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Imagery and Class in ʿAbd el-Malik Nūri’s Short Story
The South Wind

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze selected passages of the short story *The South Wind* by the Iraqi writer °Abd el-Malik Nūrī, which was done in order to find out how the description of characters, setting, and events, are related to class. The main research questions dealt with how the use of word choice and imagery are used in connection to the setting and characterization, but also how the events and agentivity are presented, and what they reveal about class. It was concluded that the writer made use several metaphors, of which some from the introductory part of the story were contrastively re-used in the final paragraph. These contrasts went in a parallel line with the unfolding of the events, the conflicting aims of the characters, and the active/passive roles assigned to them, which is related to the issue of a lower class environment.

Keywords

°Abd el-Malik Nūrī, Rīḥ al-Janūb, The South Wind, Arabic Language, Iraqi Literature, Modern Arabic Literature, The Realistic Short Story

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1. Introduction

The original aim with this study was to research the use of the medieval Galenic medical terminology incorporated into the Arabic language during the Abbasid golden age, and its impacts on contemporary standard Arabic concepts and expressions of emotion. Due to a limitation of time and resources, the focus shifted into examining the portrayal of the characters, events, setting, and class in passages of the Iraqi writer °Abd el-Malik Nūrī's short story *Rīḥ al-Janūb* 'The South Wind'. The following questions are of main importance in this study: How are the characterization and setting presented through word choice and imagery? What are the events taking place, and how is the agentivity in terms of active and passive roles conveyed? What do these reveal about class?

Despite his short-lived writing career, °Abd el-Malik Nūrī is considered a prominent figure in the contribution to the development of modern Arabic literature, whose writing came to be deemed subversive in his home country Iraq, whereupon he lost his magistrate position a year after the publishing of his second and final short story collection in 1954. *The South Wind* was published as a part of the last collection, whose study is a relevant philological supplement to its position among the cultural heritage, and as a historical literary source.

2. Background

This section presents a historical survey of modern Arabic literature, and in particular the Arabic short story, its influences, development, and definition according to the following two books and a chapter on the subject: *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* by Mohammed Mustafa Badawi, *Modern Arabic Literature* by Paul Starkey, and "The Modern Arabic Short Story"¹ by Sabry Hafez. The survey is provided as an orientation of some of the background influencing the genre of the realistic short story developed during the period in which the Iraqi writer °Abd el-Malik Nūrī was active, and concludes with biographical notes of his works and contribution.

The beginning of Modern Arabic Literature is agreed by both Paul Starkey and Mohammed Mustafa Badawi to have had its general onset in 1798, coinciding with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. According to Badawi, this period marked a "dramatic opening of the Arab world...to the West", while still a part of the Ottoman empire, which had "momentous consequences" on socio-economic and cultural developments. This event, he

¹ In *Modern Arabic Literature*, edited by M.M. Badawi.

says, resulted in a “fruitful meeting of the indigenous Arabic literary tradition and the cultural forces of the West”, through which modern Arabic literature was born². Starkey renders the event as when “Middle East and North Africa had begun to be exposed to large-scale Western and European influence...”, which he stipulates to the end of the eighteenth, and the beginning of nineteenth century; However, he also maintains the dynamicity of the onset for the ‘modern’ period, depending on different areas of the Arab world and their susceptibility for, and contact with “European Influence”³.

Furthermore, Badawi defines modern Arabic literature as literature written in Arabic, by “the modern Arab world”⁴. While Starkey incorporates Arabic-written literature as a widely valid criterion in his definition, he further problematizes it through the political history of the Middle East, which he says entailed “an at times aggressive Western colonialism” when literature in Arabic was “eclipsed” in favour of writings in French. The author adds the notion of Francophone literature as a phenomenon witnessing authors writing in both their native language and the language of their place of residence in West, with a wider audience including the non-Arabic-speaking parts of the world as well. As for the term ‘literature’, Paul Starkey concludes it being a more complex term in Arabic, partly due to the distinction of pre-modern and contemporary literature with the latter encompassing “imaginative writing”⁵, which he says is similar to the literary notion in West, compared to biographical, historical, and philosophical elements included in the pre-modern literature. Instead, Starkey treats these as genres in his survey⁶.

The development of the Arabic short story as a literary genre is rendered by Sabry Hafez as stretching from the end of the 19th century to early 20th century when it “reached maturity”⁷. In his chapter about the same genre, Starkey outlines roughly the same period for his account on the matter, whose development he considers inseparable from the that of the novel’s, with the short story having the advantage over the novel through its publications in the newspapers and magazines⁸. This coincided with the spread of the news press and a wider readership increasing significantly in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq in the beginning of the 20th

² M.M Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

³ Paul Starkey, introduction to *Modern Arabic Literature* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2006), ix.

⁴ M.M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 1.

⁵ Starkey includes novels, short stories, folktales, drama, and poetry in this category.

⁶ Paul Starkey, introduction to *Modern Arabic Literature* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2006), ix-x.

⁷ Sabry Hafez, “The Modern Arabic Short Story”, in *Modern Arabic Literature 1992*, ed. M.M. Badawi (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 270.

