

Offprint from

From Tur Abdin to Hadramawt

Semitic Studies

Festschrift in Honour of Bo Isaksson
on the occasion of his retirement

Edited by
Tal Davidovich, Ablahad Lahdo,
and Torkel Lindquist

2014

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Breaking the Silence of Nature in an Arabic Novel *Nazīf al-ḥajar* by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī

Gail Ramsay, Uppsala

ويلٌ ليد ارتفعت لتؤذي الطبيعة.

إبراهيم الكوني: أمثال الزمان 415¹

Woe to the hand lifted to harm nature
Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī, *Amthāl al-zamān* 415

This article is part of the endeavor to link ecocritical writing and theory in the West and the East to each other. It asks what can be learned from an ecocritical reading of an Arabic novel about ecological awareness in Arabic literature while exploring ecological implications of human-nature relationships in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* (1990) by Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī. We are guided by principles of ecocriticism which require “the search for an environmental counterethics” that confront “the silence of nature” spoken of by Christopher Manes (1996: 16, 26). We explore a specific question of concern in the novel, that of the extinction of central species of wildlife in the bioregion which includes the southwestern desert of Libya. While doing this we search for evidence of life-styles suitable for cosmopolitan life in the global village of the present. To gauge ecological awareness and illuminate cultural and ideational structures serving such environmentally concerned life-styles in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* we apply Hubert Zapf’s (2002) triadic model which considers (1) culture critical; (2) imaginative and; (3) reintegrative themes while applying a postmodern and “ecologically informed reading” in the vein of Serpil Oppermann (2006).

Ecological awareness in Arabic literature

Ecocriticism has become an established field in Western literary scholarship, first in the USA, since the late 1980s, and presently, throughout the Western world.² Furthermore, ecological awareness has during the last decade propelled new ecocritical theory “drawn on locally predominant traditions of thought” rapidly giving rise to ecocritical studies in other parts of the world and academic communities.³

1 al-Kawnī 1999: 145. *Amthāl al-zamān* No. 415.

2 Coupe 2000: 157; Branch & Slovic 2003: xiii-xx. For a concise survey of the “Beginnings of Ecocriticism” (Buell 2005: 13) consult Buell 2005: 1-28. Cf. Michael Verderame’s essay “The shape of Ecocriticism to Come” (Verderame 2010: 1-7).

3 Müller 2011: 71.

New concepts like “green Islam”, “eco-Islam” or “animal rights in Islam” have recently come in circulation and on the internet questions about how to integrate ecological and environmental awareness with one’s faith are discussed on sites taking a special interest in this issue (Foltz 2006; Abbas 2009; Tlili 2012; Zbidi 2013). In fact, top-ranked Beirut-based bloggers in 2009 were found to be especially concerned with local environmental issues and the transnational problem of climate change.⁴ Albeit not treating ecological and environmental concerns, Arab and European literary scholars such as Sabry Hafez (2002), Ashraf Eissa (2002), Luc-Willy Deheuvels (2002) and Mīrāl al-Ṭahāwī (2004?) have treated nature themes in Arabic literature, especially of the desert.

These aforementioned articles and studies may be considered a backdrop to this present article which responds to the call of Nadine A. Sinno to Western academia to engage their Arab colleagues in the global dialogue on ecological and environmental concerns in ecocritical studies.⁵ In this article we are engaged in Christopher Manes’ search for an “environmental counterethics” as we open up for the non-human other to “break the silence of nature.”⁶ We also fall in line with Scott Slovic’s perspective that ecocriticism may involve “the study of explicit environmental texts by way of any scholarly approach or, conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text...”⁷

Ibrāhim al-Kawnī has emerged as one of the leading Arabic language authors since the 1990s. His novels, short story collections, essays, aphorisms and Arabic proverbial writings are centered in and colored by the life of the nomadic tribes and dwellers of the desert of southern Libya, as explained by Elliott Colla:

Taking the Twareg aspect of Al-Koni’s writing seriously allows us to recognize a radically redrawn map of the world—one in which the Sahara is a full, rather than empty space; one in which the Twareg lie not at the edges, but the center of history.⁸

This observation is corroborated by Hafez who claims that al-Kawnī “has provided Arabic literature with a dimension of magic realism similar to that in Latin American fiction, though” – he adds warningly – “unique and completely different from it.” Kawnī’s emphasis is “on the desert, its special nature and role...”⁹ While Hafez and the previously mentioned scholars have focused on the desert theme as figurative and actual space, a few others have addressed ecological aspects of the desert as expressed by al-Kawnī. Of particular interest for this present article are Sharif S. Elmusa’s article “The Ecological Bedouin: Toward Environmental Principles for the Arab Region” and Jehan Farouk Fouad’s and Saeed Alwakeel’s joint article “Representations of the Desert in Silko’s

4 Riegert & Ramsay 2012: 8-9.

5 Sinno 2013: 1-2.

6 Manes (1996: 16) expresses this silence as a “...vast, eerie silence that surrounds our garrulous human subjectivity... producing the ecological crisis that now requires the search for an environmental counterethics.”

7 Slovic 2000: 160.

8 Colla 2010: *Ahramonline*, Wednesday 22nd December 2010. <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/2340.aspx>. Last retrieved August 2013.

9 Hafez 2002: 59. Miriam Cooke has also suggested that al-Kawnī’s “writings” including his novel *Nazf al-ḥajar* “should be considered examples of Arab magical realism” in her article “Magical Realism in Libya” (Cooke 2010: 9).

Ceremony and Al-Koni's *The Bleeding of the Stone*".¹⁰ Elmusa's position is that "the Ecological Bedouin" of al-Kawnī's novel *Nazīf al-ḥajar* is that this character, the protagonist Asouf, might be showing us how to live and perhaps is "meant to save us by saving the animals".¹¹ Fouad and Alwakeel propose that *Nazīf al-ḥajar* "stimulates questions about man's place in the universe" and "the interaction between the human world and the animal world... The desert... also helps ecological... awareness..."¹²

I will argue that al-Kawnī's novel, *Nazīf al-ḥajar*, first published in 1990 and translated by Mayy Jayyusi and Christopher Tingley as *The Bleeding of the Stone* expresses a "search for an environmental counterethics" and the need for present urbanized, global, consumerist society to re-evaluate its life-style.¹³ *Nazīf al-ḥajar* is like al-Kawnī's other novels set in "a desert world" in which the living beings, whether human or non-human, are all struggling to survive, in this desolate environment.

In Al-Koni's fiction, the meaning of life is always tied to struggle. Thus, Al-Koni's novels paradoxically suggest that only here—in the harshest corners of the desert waste—does life emerge in its richest sense.¹⁴

Dimitry Mikulski (Dīmitrī Mīkūlskī) writes in the postscript to *Nazīf al-ḥajar* that by employing Biblical and ingrained motifs and folkloric themes in Christian, Muslim and Jewish tradition

... the author is able to articulate current pressing issues of our age such as the profound, fraternal bond between all living creatures on the face of the earth and prohibiting, even criminalizing the brutal destruction to which nature is exposed and ... the sanctity of life. I am certain that this novel will not leave the reader who acquaints himself with it indifferent [*present author's translation*].

... استطاع الكاتب أن يعبر عن قضايا راهنة وملحة بالنسبة لعصرنا، مثل ذلك الارتباط الأخوي العميق بين الكائنات الحية كلها على وجه الأرض. مثل تحريم، بل تجريم، التخريب الوحشي الذي تتعرض له الطبيعة. و... قداسة الحياة. أنا على يقين أن هذه الرواية لن تترك¹⁵ القارئ، الذي تعرف إليها، لا مبالياً.

Elmusa concludes that *Nazīf al-ḥajar* "is an allegory against modern consumption which is increasingly held as the culprit of environmental degradation". He finds that the character of the Bedouin, the protagonist, emerges as "the conscience of nature".¹⁶ In other words,

10 Elmusa 2013: 9-35; Fouad & Alwakeel 2013: 36-62.

11 Elmusa 2013: 29.

12 Fouad & Alwakeel 2013: 57.

13 al-Kawnī 1990. Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002. Cf. cover blurb on Goodreads: "The novel combines pertinent ecological issues with a moving portrayal of traditional desert life and of the power of the human spirit to resist." http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1145139.The_Bleeding_of_the_Stone. For a backdrop to consumer oriented society on a global scale, as a precursor to what Ursula Heise (2008: 21) treats as "recent recuperations of the concept of 'cosmopolitanism' in the text of debates over nationalism and globalization", consult Zygmunt Bauman 1998 (esp. 69-76 and 79-86).

14 Colla 2010.

15 Mikulski 1992: 155. Elmusa also refers to Biblical allegory and motifs in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* such as the story of Cain who kills his brother Abel and redemption of humankind through the crucifixion of Christ as symbolized in the protagonist's crucifixion on the sacred rock in the scene of the novel (2013: 28, 29).

