehemently rejects European influence and leaves the village forever ruined from this encounter. Hearing about Simone's violent death, the Maamur responsible for the security of Darawish's region laments the desire of the village to destroy what he deems beautiful and questions why Hamid even came back to the village to begin with. To this end, the Maamur states with reference to Hamid: "Of his own will he walked into his eternal torture. If he'd never left his country none of this would ever have happened" (109). To start, unlike Hamid's abandonment during his childhood years which compelled him to embark on the initial *rihla* to Europe, the Maamur claims that Hamid made the return journey "of his own will" and wonders what would have happened had Hamid not decided to return. For one, Hamid would have not had to suffer from the "eternal torture" now afflicted upon him of rejection from his former homeland and an inability to leave Egypt how he came. The tortuous nature of this reality—for Hamid and the village alike—pushes the Maamur to pose an alternate reality that does not include Hamid's return at all. In the hypothetical situation, the Maamur claims that the scandal would not have occurred had Hamid "never left his country" yet does not specify which country he refers to. While it is possible that the Maamur refers to Hamid's initial departure from

Egypt as the source of this calamity, it is more likely in the context of the Maamur's lamentation that the country to which he claims Hamid belongs is indeed France and not Egypt. Whereas, in Salih's work, posing of alternate realities implies the narrator's estrangement from his former homeland but does not explicitly affirm it, the counterfactual scenario in Fayyad's work makes clear that this homeland no longer exists for Hamid after he first left it. In this sense, this counterfactual scenario not only holds the return journey responsible for the collision of ideologies in conflict with each other, but it also reveals that the traveler, having spent significant time away from the land and its customs, returns to a location no longer his home and to a people that no longer accept him as one of their kind.

Though the details of the return journey depicted in Kanafani's *Returning to Haifa* contrast with the storylines of Salih's and Fayyad's novels, Kanafani's work nevertheless reveals important insights as to how problems of return influence the conception of homeland. Unlike the returns of Salih's narrator and Fayyad's Hamid from *rihlas* to Europe, Said S. and his wife, Safiyya, return to their original home in Haifa on June 30th 1967, after twenty years of exile, when the Israelis open Mandelbaum Gate for Palestinians in the West Bank. As they near Haifa from Ramallah, memories of their past life before the 1948 war flood Said's and Safiyya's minds, forcing them to recall all that they had to left behind and memories they forcibly suppressed. One particular vestige of their past life in Haifa that comes to the fore in their car ride is the memory of their long-lost son, Khaldun, whom they had accidentally abandoned in the commotion of the Israeli takeover of the city. The couple have made attempts to move past the loss of their first-born son—for example, similar to Um Ahmed, Said takes on the nickname, Abu Khalid, after the name of his second-born son instead of Khaldun—but the thought of finding him in Haifa nevertheless creeps into their minds. Though they had avoided talking about this son in their

years of exile, the unique and temporary opportunity of returning to their former home gives the couple a renewed sense of hope in reuniting with Khaldun, however low the odds might be.

Upon arrival to their house in Haifa, the couple not only find it almost entirely intact from the time they left, but they also encounter a Polish immigrant, Miriam, who settled there shortly after their forced exodus. They talk with Miriam about their intentions and she shares with them her own background of immigrating to Israel. In this conversation, they learn about the son Miriam adopted and named Dov, who they quickly recognize as their very own son, Khaldun, from whom they have been separated all these years. This initial discovery gives the couple a renewed sense of hope in salvaging a relationship with their long-lost son; when he gets back to the house from his work as an Israeli soldier, however, he claims to identify with his adoptive parents and, to the couple's dismay, rejects all ties to his biological parents and their cause. This devastating encounter with Dov upon the couple's return forces them to suffer yet another loss, as they fail to recover both their homeland and the son they abandoned there.

To start, the flashbacks in Kanafani's work disrupt the chronology of his storyline and reveal how this Palestinian couple's return journey destabilizes their connection to a land once familiar to them. As the Palestinian couple heads toward Haifa from Ramallah, flashback memories of their homeland up until 1948 mix with the couple's present thoughts and worries about their brief return. In these flashbacks, we learn about Said's life before 1948, the chaos that ensued after his city's takeover, and the feeling that accompanied his realization that he had left Khaldun behind, which continues to pain Said up until the present. Kanafani describes how these memories impact the nature of the couple's return journey: "The events were mixed up, the past and present running together, both in turn jumbled up with the thoughts and illusions and imaginings and feelings of twenty successive years" (Kanafani 154). Twenty years of exile have

left the couple not only physically displaced from their homeland, but also disoriented in their own "thoughts" and "feelings" as they try to make sense of the reality of their current situation. However, this present reality is difficult for Said to process, since it mixes with the trauma of their past along with the "illusions" and "imaginings" of this past that, in turn, present alternate realities of what their lives could have been. Said proceeds to call to question facts about the calamity that beset them in 1948, further jumbling counterfactual scenarios in his head. This initial car-ride scene, in illustrating how the return confuses chronology and intertwines alternate realities, serves as a foundation from which the major tension between conflicting sides plays out.