⁸ Paul Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 106.

century, giving the genre its acclaimed status, as it became one of the most important literary mediums⁹. Badawi also comments on the close relationship of the genres through all the novelists in his survey transferring similar ideas from their novels, “borrowed from the West”, into short stories also, varying in the narration technique and “degree of mastery”¹⁰.

When it comes to notion of the Arabic short story, Hafez makes a distinction between the romantic short story, and the realistic short story. He considers the latter lacking an encompassment of any common links between its authors in its wide range, but the artistic approach. Therefore, he defines the genre as a literary form adaptable in its representation of the versatile reality, with its complexity and dynamicity comprehended and provided by Realism¹¹. Similarly, Starkey divides the distinctions of the novel and short story forms in several “trends”: the historical, romantic, and “more realistic”¹².

According to Hafez, the inception of realism coincided with the trend of domestically produced literature, as an attempt to distinguish itself from the translated works. These were usually authored by the rising middle class, who was educated outside the conventional realm, and thus expressed their new ideas in the writing dealing with the urbanization process. A tendency to speak for the lower classes from a moralistic and humanistic point of view was common, which shifted towards an ideological stance later on¹³. Hence, the socio-political aspect is an inseparable part of modern Arabic literature¹⁴.

The author adds that the artistic sensibility became more complex towards the 1950s and the 1960s, which marked a period with aspirations of progress and hopes for a new future where “The Arab realist...expresses his growing awareness of the contradictions of the age, not in radical representations of external reality, but in a poetic inward synthesis of the real and the ideal.”¹⁵. Hafez maintains that the writer of that time did not frame how the world existed objectively, and rather portrayed it in accordance to how it was grasped and expressed by the individual¹⁶.

⁹ M.M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*. (Oxford University Press, 1993); Sabry Hafez, “The Modern Arabic Short Story”, in *Modern Arabic Literature 1992*, ed, M.M. Badawi (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Paul Starkey. *Modern Arabic Literature* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ M.M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 91, 233.

¹¹ Sabry Hafez, “The Modern Arabic Short Story”, in *Modern Arabic Literature 1992*, ed, M.M. Badawi (Cambridge University Press, 1992) , 302.

¹² Paul Starkey, *Modern Arabic Literature* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 112.

¹³ Sabry Hafez, “The Modern Arabic Short Story”, in *Modern Arabic Literature 1992*, ed, M.M. Badawi (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 303.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

One of the writers of the period, whose short story *The South Wind* is the subject for this study, was ʿAbd el-Malik Nūrī, who pioneered in the Iraqi literary output and contributed to the development of the realistic short story in the 1950s. Born in 1921, Nūrī studied at the American University of Beirut, and graduated in the Faculty of Law of Baghdad University, whereupon he worked as a journalist for the newspaper al-Ahālī, before serving as an official in the Ministry of Justice in Iraq. He wrote two collections of short stories, *Rusul al-Insāniyyah* (1946) and *Nashīd al-Ard* (1954), following his was withdrawal from his position in 1955, when his writing was declared subversive, and turned to Iraqi diplomat service until 1962¹⁷.

According to Rydberg, Nūrī was inspired by Dostoyevsky, Chekov, and Joyce, and was one of the leaders of the school of realism in the Iraqi literary output, with an interest for the lower class, and sympathy for plants and animals, which he freely mixed with humans in his stories¹⁸. The *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* renders the content of the author's stories as "characterized by a profound psychological insight", written in a poetical and sometimes ironical language, and bringing the problems of the Arabic/Iraqi society into attention. Among these are patriarchal repressions, and "the tragic consequences of superstition and the veneration of saints" in *The South Wind*¹⁹. Bloch comments the story as an "ironic tale about misguided hopes and aspirations"²⁰.

¹⁷ Ariel Bloch. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir : maʿa mulāḥazāt lughawīyah, XVII. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974); *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. s.v. "Nūrī, ʿAbd al-Malik (1921-)"; Ingvar Rydberg. *Arabiska berättare*. (Gidlunds förlag, 1980), 258.

¹⁸ Rydberg, Ingvar. *Arabiska berättare*. (Gidlunds förlag, 1980), 258.

¹⁹ *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, s.v. "Nūrī, ʿAbd al-Malik (1921-)".

²⁰ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir : maʿa mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), XVII.

3. Method

3.1. Material and Scope

The material studied comprises the short story *Rīḥ al-Janūb*, by °Abd el-Malik Nūrī, consisting of 22 paragraphs in 16 pages, of which some were selected for the analysis. These excerpts encompass the introductory paragraph, as well as selected paragraphs dealing with the plot in terms of characterization and aim, complication, and denouement.

The text is written in standard Arabic with some colloquial Iraqi expressions, and was retrieved from a chrestomathy compiled by Ariel Bloch (1974), which originated from the Beirut-printed source *al-Manādīl al-bīḍ*, from 1953. With the exception of some words, the content is largely unvocalized.

3.2. Procedure

An analysis of mainly two stages of interpretation was employed for the research, with the first stage encompassing a translation of the short story where a an interlinear gloss with a word-to-word translation was initially used, mainly with the aid of Hans Wehr's *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic – English)*, and some grammatical reference literature listed in the bibliography.

