



**An-Najah National University  
Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**CONTEMPORARY HYBRIDITY AND THE FEAR  
OF DISLOCATION IN GULF LITERATURE: THE  
EASTERN OTHER IN SAUD AL-SANOUSI'S *THE  
BAMBOO STALK* AND BENYAMIN'S *GOAT DAYS***

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my dear father, Mustafa Ghanim, who has been my supporter since the beginning of this journey, and my beloved mother, Taghreed Ghanim, whose guidance and sacrifices have shaped the person I am today.

I am forever grateful for your belief in me and for everything you have done for me.

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To everyone who contributed to this work, directly or indirectly, I am truly thankful.

## Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that I submitted the thesis entitled:

### **CONTEMPORARY HYBRIDITY AND THE FEAR OF DISLOCATION IN GULF LITERATURE: THE EASTERN OTHER IN SAUD AL-SANOUSI'S *THE BAMBOO STALK* AND BENYAMIN'S *GOAT DAYS***

I declare that the work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

**Student's Name**

**Reem Mustafa Ghanim**

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**Signature:**



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**Date:**

**19/09/2024**

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the challenges experienced by Eastern migrants in the Arabian Gulf states through analyzing both *The Bamboo Stalk* by Saud Al-sanousi and *Goat Days* by Benyamin. It examines the protagonists' dilemmas and challenges with cultural hybridity, identity crises, discrimination, and rejection in their host countries. This study argues that migrants in Gulf states experience marginalization and disillusionment due to racial, linguistic, and social differences, as well as systemic discrimination. The novels critique the socio-cultural dynamics of the Gulf's labor diaspora along with its psychological impact on migrant identity.

**Keywords:** Cultural hybridity; identity crisis; disillusionment; labor diaspora; racial rejection; social discrimination; eastern other; third space

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

This thesis examines the representation of the Eastern Other in two contemporary novels about the experience of migrant characters in the Arabian Gulf states: *The Bamboo Stalk* by Al-sanousi and *Goat Days* by Benyamin. It has demonstrated the (im)possible hybridity experienced by Eastern characters residing in the Arab Gulf countries, particularly in relation to the constant conflicts they face while migrating between social and cultural spaces. In *The Bamboo Stalk*, the protagonist's struggle in Kuwait is characterized by an ongoing conflict and racial discrimination. Issa, who is of mixed Kuwaiti and Filipino origins, is rejected by his father and deported to The Philippines with his mother. Upon returning to Kuwait as an adult, he is treated as an outsider because he does not embody the typical physical features of a Kuwaiti man. His physical appearance and his linguistic deficit in Arabic language cause him to be marginalized within society as a non-Kuwaiti. The continuous rejection and discrimination Issa faces makes him live in despair and isolation.

In *Goat Days*, the main character Najeeb, a Malayalam man, experiences various cruelties upon his arrival in Saudi Arabia. Despite initially having a definite residency, Najeeb becomes trapped in a cycle of slavery and maltreatment by his employer, known as the Arbab, taken from rab (lit. God) to mean boss or landlord. He is subjected to these inhuman conditions for three years, nine months, and four days. Throughout his stay in captivity, Najeeb finds solace and companionship in his interactions with goats.

The two novels selected for this thesis illustrate the comparable experiences of suffering and agony faced by the protagonists. These experiences are primarily due to their status as the Eastern Other who struggles to assimilate into the Arab Gulf culture, often encountered by constant rejection leading to a profound sense of psychological alienation.

The thesis explores how contemporary Arab Gulf literary narratives depict the representation of the Eastern Other. It investigates the various kinds of challenges and conflicts confronted by the Eastern Other residing in the Gulf, particularly discrimination, rejection, and psychological alienation and the heavy toll these conflicts have on their

lives. In addition, it identifies the nature of the identity crisis experienced by the main characters, resulting from cultural dislocation, relocation and the failure to assimilate in the new cultural setting. In this context, the crisis emanates from a host of reasons, including linguistic hybridity, social discrimination, the complex relationship with their homeland, cultural hybridity, illusions created by labor diaspora, nostalgia, and acculturation. Additionally, the thesis highlights the factors leading to this sense of alienation, including slave trafficking, political legislations, and restrictions on visas.

As the foundational author in postcolonial literary theory of culture location, Homi Bhabha's work will guide the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha defines the concept of the "third space" as a space "which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 208). In simpler terms, Bhabha describes the "third space" as a space that is constantly evolving, thus it influences the way cultural (mis)communication takes place. The third space shapes the conditions under which cultural meanings and symbols are expressed, and it challenges the idea that culture has a fixed, unchanging essence. Instead, Bhabha argues that cultural signs can be appropriated, translated, and recontextualized, allowing for new interpretations, meanings, and identities to emerge.

Bhabha emphasizes the various impacts of negotiating cultural identities experienced by individuals when they move to live in new places. This movement imposes some form of self-adjustment to fit into the new environment, yet unfamiliar spaces that the migrating self will inhabit. This process of identity-reconstruction involves a search for ways to adapt to and to navigate the new and unfamiliar spaces, a process which involves the redrawing of the boundaries of the original identity which has already been formed in the home country. Bhabha also draws attention to the concept of hybridity which arises as a result of the cultural clash/contact between the old and the new culture. Hybridity here refers to the blending and fusion of different cultural influences and identities that occurs in postcolonial, émigré contexts. It challenges the notion of a pure, singular identity by highlighting the interconnectedness and interplay between different cultures and traditions. Furthermore, Bhabha points out the strenuous cultural condition in which marginalized immigrants often find themselves, whereby these migrant selves are

expected to assimilate into the mainstream culture, and yet, they are simultaneously subjected to rejection and discrimination based on their racial or ethnic background.

By exploring these complexities related to cultural hybridity in the context of migrant populations, Bhabha offers valuable insights into the process of migrant identity construction and shows how this process is impacted by the history of colonization, the realities of migration, and requirements of assimilation. His work sheds light on the multifaceted nature of these processes and their effects on émigré populations. Undoubtedly, Bhabha's theory voices some optimistic overtones in relation to the potential identity transformations made possible by through positioning oneself in a third space. The 'third space' suggests that there is a space in which new, more resilient identities are formed. Simply put, it represents an opportunity for the expatriate subject to create a new dual identity that allows for the original identity to grow and flourish. In addition, the third space can be viewed from an optimistic perspective, since it can be a means of challenging the colonizer by giving marginalized people the opportunity to strengthen their personal identities and to resist oppression. The thesis demonstrates that, for various kinds of reasons, these optimistic underpinnings of the theory of the third space are largely compromised in the context of the Gulf émigré culture. It has emphasized the root causes for a pessimistic émigré experience in the Gulf states driven by the economic, political, and cultural conditions in this specific cultural context.

## **1.2 Autobiographical Connections**

The two novels selected for comparison show autobiographical connections. During an interview on Sky News on September 14, 2018 (الروائي الكويتي سعود السنعوسي في, 2018 (حديث العرب), the Kuwaiti writer Al-sansousi said that he strongly opposed the idea of discrimination based on religion or race and that he always advocated for a world with zero tolerance of discrimination. His statement implies that he opposes discrimination between Sunnis and Shiites, between Christians and Muslims, and also opposes discrimination between Kuwaitis, Iraqis, or any other nationalities.

Looking at *The Bamboo Stalk*, we can see similarities in the ideas between the writer Al-sanousi and Issa in the novel. Throughout the whole novel, we do not witness any racial bias from Issa towards others, whether in terms of appearance or nationality. He treats

everyone in the same polite manner without distinguishing between minorities and majorities. This is evident despite the maltreatment and mockery Issa faces from his family and the Kuwaiti society at large.

Correspondingly, Benyamin's novel is largely viewed as an autobiographical representation of Benyamin's own years of alienation in the Saudi desert. Benyamin, who is also Indian, lived an experience that closely resembles Najeeb's, reflecting his personal experience through Najeeb's character. Although the experiences are not identical, Benyamin attempted to convey what most Indian expatriates face when they journey to the Gulf in their pursuit of improving their living conditions and those of their families left behind. Rakshitha et al. (2019) argue that "Benyamin himself was one of the millions who travelled to the Gulf in thoughts of working" (R.S., 2019, p. 6). Accordingly, Benyamin meant to present the lives of a large group of people who made a journey to the Gulf region in pursuit of economic success. The purpose of their travel was to seek employment opportunities. Benyamin also pointed out in one of his interviews about *Goat Days* that "most people think that the Arab Gulf is a land of luck. We only hear of stories of success from the Gulf. But this novel talks about the many who lead lives of suffering and pain" (Migrant-Rights.org, 2014). This suggests that the Gulf region is often perceived as a land of favorable circumstances and good luck. People frequently hear tales of triumph and prosperity about migrants in the Gulf. However, the statement also brings attention to an alternative reality. It acknowledges the presence of many individuals in the Gulf who endure lives marked by hardship and suffering, changing the conventional belief that the region is solely defined by fortune and success. This perspective serves as a reminder that beyond the glamorous image, there are individuals facing difficulties and struggles in their everyday lives.

### **1.3 Dystopian Homes**

The protagonists' traumatic experiences constantly remind us of the dystopian life in the homeland. Both Najeeb in *Goat Days* and Josephine in *The Bamboo Stalk* dream of migrating to the Gulf: "The image of the Gulf they have in mind is of a paradise where they can achieve their dreams of making wealth and better living conditions" (S.S. Kumar, 2021, p. 3). This notion, for instance, justifies Najeeb's high expectations as he reaches Riyadh. He describes the city as "Hakeem and I alighted from the plane into a wonderland" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 23). Riyadh embodies a dream land where Najeeb can

achieve the goals which he would never have achieved had he stayed in Bombay: "Bombay was worry, Riyadh, wonder" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 23). Najeeb is astonished at the beginning; he despises his homeland in exchange for a strange country. Josephine, similarly, experiences a sudden social and cultural shift as she arrives in Kuwait: "At first I doubted it was the same sun that I knew" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 20). The repositioning of Josephine in a new cultural setting is embodied in her view of the sun as a new vital source of energy, a different sun that can signify her ultimate arrival in the land of opportunities where she and many others from the Philippines want to fulfill their dreams.

Oil production was the driving force for many laborers to leave their homelands and, to often put themselves into debt to reach the land of promises. Migrants were not able to travel without getting a visa from recruitment agencies, Ayuk-Taylor et al. (2014) maintained that these agencies "uniformly charge fees to handle the labor contracts, traveling arrangements, basic job training, and other issues related to their employment in the country" (Ayuk-Taylor, 2014, p. 43). Both Najeeb in *Goat Days* and Josephine in *The Bamboo Stalk* surrender to the excessive demands of these agencies so they can obtain a visa: "Borrowing from everyone I knew" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 19). Likewise, Josephine has to deal with another gang of Bombay for the same reason: lending money to poor people in exchange for great interests: "Dealing with the Indians meant setting in motion an endless cycle of debts" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 18). All these sacrifices are undertaken in order to reach the land of promise.

In both stories, home represents the dystopia. India and the Philippines suffer from poverty and extreme social and economic hardships. Many Indians are pushed to seek work opportunities abroad due to various forms of injustice. Unemployment is rampant, especially among the youth who struggle to find job openings. Economic inequality, partly fueled by the caste system, makes it tough for individuals, particularly those from lower social classes, to secure employment in their own country. Discrimination and racism have also led to unequal treatment and opportunities based on religion or social status. This has prompted millions of Indians to explore job prospects in countries which promise a better life than the one they have at home. The situation is very similar in the Philippines, where Filipinos, especially residents of rural areas, face significant challenges in finding decent life conditions. Additionally, a crucial factor is the frequent

occurrence of natural disasters in the Philippines, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods. These disasters contribute to the destruction of properties and job losses. As a result, people turn to seek employment opportunities in countries that are safer and more stable. Furthermore, there are other factors similar to the situation in India, such as poverty, economic inequality, discrimination, and political oppression. It also contributed to the migration phenomenon under which comes many issues these two novels highlighted starting with the identity crisis. The question of identity is raised by many factors. In this context, identity is in crisis since the Asian characters are displaced and maltreated mainly due to their identity which therefore results in an identity crisis. Hall underscores that "Kobena Mercer, observes, 'identity' only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Hall, 1992, p. 257). Identity is not a fixed notion but rather a fluid and evolving process shaped by personal experiences, societal impacts, and moments of turmoil. It adapts and changes in response to various circumstances.