16 Elmusa 2013: 32-33.

with the reasoning of Elmusa, nature and the non-human are given a voice by the protagonist, the Bedouin Asouf.

In what follows we intend to probe questions such as these further: To which circumstances may we refer the “brutal destruction”, as expressed by Mikulski, of non-human wildlife of the bioregion of desert, planes and mountains to which the reader is exposed?¹⁷ What cultural, social, political or other structures are to be blamed for the extermination of wildlife and the resulting destruction of the ecological system in the Twareg land of southwestern Libya? Looking beyond the general assumption that “modern consumption” is “the culprit of environmental degradation” we ask what solutions are offered to finding balance and harmony between the human and non-human inhabitants of the natural habitat of the bioregion in *Nazīf al-ḥajar*.

Applying ecocritical theory to *Nazīf al-ḥajar*

Nazīf al-ḥajar is part of a wide genre embracing “nature writing”. It projects the problematic of desert wildlife confronted with industrialization, urbanization, population growth and cosmopolitan lifestyles in the global village. The question is how to satisfy an increasing urbanized and globalized population’s cravings for ever growing volumes of meat in a region in which resources of flora and fauna are rapidly dwindling. Against this backdrop we will let the voice of the non-human animate other break the silence with respect to the overwhelming pressures of the intrusion of the “bad magic” of modernity denoting “unbridled technology” and life-styles without concern for ecology or the non-human other.¹⁸ This voice is represented in three animal species particularly affiliated with the bioregion of the novel: camel, moufflon and gazelle.

In his critical survey of ecocritical theoretical approaches Serpil Oppermann finds ecocriticism not being a fully-fledged theory “...but an attitude”. He also finds that ecocritical pioneer Cheryll Glotfelty’s position which prescribes that ecocriticism “should remain loosely constructed, places it on shaky grounds.”

Avoiding to generate its own systematic theory makes ecocriticism potentially fuzzy in its method. Ecocriticism, like the other contemporary theories of literature, needs its own solid systematic theoretical ground if it wants to offer informed discussions.¹⁹

In order to offer a ‘solid systematic’ operationalization of theory to avoid obscurity we will here draw on Oppermann’s observations regarding postmodern ecocritical practice.

17 The terms “bioregion” and “bioregional” are applied as suggested by Buell (2005: 76-77; 135) and denote “...the reconception of ‘place’ ... in critique of provincial and nation-state borders...”(77) and “A bioregion or ecoregion is a geographical area of similar climate were similar ecosystems and groups of species area found on similar sites” (135) all of which may assist in visualizing the transnational boundaries of the desert in which *Nazīf al-ḥajar* is set.

18 Coupe 2000: 255. Discussing an ecocritical essay by Patrick Curry about J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, Laurence Coupe suggests that this novel teaches us that “Modernity, with its bad ‘magic’ of unbridled technology, is not simply to be accepted.”

19 Oppermann 2006: 108.

If ecocriticism positions itself at the cross-roads of an ecocentric postmodern theory and environmental philosophies it can achieve a broader perspective, and generate critically subversive and challenging interpretations of those literary texts dealing with representations of nonhuman nature, as well as critiques of authority in which nature still holds a politically and discursively powerless position.²⁰

With Oppermann we set out from a postmodern ecocritical reading of *Nazīf al-ḥajar* which “fosters not only ecological perceptions of our connection with the natural world...but also contests the dominant ideological discourses behind various representations of nature.”²¹ We will pattern our analyses closely on Hubert Zapf’s critical model of cultural ecology.²² This model distinguishes three discursive functions of literature: (1) *The culture critical (kulturkritischer Metadiskurs)*²³ meaning that literature criticizes oppressive structures; (2) *The imaginative (imaginativer Gegendiskurs)*,²⁴ meaning that literature gives a voice to what these structures suppress and (3) *the reintegrative structures (reintegrativer Interdiskurs)*,²⁵ meaning that literature provides a testing-ground for alternative forms of cultural organization while integrating suppressed elements in the existing cultural system. According to Zapf, all narrative literature holds this triadic structure.²⁶ Further, Timo Müller’s understanding of Zapf’s model as too great in scope as “to grasp all the different forms of text-culture interaction ...” has guided us to restrict our questioning to the discursive contribution of *Nazīf al-ḥajar* with respect to interaction between three characters in the novel and the three aforementioned animals affiliated with the bioregion of desert, mountain and planes.²⁷

Many questions pertaining to the ecology of wildlife arise while reading this novel. Our concern is framed by such cultural structures, traditions and circumstances that trigger extermination of wildlife in the Twareg land of southwestern Libya. We set in motion the postmodern methodological implementation of ecocritical analysis as called for by Oppermann by applying Zapf’s set of discursive functions to central characters of the novel. These are the protagonist, Asouf (*Asūf*), a Bedouin hermit herdsman trying live outside the delimitations of modernized, urbanized life; Asouf’s father representing the

20 Oppermann 2006: 124. It could well be argued that an ecocentric reading of *Nazīf al-ḥajar* makes sense in as much as that the “web of relations” in the bioregion of the desert in which the novel is set constitutes an “intrinsic dynamic, interconnected web of relations” with ‘no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate’ (Eckersley 1992:49 in Buell 2005: 137). This kind of interconnectedness between the animate and inanimate is particularly vivid in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* when Asouf and the rock with its sacred painting merge, Asouf’s blood gushing forth over the face of priest and moufflon, engraved in the great stone. This line of analysis will not be further pursued here.

21 Oppermann 2006: 118.

22 Timo Müller, who has applied Zapf’s triadic model in his ecocritical reading of “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe, also inspires the methodological approach in this article. Müller 2011: 78.

23 Zapf 2002: 64. “Systemrepräsentation als *kulturkritischer Metadiskurs*.”

24 Zapf 2002: 65. “Inszenierung des Ausgegrenzten als *imaginativer Gegendiskurs*.”

25 Zapf 2002: 65-66. “Aufeinander beziehen des Ausgegrenzten und des Kulturellen Realitätssystems als *reintegrativer Interdiskurs*.”

26 Müller 2011: 76.

27 Müller 2011: 83.

former generation and its (traditional) life-style; their Libyan compatriot Cain (*Qābīl*); and the aformationed non-human representatives of the desert fauna (camel, moufflon and gazelle). While conducting our analysis we will pose the following questions: (1) Which oppressive structures are revealed? (2) How do those suppressed make their voices heard? and (3) What alternative, reintegrative forms of organization emerge? The first two questions reveal oppressive “ecological perceptions” and in which ways such “dominant ideological discourses” are opposed by the oppressed. As explained by Oppermann:

The postmodern ecocritical theory fosters not only ecological perceptions of our connection with the natural world, and perceives nature as a process of unfolding and dynamic flow, but also contests the dominant ideological discourses behind various representations of nature.²⁸

In other words, the first two questions ask about the nature of the “dominant ideological discourses” which prompt each character’s representation of and activities towards the fauna. They also clarify the results of these activities and in which ways they are opposed and by whom.

While posing the third question we endeavor to perceive any solution that these same characters may project in word or action which may lead to a measure of ecological harmony between humans and the non-human other desert inhabitant.

In the following section, titled “Oppressive structures”, we seek to reveal human actions oppressive to nature. We ask in which ways traditional and cultural norms as well as individual needs structure the life-style and actions of the three afore mentioned main characters in *Nazīf al-ḥajar*; Asouf, his father and Cain. Thereafter, in “The voice of the suppressed”, we demonstrate some ways in which the voice of the non-human other, represented by the camel, moufflon and gazelle is made heard. In the two final sections, “Alternative forms of organization” and “Concluding remarks”, we discuss whether alternative, “reintegrative” ways of organization may be gleaned from activities and ideational perceptions evolving from observations in the previous sections.

Oppressive structures

Taking on the first question of criticism of oppressive cultural structures we begin with the central theme of this novel – that of hunting the near extinct moufflon in the mountain desert of southern Libya. The protagonist, Asouf, is a goat herder who lives alone in the wilderness after having seen the members of his family die one after the other. He has shouldered the role of guardian and custodian of an ancient Twareg sanctuary in a remote, mountainous part of the desert. He is also one of the few trackers who know the whereabouts of the remaining moufflon in the high mountain terrain. His is a society in which manliness may be gauged by the number and size of wild game a man can present his family with after a day’s arduous hunt.

A certain experience which Asouf’s father passes on to his son has etched itself into his conscience. This is the oft repeated story of when Asouf’s father pursued a certain moufflon. He had pursued the moufflon on the lowlands, a topography in which the animal

²⁸ Oppermann 2006: 118.

could not hide. To escape from Asouf's father the moufflon swiftly moved into the rocky, mountain hills. But his escape came too late and rather than falling in the hands of Asouf's father, who had wielded his rifle, the moufflon leapt from a cliff, broke his neck thus taking his own life, as recounted to Asouf.