In order to answer the research questions, the language was further analyzed in terms of passive and active constructions of the sentences, where both implicit and explicit representations of patients and agents were taken into account. Furthermore, the word choice and figurative language of the passages were analyzed, with the latter mainly grouped into examinations of metaphors, similes, and other symbolism in connection to the characters and setting.

4. Analysis

The analysis includes four main divisions of the following plot elements: introduction; characterization and aim; complication; and denouement, with each section preceded by tables encompassing the translation of the respective divisions. A brief summary of the short story follows in the subsequent section.

4.1. Synopsis

Rīḥ al-Janūb is a story set in presumably early 20th century Iraq, about the peasant mother Khuḍairah taking her blind daughter Khachiyyah on a train journey to have her healed by a religious figure for a sum of money. As means for affording the payment, they bring along a rooster to be sold in town. The tale ends with the rooster gaining his freedom when the mother loosens the grip of him as she falls asleep, blissfully unaware.

4.2. Introduction

Table 1.

	Transliteration	Literal translaton	Translation
1.1	“Kāna yansābu ka-th-thu ^c bāni l-ḥadhri wasta l-qafri l-jāffi mukhtariqan (...) l-ghabrā ^a l-qāḥilata bibuṭ ^o in wash-shamsu tatawaqqadu fawqahu bishiddatin wa-tamla ^o u l-faḍā ^a l-fāriḡha bishu ^c ā ^c ihā l-ḥāmīy.” ²¹	Was(he) creeping like-the snake the-wary middle-of the-desert the-dry passing (...) the-dust the-dry in slowly and-the-sun ignites(she) above-him in-intensity and-fills up the-space the-empty with-rays-her the-hot.	‘It was creeping like a wary snake, whilst slowly passing through the middle of the dry desert. And the sun above it blazed intensely, filling up the empty space with its hot rays.’.
1.2	“Wa-kullu shay ^o in yatawāhhaju taḥtahā wa-yashi ^c u: quḍbānu l-ḥadīdi l-mumtaddatu fi l-qafri wa- ^a midatu t-tilifūn(i) s sawdā ^o u wa-ṣ-ṣafā ^o iḥu l-matrūkatu ^c alā ṭ-ṭarīqi wa-t-turābu nafsuhu, t-turābu l- ^a amlāḥu l-barrāqu l-ladhī yughatṭī wajha l- ^o arḍi ilā ghayri nihāya(ti)h” ^{22, 23}	And-every thing burns underneath-her and-radiates: rails-of the-iron the-extended in the-desert and-poles-of the-telephone the-black and-cans the-left on the-road and-the-soil self-him/it, the-soil the-saline the-lustrous which covers surface-of the-earth to no end.	‘And everything underneath it [the sun] burns, and radiates: the iron railway rails extended over the desert, the black telephone poles, the cans left on the road, and the soil itself; the saline, lustrous soil covering the surface of the earth to infinity.’.
1.3	“Wa-kānat judrānu l-qiṭāri wa- ^a akhshābuhu tursilu shawḡan ya ^c taṣīru min kutali l- ^a ajsādi l-mutazāmaḡati ^c araqān sākhinan	And-was walls-of the-train and-timbers-his radiating glowing heat squeezing out from masses-of the-bodies	‘And the walls of the train and its timber were radiating intense heat, squeezing out hot, sticky sweat from the

²¹ Bloch, Ariel. *A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir* : ma‘a mulāḡazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 109.

²² ilā ghayri nihāyah – ‘undendingly, to infinity’.

²³ Bloch, Ariel. *A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir* : ma‘a mulāḡazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 109.

	dabiḡan wa-yaluffu l-jamī [°] u bitahwīmatin sādiratin marīḡatin, fatanūdu ru [°] ūsuhum wa-tartaḡjifu °ajsāduhum bitasāwuḡin ma [°] a °ihtizāzāti l- [°] arabati l- qadīma(ti)h”. ²⁴	the-crammed sweat hot sticky and-wraps the-all in- drowsiness reckless sick, sways heads-their and- trembles bodies-their in- coherence with convulsion- of the-carriage the-old.	packed masses of bodies, and sweeping them all in a sick, reckless drowsiness making their heads sway and their bodies tremble in tact with the movements of old carriage.’
1.4	“Wa-tabdū lahum l-ḡayātu ramādiyyatan-bayḡā [°] a, ka-s- sarābi l-ladhī yaltami [°] u fī l- °āfāḡi l-ba [°] īda(ti)h. Wa-qad yatabaḡḡā minhā [°] alā shafāhihimi l-yābisati madhāḡun māliḡhun marīrun huwa kullu zādahum [°] abra l-qafri ḡ-ḡawīli l- ḡhāfi.”. ²⁵	And-appears to-them the-life ashen-white, like-the-mirage the-which glows in the- horizons the-distant. And-at times is left over from it on lips-their the-dry a taste salty bitter it/he all increased- them throughout the-desert the-long the-slumbering.	‘The life appears ashen- white to them, like a mirage glowing in the distant horizons. It leaves a bitterly salty taste on their dry lips at times, ever-increasing throughout the long, slumbering desert.’.