#### **1.4 Émigré and the Sense of Otherness**

A sense of Otherness often marks the experience of migrants in the host countries. What makes Najeeb, Josephine, and Issa experience an identity crisis is the way they are perceived in the Gulf communities in addition to the stereotypes about people of the same nationalities. In other words, there are stereotypes against them that make them suffer in all places in the countries, and not only in their workplaces. Usually, migrants are often shocked upon their arrival in the Arab Gulf countries, as the reality there is quite different from what is portrayed in their home countries. They tend to believe that those returning from the Gulf are in a good position, and their standard of living has greatly improved compared to before they left. However, in reality, migrants face some of the toughest situations, such as exploitation, marginalization, and violations of their rights. Hamza (2015) addresses the maltreatment of migrant workers, stating that "migrant workers are mistreated throughout every stage of the immigration process, by the recruiting agencies in their home countries, the GCC governments themselves, and by their employers" (Hamza, 2015, p. 87). Maltreatment is so pervasive, and it occurs at various stages of the migration process, primarily within the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC). The enduring nature of this poor treatment can be attributed to several factors, notably the workers' sense of hopelessness within societies that offer little support in reclaiming their rights.

Additionally, these migrant workers and their families make significant sacrifices to enable them to reach the Arab Gulf states. Hamza points out, "The migrants and their families make great sacrifices to send them to the Gulf, so the migrants do not want their families to be disappointed or worried that their living conditions in their new homes are abysmal" (Hamza, 2015, p. 88). These family sacrifices underscore the workers' determination to shoulder involuntary burdens to safeguard their emotional well-being and fulfill the high expectations of their families.

By connecting these elements, this thesis demonstrates that migrant workers' Otherness is a systemic issue, perpetuated by multiple stages of the migration process and sustained by the workers' resilience in the face of adversity.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

On the theoretical side, Said expresses similar notions about identity to those articulated by Bhabha, particularly their shared use of the term 'inbetweenness.' In Said, in *Between Worlds* (1998), recalls,

But although taught to believe and think like an English schoolboy, I was also trained to understand that I was an alien, a Non-European other, educated by my betters to know my situation and not to aspire to be British. The line separating Us from Them was linguistic, cultural, racial, and ethnic (Said, *Between Worlds*, 1998, p. 3).

This statement embodies the profound themes of identity, belonging, power dynamics, and exclusion within colonial and postcolonial contexts. It illustrates the challenges faced by individuals who are constantly reminded of their differences and compelled to recognize their outsider status. When the comparison becomes 'them' vs. 'us,' Said continues to feel different from 'them.' He is neither European nor British. Additionally, no matter how hard he tries to become one of them or be like them, he realizes he cannot. Despite the variance in locality and experience, the lives of Issa and Najeeb present many parallel echoes as well as lots of divergent prospects, thus making their experiences theoretically significant and the insights they both provide to migrant life practically valuable. Despite his Kuwaiti nationality based on his father's identity, it parallels Said's treatment in Europe. Issa faces repeated rejection in Kuwaiti society, even from his father's family because his physical appearance differs from the typical Kuwaiti features.

Moreover, his accent differs from that of Kuwaitis, especially since he knew only a few Arabic words. Najeeb expects his life to be better in Saudi Arabia, so he sells everything he owns and pays off his debts in the hope of improving his standard of living there. However, he faces a difficult reality in Saudi Arabia, where he is enslaved and has to spend his days talking to the goats.

From a comparative studies perspective, and despite the fact that there is no comparative research conducted on Benyamin's *Goat Days* and Al-sansoui *The Bamboo Stalk*, one can draw many similarities between the protagonists in terms of their experiences in the Arab Gulf states. Additionally, the researcher has integrated other studies which were done on the common and shared notions in the two novels. Furthermore, there are many literary works that have proven and discussed the notions discussed in this study. Said's *Out of Place*, Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, and Shailendra Kumar's Experience of a Gulf Migrant through the Eyes of *Goat Days* are cases in point. Kumar analyzed *Goat Days*, exploring the hardships faced by the Indian diaspora in the Gulf. In his analysis, he focuses on the protagonist's use of imagination and faith for survival, highlighting themes of migration, displacement, loneliness, and hope. In addition, there is Kumar's "Migration and Identity Crisis in Benyamin's *Goat Days*." This article explores the themes of migration, alienation, and identity crisis in Benyamin's *Goat Days*. Furthermore, it follows up Najeeb's journey in the Gulf, where hope turns into despair, and his identification with goats relieves him from the painful contact with people. The article illustrates the aspirations and challenges of Malayalis in the Oil Era. Moreover, Surya Kumar and Sonia Chellerian in *Expectation to Despair: Analysis of Trauma Theory in Goat Days and Khadamma* (2021) show how literature influences individuals, offering new perspectives and evoking memories and trauma. Works like *Khadamma* and *Goat Days* explore characters' experiences of trauma and identity crisis in the Gulf. Rajasekaran V. and Jasmine Jose (2017) discuss the Indian diaspora's presence in over 100 countries, with a focus on migrants from Southern India seeking opportunities in the Gulf for economic stability. However, the reality often falls short of their expectations, as seen in *Goat Days*. Finally, Hezam (2017) provides insights into the protagonist's quest for his ideal "father's paradise." The study explores the identity crisis experienced by Issa, a half-Kuwaiti, half-Philippines character torn between cultures, religions, and languages. Furthermore, his study examines the barriers of culture, religion, and language that hinder

Issa's dream and compares his final response to that of other postcolonial protagonists. Almutairi, Raihanah, and Hashim (2019) examined the struggles faced by a bicultural character in *The Bamboo Stalk*. They discussed the challenges of identity construction and acceptance as they appear in two different cultures.

Shin (2014) highlights the notion that the rapid economic growth of the Gulf states relied mainly on foreign labor to the extent that they became described as foreigner majority states. This is due to their preference for having temporary foreign workers, thus fostering social segregation and discrimination based on nationality along with other factors. Shin examined the interactions of foreign workers within the Gulf states' discriminatory society.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1989) raised the idea of hegemonizing one language over others, known as 'linguicism' which reflects an ideology linked to racism. Minorities, in this case, the migrant workers in Gulf states, are always to blame for failing to acquire the language of the countries they migrate to. In other words, Skutnabb-Kangas call for support of bilingualism. In addition, Murillo and Smith (2011) highlighted the close connection between linguicism and discrimination based on various identity factors. This highlights how language discrimination intersects with broader issues of social identity, shaping individuals' experiences and opportunities based on factors beyond their language use.

Similarly, Badurais and Belkhasher examined the theme of hybridity in *The Bamboo Stalk* (2016), focusing on characters like Ghassan and Issa. They represent a hybrid identity within the Kuwaiti society, including the bidoon, who are stateless individuals. This article shows how Al-sansoui critiques societal prejudices, shedding light on the struggles faced by marginalized identities like the bidoon. Moreover, Ye and Tang (2016) argue that Foucault's discourse principles include mechanisms of control that form a discourse order reflecting how power limits discourse and human nature, emphasizing the need to critique and expose these controls to reveal human nature. Their paper elaborates on the critical importance of analyzing discourse control in addition to illustrating how discourse is controlled, and how it reflects power dynamics. Likewise, Foucault (1971) argued that in every society, the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by specific procedures designed to weaken its powers and dangers.

Gramsci (2004) explored social and political thought through his writings on language, highlighting key concepts like hegemony, intellectuals, and civil society. Gramsci's focus on language helps address how our subjectivity is constituted by external forces, while we, as subjects, make choices that collectively determine our lives. In parallel, Said in *Orientalism* (1979) examines how language can be used to resist hegemonic discourse and language. He criticizes the Western representation of the East which could be viewed more as a misrepresentation. The West aims at orientalizing the Orient to fit into their narratives. Consequently, there becomes a need to resist hegemonic language through linguistic analysis and critique. On another note, Freud (1957) examined the psychological and societal impacts of World War I. He also asserts that people welcome illusions because they spare them from unpleasant feelings, allowing them to enjoy satisfaction instead. However, he acknowledges that these illusions can sometimes clash with reality and be shattered. He identifies two main sources of disillusionment: the hypocrisy of states that internally appear to be as honest, and the unexpected cruelty shown by nationals who are supposed to be part of the highest human civilization. Accordingly, Freud hopes that understanding these issues' psychological roots can help build a more peaceful future.

In a related context, Said shows how exile uproots individuals from their essential sources of identity and sustenance—tradition, family, and geography. These elements are fundamental to a person's sense of belonging and well-being. They highlight exile as a profound and merciless human tragedy and emphasize the cruelty and enduring impact of being severed from one's roots, presenting exile as a condition that inflicts continuous suffering without the relief of an ultimate end. This, therefore, calls for a deeper understanding and empathy towards those who endure exile, recognizing it as one of the most severe forms of human-made misery.

In addition, in *The Bamboo Stalk*, the protagonist Issa, despite being a legitimate son, is exiled by his wealthy Kuwaiti father. Khawandanah (2014) highlights the themes of familial and social rejection, as well as the impact of racial and ethnic prejudice. Moreover, Shihada (2016) criticizes the Kafala system through the lens of Najeeb's story since it uncovers many negative practices against migrant workers in Gulf countries along with depriving them of their basic rights. Shihada emphasizes the need to protect migrant workers from exploitation and maintain their rights and safety.

Tartakovsky (2009) investigated the three stages immigrants experience as they decide to move abroad. His research tracks the changes made to the migrants' identities in addition to the admiration of the host country and the devaluation of the homeland. However, he ended up with the notion that migrants, after experiencing many incidents, accidents and problems, realize that they truly have a stronger feeling of connection with their homelands and not with the host countries. Similarly, Teitelbaum (1999) believed that disillusionment is related to the individual's realization that his wishes, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions are not going to be achieved. This is linked to the psychological state of the individuals in addition to their need to confront struggles and adjust to their conditions so that they will not be surprised as they fail to accomplish their expectations. Therefore, the shattering of their dreams is supposed to be linked and followed by a great fight and defying the obstacles he/she faces.

In light of these studies, this thesis addresses a gap in the literature which dealt with these two novels by focusing on the factors that prevent acculturation and assimilation in the context of the labor migrants and mixed races in the Gulf states.

## **1.6 Theoretical Frame**

The researcher draws on the work of postcolonial culture critics. She used Bhabha's concept of the third space in order to demonstrate that both Issa in *The Bamboo Stalk* and Najeeb in *Goat Days* have failed to construct a third space, thus drawing the critical attention to the pessimistic underpinnings and the complex set of reasons pertaining to the Arab Gulf migrants. This can help us conceptualize in-betweenness as a failure. Hendrix (2022) says, "Homi K. Bhabha developed the post-colonial concept of 'in-betweenness' as a decolonial space that allows us to escape the impasse of binary structures, not by complicating both or one side, but rather by opting for a continuous flux position of transition 'in between' colonial dichotomies" (Hendrix, 2022, p. 58). Bhabha also introduces the concept of hybridity, which he defines as "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. It is the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority. Hybridity displays the necessary "deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). Bhabha suggests the existence of a space "in between the designations of identity," (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4) where individuals can embody two

different identities and cultures, emphasizing the complexity of this dualism. The chapter entitled “Pessimism and the Third Space of In-betweenness will highlight the factors leading to the protagonist’s failure to inhabit this space in the two novels.

The study also draws on Said's association of place with identity. Said writes:

Along with language, it is geography—especially in the displaced form of departures, arrivals, farewells, exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging, and travel itself—that is at the core of my memories of those early years. Each of the places I lived in—Jerusalem, Cairo, Lebanon, the United States—has a complicated, dense web of valences that was very much a part of growing up, gaining an identity, forming my consciousness of myself and of others (Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir*, 1999, p. 13).

Said suffered from placelessness and was lost out of the place. Therefore, the need to establish a link between time and place emerges: "The main reason, however, for this memoir is of course the need to bridge the sheer distance in time and place between my life today and my life then" (Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir*, 1999, p. 13). Said's conceptualization of geography in relation to the various forms of identity and identification inform the sections in which the researchers addresses the antagonistic city and desert spaces and the way they intensify the character's sense of alienation.