When he saw that I'd taken my rifle, he climbed the rocks in a single swift movement, then leaped to the ground and broke his neck. The blood gushed from his nostrils, and, after he was dead, his eyes were open and that strange look was still there—the mixture of wretchedness, rancor and helplessness... I can't get that strange, possessed *waddān* out of my mind. How could I forget that fearful, despairing look he gave me when he saw the rifle in my hands and knew all hope of escape was gone?²⁹

وعندما شاهدني أحتكم إلى البندقية، تسلق الصخور في حركة خاطفة، وقفز إلى الأرض، فكسر رقبته. سال الدم من خياشيمه، ومات من دون أن تختفي تلك النظرة الغريبة عن عينيه المفتوحتين: مزيج من الشقاء والحقد والعجز... لا أستطيع أن أنسى ذلك الودان المسكون. من الصعب أن أنسى نظرة الفزع واليأس التي رمقتي بها عندما رأى البندقية في يدي وفقد الأمل في النجاة.³⁰

Later, Asouf's father, himself, dies a tragic death while trying to hunt a great moufflon ram without his rifle. The story behind his death is that he once was saved by a moufflon that he had been pursuing. During the hunt he had slipped from a mountain precipice and found himself dangling "between heaven and earth." But this same beast whom he had been hunting, had approached him and saved him from a certain death by pulling him up to safety. This incident made Asouf's father swear a solemn oath to never hunt the moufflon again and not to teach his sons how to hunt this evasive, intelligent and majestic animal.

Nevertheless, at a time when the couple is starving and they are expecting a child, they see no other way to save themselves than by killing a moufflon. Shedding tears the night before the hunt the father sets out in the morning to return with a sizeable moufflon. The family is able to satisfy their hunger but the father remains uneasy, aware that the "spirit of the mountain" will surely punish him for breaking his oath and killing a moufflon. This is when he resolves to never teach his sons the exacting method of hunting this beast. His resolve does not save him from punishment though and one day he does not return from one of his excursions in the wilderness.

Uneasy about the whereabouts of his father, Asouf follows his trail and finds that he has pursued a moufflon who has led him up to the steep, rugged cliffs above a deep ridge. He climbs to the top of the rocky edge of the wadi. Out of breath and with his nostrils filled with the stench of a corpse he looks down and sees his father lying dead on a smooth stone, his neck broken from the fall.

At one point Asouf himself cannot resist his desire to hunt one of the glorious moufflon himself and takes on the pursuit. He manages to throw a rope over the horns of the beast who drags him along the rocks and hills up the mountain until he falls from a precipice down a steep mountain side. Clinging to a cliff with his bare fingers he hangs in the sun over the wadi desperately trying to keep himself awake and alive. In the dark hours of the night he feels the rough edges of a rope touching his hand. He looks up to find the moufflon

29 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 20.

30 In this article quotes in Arabic refer to al-Kawnī, *Nazīf al-hajar*, Third Impression, 1992. For quote see al-Kawnī 1992: 25-26.

having lowered the rope to him. Asouf is saved by this moufflon who looks him straight in the eyes. This is when he perceives his own father in the eyes of this moufflon. From now on he will not eat meat.³¹ He is left perplexed as to what he should believe. Who saved him from a certain death while hanging over the precipice? Was it the hunted moufflon or was it his father who appeared in the shape of the beast?

Oh, God! It was the *waddān*. The same *waddān*. His victim and executioner. But which of them was the victim, which the executioner? Which of them was human, which animal?³²

يا ربي. إنه الودان. نفس الودان. ضحيته. جلده. من منهما الضحية؟ من منهما الإنسان؟ من منهما الودان؟³³

When “a devil called man” arrives on the scene other discursive and cultural structures impose themselves on the desert fauna. These are illustrated with city dwellers arriving in a Land Rover and equipped with machine guns the central characters of whom are Cain Adam (*Qābīl Ādam*) and Masoud al-Dabbashi (*Mas‘ūd al-Dabbāshī*).³⁴ Cain is heavily addicted to meat and none of the two can survive comfortably without meat. They have learned that the person who can lead them to the mythical moufflon is Asouf. Asouf tries to avert their attention from hunting the moufflon, offering them one of his goats instead. But they insist, scoffing at the goat meat and threatening Asouf that they will not leave until he has led them to the moufflon.

The main feature of the sanctuary of which Asouf is the custodian is a rock with a painting of a mysterious priest wearing a mask. The priest is touching a moufflon standing alongside him with a dignified air, head raised high like the priest’s. In the final scene of the novel in which Asouf is strung with ropes over this painting by Cain, as if crucified, the face of the priest, the moufflon and Asouf merge. Cain climbs up the rock from its lower back side, knife in hand, seizes the beard of Asouf, who is hanging over the painting of priest and moufflon. With the practiced hand of one who has slaughtered every gazelle in the region he cuts the throat of Asouf whose blood gushes over the rock. The great stone with the painting pulsates with the blood of Asouf and figuratively, with the blood of his father and the moufflon who become indistinguishable.

The ambivalence experienced by Asouf and his father towards killing of moufflon springs from a number of factors. Luring temptations vested in hunting and eating this mythological, majestic mountain beast (supposedly extinct since 1627 as the reader learns from the character of American Captain John Parker) are linked to the challenges involved

31 Questioning the eating of meat is a theme which surfaces in other works by al-Kawnī. Cf. al-Kawnī 1999: 40 No. 100. *Amthāl al-zamān* 100.

تُبدى لجليس دهشتك عن إنسان يأكل جثث الحيوانات، فيصاب بالغثيان شنوءةً وتقرزاً واستنكاراً، ثم لا يلبث أن يدعوك بعد قليل إلى مائدة سخية بانواع اللحوم. إبراهيم الكوني: أمثال الزمان 100

You express your dismay over people who eat animal carcasses to your partner at the table. Full of loathing, disgust and disapproval he becomes nauseated. Shortly thereafter, he invites you to a table loaded with a generous spread of meat.

32 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 60.

33 al-Kawnī 1992: 70.

34 Elmusa suggests that “the figure of Cain reifies the unquenchable drive for game, lust for human flesh, and greed for gold – all that is anti-environmental and anti-aesthetic (2013: 28)”.

in hunting it, its venerated standing among the ancient deities and the attraction of its tasty meat. Indeed, hunger is a real existential factor pressing on the father to hunt the moufflon for its meat. But he is also checked by his convictions that moufflon is the “Spirit of the mountain.” In fact, the moufflon is closely related to, or even an incarnation of, an ancient tribal deity to whom Asouf and his father are bound by an oath not to kill. This means that killing a moufflon has become a taboo and a person who challenges this taboo by hunting and killing this animal must be provided with protecting amulets or else, expect repercussions.

For all his estrangement from nature and the beasts, Cain is imbued with respect for – or fear of – the traditional beliefs, wisdom of the ancients and the powers of nature. At long last, after finally having procured the meat of a moufflon and having dined on it, his companion, Masoud, reminds him of the necessity to protect oneself from the revenge of the powerful spirit of the moufflon with strong amulets. At this, Cain is frightened.

‘Why didn’t you tell me?’ Cain shouted. ‘I didn’t know you needed amulets when you had a dinner with *waddān*!’

‘Everyone knows that,’ Masoud retorted.... ‘The *waddān* has the spirit of the mountain in it. Anyone who eats it has to protect himself with an amulet.’³⁵

صاح قائل: ‘استغفلموني. لم يقل لي أحد أن الأحبية ضرورية لوليمة الودان.

قال مسعود: ‘ومن لا يعرف هذا؟ ... الودان مسكون روح الجبال ومن ذاقه مرة لا بد أن يتسلح بالحجاب.’³⁶

This is as far as the moufflon is concerned. But meat can also be provided with the gazelle. Asouf has heard his father repeat his soliloquy over the gazelles on numerous occasions:

‘How beautiful their shape is, their bodies so graceful... Magic overflows from their eyes. They’re the loveliest creatures in the world. They’re the spirit of the sandy desert, its vast stretches, with its calm and composure and the magic of its moon. We see the impossible in the gazelle, we see freedom ...’ Tears would glisten in his eyes, which he’d cover with his veil. Then he’d go on, through his tears: “I just don’t understand. Why should this wicked creature man chase an angel, to kill it and fill his belly with? Would man die of hunger if he never killed a gazelle?”³⁷

‘ما أجمل تكوينها! ما أرشق قامتها! ... ما أنعم جسمها! السحر يفيض من عينيها. أجمل مخلوق في الدنيا. روح الصحراء الرملية. فيه امتدادها وهديرها وسكينتها وسحر قمرها. فيه المحال. فيه الحرية... ثم تتلألأ مقلناه بالدموع، بحجبها بلثامه قبل أن يضيف بصوت تخنقه العبرة: ‘لماذا على الإنسان المجرم أن يطارد ملاكاً كهذا ليقتله ويحشرو به جوفه؟ إذا لم يقتل الإنسان غزالاً هل يموت من الجوع؟’³⁸

As for Cain’s relationship to the gazelle, the reader learns that

35 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 122.