In the beginning of the story (see Table 1, section 1.1), a creeping, snake-like figure is introduced in the setting of a desert in the background of its position in space, and in relation to the sun, whose properties and the climate’s aridity are described hyperbolically; ‘dry desert’, ‘dry dust’, ‘hot rays’, ‘to blaze intensely’. The sun functions as an agent, with the “empty space” as the patient it “fills up” with rays (see example 1). Thus, the author uses an image of the universe as a metaphoric container, and therefore a bounded space, which is contrasted with the concept of boundedness, fullness, and emptiness later in the story.

(1) {The sun} fills up {the empty space} with its hot rays.
Agent **Patient**

The dryness and degree of heat are further elaborated upon in section 1.2 of Table 1, where everything underneath the sun “burns”, with the imagery increasing in intensification through the burning of the iron of the railway, the cans (of metal), and the saline soil, as well as the light effects of radiation and lustrousness. The writer continues using spatial elements in the description of the sun’s blazing effect on earth, while adding an eternal²⁶ aspect to the picture of the burning “saline, lustrous soil” (see example 2), which has associations to the earth as an infernal place.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Infinity and eternity are used interchangeably in this study as a broad sense of limitless time.

- (2) Everything underneath the sun burns...The saline, lustrous soil that covers the surface of the earth to infinity.

A train is introduced in section 1.3, which is understood in the background of the foreshadowings of the railway in the previous table, and its simile to the creeping, snake-like figure in the first table (see example 3).

- (3) It was creeping like a wary snake...

The context of the sun and the hot climate as a catalyst continues throughout the train, whose heat dehydrates the passengers by making them secrete fluid, affecting their character and well-being:

- (4) The walls of the train and its timber were radiating intense heat, squeezing out hot, sticky sweat from the packed masses of bodies, and sweeping them all in a sick, reckless drowsiness making their heads sway and their bodies tremble in tact with the movements of the old carriage.

The passengers are introduced in a cynical picture lacking individual value through the word choices (“sick and reckless, packed masses of bodies”) connoting foolishness and dysfunctionality, with the people in excess simultaneously functioning as a class indicator. Aside from their function as patients in the sentence and lifeless representation, the passivity is further illustrated by the train’s rhythm controlling their movements.

The expression *al-°arabati l-qadīmati* ‘the old carriage’ has connotations to ‘ancient arabs’²⁷, bringing a historical dimension a connection to the past, which frames a spectral aspect to the description of the packed bodies.

In parallel to the container metaphor of the empty universe filled with rays in the introduction, the train is a container filled with packed crowds, or “bodies”, increasing in a minimized space (as the story proceeds). The “squeezing” in the background of the heat has connotations to suffocation, and distinction of life; it is squeezed out of them.

²⁷ The noun in the expression, is derived from the root °, r, b, which is reminiscent of the word °arab, ‘arabs’, meanwhile the adjectival modification following it also stands for ‘ancient’, or ‘outdated’.

The metaphor of the train as the journey of life is more palpable in section 1.4, where the writer uses a simile of a mirage to describe the travelling collective's suffering way of life and the unattainability of their desires (see example 6).

- (6) The life appears ashen-white to them, like a mirage glowing in the distant horizons. It leaves a bitterly salt taste on their dry lips, increasing throughout the long, slumbering desert.

Once again, the people are rendered passive, with the mirage playing them mind tricks, and leaving them a bitterly salty taste, which is used both when it comes to taste, and feelings in Arabic. The substance of salt as gustatory imagery, and dehydrating properties in the background of the heat bears undertones to a metaphor of an increasing thirst for life, whose infliction leaves an oppressive effect. They are searching for a way to fulfill their needs, and are met with deceitfulness; Their lives are unfulfilled and bitter, and the long distance of the desert implies a prolonged, perhaps eternal duration of the journey, and therefore an extended suffering. While the mirage and the external situation are depicted causatively in their active description, the concept of the mirage also suggests a self-infliction of the situation considering the illusionary aspect, thus connoting a mutual infliction going in ambiguous directions. The mirage is also associative of vision through what is seen and not seen by the group: illusion vs. reality, which connects with the metaphor of blindness as the story proceeds.

Table 2.