Additionally, the nature of the identity crisis experienced by both protagonists is explored in light of Hall’s description of the "loss of a stable 'sense of self' [which] is sometimes called the dislocation or de-centering of the subject. This set of double displacements - de-centering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves - constitutes a 'crisis of identity' for the individual" (Hall, 1992, p. 275). Hall's concept of displaced and decentered selves can help explain the situation of the main characters in the two novels and understand their feeling of displacement and loss of identity they both experience along the way.

The thesis falls into two main chapters. Chapter 2 delineates the Pessimistic aspects of In-betweenness. Pessimism often arises when there is a significant difference between a person's expectations and the reality he or she faces. When a person has high expectations and feels there are ample opportunities to improve his/her situation, it can result in an even greater shock when that person finds him/herself in a more difficult situation than

anticipated. Issa, who arrives in Kuwait, optimistic about the prospects of a new life there, experiences a significant gap between his expectations and the reality he encounters. The same thing happens with Najeeb, who builds dreams of a better life for himself, his wife, and his mother, which quickly fade and disappear as he arrives in Al-Masara. In contrast, Bhabha's concept of 'in-betweenness' and 'third space' presents us with a positive perspective. It points to the opportunity to address the challenges and difficulties facing individuals who feel marginalized. It encourages and motivates these individuals to resist and improve their circumstances. In our context, the pessimistic aspects will be linked to the troubles faced by the traumatized characters or individuals in a foreign culture. This is evident in many aspects of the two novels such as isolation, loneliness, cultural clash, and racial prejudice. This chapter illustrates the factors leading to the failure of constructing hybrid selves with specific references to the context of migrants to the Arab Gulf states.

Chapter 3 Linguistic Hegemony examines language as one key factor in social differentiation. In both novels, the suffering and trauma that both Najeeb in Saudi Arabia and Josephine and her son Issa in Al-Kuwait can be linked directly to the language they speak. Issa mentions his mother's efforts to help him speak Arabic early which would help him as he gets older and moves to his father's homeland: "When I first started speaking, she taught me some Arabic words" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 21). Learning from an early age would help him speak Arabic fluently as he gets older as if his Arabic accent would save him from the cultural hegemony if people did not look at his face while speaking. Language stands as a barrier to the character's attempts to integrate into the mainstream society. Issa and Josephine struggled to integrate into Kuwaiti society due to the Arabic language barrier. Hezam (2017) states, "This inability to speak Arabic works as an additional barrier between him and the society to which he belongs" (Hezam, 2017, p. 13). When individuals cannot communicate in the dominant language of the society, they find it challenging to connect with others or engage in social activities, resulting in feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Najeeb in *Goat Days* lives a similar experience when he arrived in a land completely unfamiliar to him in terms of language and culture. He has to face many differences. Consequently, Najeeb seeks companionship in the company of goats, as noted by Kumar (2017) Unable to communicate with others due to his lack of knowledge of the local

language “he starts speaking with goats, thinking of himself as one of them” (Kumar, 2017, p. 317). This behavior can be seen as an attempt to fulfill his need for social interaction and belonging, serving as a bridge between himself and the unfamiliar environment, effectively helping him cope with his isolation. Furthermore, neither Najeeb nor his Arbab knows each other's language. Najeeb wonders, "Anyway, in which language would I ask him?" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 24). The absence of communication between them due to language barriers can be considered one of the main reasons for their shared traumatic experience, highlighting how the lack of effective communication leads to a prolonged period of misery lasting three years. Moreover, Skutnabb-Kangas concept of 'linguicism' highlights the discrimination between individuals based on language. In this context, not acquiring the dominant language might affect migrant workers in terms of social exclusion, access to services, and even psychological impact. This therefore justifies Said's notion in his book *Orientalism* (1979) where he underscores the use of language as a means to resist hegemonic discourse and language. In other words, both Skutnabb-Kangas and Said asserts the importance of promoting linguistic diversity to ensure migrants participation with society.

In light of these realities, the thesis concludes that, in the context of migration to the Arab Gulf countries, there have been numerous attempts and concessions demonstrated by migrant workers to improve and facilitate their existence in the host countries whether through creating a third space, a dual identity, bridging their old lives with the new ones, or even attempts to learn the Arabic language. However, all these efforts went in vain since both protagonists were helpless due to the hardships they experienced. Also, although there are great job opportunities in the Arabic gulf countries, laws and policies of workers must be seriously addressed and improved to ensure migrant workers' rights and protect them.

## Chapter Two

### Pessimism and The Third Space of In-betweenness

#### 2.1 Introduction

Workers from different nationalities move to the Arab Gulf countries in search of job opportunities, carrying with them not only their luggage but also dreams woven by their own imaginations and those of their families for better jobs and better standards of living. At the beginning of the novel, the characters are set to believe that the quality of life in Arab Gulf countries is considerably better compared to that in their own countries due to the presence of many migrants who find it easy to adapt to the host country. Therefore, economic prosperity and the availability of contemporary means of life, along with a modern lifestyle are the main factors which drive the characters to leave their countries and to find work in the Arab Gulf countries. Issa's motive in *The Bamboo Stalk* stems from his desire to return to his father's, some sort of a quest in search of family roots. To him Kuwait represents a promised paradise that turns into conflict. As for Najeeb, his motivation is to find a job to improve his family's miserable life conditions in India. In this chapter, the researcher accompanies Issa in *The Bamboo Stalk* and Najeeb in *Goat Days* in their journey to the Arab Gulf countries, a journey which is marked by defeat and disillusionment. This chapter identifies the multiple challenges they encounter as they try to adapt to the harsh conditions in the Gulf.

There is a plethora of psychological evidence on human liability to develop illusions. Freud suggests, "We welcome illusions because they spare us unpleasurable feelings, and enable us to enjoy satisfactions instead" (Freud, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, 1915, p. 279). Freud's statement highlights the complex interaction, often a clash, between reality and illusions. This collision informs of a stark contrast between one's internal morality standards and those set by external social forces. In addition, another moral dilemma arises when the individual is faced with the cruelty of members of society whose behavior contrasts with one's own positive expectations, a situation which leads to an intense feeling of disillusionment. In this context, Freud aptly describes this state of collision between the social and political realities and one's own illusions:

We welcome illusions because they spare us unpleasurable feelings, and enable us to enjoy satisfactions instead. We must not complain, then, if now and again

they come into collision with some portion of reality, and are shattered against it. Two things in this war have aroused our sense of disillusionment: the low morality shown externally by states which in their internal relations pose as the guardians of moral standards, and the brutality shown by individuals whom, as participants in the highest human civilization, one would not have thought capable of such behaviour (Freud, 1915, p. 279).

This definition provides an insight into the motivations that drive an individual to try to nurture illusions to protect oneself from emotional stress under conditions of betrayal, bereavement and frustration. Illusions thus become like shields which are put in place to protect the individual from the influence of social, economic and political pressures. However, one should guard against situations when this self-nurtured barrier collapses due to a clash with life own realities. In the case of migrants, there are two sources for disillusionment. The first one relates to the hypocrisy of the state, which promises to adhere to humanitarian principles internally but acts in ways that contradict these principles when dealing with migrants. The second has to do with the racial bias against migrants shown by the state nationals. This second case may result in disillusionment and trauma from mistreatment and discrimination. The discrepancy between declared morals, values, and actual behavior is evident, especially with migrants expecting good treatment and respect as they leave their country in pursuit of a better life.

When talking about migrants, it is necessary to point out the stages they go through on the way to disillusionment. Tartakovsky (2008) divided those into three distinct stages. Tartakovsky conducted his study on migrants who have lived abroad for up to three years, a period which fits well with the main characters in both novels. For example, in *The Bamboo Stalk*, Issa spends approximately two years and eight months in Kuwait before he embarks on a journey back to his homeland: the Philippines. Likewise, in *Goat Days*, Najeeb spends three years and a few months in Saudi Arabia before he flees the host country on his way home.

Tartakovsky contends that these phases are consistent for all migrants. The first phase begins while the migrant is still in his or her country of origin, a period that precedes the actual migration experience. This period is characterized by the underestimation of the home country and the portrayal of the receiving country as a perfect object of glorification. The second stage happens during the first year after arrival into the host

country; here, the stage of fascination with the receiving country ends and a new stage of disillusionment begins; meanwhile, belonging to the original country grows significantly. The third and final stage is characterized by hybrid sense of identity; here the migrant remains optimistic about the receiving country, but, at the same time, s/he develops a greater sense of belonging to the country of origin.

Disillusionment often culminates in a feeling of exile, a state which according to Said is both fictional and real. This feeling surfaces when the migrants are subjected to maltreatment, as it appears as if their very existence is undesirable. Said states that the views of exile in literature and religion obscure the fact:

Exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; it is imposed by human beings on other human beings; and that, like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography (Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 2000, p. 174).

Said correctly defines exile as a historical state of being as it marks human relationships, human isolation, and human desire to fit into social and national moldings. Here Said refers to the fact that exile is not connected to religious principles, but rather is a historical phenomenon that extends over time, in addition to being not easily reversible, as it was imposed by humans on humans. It includes individual's relationship to entire societies. The exile may result from the separation of individuals from their own traditions or even from the family ties that form part of their identity. Moreover, Said points out that exile places one in a state of constant displacement and suffering without ever reaching comfort. This feeling results in them being subjected to maltreatment, as it appears, as if their existence is undesirable.

For individuals who experience a sense of exile, and since integration in the host culture is not one pursuit for them, especially if they experience rejection, the third space may constitute a resort from the sense of alienation experienced away from home. As Bhabha stated *The Location of Cultures* (1994) the third space is a space "which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 208). In this context, the third space presents itself as a reality that does not strictly follow the rules laid out by the

colonizer, but at the same time, it is not part of the colonized's property either. Rather, it represents something else, a hybrid space that arises as a result of the intersection of different cultures. As a result, the third space challenges rigid ideas, providing an opportunity for the continuous renewal of cultural meanings and concepts. The third space also appears as an environment in which traditional meanings can be constantly reshaped and new meanings added, a condition which allows them to create new identities that do not succumb to the dichotomous discourse of colonialism. In *The Bamboo Stalk* and *Goat Days*, both Issa and Najeeb try to build a third space that would facilitate their stay in the Arab Gulf countries, through their efforts to eliminate marginalization and integrate into the local society.

Nevertheless, they fail to accomplish this due to the apparent gap between their anticipations and harsh reality, and the obstacles that hinder their progress and prevent them from facing the multiple challenges imposed on them. Correspondingly, there are existing barriers to improve their condition, whether social or cultural. These barriers negatively influence their capability to adjust and participate effectively in society. Consequently, it appears that there is a great effort made to achieve integration in Arab Gulf society. Still, circumstantial and cultural factors jump in the face of those attempts, which lead to a frustrating failure.

## **2.2 The Pursuit of Belonging in the Arab Gulf Countries**

The experience of exile begins after the individual goes through a certain experience and is in a place that could be his hometown or country of origin, or perhaps a place he decides to move to in search of job opportunities. Both Issa in *The Bamboo Stalk* and Najeeb in *Goat Days* live the experience of exile, with slight differences in the details of each of their experiences. As they arrive in their destination, the promised happiness gives way to shocking experiences of rejection, imprisonment, intimidation, and torture. This initial stage is marked by their pursuits to belong into the new hostile environment.

According to Freud's identification of sources of disillusionment, there is the cruelty of individual treatment of migrants which appears in Issa's rejection from most family members leading him to a sense of disillusionment. Additionally, assuming facial features, as a stronger bond than blood ties, contradicts all logic.

My father picked me up in his arms and took a long look at my face. 'Maybe he was looking for just one thing that you two had in common,' my mother said. For sure, what he saw was a face with elements taken from other faces, but not from his own (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 35).

While searching for any resemblance, Issa's father couldn't find any feature in his son's face that looked like him as the biological father or the Kuwaiti people generally since identity is revealed to members of Kuwaiti society through the face only, and dealings are based on it. Therefore, those who have nationality but do not have features confront rejection and discrimination. Consequently, the relationship between the father and his son seems to be complicated and irresolvable. Issa has no opportunity to decide or choose between the Philippines and his father's country, Kuwait. This is because he is exiled based on the decision of his Kuwaiti father when Issa was still a newborn.

This shows that, according to Said's definition, exile is irreparable, as neither Issa nor his mother Josephine are able to remain in Kuwait after his father's decision. Here, it is the father's rejection based on racial grounds. The son and the mother are deemed a disgrace to the father, who has all the authority to banish them from the country. Also, his father is able to impose exile on Issa without any deterrence. This exile is not only spatial, but also Rashid sends his son Issa away from him, which leads to the severing of the family bond between them, and therefore leads to Issa losing part of his identity.