The foiling of two brothers, Khalid and Khaldun, in Kanafani's work resembles those in the works of Salih and Fayyad, but moves past the East-West divide apparent upon return in those texts to represent instead the friction between two distinct national causes. As previously mentioned, Said and Safiyya hope to find their first-born son, Khaldun, during their brief return visit to Haifa. While they do, indeed, find this son at the home they were forced to flee, he is hardly distinguishable as their own: not only does he now take on the Hebrew name "Dov" and fully identify as Jewish Israeli, but he also fights for the Israeli army and views his biological parents as part of the enemy side. By contrast, Khalid, the couple's second-born son, fights for the Palestinian resistance forces and, though never having met his biological brother, could foreseeably come into contact with Dov on the battlefield. Though Kanafani's characters bring up war numerous times in his short story, Said places the discussion of war within the frame of the opposing causes of these two sons, telling Safiyya: "Dov is our shame, but Khalid is our enduring honor. Didn't I tell you from the beginning that we shouldn't come—because that was something requiring a war?" (187). Despite the similarities between these two brothers—the

connection between their names given at birth and their similar occupations as soldiers fighting for national causes, they have become, as Said realizes during this return, so divergent in their ideologies that only a "war" could reconcile the contested space between them. Through this foiling, Kanafani, like Salih and Fayyad, invokes the counterfactual scenario of never returning in Said's question to Safiyya. Said regrets the return journey embarked upon with his wife, since it has exposed him to the immutable rift of two brothers born from the same stock, which has conjured within him both feelings of "shame" and "enduring honor." While Dov and Khalid never actually interact with each other, the tension between them plays out through the couple's return journey.

This tension between Dov and Khalid differs notably from that embedded in the literary foils of the other two texts, in that it illustrates a conflict between two opposing national causes. Whereas the sides of other character pairs come into contact with each other in a previously shared home and only then realize the rift formed between them from the *rihla*, Dov and Khalid lack common ground to set foot on, aside from the battleground. The narrator and Mahjoub in Salih's work, for example, had spent their childhood years together and rekindled their friendship after the narrator's return, implying that the narrator—though estranged from his homeland and its people—could nevertheless occupy its physical space. The physical barriers between Dov and Khalid and the ideological ones between the causes they embody preclude any form of reconciliation through the couple's return journey, and instead further destabilizes Said's notion of an existent homeland. Giving up on reclaiming his son or his home, Said expresses this sense of resignation to Safiyya: "Let's get out of here and return to the past. The matter is finished. They stole him" (172). Said's desire to leave and "return to the past" raises the question of what past he seeks to return to. If he refers to pre-1948, he cannot return to that past as indicated by

the temporary nature of his visit and his failure to fully reunify with his long-lost son. If he refers to the immediate past prior to the couple's return journey to Haifa, they have very little to return to, having lost their homeland after 1948. In the context of their return journey to Haifa, Said's claim that the Israeli couple "stole" his first-born son relates to the larger questions of nationhood and homeland that Kanafani presents in his work. If viewed as representing the cause for which he fights, Dov has diverged from the path of his biological brother, Khalid, who struggles for the reclaiming of the Palestinian homeland. The stealing of Dov, who has abandoned his blood line to support the enemy cause, therefore also represents the contestation of homeland between these two national causes. In the end, the couple's return journey to Haifa forces them to come to terms with the reality of their situation: not only must they come to terms with the devastating divergence of their first-born son from Khalid's path, but they also consequently suffer from the complete loss of their homeland and any hope they had of returning to it.

Thus, the multidimensional destabilization caused by the *rihla* is evident throughout these works, and casts doubt on the belonging of a traveler to his homeland upon return. At the level of the individual, the narrator in Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* suffers an internal conflict as he struggles to reconcile the two sides of his identity bifurcated during his time in Europe, and Salih ends his novel without resolving the protagonist's dilemma. On the scale of a community, the violent rejection of European values takes the form of a collective mutilating and murdering of the foreign body in Fayyad's *Voices*, a scandal that leaves the village of Darawish perpetually plagued and Hamid forever an outsider after his return journey. Their return visit caught in the crossfire of two warring national causes, Said and Safiyya not only fail to reclaim their long-lost son and the future he represents during their short reprieve from exile, but also find that this homeland of their past no longer exists, adding permanence to their stateless condition and

forcing them to continue to live as strangers to their own home. With these return stories that portray division, irresolution, and constant questioning of what could have been, the authors of these works narrate a fundamental deterioration—and even disappearance—of the homeland that parallels the dislocation of their homeward-bound characters. The return journey, regardless of how taxing and painful it may be, grants the participant a new perspective from which to view himself, and the community—from the level of the village to that of the homeland—to which he originally belonged, consequently leading to the formation of new conceptions of self and belonging.

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