	Transliteration	Literal translaton	Translation
2.1	“Hadhihi l- ^o ayyama ^o ayyāma ziyāratin, wa-l-musāfirūna kathīrūn(a) (...) Āh, law kāna ladayhā muttasa ^o i min al-waḡti ^o idhan ²⁸ li-dhahabat (---) ^o innahā ni ^o matun kabīratun ^o an yazūra l-mar ^o u sayyida sh-shuhadā ^o i wa-yatabarraka biturābi ḡariḡihi. (---) Yuḡyī ²⁹ l- ^o izāma wa-hiya ramīm. Afaya ^o jizu ^o an fathī ^o uyūni l- ^o umyān(i)?” ³⁰	This the-days day-of pilgrimage and-the-travellers many (...) Ah, if was with-her space of the-time then went(he) (---) Verily-it blessing big that to visit the-one lord-of the-martyrs and-to be blessed with-soil-of grave-his. (---) Calls into being(he ³¹) the-bones and-it/she decayed. Is-then(he)-incapable of opening eyes-of the-blind?	‘These are the days of pilgrimage, and there are many travellers (...) Oh, if she had enough time, she would have gone (---) Verily, it is a big blessing to visit the lord of the martyrs to and be blessed by the soil of his grave. (---) He ³² calls the decayed bones into being. Is he then incapable of opening the eyes of the blind?’.
2.2	“Wa-sh-shaykhu Muḡyī d-dīn min afdali ^o awliyā ^o ihi ṡ-ṡāliḡīn(a). (...) Yaftaḡu ^o uyūna l- ^o umyāni fī l-baldati wa-yashfī n-nāsa l-masākīn(a). (---) Wa- ^o in shā ^o a l-lāhu takūnu barakātuḡu kathīratan ^o alayhā wa- ^o ala ^o ibnatihā Khāchiyya(ti)h (...) Wa-yaftaḡu ^o aynayya l-ḡadīthati l-ḡilwati.” ³³	And-the-cleric reviver-of the-faith of best-of masters-his the-pious. (...) Opens(he) eyes-of the-blind in the-town and-heals(he) the-people the-poor. (---) And-if wants the-God will be blessings-his plentiful on-her and-on daughter-her Khāchiyyah (...) And-will open(he) eyes-of the-young the-pretty.	‘And sheikh Muhieddine is one of his (God’s) best pious masters. (...) He opens the eyes of the blind, and heals the poor people in town. (---) God willing, his blessings will be plentiful on her and her daughter Khachiyya (...) and he will open the eyes of the pretty young girl.’.
2.3	“Wa-tadhkuru Khuḡayratu faj ^o atan ad-dīka l- ^o aḡmara l-badīna (...) fī ḡajriḡā wa-tanzuru ilayḡi biḡanānin wa-tarbitu ^o alā ḡajriḡi s-sākhin(i). Thumma ta ^o ūdu ilā tahwīmihā l-munaghghami- r-ratīb(i) ³⁴ . ‘Allāhu akbar(u) Allāhu akbar(u) Allāhu akbar(u)’ ” ³⁵	And remembers Khuḡayrah suddenly the-rooster the-red the-stout (...) in lap-her and-looks(he) to-him in-tenderness and-strokes on back-his the-hot. Thereupon returns(he) to drowsiness-her the-hummed the-monotonous. “God greatest God greatest God greatest”...	‘Khuḡayrah suddenly remembers the red, stout rooster (...) in her lap, looks at him tenderly and strokes his hot back. Then she returns to her monotonous melody: God is greatest, God is greatest, God is greatest...’.

²⁸ As vocalized by Bloch.

²⁹ As vocalized by Bloch.

³⁰ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṡir : ma‘a mulāḡazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 110,-111

³¹ God.

³² Ibid.

³³ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṡir : ma‘a mulāḡazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 111-113.

³⁴ According to Bloch: munaghgham-ratīb, ‘monotonous(ly) melodic’, 113.

³⁵ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṡir : ma‘a mulāḡazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 113-114.

2.4	<p>“Wa-kāna d-dīku yaḥlamu °aḥlāmahu l-gharība(ta)h (...) Wa-qaḍ fataḥa °aynan wāḥida(tan)h (...) Baynamā °aghmaḍa l-°ukhrā taḥta l-kaffi th-thaqīlati l-muṭbaqati °alā zahrih(i) (...) Wa-lidhā makatha sākinan yantaḥiru sā°ata l- khalāṣ(a) (---) Wa-huwa yaḥissū biḥarāratin shadīdatin lā tuṭāq(u) (...) Tukādu takhnuquhu wa- taqḍī °alayhī.”³⁶</p>	<p>And-was the-rooster dreaming dreams-his the-strange (...) And-truly opened(he) eye one (...) While closed(he) the- other underneath the-palm the-heavy the-pressed on back-his (...) And-therefore remained(he) motionless waiting time-of the-liberation (---) And-he feels with-heat intense no bears (...) Is about suffocates-him and-kills on- him.</p>	<p>‘And the rooster was having his strange dreams (...)He opened his first eye (...) while closing the second, underneath the heavy palm pressing on him (...) And so he remained motionless, waiting to become free (---) while feeling that the intense, unbearable heat (...) was about to suffocate and kill him.’.</p>
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4.3. Characterization and aim

The omniscient narration shifts to the interior monologue of the character Khudayrah in section 2.1 of Table 2, with the time of the pilgrimage season acknowledged to the reader, explaining the crowding. Khudayrah expresses a longing of visiting the pilgrimage site, with her thoughts of it as something canonical, which brings a socio-cultural dimension into the story (see example 7).

- (7) Verily, it is a big blessing (for one) to visit the lord of the martyrs
 and to be blessed by the soil of his grave.