Another prominent barrier is imprisonment which is considered as one way of restricting a person from communicating and living a normal life. In the case of Issa, there are hierarchies within the Kuwaiti community which include explicit discrimination between citizens and foreigners. Due to not having the facial features of Kuwaitis, Issa is treated the same like other migrants.

The policeman pushed me from behind and suddenly I found myself in a van parked on the kerb, packed with migrants who didn't have identity papers or valid visas. There were Arabs, Indians, Filipinos and Bangladeshis, and me – a Kuwaiti who didn't look like other Kuwaitis (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 241).

Here Issa is treated as an outsider which magnifies his misery and harshens his effort to belong and assimilate. The presence of such obstacles sheds light on the fact that nothing will save a person from bad treatment if he/she does not share physical and philological

attributes. Issa's suffering broadens to include not only challenging hierarchies within the community but also inside the house. Normally, the relationship between family members is built on love, care, and equal treatment. However, hierarchies and unequal treatment are another barrier that Issa has in the house. It somehow humiliates and restricts him from integrating into the family. In this case, it could be considered as putting someone in a family-made prison. "Khawla told me they had prepared a room for me in the annex with everything I would need" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 171). The annex is a room separated from the rest of the house as Issa explains, "The annex wasn't the house itself. It was somewhere separate in the inner courtyard where the cook and the driver lived. Only the owners lived inside the house itself, and the maids on the top floor" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 171). The symbolism of the annex sheds light on the social hierarchy within the household. This works as a daily reminder for Issa that he is an outsider. The constant exposure to practices of discrimination including a person's house leads to a feeling of alienation and exile according to Said's definition of exile because there is nothing that guarantees Issa's comfort and stability in Kuwait.

The concept of exile goes beyond geographical displacement, as it extends to include other psychological dimensions. Dehumanization and torture represent another barrier. Again, this experience reflects the absolute power the Saudi nationals have over migrants. The torture suffered by migrant workers shows that it has an impact not only on their personal lives but also on their families. Migrant workers who lack contacts in the host country are often exploited, ensuring that they have no support or protection. In addition, they work hard for fear of being deported to their countries and thus endure high levels of torture to keep their jobs. It is important to highlight the idea that their incapability to improve poor circumstances contributes to feelings of helplessness and loss of resilience. Said emphasizes the idea that exile leaves a profound impact on the exiled individual's feelings, creating a psychological state that causes him to face complex challenges in the new place, as he strives to adapt to the unfamiliar environment. In the context of *Goat Days*, Najeeb is subjected to the experience of exile by his Arbab who detaches him from the city and society, leaving him in the desert alone with the goats. This situation appears as a model of the embodiment of exile, as Najeeb is separated from the environment and finds himself centered in strange surroundings. This type of experience generates psychological challenges that make Najeeb struggle to understand and adapt to the new

circumstances. This reality highlights the effect of exile on the psychological aspect of the exiled individual. "My arbab, how can you so cruelly walk away after leaving me here in this darkness in front of a tent, without saying a word? Don't you know that I am here in the Gulf for the first time?" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 38). A feeling of loneliness affects Najeeb; the use of the question form reflects a state of shock and frustration, especially when he is dealing with the place for the first time. Also, this shows a form of silent protest, some form of contemplation of the great level of inhumanity that marks the psychology of the master "Arbab".

Intimidation can manifest itself in many forms, whether physical or psychological. In Najeeb's case, it may be manifested in both forms, including complete isolation and violence. In addition, his lack of knowledge of the Arabic language adds to the challenges. It must be recognized that the imbalance of power between the employer and his workers leads to the exploitation of workers and deprivation of their basic rights and dignity. Consequently, this results in workers feeling unwelcomed, in addition to losing protection, which contributes to limiting the possibilities available to them, such as controlling their isolation from others and preventing them from moving around and leaving the workplace after the end of work hours. These harmful practices affect the cultural exchange between migrant workers and citizens of the host country, affecting their identity as migrants and making it difficult to integrate into the local community.

Regarding the Kafala system, Shihada argues, in Benyamin Daniel's *Goat Days*, that:

Kafala is a binding system which denies migrant laborers the right to get transferred from abusive sponsors who, in return, report them to the government as trouble makers and absconders, in a way which could make migrant workers risk losing their legal status and could make them liable to deportation (Shihada, 2016, p. 5).

Shihada highlights the great injustice migrant workers face, especially if the employers abuse the authorities granted to them. By referring to Freud's definition of disillusionment and its sources, he points out that one of the sources of this disillusionment is the "hypocrisy of states," meaning that states contribute to granting employers the powers to practice this injustice and exploitation. This makes the system similar to slavery, where migrant workers cannot control any aspect of themselves or claim their rights. If they tried to, they would be deported or put in prison under the Kafala system.

In short, the aim of shedding light on these issues is to show the difference between the influence of the Gulf states on workers, the influence of workers on the Gulf states, and the economic development they are witnessing. In other words, it emphasizes the mutual interest of the Arab Gulf and the workers, and therefore they should be treated in a better and fair manner, since the former needs their expertise and the latter need the work.

### **2.3 Between Worlds: Disillusionment and the Unfulfilled Promise**

The gap between the reality experienced by the migrant and the dreams and promises that precede the migration experience leads to great disappointment. When referring to the definition of the three stages of Tartakovsky that the migrant passes through, it is worth noting that the first and second stages include promises that do not find a place in reality. For example, during the first phase, as Tartakovsky says, there is "devaluation of the homeland and idealization of the country of immigration in the pre-migration period" (Tartakovsky, 2009, p. 1). Issa lives in a state of excitement at the idea of traveling to Kuwait, where he can build dreams of comfort, happiness, and wealth, all of which he lacks in the Philippines.

More importantly, there is the hope of defining a specific identity, religion, and name in Kuwait. Going to Kuwait is like going to heaven where everything missing in the Philippines will be available there: "My mother convinced me that we were living in hell and that Kuwait was the heaven I deserved" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 52). Praising Kuwait and placing it in the same position as Heaven shows how ideal Kuwait is in the eyes of Issa. His condition is like being blindfolded by his mother because she has been promising him a return to Kuwait since his childhood and makes him imagine that everything is available there as if it were the land of dreams and wonders. Thus, enthusiasm is the first step in Issa's journey towards disillusionment.

There were many things my mother hadn't told me about the paradise I was promised. She told me a lot about making dreams come true, ... In the meantime I was in a country I didn't know, looking for somewhere that would take me in, torn between Kuwait and the Philippines (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 224).

It becomes clear here how many dreams may be illusory in the Philippine's reality, and how Kuwait is portrayed as a promised paradise. Issa feels excited and has high

expectations, but faces contradictory interactions from his family and internal conflicts, leaving him in a difficult situation that makes him torn between two worlds: Kuwait and the Philippines, a situation that is considered pivotal in his journey.

There is no doubt that, according to Issa, after a year of stay in Kuwait, the elements of the second stage begin to emerge, according to Tartakovsky's scheme. Signs of the disappearance of Issa's admiration for Kuwait emerge as a result of a lack of respect, lack of welcome, and injustice; he is subjected to insult, discrimination, and exploitation, whether from Kuwaiti society or his father's family. These occurrences increase his sense of belonging to the Philippines and all that is related to it. Here contradictions appear between reality and prior anticipations. He begins to experience the contradictions of professional reality compared to previous expectations. He says:

For the first time in my life, I felt useless. My old dream had come true, I had the paradise I was promised, I had travelled to Kuwait and I had more money than I needed. What next? In the Philippines all I had was my family. In Kuwait I had everything except a family (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 303).

The text here reflects the state of emptiness that Issa feels after achieving his dream, which he has grown up with since his childhood, and now he lives in Kuwait. Although he has achieved financial success and reached a level of comfort, this success has not relieved him of the feeling of emptiness. This appears clearly when he says "For the first time in my life, I felt useless" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 303). The emptiness is evident when Issa begins to compare life in Kuwait and the Philippines. In the Philippines, he has his family but nothing else, while in Kuwait, despite achieving financial success and having everything except his family, a feeling of isolation emerges as a result of this material success.

In *Goat Days*, Najeeb also goes through the stages identified by Tartakovsky. There is a strong conflict between his dream and the bitter reality. In the first stage, according to Tartakovsky's description, he shows enthusiasm and rush in all ways and methods to collect the cost of travel:

Two months passed, months of waiting and dreaming ... Meanwhile, I dreamt a host of dreams. Perhaps the same stock dreams that the 1.4 million Malayalis in

the Arab Gulf had when they were in Kerala—gold watch, fridge, TV, car, AC, tape recorder, VCP, a heavy gold chain (Benyamin, 2012, p. 26).

This quotation includes the idea that Najeeb is alert and is anticipating what he will encounter in the Arab Gulf. He highlights the fact that about 1.4 million Indians are expatriates in the Arab Gulf for economic purposes, which makes his experience not unique, but rather representative of many experiences. In other words, Najeeb's dreams represent not only himself but every Indian who has migrated in search of better opportunities. The reference to specifying a time limit of two months also indicates the migrants' preparation, whether mentally, emotionally, or physically, to face the migration experience. It is worth noting the common dream in material terms among Indians, is having an expensive watch, a refrigerator, a television, etc. These examples show how unstable the economic situation of Indians is, especially when compared to the situation of the Arab Gulf citizens. This reflects the challenging economic reality for these Indians, where such things are available to the majority of Arab Gulf citizens. It is also important to note that India is being devalued by the unwillingness of many to remain there in the same financial situation. This leads to the Arab Gulf beginning to be glorified and seen as a better destination.

After a year has passed, the scales reverse, as the second stage begins with the disappearance of fascination and increases belonging to the homeland.

I was alone. My bag was my pillow. It had the scent of pickle. Suddenly, I recalled the people at home, Ummah, Sainu, our son (daughter) who grew inside her. They must be troubled not having heard of my safe arrival. I felt miserable. My heart felt like it was about to burst (Benyamin, 2012, p. 53).

Najeeb's emotional state is revealed here through nostalgia for his mother, wife, and son. Going through challenging circumstances leads to the stirring of conscience and the beginning of regretting leaving the family. The admiration fades after the bag becomes the pillow, and this is an indication of the absence of comfort and considering it as a thing of the past.

## 2.4 Echoes of Solitude and the Ongoing Gulf Adventure

The migrants' experiences of, especially those from vastly different cultural backgrounds, include times of isolation. This feeling comes among the many challenges they face during their presence in the host countries. So the word 'solitude' in the title draws attention to the migrant's feeling of home and family sickness, especially during moments of contemplation and thinking about their families, the culture of their country, and everything that links them to their country of origin: "In my isolation I found I had a morbid longing for my family in the Philippines. I was nostalgic for home although I had started to become familiar with some of the things in my father's country" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 233). The effect of loneliness appears here in terms of overthinking about family and homesickness, in addition to acknowledging. It is clear that there is a kind of adaptation to the receiving country, which reflects the dual nature of the migrant's experience. Najeeb admonishes himself:

I must reach out to my ummah. I must see my Sainu. I must see my Nabeel. I must see my land. I must see my dusty roads. I must see my river. I must see my canoe. I must see my rain. I must see my earth. At such moments, I could truly comprehend the meaning of nostalgia (Benyamin, 2012, p. 87).

His sudden recollection of family members draws attention to the spatial and emotional isolation, which in turn greatly affects his experience in the Arab Gulf as a whole. The ongoing challenges in the Arab Gulf may indicate constant homesickness coupled with optimism related to the hosting country, which means that migrants must achieve a balance between the two. As previously indicated, according to Tartakovsky's analysis, the arrival of migrants to this stage means that they have reached the third and final stages of their experience. Therefore, in this context, there will be an explanation for the state of optimism of both Issa in *The Bamboo Stalk* and Najeeb in *Goat Days* and how they continued despite all the difficult circumstances.

