

The Rhetoric of Anti-Arabism in Jonathan Raban's *Arabia through the Looking Glass*

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Abstract. This paper is a critical study of Jonathan Raban's *Arabia Through the Looking Glass* (1987). The attempt is made to examine the different allegations brought by Raban against the Arabs and Arabia. Raban's concern about the linguistic imperialism of the shops and clinics, displaying notices in Arabic, is not just an impressionistic attitude. He assumes that the Arabs may constitute a real threat to the British nation. The discussion of Raban's rhetoric of Anti-Arabism is based on the three subdivisions of the study. They are: demeriting the Arabic language, the conflict between the two cultures, and racism.

Introduction

Jonathan Raban (1942-) is not, by any means, the first Western writer who seems unfairly over-censorious of Arabism in his prose writing. Dr. Michael Suleiman, in a study on *The Image of Arabs in the United States* (1987) has enumerated 82 references dealing with viewpoints, reports and images of the Arabs in American culture. They range from very friendly to very hostile. Anti-Arabism, in this study, is defined as an attitude in a literary work that is hostile and unfriendly to Arabic culture. The definition may include fictional and non-fictional works of art. But our study will be mainly concerned with Raban's *Arabia through the Looking Glass* (London, Flaming, published by Fontana paperback, 4th impression, 1982, first published by William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1979) [1] as an example of travel fiction on Arabia in the recent years.

Jonathan Raban was terrified by the linguistic imperialism of the Arabic language dominating Earls Court Road and many other places in England. The features of this linguistic imperialism are demonstrated by the notices displayed - in Arabic - on the variety of shops on Earls Court Road such as : "Halal Butcher's, " "Kebab and Kufita Houses, " Arab doctors and dentists writing their names in Arabic beside English and finally "the elegant graffiti at the foot of film posters" [1, pp. 13-14]. Raban, in this way, is associated with a group of English thinkers in believing that the citizens from the developing countries who settled in Britain and became British subjects may colonize

Britain. Of course, the anticipated means to that will not be as bloody as the means which the Brits first used when they occupied parts of the Arab World and Africa. "It was only when this process of decorative linguistic imperialism had nearly reached saturation point that I realized how suddenly different Earls Court Road had become; everywhere one walked, one was surrounded by those stylish, looping letters, a script of ripples and flourishes in which even the most cursory graffito takes on the air of something executed with deliberate artistry" [1, pp. 13-14].

His worry about the cultural imperialism of the Arabic language is one of the Western attitudes towards Third World nations in general and Arabic culture in particular. Raban considers the name signs, in Arabic, a great threat to the English empire. Could we investigate the English cultural streams invading Third World nations and their role towards demolishing the culture of those nations? Could we investigate the image of the white man in the minds of Third World nationals? Any simple investigation will indicate that the white man is given a key position in shaping and formulating the Arabs' minds: the English language is taught and spoken everywhere; language schools in Egypt, as well as in many parts of the Arab world, teach everything only in English. Our most distinguished intelligentsia are those who were educated in Britain or the United States. Do we feel that this is a threat to the Arabic political regimes and the Arabic culture? Raban does not allow an argument about a counter effect. He does not allow any Arabic in the English culture. He takes it for granted that the group of "preferences" [2, p. 292] of the English culture are bound to convert the Enlightenment, a one way movement; from the West to the East only. According to the preferences of language, culture and nationality, the English colonists delegated themselves to enlighten the colonized nations and considered that as a *sacred obligation*. The question raised by Edward Said, "... why sacred obligation on one front should not be binding on another ...?" [2, *idem.*] is not attempted. The name signs of famous shops and distinguished doctors' clinics in London may give the answer. But the answer is rejected because the Arabic language does not have the preferences of English and the British people. The Western denial of any Eastern counter effect by their ex-colonized nationals "... formulates the connection between a certain kind of European well-being and cultural identity on the one hand, and, on the other, the subjugation of imperial realms overseas in too fastidious and circumspect a fashion. ... the European culture often, if not always, characterized itself in such a way as simultaneously to validate its own preferences while also advocating those preferences in conjunction with distant imperial rule" [2, *idem.*].

Paul Kennedy, a professor of history and a futurist, had anticipated the demographic consequences of migration from Third World countries and its results: "The basic difference today is that whereas that earlier migration went from the technologically advanced societies into less advanced, contemporary migrations chiefly move from less developed societies toward Europe, North America and Australia. Given the global imbalances in population trends, this movement ought in principle to help all concerned. Migration from less developed countries should lower population pressure

and unemployment at home while offsetting the economic problems of negative population growth and an aging work force in the developed Countries" [3, p. 42].

It is not surprising to say that Raban's concerns about the "Halal Butcher's" and the similar phrases are resounding with what Paul Kennedy had diagnosed as "offsetting the economic problems of negative population growth and an aging work force in the developed countries." But, Paul Kennedy's dealing with this problem is mainly demographic, economic and political. On the other hand, Raban's handling may agree very much with Kennedy's but it will not be limited to it.

Raban's concern about the linguistic imperialism of the shops and clinics, displaying notices in Arabic, is not just an impressionistic attitude. He assumes that the Arabs may constitute a real threat to the British nation. He, also, may preach that they are always hooked to an ideology that absolutely guides them towards this end. He, thirdly, takes it for granted that Christian Arabs, as well as Muslim Arabs, will be connected to their Arabic language. Therefore, Raban's attitude evinces a conflict between the Arabic and the English cultures. Moreover, it proves that what we conceived as the bridged gap, between the East and the West, is a mere illusion. Or, at its best, the gap is not completely bridged.