According to note 14 in Bloch’s chrestomathy, the pilgrimage, ‘ziyārah’, refers to a site in Karbala, south west of Baghdad, which is “the most important Shiite holy places where the...grandson of the Prophet was slain”³⁷. Thus, the story also gains a destination the train heads for, while Khudayrah’s belief is understood as part of the traditions and custom of the society she inhabits, which in turn is introduced in the background of her characterization.

Her religious inclination is further represented by the recitation of the Quranic verse 36:78, centering on the superiority of God and his ability to revive, whereupon she rhetorically asks whether he would not be able to open the eyes of the blind (see example 8).

³⁶ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 115-117.

³⁷ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 110.

- (8) He calls the decayed bones into being. Is he then incapable of opening the eyes of the blind?

The theme of blindness and vision continues in the next sentence, in Table 6, where the character's aim with the journey is revealed, which is an attempt to cure her daughter Khachiyyah's blindness in the town where the cleric Muhiyeddine 'reviver of faith' resides, hoping that he will "open her eyes" (see example 9 or section 2.2).

- (9) And Sheikh Muhieddine is one of [God's] most pious master. He opens the eyes of the blind and heals the poor people in town.

The religious theme continues with the authority and position of the cleric as a divine problem solver, especially among the lower classes of the society in which Khudayrah and the commuters are part of. The cleric's attributes of causing the people to see, or understand faith in the figural sense, and his naming ('reviver of faith') function to enhance his practice, which in parallel with the previous description of the mirage extends the notion of the deceitfulness of vision. Thus, a discrepancy is created figuratively where the cleric's preaches are underscored as a misleading activity, deceiving the passive masses.

The elevated language through the rhetoric of a divine superiority are employed elsewhere in the text as well in connection to matters considered holy, whose reference becomes satirical in its pretentiousness towards the ironical background. An example of this is the cosmic irony understated in the divine ability to resurrect and heal, in contrast to the misfortunate conditions persisting contrary to the beliefs of the character.

Another character, the red rooster, is introduced through Khudayrah's point of view in Table 7, where she remembers him in her lap and pats him lovingly, before going back to chanting her prayers (see example 10 or section 2.3).

- (10) Then she returns to her monotonously melodic drowsiness: "God is greatest, God is greatest...".

The description of a "monotonously melodic drowsiness" marks Khudayrah's place among the rest of the passengers in their passivity by drowsily following the rhythms of the train.

The point of view shifts in section 2.4 of Table 2, where a rooster finds himself trapped underneath the pressing palm of his owner, disabling him from moving, and seeing through

one of his eyes, which he keeps closed while longing to be released; his aim is freedom (see example 11).

(11) He remained motionless, waiting to become free.

Thus, the desires of the two main characters are in opposition, as the freedom of the rooster would interfere with the mother's goal of pursuing her dream behind the reason of the journey, whose affording depends on his exchange for the payment required to cure her daughter's blindness.

In comparison to *Khuḍayrah*, the rooster is less complex and more dramatically presented in the way his state of mind and desires are more direct and straightforward. While the mother is reflective in her approach and accepts her destiny, the rooster stands out of the passive picture through his reactions of the prevailing situation, with his feelings more outspoken (he feels, he wants, he waits). The imagery of the pressed crowding in the heat, and its connotations to suffocation described in the introduction, comes alive through the rooster's expressions (see example 12).

(12) [He felt] that the intense, unbearable heat was about to suffocate,
and kill him.

The crowd's indifference of the situation is especially pronounced in this background, creating an exaggeration effect in either way of the polarization between their, and the rooster's reactions.

Table 3.

	Transliteration	Literal translation	Translation
3.1	“Wa-yasqutu ra ³ su Khuḍayrati °alá ṣadrihā. Wa-yanāmu fihā kullu shay ³ (in) (...) Wa- taghiṭṭu ³⁸ fī subātin °amīq(in). Wa-yarfa ^c u d-dīku l-°ahmaru ra ³ sahu ṣ-ṣaghīra wa-yanzuru bi- stighrāb(in). °inna l-kaffa th- thaqīlata qad saqātat °an ṣahrihi ilá aṭwā ³ i dhalika th-thawbī l-	And-falls head-of Khuḍayrah on chest-her. And-sleeps in- her every thing (...) And- plunges(he) in sleep deep. And-raises the-rooster the-red head-his the-little and-looks in-wonder. Verily the-palm the-heavy truly dropped from back-his to fold-of that the-	‘Khuḍairah’s head falls upon her chest, and she plunges into deep sleep (...) The red rooster raises his little head, looking up in wonder; Verily, the heavy palm had dropped from him, and was resting on the fold of the extremely

³⁸ As vocalized by Bloch. Retrieved from.

	qāni ³⁹ i shadīdi l-ḥarāra(ti)h.” ³⁹	dress the-deep-red intense-of the-heat.	warm dress in deep-red.’.
3.2	“Kāna fī ‘ālamīn kulluhu aḥmaru wa-kulluhu yashta‘ilu. Wa-qad khuyyila ilayhi aḥyanan annahu yūshiku an yaḥtariq(a). Wa-kāna l-faz‘u ya ³ khudhuhu min kulli jānib(in). Innahu l-‘āna yatamalmalu dahishan fī ḥijri Khudayrah(ti)h (---) Wa-yazīdu ḥarārata hadhā l-jaḥīmi l-ladhī yuṭbiqu ‘alayhī.” ⁴⁰	And-was(he) in world all-of-it red and-all-of-it ignites. And-truly imagined to-him sometimes that-he is about to that catch fire. And-was the-fear taking (over)-him from all side. Verily-he now wriggles astonished in lap-of Khudayrah (---) And increases heat-of this the-(hell)fire the-that surrounds on-him.	‘He was in an entirely red, ignited world. Sometimes, it appeared to him that he would catch fire, and the fear took over him. He now wriggles, astonished in Khudayrah’s lap (---) and the heat of this hellfire surrounding him increases’.