The fact that Najeeb has optimism implies strong internal resilience, combined with external support, which together contribute to a positive change in his perspective towards things. One of the factors that contributes to this is the belief that he would not remain in this misery forever. In difficult moments, he seeks help from God. This is considered a positive factor that gives him strength and motivation to overcome challenges: "The two factors that helped me through that phase were my desire to live and my infinite faith in

Allah" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 72). His faith in God that everything will be in the best condition gives him a feeling of comfort:

I didn't know if Allah heard me or not. But the belief that Allah was looking after me instilled in me a new confidence. Non-believers, those of you fortunate to live merrily in the pleasant greenery Allah has bestowed on you, you might feel prayers are ridiculous rituals. For me, prayers were my bolt-hole. It was because of faith alone that I could be strong in spirit even when I was weak in my body. Otherwise I would have withered and burnt like grass in that blazing wind (Benyamin, 2012, p. 91).

On the other hand, his faith in God constitutes a consolation for him that he is not alone, but God is with him at all times and in all conditions. Therefore, this is an indication of faith in God. Also, the occurrence of bad things is just part of the divine plan that has a happy ending. Accordingly, the fact of constantly returning to God contributes to instilling hope that He will be kind and will help him and will not leave him struggling forever. The result of all this is reaching a state of acceptance of God's will, whatever it may be, thus creating a feeling of peace and freeing one from all pessimistic feelings. It can also be said that there is a perception of the future that it will be more promising, which is considered a motivating factor for Najeeb that increase his optimism.

Although Issa is in his father's country of Kuwait, he is constantly treated like a foreigner, and this applies to the third stage that migrants go through according to Tartakovsky's analysis: "In my isolation I found I had a morbid longing for my family in the Philippines. I was nostalgic for home although I had started to become familiar with some of the things in my father's country" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 233). The dual nature of the migrant's experience is clarified here as he admits his longing for his family and the Philippines. In other words, he has a greater sense of belonging to his family than ever before. Furthermore, the presence of optimism is clear through his acknowledgment of the existence of some kind of adaptation to Kuwait. Therefore, in light of the challenges, including loneliness and spatial distance from the family, there is a kind of adjustment to the receiving country, as well as a positive adaptation, which would indicate hope and willingness to accept all challenges and new experiences that the host country may bring. One of the methods that Issa uses to facilitate his experience is trying to search for anything related to the Philippines:

I looked around and then broke off three or four small green leaves. No one had noticed me. I closed my fist on them and crumbled them up between my fingers and thumb until I could feel the sticky sap on the palm of my hand. I brought my hand to my nose, closed my eyes and took a deep breath that filled my lungs with the smell ... That alone got rid of half the homesickness I had felt in my seclusion (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, pp. 234-235).

Issa longs for his homeland. The act of smelling the green leaves works as a form of consolation and patience for everything he is going through and enduring.

## **2.5 Summary**

Expatriate subjects often end up in a whirlpool of thoughts and questions, creating a feeling of disillusionment. It is known that negative emotions, such as pessimism and disillusionment, arise after an individual has high expectations and big promises, which makes him hope that everything will work out according to his expectations. When this meets a different reality, a feeling of shock arises, especially if there were high expectations. Thus, Stanley H. Teitelbaum defined disillusionment (1999) "Disillusionment can be described as a process in which one comes to the realization that one's wishes, beliefs, expectations, and assumptions are not going to be fulfilled" (Teitelbaum, 1999, p. 5). Therefore, frustration can be described as not occurring suddenly, but rather emerging as a result of the accumulation of challenges and a gradual understanding of things over time. Frustration is the result of several factors, as it occurs when the wishes or desires that an individual holds are not fulfilled. However, rethinking those expectations and proving them wrong can lead the individual to reach a point of disappointment. In addition, expectations may not always match reality, causing the individual to shatter their assumptions and cause feelings of extreme frustration. It should be noted that frustration carries a psychological and emotional impact, which is inevitable in the life experience.

The obstacles immigrant workers face make their experience difficult and leave a long-term impact, even after they return to their country of origin. This stems from the extent of the psychological and physical devastation they experience during their journey in their pursuit of fulfilling their families' dreams and improving their economic situation. The pain also lies in the absence of their families, as this takes a serious toll and does not vanish away easily. It is worth noting that the benefit is not limited only to immigrants,

but also extends to the receiving countries. Immigrants contribute greatly to improving and developing the economy of these countries. Based on this fact, they should be treated in a much better way, due to their importance and the urgent need for their presence to ensure continued progress and development. One of the elements that cause frustration is cultural adjustment meaning that migrant workers find it difficult to adapt to the host countries due to differences in cultural backgrounds and what makes it harder is being away from their families. Another important element is the work environment in terms of job insecurity and long working hours. These are also social restrictions that contribute to their feeling of segregation. Overall, émigrés reactions after experiencing disillusionment are very similar due to the similarity of the circumstances they experience. They often feel shocked after a significant discrepancy between their expectations and reality, leading to a sense of confusion about their cultural identity and place in the new environment.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Linguistic Hegemony**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Cultural and social interactions play an essential role in shaping the relationships among members of different ethnicities in cosmopolitan societies. These interactions often point to the challenges and dilemmas these societies encounter. In such context, injustice emerges from prejudices, discriminations, and stereotypes that may exist towards specific groups based on several factors such as color, ethnicity, and belief systems. Discriminatory behaviors, therefore, restrict chances for integration and effective contact between individuals from different communities; they often damage the opportunities for migrants who aspire to improve their living conditions in the new environments. In the Arab Gulf countries, which attract large migrant populations, discriminatory actions appear in state-sanctioned procedures, such as limited access to social services, visa regulations, residency permits, unequal treatment under the law and labor laws. Shin (2014) highlighted the discriminatory acts practiced by Gulf states against migrant workers. The huge demand for migrant workers started to threaten the citizens of these states to the extent that they started to call them "foreigner majority states." Therefore, they started to introduce new regulations to prevent migrant workers from achieving social integration along with social fragmentation and prejudices based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, and social status. One of these regulations is the kafāla system. Although this system mainly aims at controlling and arranging the relationship between employers and migrant workers, there are numerous weaknesses since it controls migrants' lives in many ways, such as restrictions on mobility, exploitation, lack of legal protection, and restrictions on social interactions. These disadvantages highlight the need to improve working conditions by creating a more rational relationship between employers and migrant workers. Horinuki and Matsuo (2014) raised the issue of division in the labor market between the nationals and foreign workers which depends on ethnicity rather than on competence. Another serious issue is isolation. Ishii (2014) believed that alienation may end in terrorizing their subsistence. To overcome this, Hosoda (2014) suggested formation of their own networks to facilitate/ease their monotonous lives.

Migrants encounter discrimination and are often devalued because of their language use, a phenomenon that is referred to in the literature as language-based discrimination or

linguistic racism. Skutnabb-Kangas (1989) argues that “ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1989, p. 13). Linguicism, a phenomenon similar to racism, is specifically related to discrimination based on language. Therefore, Linguicism extends beyond individual attitudes or behaviors; it includes standards, institutions, and systems that perpetuate linguistic discrimination, including beliefs and laws favoring certain languages over others. Additionally, Linguicism contributes to the division of people based on language into groups of speakers of dominant languages and minority languages. Therefore, Linguicism is regarded as one of the systems of oppression that reinforces inequality and heighten issues related to the lack of linguistic diversity, thus perpetuating societal injustice. Murillo and Smith (2011) stated that “because language is so central to our lives, Linguicism is closely related to discrimination based on other forms of identity, such as race, ethnicity, nationality, etc.” (L. A. Murillo, 2011, p. 147). This phenomenon highlights the link between language and power, language and silence, and language and exclusion. Language and exclusion in the Arab context can be linked to social and historical factors, such as language policy, social exclusion, job opportunities, and legal and administrative procedures. These language instances demonstrate how language can become a tool for social exclusion, building certain negative perceptions about Indians and Filipinos because of their language. Here language appears as a means of creating narratives of superiority and inferiority, and plays a major role in deciding who is rejected and who is accepted.

A good example of this is the “Bidoon” or stateless within the Kuwaiti society. It is a term used to describe a group of people who do not have Kuwaiti citizenship. As Belkhasher and Badurais (2016) clarified “bidoon literally means "without" in Arabic. The term comes from "bidoonjensiyya", which is Arabic for ‘without citizenship’ and is used to refer to the stateless in Kuwait” (Belkhasher, 2016, p. 6). The classification of people into 'with' (citizens) and 'without' (foreigners) endows citizens with a plethora of rights which are denied to all foreigners. Some of these rights are as basic as healthcare. These rights include fair treatment, access to justice, non-discrimination, and education. These classifications have become a driving force that regulates the truth regarding the expatriate populations in Kuwait. They generate epistemic assumptions and ways of

thinking which determine population rights and obligations. As pointed out earlier, accepting this truth contributes to reinforcing the systems of power which accordingly can increase and strengthen the authority's power. Such discriminatory practices can be detected in certain derogatory language instances that are used to construct stereotypes about immigrants.

### **3.2 The Triangulation: Language, Power, and Self-perception**

The concept of triangulation has emerged as a critical framework, revealing and illuminating the role of language as a powerful tool in questioning power and identity. Language can also be perceived as a means through which power dynamics are constructed, shaping an individual's self-perception and accordingly their place in the world.

Post-modern and postcolonial theorists have pointed to the role language plays in the construction of systems of domination or exclusionary practices. One important connection established in Foucault's critical discourse analysis is the fact that the power of discourse lies in its style and ability to deny the right of authority to monopolise speech. The ideas of the French philosopher Michael Foucault highlight his perspective as Yea and Tang (2016) pointed out "In Foucault's view, discourse is controlled; the controlled discourse forms discourse order, discourse order reflects the role of power, and power constrains the human nature. Therefore, control discourse and power should be criticized to publicize the human nature" (Ye, 2016, p. 155). There is an intersection between language, knowledge, and power within society. According to Foucault, discourse is affected by power dynamics, thus highlighting the role of power. Foucault believes that discourse goes beyond communication, for example. Instead, it is a system through which knowledge is produced and regulated. From the view that discourse is not unbiased, comes the notion that discourse is controlled, and the result is that some voices or narratives are privileged to others. This is mainly because power permeates all aspects and parts of society. The triangular relationship between language, knowledge, and power highlights the role of power in producing, circulating, and accepting discourse within society. This was clearly discussed by Foucault (1971) who argued that in every society "the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers" (Foucault, 1971, p. 52). Therefore, the control is done through

various mechanisms and means. That is, some discourses are privileged while others are marginalized and suppressed. This means that it goes through a process of selection of certain ideas and voices over others. It should be noted that this process is not random, but it is affected by societal norms. And, here arises another issue which is the establishment of hierarchies of knowledge and authority, meaning that educational institutions, media, governmental bodies, and cultural practices play a major role in organizing, shaping, and circulating discourse. Therefore, it can be deduced that human beings do not have a fixed and static nature, but they are, like discourse, affected and shaped by power along with social and cultural control. The human nature is a product of power relations, and it can be easily molded by the conditions and circumstances it experiences.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist philosopher, examined language hegemony from the perspective of the subjective constructions of identity and sense of self. Gramsci argued that language plays a major role in determining an individual's sense of self, which, of course, is constructed to a large extent through external and societal forces. Using the Gramscian premise, Ives (2004) argued that the way an individual view the world around him/her is directly affected by the dominant language in the society in which he/she lives. Ives maintains “Gramsci's focus on language helps address how our subjectivity is constituted by forces external to us, and yet, at the same time, we as subjects make choices that collectively determine our lives” (Ives, 2004, p. 8).

Gramsci considers language as an integral factor that sustains class hegemony. He also highlights the influence of the dominant language on how individuals perceive the world and express themselves and their ideas; in addition, language use seems to determine social relationships as in determining one's class or social status. Accordingly, although individuals may seemingly have the freedom of decision, their choices are often constrained by linguistic dominance. It would be theoretically valuable to examine the imperatives of self-identification, for migrant communities are propelled by the linguistic hegemony of Arabic: the migrant's individual reactions to the use of certain racially profiling words used in the Arab Gulf states.