36 al-Kawnī 1992: 132.

37 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 45.

38 al-Kawnī 1992: 56.

Cain had little thought for the rules of nature. His concern was to hunt as many gazelles as he could, and so quench the flames between his teeth and calm his belly, then, sell the rest to the American officer at the camp.³⁹

ولكن قابيل لا يفكر كثيراً في الإخلال بقوانين الطبيعة. ما يهمله هو أن يصطاد أكبر عدد ممكن من الغزلان ليطفى لهيب أسنانه، ويسكت جوفه، ويبيع الباقي لضابط المعسكر الأمريكي.⁴⁰

A foundling, his parents having been killed when he was still an infant, he is raised on gazelle blood. When his adoptive father, a merchant, one day sees his adopted son gobbling up raw meat, blood dripping from his hands, he decides he must consult an African soothsayer. The soothsayer spells out Cain's fate in Hausa:

'Cain, son of Adam', the soothsayer intoned, 'you will never have your fill of meat, or of blood, until you eat of Adam's flesh and drink from Adam's blood.'⁴¹

قال [العراف] بصوت واضح:

'يا قابيل يا ابن آدم، لن تشبع من لحم، ولن تروي من دم، حتى تأكل من لحم آدم، وتشرب من دم آدم.'⁴²

At this, the merchant, whose name is Adam, is profoundly disturbed and loudly protests to the soothsayer:

'Have his fill of my own flesh, you mean?' The magician remained unperturbed. 'From Adam, I said,' he went on. 'I didn't say from your own flesh.'⁴³

'يشبع من لحمي أنا؟'

قال الساحر دون أن يبدو عليه الضيق: 'قلت من لحم آدم ولم أقل من لحمك أنت.'⁴⁴

Figuratively speaking, Cain does, indeed, at one point devour the flesh of "Adam" – the flesh of a human being – that of his own sister who has taken on the form of a gazelle. Cain's measures to slaughter every gazelle until the last one has taken on gross proportions. When the company in the helicopter spots a gazelle doe with her fawn they set out to chase it. Her golden fleece glitters in the sun as she scrambles through the muzzle of a cave between narrow cliffs to take shelter. She stands in front of her young one to protect it. She shivers and her golden fleece glitters.

The Grasshopper hovered right over the entrance to the crack. The pilot shouted: 'Fire!' Masoud and John followed suit, yelling in unison: 'Fire!' Cain was trembling, like the gazelle, and their eyes met.⁴⁵

...

39 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 88.

40 al-Kawnī 1992: 98.

41 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 83.

42 al-Kawnī 1992: 92.

43 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 82.

44 al-Kawnī 1992: 92.

45 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 118.

It was the first time they'd heard a gazelle howling like a wolf. Then she dropped to the ground and lay on her right side, craned her head towards the *qibla*. The frightening expression hadn't left her eyes. Cain couldn't approach, but the rest ran toward her. A knife glittered in Masoud's hand. That night, Cain, the son of Adam, didn't just kill his sister. He ate her flesh too.⁴⁶

حلَّق الجندب فوق فوهة التجويف باتضبط. صرح الزنجي:

'Fire!'

ثم تبعه مسعود وجون في صوت واحد: 'أطلق النار!'

هو أيضاً يرتعد. صوب فوهة البندقية نحو التجويف، فالتقت نظراتهما... لأول مرة يُسمع غزال يعوي كالذئب. ثم هوت على الأرض، ورقدت على جنبها الأيمن، ومدت رأسها نحو القبلة. بقي التعبير المخيف في عينيها، فلم يستطع قابيل أن يقترب. توافزت الجماعة نحوها. في يد مسعود لمع السكين. في تلك الليلة، لم يقتل قابيل ابن آدم أخته فقط، ولكنه أكل لحمها أيضاً.⁴⁷

Cain's pursuit of the gazelle grows to such an extreme that it occupies him completely and becomes the sole factor around which he structures his life. This obsession with hunting gazelle to fill his need for enormous daily rations of meat extinguishes any concern for nature and the non-human species inhabiting it. All measures of husbandry or welfare for the living beings are disregarded. The reader understands that this kind of shortsighted and insatiable exploitation will not only harm the gazelles but cause ecological imbalance and ultimately leads to starvation among both humans and non-humans. The following passage summarizes the peak of Cain's obsessive rampagings in the mountain desert to kill the gazelles with his comrade Masoud and assisted by the Americans, their vehicles and weapons.

As the number of slain animals grew, so did the amount of meat he ate. He'd breakfast on one gazelle, lunch on another and have a third for his supper, with still one more if happened to have a guest, some passing herdsman, perhaps, or a merchant from a caravan. He never dreamed that one day the gazelles would become so scarce, he never dreamed this beast, with which the desert had once abounded, could ever die out. Only then did he remember the small unborn calves he'd taken from slain gazelles—especially that gazelle whose calf he'd killed in her belly, and who'd complained to heaven against him. But he forgot all that soon enough, still scouring the Hamada in search of the fleeting herds, who'd retreated southward now, seeking refuge in the heights of the Hasawna mountains.⁴⁸

ومع ازدياد الذبائح، ازداد استهلاكه للحم. الآن يفطر بشاة ويتغذى بشاة ويتعشى بشاة وربما أكثر من شاة إذا استضاف أحد الضيوف أو عابري السبيل من رعاة أو رحل أو تجار القوافل. ولم يتصور في يوم من الأيام أن يتناقص الغزال إلى هذا الحد. لم يتصور أن هذا الحيوان الذي تعج به الصحراء يمكن أن ينقرض. عندما فقط تذكر الأجنة التي يستخرجها من جوف الأنثى و تذكر - بشكل خاص - الغزاة

46 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 119.

47 al-Kawni 1992: 129-130.

48 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 90.

الصريعة التي قتل جنينها في بطنها فاشتكته إلى السماء. ولكنه ما لبث أن نسي وواصل تمشيطة
للحمادة بحثاً عن الرؤوس الشاردة التي تراجعت إلى الجنوب واحتمت بمرتفعات جبل الحساونة.⁴⁹

In other words, it is not a question of hunting only the moufflon and with conventional methods. By employing an American Grasshopper helicopter with its pilot and using machine guns Cain and Masoud slaughter all of the gazelles in the region in a near frantic manner. Consider the following lines describing the scene in which Cain chases a fleeing gazelle with his Land Rover.

And there he was now, exhausted broken, sweat soaking his body, his lips covered with foam. He could endure no longer, and yet still he endured, endured adversity... He races straight on, through the open spaces, disdaining the ignobility, the shame of breaching the rules of racing. He chooses heroism before the shifts of cunning, rejects trickery and craft, keeps firmly to the path of chivalry. Poor gazelle! He doesn't see how this devilish machine is a betrayal of nature, breaching the rules of noble conflict and seeking to win the day through the ugliest trickery.⁵⁰

هذا هو. منك. محطم. العرق يغمر جسمه، والزبد يعلو شفثيه. يجن. يطير. لم يعد يقوي على الاستمرار، ولكنه يصبر ويصبر، ويصبر على البلاء... وأتما يمضي في خط مستقيم، عبر العراء السمع، معتقداً أن الأخلال بقواعد السباق يخالف النبيل ويجلب العار. يختار البطولة على الخبيث والمداورة. يرفض الحيلة والخديعة يفضل الالتزام بأسلوب الفرسان. مسكين الغزال البري. لا يدري أن مجرد استخدام هذه الآلة الشيطانية خيانة للطبيعة وإخلال بقواعد الصراع النبيل واحتكام إلى أشنع أنواع الخديعة.⁵¹

Against this background it does not seem to be a foregone conclusion to ask, with the words of Elmusa, whether the character of Cain represents “the dark side of our ancient human nature.”⁵² However, strange as it may seem, the oppressive cultural and normative structures and bodily cravings ruling the activities of Cain are not void of ambivalence although he ultimately succumbs to his carnal requirement to devour exceeding amounts of meet. Racing his Land Rover, machinegun in hand, Cain is callous but not completely unemotional when hunting the gazelle with his vehicle at top speed while the animal is fleeing for its life. Consider the following lines in which Cain is shown not to be void of feelings towards this graceful, small antelope.