4.4. Complication

The distinction of the rooster and his assumed captivatress in terms of activity and passivity is pointed out in the complication in Table 3, section 3.1, where Khudayrah eventually falls into a deep sleep, whereupon the rooster becomes alert at her palm dropping from him, and her loss of control. The red color of her “intensely heated” dress as infernal associations is added to the imagery of the rooster’s experiences and feelings additionally outlined in section 3.2, and illustrated in example 13 below.

- (13) He was in an entirely red, ignited world. Sometimes, it appeared to him that he would catch fire...and the heat of this hellfire surrounding him increased.

This is an another example of where the introductory imagery of the story becomes pronounced by the rooster’s responses, who at this stage attempts to change his position to escape, as his confusion and suffering increase. The writer makes use of situational irony as a turning point in the complication where the expectations of the events through the fulfillment of Khudayrah’s aim according to her worldview are about to get interrupted by an alternative outcome.

³⁹ Bloch, Ariel. *A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 121.

⁴⁰ Bloch, Ariel. *A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 121-123.

Table 4.

	Transliteration	Literal translation	Translation
4.1	“Ash-shams(u)! Ash-shams(u)! Kāna yurīdu sh-shamsa faqaṭ. Wa- [°] indamā ghamarahu shu [°] ā [°] uhā min jadid(in), wajada nafsahu yahbuṭu ilā [°] arḍin [°] ukhrā, [°] arḍin ṣulbatin thābita(tin)h. Wa-wajada lidahshatihi [°] annahā lā tataḥarraku katilka l-markabati l-gharība(ti)h, dhalika th-thu [°] bānu l-mukhīf(i). that the-snake the-horrible.” ⁴¹	The-sun! The-sun! Was(he) wanting the-sun only. And-when overflowed-him rays-her from new ⁴² found(he) self-him coming down to ground another, ground solid steady. And-found(he) to-perplexity-his that-she/it not moves like-that the-vehicle the-strange,	‘The sun! The sun! He only wanted the sun. And when the sunshine overflowed him again, he found himself stepping down on solid ground. To his perplexity, it did not move as the strange, horrible snake-like vehicle.’
4.2	“Wa- [°] aḥassa li-l-marrati l- [°] ulā mundhu bad [°] i s-safrati l-la [°] īnati [°] annahu ḥurrin min kulli qayd(in) (...) Walahu [°] an yamraḥa wayasraḥa ⁴³ fī hadhihi l- [°] arḍi l-wāsi [°] ati l-laṭī lā taḥudduhā ḥudūd(un) (...) Wa-huwa ya [°] ūdū l- [°] āna (...) ilā tilka ṭ-ṭabī [°] ati l-khāliyatī min banī l- [°] insān(i).” ⁴⁴	And-felt(he) for-the-time the-first since beginning(of) the-journey the damned that-he free from all shackle (...) And-to-him that being happy and-proceeding freely in this the-soil the-vast the-which not to limit-it/her boundaries (...) And-he returns the-now (...) to that the-nature the-free from sons-of the-human being.	‘For the first time since the beginning of the damn journey, he felt that he was free from the shackles (...) and could do as he pleases in this vast, limitless land (...) He now returns (...) to the nature, free from human beings.’
4.3	“Wa- [°] āda l-qīṭaru yansābu bibuṭ [°] in taḥṭa wahajī z-zahīrati muḥammalan bikulli tilka l-kutali th-thaqīlati min al-laḥmi s-sākhini l-lazij(i). Wa-Khuḍairah tabsimu li [°] aḥlāmin nā [°] isatan (...)” ⁴⁵	And-returned the-train creeping in-slowly under sun glare-of the-noon loaded with-all that the-masses the-heavy of the-flesh the-hot the-sticky. And-Khuḍairah smiles to-dreams sleepy (...).	‘And the train continued to creep slowly under the midday sun, burdened with the heavy masses of hot and sticky flesh. Khuḍairah smiles to her dreams sleepily (...)’.
4.4	“Wa-rīḥu j-janūbi mā tanfakku tahubbu [°] alā wajhihā (...) Taḥmilu lahā (...) Wa-li-l-rukkābi jamī [°] an dhalika l-khadari l-marīḍi l-ladhī yaj [°] alu min al- [°] aḥyā [°] i anṣāfa ⁴⁶ aḥyā [°] in ⁴⁷ .” ⁴⁸	And-wind-of the-south not stops doing blows on face-her (...) Brings to-her (...) and-to-the-passengers all that the-numbness the-sick the-that makes from the-living half living.	‘The south wind does not cease to blow on her face (...) bringing her (...) and all the passengers that sick numbness, making the living half alive.’.