Language plays a major role in challenging systems of power. Edward Said, a prominent Palestinian-American literary theorist and intellectual, examined in *Orientalism* (1979) the use of language as a tool of resistance to evade hegemonic language use. It is worth noting that *Orientalism* focuses on the Western representation of the East in addition to treating the Orient as the other. This aims to highlight the truth behind the Western scholars' misrepresentation of the East. Likewise, for Eastern people, it is not only about being misrepresented, but also about imposing on them stereotypes along with false portrayals as being exotic, inferior, and backward: "One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior" (Said, *Orientalism*, 1979, p. 300). Thus, there becomes a need to fight and defy to prove the inaccurate manifestations. This can be done through opposing and challenging hegemonic language through the use of their native language. By doing so, they can produce counter-narratives and alternative discourses that work to challenge the Orientalists' misrepresentations and stereotypes. Said (1979) underscores the resilience of the colonized in questioning and subverting the Western hegemony "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be—that is, submitted to being—made Oriental" (Said, *Orientalism*, 1979, p. 5). Here, orientalism is clearly explained. The Orient is not only perceived as different but also reconstructed by Western discourse. And here comes the need to resist these wrong narratives necessary and highly important. This can be done by using native languages which helps convey the truth, using suitable expressions. This shows that changing the language used to explain and portray something might lead to changes in the narratives and consequently, changes in the facts. That is to say, the East does not know how they are represented and what is being said about them which heightens the need to use the native language to resist linguistic hegemony and provide guaranteed valid and secured narratives by the Eastern people. In other words, the East does not need any representations other than theirs.

In the same way, the Eastern others in both novels, Al-Sanousi's *The Bamboo Stalk* and Benyamin's *Goat Days*, are also challenging the imposed narratives and stereotypes that Gulf people already know about them. That is to say, the linguistic hegemony in the Gulf countries works similarly to the use of the Western scholars of their language and

expressions to represent the East. Indeed, the Gulf perception of the Indians, Filipinos, and their neighboring countries is that they are inferior, backward, and exotic. The protagonists in both novels seek to uncover the hidden stories of circumstances immigrant workers experience since they were the victims of not knowing how reality is in addition to the hard conditions they undergo.

This chapter examines the impact of language use on the protagonists of the two novels. They depict the life of migrant characters in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia at three interrelated levels. In the first level, the chapter explores the exclusionary power of Arabic language by building a repertoire of racially profiling language used in labeling migrants in the two novels. Foucault's thought shows how tyrannical societal systems are. They illustrate through language control, marginalize individuals and shape their identities. Indeed, the serious necessity to question linguistic hegemony is essential to facilitate the recognition and empowerment to reveal authentic diverse human narratives. Gramsci's reflection on linguistic hegemony illustrates how the individuals' sense of self and agency are shaped by dominant linguistic structures, highlighting the complex interplay between language, identity, and societal power dynamics. Equally important, Said's exploration of language as a tool of resistance in *Orientalism* demonstrates how the colonized challenge systems of power, using their native language to produce counter-narratives and challenge Orientalist misrepresentations and stereotypes, illustrating the resilience of marginalized communities in subverting Western hegemony. Similarly, migrant workers in the Gulf countries contest stereotypes and misrepresentations imposed on them by the nationals using their native language to shed light on the truth. This chapter sheds light on the practices that migrants face in their attempt to fit in while challenging other exclusionary language that leads to their sense of inferiority. The chapter draws heavily on the premises of the linguistic hegemony theory, as manifested in the works of Said, Foucault and Gramsci, to explain the impact of language on migrant characters' sense of self in *Goat Days* and *The Bamboo Stalk*.

### **3.3 Language and Social Exclusion**

Language functions can differ to include the construction of truth according to Foucault. It is not merely a means through which people can communicate and share thoughts on different subjects, but also it can either include or exclude people in society depending on the existing systems of power. Therefore, constructing truth can result in referring to it as

our sense of direction and consequently, it shapes peoples' parameters for judging, classifying classes, and maintaining power within society.

In *The Bamboo Stalk* and *Goat Days*, both Issa and Najeeb find themselves trapped and unable to communicate due to their lack of knowledge of the dominant language, i.e. language here appears as a mechanism of power that contributes to imposing certain norms and hierarchies. Consequently, speakers of the dominant language can control those who do not speak it. Ultimately, this leads to excluding migrants from accessing essential services, legal protection, and many job opportunities, thus putting them in a situation where they cannot choose their jobs and consequently are at a higher risk of accidents and injuries due to difficult work conditions.

In *The Bamboo Stalk*, Issa's inability to master the language isolates him from interacting with Kuwaiti nationals in addition to denying him his basic rights. Issa finds himself trapped in an unfamiliar linguistic environment. There are times when he longs to communicate with people without encountering any obstacles including language barriers “Everything would have turned out as in my dreams, if it hadn’t been for the language barrier, which I couldn’t overcome, though I could pick out some words when they spoke to each other in Arabic” (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 354). Issa's regret sheds light on how the language barrier has destroyed all the dreams he had of life in Kuwait. Foucault's notion of language's power to exclude depends on the fact that discourse and language are connected mainly with power dynamics that are responsible for shaping the social relations between people, i.e. language use decides who is allowed to get full access to society and who is not. Issa's access to Arabic represents a barrier between him and the Kuwaiti people including his Kuwaiti friends and family members.

The exclusionary power of language has a great effect on Issa's existence by controlling his access to his basic rights in the Kuwaiti society. This appears in his longing for a different and better outcome in his life as he always had dreamed. However, the unbridgeable language barrier he encounters prevents him from realizing his dream due to his partial understanding of the language since he is able to pick up some of the basic words which apparently are not enough for him to fulfill the social integration into the Kuwaiti society.

The partial integration is also evident through the number of Kuwaiti people that Issa has managed to integrate and communicate with. During his life in The Philippines, he meets Kuwaiti guys and presents himself to them as a Kuwaiti, making them mock him. This is the beginning of Issa's exclusion. However, there is not much harmony between him and them. This leads to a feeling of alienation due to the unfamiliarity with the Arabic language. However, he meets them again in Kuwait which gives him a false hope that this time the integration is going to be easier. The sentence 'Kuwait is a small place' is mentioned many times in the novel. For Issa, it has many interpretations: small to the extent that he will get to know many people there, or small to the extent that it cannot accommodate and absorb people other than its national citizens. Although the size of the country is small, boundaries set by systems of power make it massive and big as if it were a continent. Also, these social boundaries work as boundaries between countries, and if a person needs to move between them, he has got to be a citizen in it; otherwise, the circle of a person's acquaintances will never get bigger at all. Indeed, Issa is trapped inside a circle and is unable to go beyond any of the boundaries. Whenever he tries to meet these Kuwaiti guys, he ends up a lot more certain that he is not able to fit in their group: "They made lots of noise in the boat, singing together in my father's language, which I didn't understand" (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 151). Boundaries set by language contribute to separate him from the Arab population at large. It also works as means of defining the position of each individual. Issa's lack of understanding is also evident in his description of the way he perceives the language as 'noise'. That alludes to the separation and might also symbolize Issa's rejection of being excluded and silenced. Issa's psychological status is threatened and reaches a point where he can no longer pretend to be blind to fulfill his dream in the promised land: Kuwait.

Typically, there are stereotypes against immigrants in Kuwait. These stereotypes could be a form of violence. For example, Issa is perceived as the 'other' due to his Filipino features which straightforwardly make them underestimate him and position him in a lower status when compared with Kuwaiti citizens who have Kuwaiti features. Also, according to the limited job opportunities, immigrants have in Kuwait jobs that may degrade the person's worth once he/she starts working due to social hierarchies within the Kuwaiti community. Issa is stereotyped as a 'servant'. This perception deprives Issa of the chance to express himself and integrate and of being a victim of submissiveness and

exploitation. It should be noted that along with being socially excluded, there are certain words that people in Kuwait, including his family members, use to humiliate him and remind him of being an outsider in addition to their refusal to let him fit in. These words are used in lieu of calling him by his name such as 'you're illegitimate', 'you're a cockerel', 'this Filipino', 'you idiot'. These can be seen as discriminatory practices, by using derogatory language instances, aim to construct stereotypes about Issa. They also contribute to affecting his sense of belonging within the Kuwaiti community, putting him in a state of ongoing identity crisis, and consequently complicating his sense of self.

Also, there is a kind of mockery from people in the community each time Issa tries to fit in and communicate using the Arabic language. This demonstrates how language differences are exploited to remind the marginalized individuals of their difference and inferiority:

Outside the flat, three young men were waiting for the lift ... 'As-salam aleekum,' I said as I walked past them. Making fun of my accent, the man in the middle answered me like Grandmother's parrot: 'Salamuuu alekoom.' With his index fingers, he stretched his eyes into slits, mocking my Filipino features. They burst out laughing. He then made fun of me by greeting me in Filipino: 'Kumusta ka. (Alsanousi, 2015, p. 238).

Through the lens of racial and cultural prejudice, this conversation marks differences and distance between the Kuwaiti nationals and migrants. Issa's use of the Arabic greeting shows his respect for the Kuwaiti culture whereas when compared with the Kuwaiti nationals' use of the Filipino, it shows an act of mockery of the Filipino accent. Also, imitating Filipino features by stretching a guy's eyes with his index fingers implies racial stereotypes and discrimination. This works for them as an assertion of their superiority over Issa due to the deep-seated racism in the Kuwaiti culture. All these incidents reinforce Issa's status as an outsider and the other. It also works as a means of humiliating him along with his identity, culture, native language, and homeland. The superiority of Kuwaiti nationals over migrant workers contributes to silencing them to make them become afraid and lose their confidence in trying to use the dominant language again.

Similarly, language use in *Goat Days* indicates exclusion and marginalization. The 'arbab' does his best to remind Najeeb all the time of his difference. In one of the scenes, Najeeb's 'arbab' is depicted with another 'arbab' in a state that leaves Najeeb aware of his alienation

“The two arbabs embraced and greeted each other for almost five minutes after which they began to talk. While doing so, they glanced at me from time to time. I guessed that their conversation was about me” (Benyamin, 2012, p. 43). There are various social exclusionary acts, especially in contexts of interactions within the community. This could be a sign to show marginalized groups, in this case immigrant workers, that they are outsiders and are treated based on perceived discrimination and differences. The act of 'othering' Najeeb in *Goat Days* is manifested in different contexts through his existence with the 'arbab' in the masara. For instance, Najeeb has no access to lineage, interpersonal communication, and linguistic isolation as in the case of the 'arbab'. Consequently, this contributes to marking Najeeb as different. It is worth noting that Najeeb's inability to lineage access is clear as the two 'arbabs' meet. Their embrace and greeting imply the notion that there are no boundaries between them and have their strong social connection. Also, Najeeb's sense of belonging or exclusion is affected by his interpretation and understanding of the non-verbal signals. It is sad to see Najeeb able to understand the non-verbal signals that explicitly reflect the presence of social boundaries and that he is not welcomed in any context. The term 'arbabs' reflects their belonging to one social circle meaning that they have many things in common. First of all, they both belong to one ethnic group since they are Saudis which underscores the importance of social hierarchy in shaping interpersonal interactions. Second, they subscribe to the same notions and beliefs due to their shared social group especially working the same jobs which means that there is a connection also in their interests and hopes. Lastly and most importantly, speaking the same language: the Arabic language.

There are also pieces of evidence that alienate Najeeb, such as when the two 'arbabs' are looking at him while talking. This scene implies that their look is due to recognizing something different and weird to them. Najeeb's outsider status is proved by their glances and not engaging him in their communication. He is also linguistically isolated since he does not speak or understand the Arabic language. Therefore, he can't participate and enter their social circle. For Najeeb, the two 'arbabs' are like a whole different world into which he cannot integrate. As a consequence, the inability to understand the social dynamics deepens Najeeb's alienation and marginalization.

Controlling the marginalized minorities based on language dominance does not depend on dealing with the 'arbab'. The 'arbab' has the right to limit the immigrant worker's interaction and communication with other people in the society.

One cannot say what the arbab would have done if he had tried to talk to me. One time, the arbab jumped out with his gun when the driver of the wheat trailer tried to talk to me. I remember the arbab felling the driver of the water truck with his rifle butt for trying to talk to me (Benyamin, 2012, p. 77).

The arbab's dominance and control are evident. They aim at isolating him linguistically by preventing communication with others. This practice amounts to full control over the fate of the migrant and an ultimate act of dehumanization through relegating him to a state of pre-linguistic state of existence. Violence is also used as a means to protect his authority. One can truly relate to this as using all the means in practicing his dominance over Najeeb who possesses neither the Arabic language nor a rifle or anything related to that means of violence. Najeeb's needs to communicate and to be acknowledged and heard. He becomes more and more serious as he reaches a point where he finds talking to goats would help him satiate his need to communicate:

I kept talking to them as if I were talking to dear ones ... I poured out my tears, pains, sufferings, emotions and dreams. I do not know if they understood anything. But they listened to me, looked at me with raised eyes, even shed tears with me. That was enough for me (Benyamin, 2012, p. 98).