There was the gazelle you'd dreamed, as all desert children do, of holding in your hands. You'd dreamed of stroking his graceful neck, touching his golden hair, looking into his sad, intelligent eyes, kissing him on the forehead and clutching him to your heart.⁵³

49 al-Kawnī 1992: 100. The author has annotated this passage as follows: “Al-Hasawna (*al-Ḥasāwna*) mountain is a mountain range stretching from the south of *al-Ḥamāda al-Ḥamrā'* and separates it from the sandy desert in *Fazzān*.”

50 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 88.

51 al-Kawnī 1992: 98.

52 Elmusa 2013: 28.

53 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 88.

هذا هو الغزال الذي حلمت، كما حلم كل أطفال الصحراء، أن تمسكه بين يديك، وتربت على رقبته الرشيقة، تلامس شعره الذهبي، تتأمل عينيه الذكيتين الشقيقتين، وتقبل في جبينه، وتضمه إلى صدرك.⁵⁴

In fact, during a period of his life Cain even resolves to refrain from eating meat. After a month of abstaining from meat Cain's appearance has changed and he is struck by bouts of sickness and seizures.

...Cain decided to give up eating meat. After a month, his whole face had changed and grown pale, his body began to droop, his cheeks started jutting out, and he suffered from headaches and nervous seizures. Sometimes a violent shudder would pass through him, his lips would be covered with foam, and he'd drop on the ground, convulsing furiously like a slaughtered chicken.⁵⁵

...قرّر قابيل أن يترك أكل اللحم. مضى شهر على قراره فتبدلت ملامحه. شحب لونه، وذبل جسمه وبرزت وجنتاه، وعانى من الصداع والنوبات العصبية التي تشبه الصرع. تتنابه رعدة عنيفة، ويعلو الزبد شفتيه، ويسقط على الأرض وهو ينتصف في هزات عنيفة كما تنتفض الدجاجة الذبيحة.⁵⁶

But Cain's efforts to give up eating meat are in vain for he is, as already explained, addicted to meat without recourse. Not even Masoud's efforts to cure his companion's addiction with traditional remedies such as green, desert tea are of any avail.

Masoud would rush to sprinkle water on him, then fetch him a cup of green tea – tea, he believed, could cure any addiction, even an addiction to meat... But it was all in vain, as Masoud finally realized the night he was woken by his friend's weeping and lamentation.

'I can't,' he was crying. 'I can't, I tell you. I can't take it anymore!'⁵⁷

يهرع مسعود ويرشه بالماء، ويأتي له بكأس الشاي الأخضر ظناً منه أن الشاي قادر أن يشفي أي /إدمان حتى لو كان إدمان اللحوم طالما يعالج المدمنين على ... ولكن مسعوداً أدرك عقم عمله عندما استيقظ في إحدى الليالي على صوت صديقه وهو يبكي بصوت مسموع ويردد غائياً: 'لا أستطيع. لا أستطيع. لا أستطيع. لم أعد أحتمل.'⁵⁸

After this experience with heavy abstinence symptoms Cain's raving hunger for meat takes on immense proportions.

With no gazelles left and desperate to find meat, Cain, Masoud and his Western aides at all costs must find the moufflon. They press their tracker, Asouf, to lead them to the remaining individuals of this magnificent mountain beast. Asouf is deeply reluctant to help them and therefore struggles to hide all tracks of the moufflon. But to no avail. At long last, the men find the moufflon and take Asouf's life.

54 al-Kawnī 1992: 97.

55 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 85-86.

56 al-Kawnī 1992: 95.

57 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 86.

58 al-Kawnī 992: 95-96.

Three lifestyles with their own cultural and existential structures

Asouf's father, representing the former generation, will not hunt the near extinct moufflon. Further, though the plains are milling with large flocks of gazelles, he will only hunt the occasional, solitary gazelle – never more than one at a time and never a pregnant doe or a doe with a fawn. This emerges as common sense, a kind of the sensitivity towards nature, it seems. The reader senses that this law is robust and overrides all other laws and powers against which no man may transgress. This fact is emphasized in as much as that neither the Qur'an nor the magicians or the soothsayers have in their power to avert the revengeful spirit of the dead gazelles. In other words, the traditional normative structures guiding the actions of Asouf's father with respect to hunting and killing gazelles for meat request of him restraint and sound management of the resources. Unrestricted exploitation and killing for the sake of satisfying indulgent cravings are forbidden.

Asouf's experiences with the moufflon, the voracious incursion of modernity in the shape of Cain, his weapons, equipment and insatiable craving for meat and lust for killing prompt Asouf to reassess the value of the non-human other on the ecological scale altogether. He represents the present generation and the circumstances and normative structures which had ruled the life of his father have been altered to some degree. The majestic moufflon, extinct or hiding in the high mountains or perhaps only appearing in Asouf's phantasy, has taken on the shape of his father. Asouf cannot and will not kill his father. Furthermore, his father's homage to moufflon and gazelle have given Asouf ample reason to give up eating meat of any kind, whether from moufflon or gazelle. He is clear over the fact that he must protect the moufflon at all costs, something which he also does, even until death. Asouf tries to cover up the trail of the moufflon but to no avail. In the end the men spot one of them and Cain who has lost his confidence in and patience with Asouf, swiftly cuts his throat while the shepherd is hanging, as if crucified, on the rock of the sanctuary, his face uniting with the face of the moufflon in the cave painting.

Cain and his companions, Western and Arab, illustrate the fluidity of the boundaries of the global village of today. A large, cosmopolitan humanity whose individuals, in their capacity as Bauman's consumerist globetrotters roam the planet illustrate Heise's ecocritical point that "environmentalism needs to foster an understanding of how a wide variety of both natural and cultural places and processes are connected and shape each other around the world."⁵⁹ Asouf is in the hands of these men – and of the city dwellers at large whether Arab or Western. Although he himself will not taste meat, in order to survive he must trade in his goats for the grain that he needs to feed himself.

Cain's fate is also bound to the traditional cultural structures but he is alienated from them. He is impressed by the traditional beliefs of the tribal peoples and herdsmen roaming the deserts and oases. (Remember how frightened he is after having eaten moufflon without amulet protection!) But the normative and existential structures ruling Cain's actions may be referred to his upbringing in a well-off merchant family with meat-eating on a daily basis. He also seems to be doomed to a physical addiction to this kind of nourishment – something which may be inferred by what we learn about his childhood eating habits and the prediction of the African soothsayer. His indulgence is propped up by imported goods from the West; the four-wheel drive vehicle, machine guns, a helicopter with a pilot all of

⁵⁹ Bauman 1990: esp. 79-85. Heise 2008: 21.

which are hardly acceptable for conventional hunting in the major parts of the industrialized and urbanized world.

All of these factors seem to herald the last great gazelle hunt in the story which takes place with Cain, Masoud, the American captain John Parker and the Afro-American pilot of their Grasshopper helicopter.

The voice of the suppressed

Many aspects of nature are made to express themselves in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* such as 'desert', 'rocks', 'mountains', 'planes', 'wādī', 'water', 'flowers', 'herbs', 'wild ox', 'waddān', 'gazelle', 'camel', 'wolves' and 'goat'. In this section we will restrict ourselves to ask in which ways the voice of three species of the non-human inhabitants of nature make themselves heard in the narrative; that of the camel, the moufflon and the gazelle.⁶⁰

These non-human species express themselves and make themselves understood to Asouf and his father in a variety of ways. In fact, Asouf's father, who we refer to the former generation, articulates the wisdom of those who lived in and of nature and therefore were compelled to adjust to the terms of nature and its inhabitants. In contrast, Cain and the city-dwellers have lost not only their respect for nature but above all their sensibility and ability to understand and communicate with the non-human species inhabiting the biosphere. Despite this, as we have seen, the desert fauna even communicates with Cain a few times.

Camel

Asouf and camel are figuratively merged in as much as that the reader learns that his father has "turned him into a camel." Instead of approaching a caravan passing their abode to acquire some necessities, Asouf stays out of its way. Whether consciously or not his mother is clear over the fact that Asouf is not a "real man."

He returned home defeated, to his mother's bitter scolding. Weeping she said he was like a girl. Then she said: 'It's not your fault. Your father, God rest his soul, turned you into a camel frightened by men's shadows.'⁶¹

عاد إلى البيت مهزوماً، فسمع اتهامات قاسية من الأم. وصفته بأنه بنت، بكت، وقالت: 'الذئب ليس ذئبك. المرحوم هو الذي خلق منك بغيراً يفزعه ظلّ الأنس.'⁶²

Actually, Asouf's father has taught his son to show respect for and kindness to this valuable animal. The father owns a camel of great value, beauty and strength which he caresses and whispers words of endearment to.