⁴¹ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 124.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ ‘Sari‘a wa mari‘a’: to do as one likes.

⁴⁴ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 124.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ As vocalized by Bloch.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bloch, Ariel. A Chrestomathy of Modern Literary Arabic: Mukhtārāt min al-adab al-‘arabī al-mu‘āṣir : ma‘a mulāḥazāt lughawīyah. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1974), 124.

4.5. Denouement

The horror and tension of the rooster are resolved towards the end of the short story in Table 4, section 4.1, as he steps out of the train, finding himself on solid ground. The initial imagery of the dry climate and sun as a fatal force changes into a salubrious weather, with the rays “overflowing” him (see example 14).

- (14) When the sunshine overflowed him...he found himself on solid ground...it did not move as the strange, horrible, snake-like vehicle.

Among the meanings of this word with a following pronominal suffix in Arabic are ‘to fill’, as in to fill someone’s heart with feelings, but also ‘to pour a liquid over something’, or ‘to soak something in liquid’, whose usage is associated with water⁴⁹. These connotations gain opposing contrasts in comparison with the initial hyperbolic descriptions of ‘hot rays’, ‘dry desert’, and the concentration on the intensifying modifications of heat and dryness.

Additionally, the gloomy description of the empty space being filled with the sun’s rays is contrastively re-used with the sunshine filling, or overflowing him (empty vs. full). It is also revealed that the rooster sees the train as a fearful snake, thus, his point of view connects to the simile of the train as a snake in the introduction.

In section 4.2, the rooster curses the journey and feels free from the onset of it when imprisonment begun. The story ends happily for him, as he returns to the vast and limitless land, whose boundlessness can be understood as opposed to the context of the metaphor of the universe as a container, and therefore a limited space (see example 15). He is also free from human beings and the order they set.

- (15) ...[He] could do as he pleases in this vast, limitless land. He no returns to the nature, free from human beings.

The metaphor of the train as the creeping snake carrying the passengers is reinforced in the final sentences of the story (see example 16), which concludes in section 4.3 and 4.4, with

⁴⁹ *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic – English)*, 4th ed., s.v. “gh m r”.

Khudayrah blissfully unaware of the complicating matter of her plans, smiling to their prospects (see example 17).

- (16) The train continued to creep slowly under the midday sun, loaded with the heavy masses of hot, sticky flesh. Khudayrah smiles to her dreams sleepily...
- (17) The south wind does not cease to blow on her face, bringing her and all the passengers that sick numbness, making the living half alive.

The animal character stands out heroically in his personification of individualism and anti-mainstream ideals as an alternative to traditionally rooted ideas, which Khudayrah and the collective are assigned. They are given a hopeless description in their credulousness and passivity for a deeply rooted convention resulting in harmful consequences, which attributes especially one of the main characters, Khudayrah, with anti-heroic features, at times merging with mock-heroic traits to that of the group.

5. Summary

The aim with this study was to analyze the depiction of characters, setting, events, and class in some excerpts of the short story *The South Wind* by the writer ʿAbd el-Malik Nūrī. The research questions mainly dealt with how the word choice and imagery are used in connection to the setting and characterization, how the events and agentivity are presented, and what these reveal about class. The excerpts studied were divided in four main parts encompassing passages dealing with the introduction, characterization and aim, complication, and denouement. In order to answer the questions posed, two methods were used: first, the passages were translated, and second, an interpretation of the language content was made, regarding the word choice, imagery, characterization, setting, events, agentivity, and class.

The study showed that the writer used a series of metaphors and hyperboles of natural phenomena as that of weather, along with space and the concept of boundedness in the introductory part of the story, which were contrastively re-used in the concluding paragraphs, concurrent with the outcome of the events. The events were mainly tied to the two main characters, the rooster and Khudayrah, and the conflict arising due to their differing aims, and

the eventual accomplishment of the rooster's desires, who was given an active role, while Khudayrah and the background characters of passengers were given a passive role. This passivity was further illustrated through the setting of the train and the mirage as the travelling collective's way of life as "masses" and their chances in the society as coming from a lower class environment. Although not originally intended in this study, it was also found out that the use of different types of irony, exaggeration, and the heroic and anti-heroic traits of the characters incorporate satirical and allegorical features to the story.

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Appendix

Transliteration key

ā	ا
b	ب
t	ت
th	ث
j	ج
ḥ	ح
kh	خ
d	د
dh	ذ
r	ر
z	ز
s	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط
ẓ	ظ
ʿ	ع
gh	غ
f	ف
q	ق
k	ك
l	ل
m	م
n	ن
h	ه

w	و
y	ي
ta	ة
◌◊	ء
īy	يَّ
á	ى
ā, °ā	آ
short vowels:	
a	◌َ
i	◌ِ
u	◌ُ
long vowels:	
ā	ا
ī	ي
ū	و