Najeeb's way of adaptation, even though he is fully aware of what he is doing, is the only way through which he would have the chance to express his thoughts and at the same time challenge linguistic boundaries. Najeeb also affirms the fact that there are forms of resistance to confront all forms of linguistic dominance and its consequences.

Other forms of excluding and humiliating Najeeb include using insulting words: calling him in lieu of calling him by his name "I had even doubted that he knew my name. He usually called me 'himar' or 'inti'" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 80). The 'arbab' insists on not recognizing Najeeb, leaving him in a circle of negative feelings, in addition to being perceived as undervalued. This aims at derogating Najeeb and disrespecting him.

In *The Bamboo Stalk*, Issa's mother appears to subscribe to the power theme due to her efforts in teaching her son Issa some basic Arabic words from an early age to help him

integrate and fit in. Also, Najeeb in *Goat Days* is subjected to maltreatment considering his unawareness and lack of knowledge of the Arabic language. If he could speak the language from the beginning, his whole experience would be different. Therefore, in Najeeb's case, not knowing the Arabic language separates him not only from his employer, the Arbab, but also from the whole Saudi society. Thus, the focus in this context is on the term “linguistic hegemony” is not limited to a specific language but rather extends to include the cultural and mental perception of the superiority of one language over another.

The process of being socially excluded includes different types in the two given novels. All of these practices could be destroyed and demolished only if the protagonists were able to speak the dominant language: the Arabic language. It is true that both characters try to fit in, but both are rejected in different ways, such as exclusion from getting their basic rights, from joining social groups whether they are people they knew before or met for the first time, from fulfilling their dreams of improving their standards of life, from having access to lineage, and undoubtedly from living a very basic life. Through their experiences, it becomes clear what harmful consequences all these practices of stereotyping them might have an effect on their psychological status.

### **3.4 Language and the Sense of Subjectivity**

Language contributes significantly to the construction of individuals' subjectivity. It is worth noting that there are complex ways of how language shapes the perception of the individual and also the world around them. That is to say, there is a relationship between language, culture, and individual's subjectivity. This could be linked to the fact that language is used to describe and interpret individual's experiences.

In Al-sanousi's *The Bamboo Stalk*, navigating between two languages gives Issa the chance to perceive the world differently depending on the language he is using. It also affects the way he is perceived by people in the community. As mentioned earlier, Gramsci suggests that language sustains class and social hierarchies within society. Also, language establishes behavioral patterns for a character who, ultimately, might end up in isolation, silence, or rebellion. Gramsci points out that individual's sense of self is not only defined by internal elements but also by external ones including social and linguistic factors. The statement “Our subjectivity is constituted by external forces to us” sheds light

on Gramsci's identification of the fact that individuals are helplessly positioned in social structures and contexts that form individuals' experiences. Therefore, language can be seen as a double-edged sword that can either be a source of dominance or a driving force for challenging and resisting discriminatory practices.

Through Issa's reflection on what he encounters in Kuwait, it becomes clear that he faces many challenges in the Kuwaiti society which basically are associated with language barriers in the first place. Therefore, it is worth noting that linguistic differences have an impact on the individual's relations with others which extends beyond their cultural integration as well. Being unable to navigate in social situations might also lead to forming segregated communities within society. Issa's navigation and attending social gatherings are constrained by the linguistic dynamics of the dominant language:

Sometimes I would go to the diwaniya ... Everything would have turned out as in my dreams, if it hadn't been for the language barrier, which I couldn't overcome, though I could pick out some words when they spoke to each other in Arabic. I felt really sorry for my friends when they felt they had to abandon their own language just to bring me into their world (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 275).

Language barriers work as a fence to integrate into the Kuwaiti society. Specifying the language used in his gatherings with his friends highlights the attempts to include Issa in their social circle so that he can understand what is being said and therefore take part in their discussions. However, even though he is not excluded, he still has the feeling of being an outsider. The language barrier also works as an obstacle that prevents him from being engaged and consequently shapes his subjectivity of exclusion. Furthermore, his sense of regret and guilt stems from his consciousness and awareness of the systems of power. This also creates a sense of isolation and otherness. However, Issa's friends approval and willingness to communicate, using a language he understands, underscores a kind of resistance against linguistic hegemony. It should be noted here that the individual's choices can change the norms and hierarchies within the community.

Accordingly, Issa's sense of subjectivity is affected by systems of power that privilege speakers of the Arabic language and marginalize speakers of other languages. This leads to Issa's longing for a fixed stable life that external forces have no control over it "If only my parents could have given me a single, clear identity, instead of making me grope my

way alone through life in ... of a religion that was mine alone” (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 46). Therefore, his yearning for a fixed life intersects with Gramsci's notion of being in different social contexts. This may affect Issa's sense of self due to the constant changing and conflicting social norms that are perceived as a burden to him. Indeed, he needs a unified name, identity, and native country since there is a profound sense of displacement and fragmentation.

It is also worth noting that the process of constructing subjectivity also includes gestures. This may contribute to widening the horizon for individuals to perceive further details of society and also, on the other hand, maybe contribute to facilitating the perception process. Issa reflects on this:

I think it's wonderful when people stretch language to the limit, peppering their own language with words from other languages, or supplementing it with gestures, just so that they can tell you how they feel towards you ... Kind words don't need translation. You only have to look at the face of the person speaking to understand how they feel, even if they're speaking a language you don't understand (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 275).

In other words, kind words can go beyond the limits of language and that non-verbal expressions navigate easily without the need to convey and translate everything. By doing so, individuals would have a better chance to fit in and integrate with others on a deeper level. This takes part in deconstructing linguistic barriers and simultaneously bridging the cultural and linguistic gaps. This also helps in enabling the connection between people from different linguistic backgrounds.

Najeeb in *Goat Days* is also in a state of resignation and introspection. He experiences a feeling and a perception of detachment. His psychological condition is more serious than the physical one although he is supposed to endure hard working conditions. He also experiences a significant change in his inner thoughts which happen mainly due to his detachment from his family back in India. The hard and serious conditions he goes through affect his sense of self and also change his manner of perceiving things. Gradually, he is uprooted from all his thoughts about family and home to reach a point through which his sense of self is shaped. This transformation highlights the human ability of resilience regardless of all the suffering he might have:

My discomfort kept me awake even though I was very tired. My thoughts were not of my home country, home, Sainu, Ummah, my unborn son/daughter, my sorrows and anxieties or my fate, as one would imagine. All such thoughts had become alien to me as they were to the dead who had reached the other world. So soon—you might wonder. My answer is yes. No use being bound by such thoughts. They only delay the process of realization that we've lost out to circumstances and there is no going back (Benyamin, 2012, p. 59).

The detachment from his previous life is associated with a serious and intense shift in his subjectivity due to the harsh circumstances he had to bear. It is also worth noting that his acceptance and endurance of the hard conditions emphasize Gramsci's thoughts and the flexibility of forming his subjectivity. Najeeb goes beyond his thoughts that barely anyone in his situation would act and think like him. This only shows how truly powerful he is as he actively chooses to focus on the present situation and not on the past. Najeeb's lack of linguistic proficiency contributes to reinforcing his marginalization due to the language barrier. Also, his detachment can be seen not only as linguistic isolation but also as a coping mechanism through which he can engage easily with his present situation. In other words, he justifies his reaction by acknowledging that there is no benefit from staying attached to the past. His perception of life has changed and he is ready to move forward and forge a new path.

### **3.5 Deconstructing Binary Notions of Linguistic Superiority Perpetuated by Dominant Groups**

In addition to cultural prestige, certain languages are fundamentally considered superior to others based on systems of power as explained earlier. This means that speaking one language or more of these languages can contribute to giving privileges to these people and therefore upgrade their position in the hierarchal system. It is worth noting that notions of superiority are set and constructed by dominant groups to preserve their position and privileges.

Said emphasized this notion in his *Orientalism* (1979). In *The Bamboo Stalk* and *Goat Days*, the two protagonists, Issa and Najeeb, suffer from dehumanization and stereotyping in addition to a lack of maltreatment and basic human rights. Said's comparison of the way the West misrepresents the East is similar to the way Gulf societies misrepresent and maltreat the Indians and Filipinos. Their dominant cultures give them the chance to

misrepresent and mistreat Indians and Filipinos, for example. This works as the driving force to maintain stereotypes and social hierarchies against migrant workers. The Gulf society's attitude towards Issa and Najeeb reflects an Orientalist attitude since they are seen as inferior and backward. This also highlights the facts to the imbalance and inequality between Gulf nationals and their dominance and control over everything.

By doing so, there is a call for a reconsideration of the presuppositions regarding linguistic divisions and segregation. Furthermore, there should be a strive for the administration of justice and respect for all people. Through the conversation between Issa and his sister Khawla, it becomes clear how the Kuwaitis have a profound feeling and sense of superiority and lack of any respect towards the Filipino heritage.

‘Our tribes are known for growing rice,’ I said. ‘What are the tribes here famous for?’

‘For eating rice,’ she said without thinking.

She laughed out loud as soon she spoke the words, delighted with her own comment as though she was laughing at a joke.

‘You seem to think they’re ridiculous,’ I said.

‘And they think we are too,’ she replied.

I don’t claim that such things don’t exist in the Philippines, but people.

there are busy with more important things (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 211).

The clear division of the roles each culture or country has sheds light on the way Kuwaitis perceive themselves as rational and superior. Her laughter also underscores a sense of certainty and indifference. She believes that being on the side of those who consume the rice and not grow it is more desirable and reinforces the stereotypes of her own culture. This act is a form of Orientalization as she does the same job as the Orientalists who force the Orient into stereotypical works to justify their sense of superiority and at the same time this reduces the Filipino culture to something inferior, exotic, and backward.

Issa does his best to demolish thoughts of linguistic superiority due to his aspiration to bridge the gap between him and the Kuwaiti society. In many cases, Issa tries to challenge notions of superiority by requesting native speakers of the Arabic language to speak in a

language that he could understand. “They went back to talking in Arabic and I understood some words but not others. For the first time I found myself interrupting them. ‘Could you let me in on the conversation? Please,’ I said.” (Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 2015, p. 294) His desire to be involved in the conversation shows that he is aware of the differences between people and still the need to respect all individuals regardless of their linguistic skills and capabilities. This scene works as a model that manifests his suffering as being on the margins of linguistic and cultural dominance.

In the same way, Najeeb is also keen to be involved in discussions with other individuals within the Saudi society, but each time he tries to bridge the gap and free himself from the imposed restrictions by his arbab, he receives maltreatment. The arbab's words "are loaded with anger, curses, sympathy, cruelty, disparagement" (Benyamin, 2012, p. 61). All this has a strong impact on Najeeb, thus leading to his misery in the Masara and also keeping him marginalized and excluded. However, Najeeb is ultimately able to challenge these cruelties in the land of Saudi Arabia

“We were then taken to the large prison building. ... One block for each nationality—Arabs, Pakistanis, Sudanese, Ethiopians, Bangladeshis, Filipinos, Moroccans, Sri Lankans and then, finally, Indians” (Benyamin, 2012, p. 12). The size of the prison symbolizes competence along with the practices of domination over people who belong to the bottom of the social hierarchy system. This is compatible with Said's notion that underscores the power possessed by dominant groups of society. However, Najeeb and other oppressed minorities are able to achieve their goal of breaking the rules and communicating with each other regardless of their nationalities and the languages they speak. Prison here works as a depiction or visualization of how Saudi society must be regulated. By doing so, none of the immigrants would be excluded and marginalized.

Without a doubt, Najeeb in *Goat Days* lives the life of a goat throughout his stay in Saudi Arabia. The harsh treatment of his 'arbab' forces him to violate all of his hygiene rules and ignore all of his habits. The comparison Najeeb made, between his home and the new one, highlights the contrast as he moves to live in a whole new world:

The arbab signals to me that I should eat. I had not even brushed my teeth in the morning, nor followed any of my morning rituals. I hadn't taken a bath. Had it been at home, I wouldn't have even drunk coffee without first ducking into the

river—even when it rained. But that day, for the first time, I violated all my hygiene rules. I had drunk milk without brushing my teeth. Hunger for one and a half days forced me to ignore my habits (Benyamin, 2012, p. 44).