He'd talk to the beast day and night alike, at dawn before he prayed the dawn prayer, at noon before he started eating his lunch, at night before he went to sleep. He'd fondle the hairs on the camel's body, stroke his long neck, and

60 'Desert', 'water', 'forest' and 'trees' are all components of the natural environment which are at the center of attention in numerous proverbial words of wisdom presented in al-Kawnī's *Amthāl al-Zamān* (*Sleepless eye* tr. Roger Allen, selected by Hartmut Fähndrich, in press 2013). Translations of selected sayings in German and French are available.

61 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 28.

62 al-Kawnī 1992: 37.

with the most tender care, wipe the foam from the big, dangling lips. Then, he'd hug the beast's head and say: 'Did you ever, in the whole desert, see a more beautiful camel? Did you ever see one that was more intelligent and sensible?'⁶³

...

The piebald's the beloved of all the she-camels in the Sahara. Yesterday I had a token of admiration and praise, passed on by a roving herdsman, from the comely she-camels of Tamanghast. They'd sent him a halter, decorated with different colours and embroidered with gold threads... because he's the noblest, most beautiful camel in all the Sahara.⁶⁴

يحاوره في الليل والنهار، في الفجر قبل أن يصلي، وفي الظهر قبل تناول طعام الغداء، وفي الليل قبل أن يهجع للنوم... ثم يحتضن رأس المهري ويردد:

'هل رأيت في الصحراء جملاً أجمل منه؟ هل عرفت أطوع وأصبر وأشجع؟ هل رأيت أذكى وأعقل؟ يا ربي ما أجمله، هذا الأبلق!... بالأمس تلقيت من راع عابر وصية إعجاب وثناء من نوق "تامنغست" الحسنات. بعثن إليه زماماً جديداً مزركشاً بالألوان ومطرزاً بخيوط الذهب... لأنه أجمل وأنبل جمل في الصحراء الكبرى كلها.'⁶⁵

This individual camel is not only "intelligent", then, but also "sensible", positioned on the same level as Asouf who has "been turned into a camel".

Mouflon

As for the moufflon, Asouf's father is not only impressed by its beauty and strength. He also fears and admires the intelligence of this desert animal something which he expresses on several occasions:

'I fear the *waddān*. ' The *waddān* was intelligent.

أنا أخاف الودان... الودان أيضاً ذكي.⁶⁶

'I fear the *waddān*,' his father said. And he was right. Hadn't his end come at the *waddān*'s hands?

...أنا أخاف الودان. لم يخطئ في أحساسه. نهايته كانت على يديه.⁶⁷

Shortly before his death, as a result of pursuing a moufflon without his rifle and in breach of his vow never to hunt this beast, Asouf's father admonishes his son.

Don't think animals can't understand... just because they can't speak the way you do. They're cleverer than either of us!⁶⁸

'هل تظن أن الحيوان لا يفهم لمجرد أنه لا يقدر أن يتكلم مثلك؟ إنه أذكى منك ومني!'⁶⁹

63 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 43.

64 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 44.

65 al-Kawnī 1992: 55.

66 al-Kawnī 1990: 56. Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 45.

67 al-Kawnī 1990: 57. Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 47.

68 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 43.

Asouf's father is convinced that the battle between himself and the beast are on near equal terms; were it not for the rifle the moufflon would have the upper hand in the mountainous terrain. He is also certain that the moufflon is aware of this fact and reflects on it when he sees that hope is lost; "How could I forget that fearful, despairing look he gave me when he saw the rifle in my hands and knew all hope of escape was gone?"⁷⁰ As a matter of fact, the shame of giving up to the enemy seems to be equally unbearable for human and beast:

It's no shame to die with your hands around a rifle. The shame is when you die bound like a lamb. The shame is to fall alive in the enemy's hands, to be a prisoner.⁷¹

أن تموت وفي يدك بندقية ليس عاراً. العار أن تموت مثل الخروف. العار أن تقع في يد العدو حياً. أن تقع في الأسر. لا يقع في الأسر إلا الجبان أو الأعزل من السلاح.⁷²

In keeping with this traditional Bedouin sense of the necessity to preserve ones dignity the moufflon will not give himself up by letting Asouf's father shoot him. And what is more, by taking his one life he has not been slaughtered according to the ritual of *dhabīḥa* and can therefore not be eaten. "Did you slaughter it," Asouf asked, and make its flesh lawful? "How could I slaughter an animal that had killed itself?" his father responds.⁷³

The moufflon even takes on powerful, mythic proportions, merging with the deity to whom Asouf and his father pay homage before the great rock painting in the cave of the distant mountain shrine.

There was the giant priest depicted over the full height of the rock, hiding his face behind the mysterious mask. His hand touched the *waddān* that stood there alongside him, its air both dignified and stubborn, its head raised like the priest's.⁷⁴

على طول الصخرة الهائلة ينهض الكاهن العملاق، يخفي وجهه بذلك القناع الغامض، ويلامس بيده اليمنى الودان الذي يقف بجواره مهيباً، عنيداً، يرفع رأسه، مثله مثل الكاهن، نحو الأفق البعيد، حيث تشرق الشمس وتسكت أشعتها في وجهيهما كل يوم.⁷⁵

When he has finished Asouf's father is satisfied that his prayers have been accepted.

Praying before the Guardian Idol he finished his prayer and leaned back his head, still gazing at the wall soaring above him. The master jinni was blessing him. From behind the veil that strange look expressed contentment and calm. The majestic *waddān*, crowned with its two curved horns, was in harmony with its god; the prayer had, it appeared, and the *waddān* had found favour with the deity of the shrine.⁷⁶

69 al-Kawnī 1992: 55.

70 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 20.

71 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 25.

72 al-Kawnī 1992: 32.

73 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 25.

74 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 2.

75 al-Kawnī 1992: 8.

76 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 7.

أنهى صلاته، وألقى برأسه إلى الوراء متابعاً الجدار العملاق المنتصب فوق رأسه. كبير الجنّ يباركه. نظراته الغامضة من خلف القناع تنطق بالرضى والسكينة. والودان المهيب، المتوجّح بقرنين ملتويين، أيضاً يوافق إلهه ويوحى بأنه قبل الصلاة وفاز رب المعبد.⁷⁷

Asouf's father had vowed not to hunt the moufflon and his oath had prevented his son from doing so as well. He was aware that after having breached his oath his life would be endangered. But he was not the only one aware of this oath. The moufflon, the "Spirit of the mountains", was equally aware of this pact between the human hunter and his own kin.

Vows are no light matter, and the *waddān* knows that. How could he not know it, when he's the spirit of the mountain?⁷⁸

النذور ليست مزحة. والودان يعرف ذلك. وكيف لا يعرف وهو روح الجبال؟⁷⁹

In fact, the moufflon is in direct contact with the omniscient and omnipotent creator and as such may be reckoned as more powerful and nobler than a human. Remember, "... he's the Spirit of the mountains" and

Spirits are from the Spirit of God, and they see everything. They know what man keeps hidden deep in his heart, and that's why they're so utterly, amazingly sure of themselves.⁸⁰

الأرواح من روح الله وبكل شيء عليم. تعلم ما يبطنه الإنسان في القلب. هذا سبب الجرأة الإطمئنان المدهش.⁸¹

Gazelle

As for the gazelle the reader has already learned about many of its enchanting features. Particularly in Cain's endeavor to kill as many gazelles as he can we are made aware of the voice of the gazelle. In one scene he has singled one out for the hunt and while pursuing it with the Land Rover he cannot help but notice its beauty and stamina and even likens it to a human being.

In this beast was the magic of a woman and the innocence of a child, the resolution of a man and the nobility of a horseman, the shyness of a maiden, the gracefulness of a bird, and the secret of the broad expanses.⁸²

فيه سحر المرأة، وبراءة الطفل. تصميم الرجل ونبل الفرسان. خجل العذراء وشقاء الصحراء، رشاقة الطير وسر الخلاء.⁸³

In one of the final hunts he is unable to fire at a gazelle because he sees the eyes of a human being in it rather than those of an animal. This is when his eyes meet those of a doe with her young beside her. He senses that mother and child are communicating with each other and wishes that he had been able to participate in this communication.

77 al-Kawnī 1992: 13.

78 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 46.

79 al-Kawnī 1992: 57.

80 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 46.

81 al-Kawnī 1992: 57.

82 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 88.

83 al-Kawnī 1992: 97.

...he'd never before seen a human in a gazelle's body. He was amazed he hadn't fired at her.⁸⁴

...ولكنه لم يحدث أن رأى إنسانا في غزال. اندهش كيف لم يطلق عليها النار.⁸⁵

Her eyes were big and black and intelligent, speaking some unknown language, saying something to him, revealing a secret... What was this beautiful creature trying to say?⁸⁶

عيناها كبيرتان، سوداوان، ذكيتان، تنطقان بلغة مجهولة، تحدّثه بشئ ما، تبوح له بسرّ ما... ماذا تريد أن تقول المخلوقة الجميلة؟⁸⁷

Cain is so taken aback by his own lack of action in this situation that he continues asking himself whether the creature that he had confronted, in fact, was an animal at all.