The 'arbabs' commands are similar to Said's notion of the way dominant cultures think they have the right to impose things on Najeeb. These living conditions humiliate Najeeb because of the 'arbab's justification that he is superior and therefore is allowed to impose this lifestyle on Najeeb, the inferior migrant worker. This is not only about depriving Najeeb of following his habits and routine but also it is about underscoring a broader hierarchy where the 'arbab' believes the superiority of his own culture. Najeeb is suppressed to be Oriental and dehumanized. This is to change Najeeb to fit into the Saudi stereotypes of migrant workers.

In conclusion, the complexity of the relationship between superior people and inferiors depicts the manifestation of systems of power in different contexts and shows the need to have a critical examination of how the authority works within society.

### **3.6 Summary**

*The Bamboo Stalk* by Saud Al-Sanousi and *Goat Days* by Benyamin show the dominance of language through the two protagonists: Issa and Najeeb. The message is that it is possible to transcend all imposed restrictions. They both struggle, searching for acceptance and a sense of belonging, trying to eliminate the idea of suppressing everything foreign. Depriving the immigrant of his identity and language is nothing but a nightmare that can be overcome, and humans will triumph and overcome hardships.

Through the notions of Foucault, Gramsci, and Said, the experiences of both Issa and Najeeb illustrate the complexities between power, discourse, and identity and their role in shaping the migrants' narratives. First, Foucault maintains that migrants, in the two novels, are resisting the imposed narratives on them. Second, Gramsci's theory highlights Issa's and Najeeb's attempts to fit into the new environments by challenging linguistic and cultural barriers and trying to redefine their subjectivities. Finally, Said's concept of Orientalism underscores the characters' perception of themselves. He also criticizes power and discourse and the Orientalist construction of humanizing narratives that mainly aim to confine identities. The stories of both protagonists reveal the necessity of

criticizing power structures and the need for a better understanding and appreciation of the lives of migrants and their resilience.

There is also another similarity between Issa and Najeeb in that despite their attempts to adapt and integrate, they do not abandon their mother tongue and culture, thus preserving their identities. There is also a reminder of the importance of humanity and its strength compared to linguistic hegemony. There is a call for individuals and societies to challenge this hegemony, and there must be respect and support systems for linguistic diversity so that the world becomes unbiased and fairer.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways in which contemporary literary narratives have addressed migrant experience in two Arab Gulf countries: Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It has illustrated the Eastern Other. These narratives present the challenges migrant workers encounter during expatriate years. These challenges include discrimination, rejection, and psychological alienation. They also explore the tensions generated around migrant identities which result from cultural dislocation, relocation, and assimilation failures, resulting from attempts at linguistic and cultural hybridity, social discrimination, complex homeland relationships, diaspora illusions, nostalgia, and acculturation. Additionally, the thesis highlights factors like slave trafficking, political legislation, and visa restrictions which cause migrants' sense of alienation and suffering.

Drawing on Freud's theories of disillusionment, the second chapter discusses how the clash/conflict between expectations and the harsh realities in the host countries leads to feelings of alienation and identity crises. It underscores the stages of migrants' disillusionment, the struggle to adapt to new environments and circumstances among social and cultural barriers. Migrant workers usually experience a notable gap between the dreams and promises they have before migration and the harsh realities they face upon arrival. This contrast leads to profound disappointment and a sense of disillusionment. For instance, Issa in *The Bamboo Stalk* and Najeeb in *Goat Days* originally idealize the Gulf countries as lands of prosperity and fulfillment due to the promises they had before of better opportunities and living standards. However, their actual experiences uncover tough social and cultural challenges that include discrimination, exploitation, and psychological alienation. Said's explored the concept of exile to enrich the understanding of both the emotional and psychological dimensions of those living in exile. It offers broader insights within social and political contexts. Likewise, using Homi Bhabha's perspective of third space is intended to focus on spaces where cultures interact. It also sheds light on how both Issa's and Najeeb's identities are shaped.

Migrant workers also often tolerate significant isolation and homesickness which reflects the emotional and psychological challenges they face and suffer from in host countries. This isolation worsens their longing for families and their homelands in spite of their

partial adaptation to the host countries. Both Issa and Najeeb experience a dual nature of their migration journey. Dual nature here means the multifaceted experiences of migrants. Their journeys are not just physical relocations but also emotional and psychological processes that involve significant inner conflict and transformation. They keep trying to balance their deep connection to their homelands with efforts to adapt to the new environment. This struggle often leads to a feeling of solitude and constant emotional conflict. The two protagonists demonstrate resilience through faith and optimism which helps them cope with their hardships. Najeeb's strong faith in God provides him with comfort and motivation, whereas Issa finds solace through his memories and symbols of his homeland. Eventually, their experiences depict the complex interconnectedness between homesickness, adaptation, and the quest for a balance between their native and host cultures, thus fostering a sense of hope and resilience amidst their serious challenges.

The third chapter was devoted to the impact of language use on the two protagonists of the novels. It has investigated the exclusionary power of the Arabic language through racially profiling language as proclaimed by Foucault's ideas about societal control and identity. Gramsci's reflections highlight how dominant linguistic structures shape self-perception and agency. Said's concept of language as resistance shows how migrants' use their native languages to challenge stereotypes and misrepresentations. The second chapter also addresses the struggles of migrants to fit in and balance exclusionary language, drawing on the theories of Said, Foucault, and Gramsci, as seen in Benjamin's *Goat Days* and Al-sansousi's *The Bamboo Stalk*. It should be noted that the outcomes of the migrant workers' experiences have many things in common due to facing the same conditions and circumstances in the host countries. The triangulation between language, power, and self-perception arises as a critical framework demonstrating the role of language in challenging power and identity formation. Post-modern and postcolonial theorists like Foucault and Gramsci emphasize language's role in shaping power dynamics and individual self-perception.

Disillusionment is characterized by a transformation from initial enthusiasm and high expectations to a realization of harsh realities, leading to a profound sense of emptiness and alienation. Despite their efforts, the characters often fail to achieve significant material success, exacerbating their feeling of disconnection and detachment from their homelands. This sense of emptiness is not merely the absence of material profit, but a

deeper psychological gap that manifests as a loss of purpose and identity. The harsh realities they face strip away their initial optimism, leaving them in a state of inner uneasiness and existential despair, struggling to reconcile their dreams with their lived experiences. Both characters undergo a three-stage process of disillusionment as Tartakovsky believes, where initial idealization of the host country is followed by a phase of disillusionment and a final stage of hybrid identity formation. The emotional and psychological toll of this journey highlights the complex interplay between expectations and reality in the migrant's experience, ultimately leading to a search for a 'third space' of belonging amidst the conflicting identities and cultural pressures they face.

Migrant workers in Arab Gulf countries often encounter challenging conditions characterized by labor exploitation in terms poor pay, long hours, and a lack of job security. They live in overcrowded and substandard accommodations with limited access to basic services: health and education. Legally and socially vulnerable, they are frequently subjected to restricted rights and dependence on employers due to the kafala system, which exacerbates the power imbalance and potential for abuse. Social isolation, discrimination, and a sense of alienation are common, thus causing psychological stress and mental health problems. Despite being crucial to the Arab Gulf economies, migrants remain marginalized with limited pathways to social integration or citizenship. While some reforms and improvements have been made, largely due to international pressure, implementation still remains inconsistent, highlighting the ongoing need for better protection and integration efforts.

This thesis has highlighted many issues regarding the immigrant experience in the Arab Gulf countries which adds to previous studies' concentration on a detailed analysis of the psychological and mental side of the main characters. It has also detailed the specific stages most immigrants experience. In both novels, Issa's and Najeeb's ordeals are marked by widespread notions such as 'arbab' (masters), parentage denial, passport confiscation, and alienation. They collectively underscore the systemic inequities and power imbalances ingrained in Arab Gulf societies. The concept of 'arbab' highlights the unequal power dynamics between migrant workers and those in positions of authority or employers, thus leading to exploitation and maltreatment. Parentage denial, as seen in Issa's case, underscores the emotional effect of being denied recognition and acceptance by family members and society leading to feelings of displacement and identity crisis.

Passport confiscation serves as a forcible tactic to control migrants' movements and autonomy and further reinforces their vulnerability to exploitation. These themes collectively illuminate the systemic injustices and power imbalances ingrained in the migrants' experience, enriching our understanding of the complex dynamics at play in the Arab Gulf countries.

The protagonists use specific tactics to challenge the hegemonic and exclusionary structures in their environments. Foucault's discourse analysis (Foucault, 1971) highlights the power of discourse in constructing societal norms, revealing how language serves as a mechanism of control, exclusion, and marginalization. Similarly, Gramsci underscores the influence of language hegemony on subjective identity construction. As Said (Said, *Orientalism*, 1979) has demonstrated, language becomes a means of resistance for marginalized communities, enabling them to challenge dominant narratives. In the Arab Gulf context, migrant workers contest stereotypes by using their native language to shed light on their experiences and confront exclusionary practices. Thus, language emerges as a critical tool for resistance and empowerment. Issa's and Najeeb's struggles to navigate unfamiliar linguistic landscapes highlight how mastery of the dominant language is intricately linked to access to rights, opportunities, and social acceptance. Moreover, their encounters with derogatory stereotypes and discriminatory practices reflect broader societal hierarchies perpetuated through language.

The connection between language, culture, and subjectivity underscores the profound influence of linguistic dynamics on human experiences. Issa's and Najeeb's experiences illustrate how navigating between languages not only influences their perceptions of the world but also shapes how they are perceived by others. Issa's struggles with language barriers in Kuwait highlight the broader implications of linguistic differences on social integration and community dynamics. Despite facing exclusion and isolation, Issa's reflections also highlight instances of resistance of linguistic hegemony, suggesting the potential for language to challenge discriminatory practices. Similarly, Najeeb's detachment from his past and acceptance of his present circumstances demonstrates the transformative power of language on subjectivity, particularly in the face of adversity.

Certain languages are accorded superiority based on power dynamics and cultural prestige, perpetuating hierarchies within society. Drawing from Said's thoughts in

*Orientalism*, the treatment of protagonists Issa and Najeeb reflects a systemic disregard for the dignity and rights of individuals from marginalized linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Gulf Arab societies, positioned as dominant cultures, leverage linguistic and cultural biases to perpetuate stereotypes and maintain social hierarchies against migrant workers. Issa's request to be included in conversations despite linguistic barriers demonstrates a desire for inclusion and recognition of individual worth beyond linguistic capabilities. Similarly, Najeeb's defiance of his arbab's dehumanizing treatment signifies a struggle for agency and dignity within oppressive structures.

While previous studies have often focused on surface-level analyses of migrant workers' socio-economic challenges, this thesis has gone beyond by exploring the complex stages of disillusionment, isolation, and identity formation experienced by protagonists like Issa and Najeeb. By uncovering the systemic injustices and power imbalances ingrained in Arab Gulf societies, this study has offered a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play in this specific context of migrant communities. Furthermore, its examination of language as a tool of resistance and identity formation adds a critical dimension to existing scholarship, shedding light on how linguistic dynamics shape individuals' perceptions of self and others. Overall, this study serves as a crucial contribution to the field, calling for greater awareness and action to address the crucial issues faced by migrant workers in the Gulf region.

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جامعة النجاح الوطنية  
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إشراف

أ. د. عبد الكريم دراغمة

قدمت هذه الرسالة استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في الأدب المقارن بكلية الدراسات  
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2024

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## الملخص

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة التحديات التي يواجهها المهاجرون الشرقيون في دول الخليج العربي من خلال تحليل روايتي "ساق البامبو" لسعود السنعوسي و"أيام الماعز" لبنيامين. تتناول الدراسة معضلات وتحديات الأبطال المتعلقة بالتهجين الثقافي، وأزمات الهوية، والتمييز، والرفض في البلدان المضيفة. وتزعم هذه الدراسة أن المهاجرين في دول الخليج يعانون من التهميش وخيبة الأمل بسبب الاختلافات العرقية، واللغوية، والاجتماعية، فضلاً عن التمييز المنهجي. كما تنتقد الروايات الديناميكيات الاجتماعية والثقافية المرتبطة بثبات العمالة في الخليج، إلى جانب تأثيرها النفسي على هوية المهاجرين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التهجين الثقافي؛ أزمة الهوية؛ خيبة الأمل؛ ثبات العمل؛ الرفض العرقي؛ التمييز الاجتماعي؛ الآخر الشرقي؛ الفضاء الثالث.