How could he, Cain, have held back from pressing the trigger, when a graceful gazelle stood there in front of him? Had she really been a gazelle at all?⁸⁸

لم يصدّق أن قابيل يمكن أن يمتنع عن الضغط على الزناد وغزالة هيفاء تنتصب أمامه. ولكن هل كانت غزالة حقاً؟⁸⁹

The communication between Cain and the gazelle seems symbolically to be related to his sister or his wife. As already made reference to above, on one occasion he figuratively, or in a magical realist sense eats his own sister – while, in fact, he is devouring the last gazelle. On another, his wife takes the initiative to divorce him because she has been warned in a dream that he will eat her when he cannot find any more gazelles. In other words, Cain is not only slaying gazelles but metaphorically taking the lives of humans as well.

That night, Cain, the son of Adam, didn't just kill his sister. He ate her flesh too.⁹⁰

في تلك الليلة، لم يقتل قابيل ابن آدم أخته فقط، ولكنه أكل لحمها أيضاً.⁹¹

Alternative forms of organization

هلاك الشجرة - هلاك الغابة.

هلاك الغابة - هلاك الطبيعة.

هلاك الطبيعة - هلاك الإنسانية.

ابراهيم الكوني: أمثال الزمان 625⁹²

84 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 116.

85 al-Kawnī 1992: 127.

86 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 116.

87 al-Kawnī 1992: 126.

88 Jayyusi and Tingley (trans.) 2002: 116.

89 al-Kawnī 1992: 127.

90 Jayyusi & Tingley (trans.) 2002: 119.

91 al-Kawnī 1992: 129-130.

Destruction of the trees – is destruction of the forest.

Destruction of the forest – is destruction of Nature.

Destruction of Nature – is destruction of humanity.

Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī, *Amthāl al-Zamān* 625

Which “alternative forms of cultural organization” are provided in *Nazīf al-ḥajar* and may the suppressed elements in the cultural systems become integrated in the reality of the story? Against the discussions above we make out three life-styles all with different implications for the ecological system and the wildlife discussed in this paper. Legal scholar Gary L. Francione’s proposal that “We must change the *way* we think: a paradigm shift in the way we think about animals” emerges as a key statement in the context of intersections between humans and the three animals discussed in *Nazīf al-ḥajar*. This has been illustrated in the standing enjoyed by the camel, the moufflon and the gazelle in the lives of Asouf’s father and of Asouf himself.⁹³

Setting the camel aside in the following discussion, Asouf’s father and his generation are prompted to engage in husbandry in their hunt for wildlife by their cultural norms, traditions and beliefs in the ancient tribal myths and legends. The wise men and guides of old impress reverence and veneration for the moufflon and husbandry of the gazelle. All of this leads to restricted hunting of these animals with a harmony of sorts with nature which preserves a measure of balance in the ecological system.

The cultural and ideational structures based on traditional wisdom of the ancients which restrain hunting have an impact on the present generation represented by Asouf too. This becomes clear from the fact that the oath which his father takes never to hunt the moufflon rules his life as well. Hence, influenced by his father to hunt with restraint Asouf is bound by his father’s oath not to hunt the moufflon. However, Asouf loses the taste for meat altogether after having fallen for the temptation to hunt a moufflon and having survived the hunt only because the moufflon, in which he sees his father, rescues him. Indeed, the mere smell of his mother’s cooking of goat’s meat is nauseating to him. His nourishment will henceforth come from grain and herbs. Occasionally he receives some canned foodstuffs such as sardines, tuna and condensed milk which he reluctantly accepts from the Western visitors, tourists and officials from the regional administrative department. Although he himself will not taste meat, he must trade in an occasional goat for the grain which he needs to survive. This he does by placing the goat at one of the caravan stops and leaving it there. On his return the next day the goat will be gone and in its place he will find the requested products.

Asouf’s life-style prompts societal structures reminiscent of the vegetarian and maybe even vegan movements in the urbanized, industrialized metropolis which go against the grain of the insatiable consumerism of its inhabitants. His choice is to abstain from meat while the majority of his surrounding compatriots continue with the meat eating tradition.

As for Cain Adam, it is the “bad magic” of modernity which emerges as the trademark of this character. In order to satisfy his sybaritic cravings and realize his “modernized” life-

92 al-Kawnī 1999: 215, no. 625. *Amthāl al-zamān* 215, no. 625.

93 Francione 1999: 85.

style he structures his life around gadgets of technological “magic”.⁹⁴ He impersonates the big-city and its inhabitants who have been alienated from the animals whose meat they devour. He demands ever increasing amounts of this product and his life-style expresses one single idea: Kill them all without thought for the morrow. Cain’s attitude exemplifies Rush Limbaugh III’s line of argumentation which says: “...the earth is a remarkable creation... We can’t destroy it. It can fix itself... We have a right to use the earth to make our lives better.”⁹⁵

Concluding discussion

Asouf’s father, whose occasional hunting of a sole gazelle to satisfy the needs of his family had fastidiously taken care not to transcend the ancient rules of chivalry and fairness with respect to nature’s resources and the fauna. As attractive as the life-style of Asouf’s father may appear for its regard for and husbandry of the wildlife of the desert, it would hardly suffice as a reintegrative model for our planet at present.⁹⁶ This is a life-style of former generations which was structured by the normative ideas and requirements of the nomadic tribes of the desert bioregions. They depended on the richness of the flora and fauna for survival and this instilled some respect and love for animal life. With growing populations, higher standards of living, technologically advanced weapons and communication and increasing demands for equal opportunities, were the life-style of Asouf’s father applied on a global scale, it would doubtlessly empty the bioregional habitats of sizeable numbers of species of wildlife sooner or later.

Cain represents the present cosmopolitan big-city dweller. He exceeds the traditional rules of husbandry and sets respect for nature aside. His westernized and urbanized life-style has alienated him from that of his compatriots who still reside in and live off the natural environment of the Libyan desert. Without thought for the consequences of his actions he confirms a popular notion held by some people and expressed by Limbaugh III. Their idea is that nature is indestructible and can withstand freewheeling human exploitation.⁹⁷ Cain’s trademark is also a reflection of Coupe’s “[M]odernity, with its bad ‘magic’ of unbridled technology...”⁹⁸ The reader senses that both of these lines of thought (nature as indestructible and unchecked liberality to use ‘unbridled technology’) must be rejected because they deplete the environment of wildlife. Cain’s life-style emerges as vulgar and insensitive, even fanatical. Moreover, it suggests the dangers of local and regional unrest and human conflict in the wake of food shortage and environmental degradation when the resources are diminished and the ecological system destroyed. In summary, the gadgets of modernity reflected in Cain’s life-style emerge as threatening and destructive because his unrestrained consumerism results in a collapse of the ecological system. This, in turn, ultimately will lead to unrest and conflict between populations, something which is expressed in Cain’s killing of Asouf, his own national compatriot.

94 Coupe 2000: 255.

95 Limbaugh III 1999: 442.

96 As Hafez observes: “Al-Kawnī never posits it [the desert, *the present writer’s comment*] as an alternative to modernity, nor treats it with romanticism and nostalgia as a lost paradise” (2002: 59).

97 Limbaugh 1999: 442.

98 Coupe 2000: 255.

Does *Nazīf al-ḥajar* tell us that modernity is to be rejected altogether? Are all aspects of modernity made to be negative? If we consider the Bedouin goatherd hermit Asouf, he clearly tries to distance himself from the life-style of his forefathers as well as from that of the big-city dwellers. In this sense, he does indeed, emerge as “the Ecological Bedouin” discussed by Elmusa to whom we have referred above. Yet, although he discards some of the traditional ways of his predecessors such as seeking manliness in hunting as well as those of the city-dwellers such as heavy meat-eating, he is unable to stand alone without traces of either of these ways of life.

His father has impressed upon him respect for the traditional beliefs in the powers of the deities of old and the non-human other. He is guided in the structuring of his life by his ties to the shrine and his father’s oath. But he also goes against the life-style of his father by abstaining completely from hunting and meat-eating.

As for the fatal incursion of the life-style introduced by Cain, Asouf takes a clear stand against it, even though he has to pay for this with his life. But he is also dependent on a number of products from modern civilization such as the grain which he trades in for his goats and the canned foodstuffs with which he is provided by tourists visiting the shrine.

Hence, we may again agree with Elmusa that Asouf emerges as a kind of “Ecological Bedouin” in the sense that he is concerned about the ecological system and its non-human inhabitants. However, a reintegrative structure which can be gleaned from *Nazīf al-ḥajar* seems largely to be inspired by combining features from the life-styles of the former generation and that of Asouf. Moreover, communication does, indeed, take place between Asouf’s father, Asouf and even Cain, on the one hand and camel, moufflon and gazelle on the other. In this way, momentarily at least, “the silence of nature” is broken. This points to the relevance of Mane’s thesis that “Attending ecological knowledge means metaphorically relearning ‘the language of birds’ – the passions, pains, and cryptic intents of the other biological communities that surround us and silently interpenetrate our existence.”⁹⁹ We may conclude that care for the non-human other (symbolized in the camel, moufflon and gazelle) and more particularly, husbandry of wildlife emerge as vital for the ecological balance of the bioregion and, in extension, for the survival of all of its inhabitants, human and non-human.

In essence, I suggest that *Nazīf al-ḥajar* helps to instill and reinforce human concern about the importance of adapting lives and policy to life-styles which consider local circumstances and strive towards ecological harmony. Perhaps, this novel goes as far as to align with Francione’s stand: “I believe that animals have rights... The problem is that our value system doesn’t permit the breadth of vision necessary to understand that.”¹⁰⁰ Clearly, *Nazīf al-ḥajar* illustrates the need for what Heise calls “stories and images of a new kind of eco-cosmopolitan environmentalism.”¹⁰¹ While pointing at existential questions of survival for all living beings, human and non-human, a virtue of this novel lies in the fact that it does not deliver a fully-fledged program for ecology and environmentalism. Rather, it urges us to take into account questions of ecology and environment individually, something which has also been pointed out by Fouad and Alwakeel and made reference to above. My hope is that *Nazīf al-ḥajar* and this ecocritical reading may encourage further studies in the Arab world and in the West that aim at reinforcing awareness of the necessity for

99 Manes 1996: 25.

100 Francione 1999: 85.

101 Heise 2008: 2010.

environmental concern, including animal welfare, for the well-being and survival of both human and non-human species inhabiting the earth.

References

- Abbas, Fakhar-i- 2009. *Animal's Rights in Islam: Islam and Animal's Rights*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller.
- Alif: *Journal of Comparative Poetics* 33 (2013). *The Desert: Human Geography and Symbolic Economy*. Cairo: Department of English and Comparative Literature, American University of Cairo (AUC).
- Andersson, Lorraine; Slovic, Scott; O'Grady, John P. (eds.) 1999. *Literature and the Environment. A Reader on Nature and Culture*. New York: Longman.
- Bauman, Zygmund 1998. *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- The Bleeding of the Stone. Goodreads.
http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1145139.The_Bleeding_of_the_Stone. Last retrieved January 2014.
- Branch, Michael P. and Slovic, Scott (eds.) 2003. *The ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment) Reader, Ecocriticism, 1993-2003*. Athens & London: University of Georgia Press.
- Buell, Lawrence 2005. *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Colla, Elliott 2010. *Ahramonline*, Wednesday 22nd December 2010.
<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/2340.aspx>. Last retrieved August 2013
- Cooke, Miriam 2010. "Magical Realism in Libya." *Journal of Arabic Literature* 41 (2010). Leiden: Brill, 9-21.
- Coupe, Laurence (ed.) 2000. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Deheuvels, Luc-Willy 2002. "Le lieu de l'utopie dans l'oeuvre d'Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī." In: Hallaq, Boutros, Ostle, Robert and Wild, Stefan (eds.) *La Poétique de l'espace and la littérature arabe moderne*. Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 25-42.
- Eissa, Ashraf 2002. "Poetics of the Desert in Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī's «The Maiden's Waw»." In: Hallaq, Boutros, Ostle, Robert and Wild, Stefan (eds.) *La Poétique de l'espace and la littérature arabe moderne*. Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 85-94.
- Elmusa, Sharif S. 2013. "The Ecological Bedouin: Toward Environmental Principles for the Arab Region." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* (33). Cairo: Department of English and Comparative Literature, American University of Cairo (AUC), 9-35.
- Fouad, Jehan Farouk and Alwakeel, Saiid 2013. "Representations of the Desert in Silko's Ceremony and Al-Koni's The Bleeding of the Stone." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* (33). Cairo: Department of English and Comparative Literature, American University of Cairo (AUC), 36-62.
- Foltz, Richard C. 2006. *Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Francione, Gary 1999. "Harper's Forum: Just like us?" In: Andersson, Lorraine; Slovic, Scott; O'Grady, John P. (eds.) 1999. *Literature and the Environment. A Reader on Nature and Culture*. New York: Longman, 83-95.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl & Fromm, Harold (eds.) 1996. *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press.
- Goodbody, Axel and Rigby, Kate (eds.) 2011. *Ecocritical Theory, New European Approaches*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Hafez, Sabry 2002. "The Novel of the Desert: Poetics of Space and Dialectics of Freedom." *La poétique de l'espace dans la littérature arabe moderne*. (Boutros Hallaq, Robin Ostle and Stefan Wild, eds.) Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 55-84.

- Heise, Ursula K. 2008. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jayyusi, May and Tingley, Christopher (trans.) 2002. *The Bleeding of the Stone*. New York: Interlink.
- al-Kawnī, Ibrāhīm 1992 (1990). *Naẓīf al-ḥajar*, Third Impression. Limassol: Dār al-tanwīr li-l-ṭibā'a wa-n-nashr, Tāsīlī li-l-nashr wa-l-i'lām.
- al-Kawnī, Ibrāhīm 1999. *Amthāl al-zamān: nuṣūṣ*. Bayrūt: Dār al-Nahār, ISBN 9782842891244, 2842891244.
- Limbaugh III, Rush 1999. "The Environmental Mindset." In: Anderson, Lorraine, Slovic, Scott and O'Grady, John P. (eds.), *Literature and the Environment*. New York: Longman, 439-442.
- Manes, Christopher 1996. "Nature and Silence." In: Glotfelty, Cheryl and Fromm, Harold (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 15-29.
- Mikulski, Dimitry 1992. "Yā Qābilu: Ayna akhū-ka Hābīlu?" In: al-Kawnī, Ibrāhīm, *Naẓīf al-ḥajar*, Third Impression. Limassol: Dār at-tanwīr li-ṭ-ṭibā'a wa-n-nashr, Tāsīlī li-n-nashr wa-l-i'lām, 149-155.
- Müller, Timo 2011. "From Literary Anthropology to Cultural Ecology: German Ecocritical Theory since Wolfgang Iser." In: Goodbody, Axel and Rigby, Kate (eds.) *Ecocritical Theory, New European Approaches*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 71-82.
- Opperman, Serpil 2006. "Theorizing Ecocriticism: Toward a Postmodern Ecocritical Practice." In: *ISLE (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment)* (Summer 2006): 103-128. http://www.academia.edu/234380/Theorizing_Ecocriticism_Toward_a_Postmodern_Ecocritical_Practice Last retrieved August 2013.
- Riegert, Kristina & Ramsay, Gail 2012. "Activists, Individualists, and Comics: The Counterpublicness of Lebanese Blogs." In: *Television & New Media* XX(X) 1-18.
- Sinno, Nadine A. 2013. "The Greening of Modern Arabic Literature: an Ecological Interpretation of Two Contemporary Arabic Novels." In: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. (Winter 2013) 20 (1): 125-143. Published online February 20, 2013 doi:10.1093/isle/ist013. Oxford University Press.
- Slovic, Scott 2000. "Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practising Doctrine." In: Coupe, Laurence (ed.). *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge, 160-162.
- al-Ṭahāwī, Mirāl. 2004 (?). *Jamāliyyat al-tashkīl al-fannī fī riwāyat al-ṣahrā': al-muqaddas wa-ashkāluhu fī al-mukhayyala al-ra'awiyya*. (Cairo University, unpublished).
- Tlili, Sarra 2012. *Animals in the Qur'an*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Verderame, Michael 2010. "The shape of Ecocriticism to come." In: *New Directions in Criticism*, Fall 2010 Department of English, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 1-7. https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/25241/ENG_581_contents.html Last retrieved August 2013.
- Yahya, Hamoud; Lazim, Zalina Mohd; Vengadasamy, Ravichandran 2012. "Eco-resistance in the poetry of the Arab poet Mahmoud Darwish." In: *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature* 18(1):75-85. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, The National University of Malaysia. ISSN: 0128515.
- Zapf, Hubert 2002. *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie: zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte und Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Zbidi, Monika. 2013. "Da'wa lil-jihād al-bī'ī. Al-ḥaraka al-bī'iyya al-islāmiyya." (Call for an ecological *jihād*. The Islamic ecological movement). In: *Fikrun wa-fann* 99: 5-9. Köln: Goethe Institut.