Raban, in the nine chapters of his book [they are: Arabia on the Earls Court, Island Labyrinth, The Day before Tomorrow, Temporary People, Quattro Cento, Arabia Demons, Two Nations, The Rock Garden and the Biggest Souk in the World], exposes a stereotyped image of the Arabs. The same image is reiterated even when he visits seemingly more civilized countries like Egypt and Jordan.

Arabs had bought the Dorchester; Arabs had owned half of the Holborn; Arabs tipped business girls with Cadillacs and solid gold watches; Arabs closed down the whole of the Harrods for an afternoon, just so that their wives could shop in decent privacy. If they wanted to take a little perfume back to their places in the desert, Arabs purchased a couple of suitcases first, then instructed the assistant to load them to the brim with Dior, Givenchy, Paco Rabanne. When Arabs were caught shoplifting in Marks and Spencers, they were invariably found to have thousands of pounds in cash distributed in secret pockets in their robes [1, p. 10].

Almost all his arguments, as we will delineate, are against the Arabs. Although his style is elegant and eloquent, it is very uncomplimentary to the Arabs and ridicules their culture very much.

Raban's rhetoric of anti-Arabism centers on three main points: a) demeriting the Arabic language, b) the conflict of two cultures: the British versus the Arabic, and c) racism. The study aims at representing these three points by depicting them through Raban's book.

Demeriting the Arabic Language

Raban declared his worry about the linguistic imperialism of the Arabic language as seen on different signs at Earls' Court in London. Therefore, he exerts a lot of effort to defend the English language against the invasion of the Arabic Words. He begins at the level of the single word, then at the level of the sentence. Eventually, he reaches at the Quran concluding that it, representing all the demerits of any language, is untranslatable.

To live in Arabic is to live in a labyrinth of false turns and double meanings. No sentence means quite what it says. Every word is potentially a talisman, conjuring the ghosts of the entire family of words from which it comes. The devious complexity of Arabic grammar is legendary. It is a language, which is perfectly constructed for saying nothing with enormous eloquence; a language of pure manners, which there are hardly any literal meanings at all and in which symbolic gesture is everything. Arabic makes English look simple-minded, and French a mere jargon of cost-accounts. Even to peer through a chink in the wall of the language is enough to glimpse the depth and darkness of that forest of ambiguity. No wonder the Koran is notoriously untranslatable [1, p. 19].

The Arabic language, according to Raban, is defined as: double meaning, talismans saying nothing with enormous eloquence, no literal meanings at all, only symbolic gestures, and finally a forest of ambiguity. At the conclusion, Raban reaches - very quickly - at the striking assumption that "No wonder the Koran is so notoriously untranslatable." There is no doubt that to begin his argument by demurring at all the linguistic characteristics of the Arabic language as represented in the Koran, is an expected success to Raban's argument. But, it seems that he has no idea that the Koran is translated almost forty times. Therefore, he gives his own translation of it.

Some Arab employers feel shy to speak Arabic to their employees. This is a very strange case, which has never been seen in any other culture. Germans, arrogantly and proudly answer, in German, any questions given by foreigners on the street. But some of the Arab employers, who pay money to their employees, give up their Arabic language and start using their employees' language instead. Were it English, the Arab employers would have used it. But not many of them are good speakers of English. The majority of the Arabs are very poor speakers of English. In case the employee is a Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, or a Filipino who knows a little English, a new language is used: it is neither Arabic nor any of those people's native languages. It could be, in many situations, the sign language; or a cocktail of Arabic and English words. It is a disaster to have this linguistic transfer. I find myself obliged to agree with Raban's attitude towards using English, instead of Arabic. His attitude could be demeriting to the Arabic language if we looked at it as proudly as the Germans do.

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‘Never use it’, he said. ‘You can’t go round talking Arabic to chaps you’re employing. If you talk Arabic, they think they’ve got you where they want you. Take my assistant. I was a bit green when I started. Talked Arabic to him for a bit, and he didn’t do an honest day’s work in a year. You can only frat up to a point, you know, frat too much with an Arab, and he thinks that if he feeds you up to the eyeballs with one plate of mansaf, he’s got you eating out of his hand. If you want these buggers to actually do any work, you’ve got to order them about in English; it’s the only way’ [1, pp. 44-45].

Raban lengthens his castigation of the anarchy and vagueness of the Arabic language and the Quran. But his argument, this time, is a sign of ignorance of Arabic poetry and its development on the one hand. On the other, it introduces the Quran - according to his interpretation - as a second *manifesto* to communism. As a matter of fact, Arabic poetry, at all stages of its history and development, is mainly lyrical. Raban’s statement that “the language of the poet is touched by divinity,” and that “it is a manifestation of Allah,” lacks credibility.

The most beautiful Arabic poetry was written a hundred and fifty years before the emergence of Islam. It is well known as the Jahili (pre-Islamic) poetry. At that time, the Arabs did not believe in any religion. Neither Judaism nor Christianity had major influences on the Arabic religious atmosphere. That could be explained by the fact that when Islam came, the Arabs were deifying animals, gods, and goddesses. Their idols surrounded the Kaba. Makkah was officially announced a Muslim land when those idols were demolished and only Allah (the Almighty God) - as preached by the Prophet Mohammed - was worshipped.

Whether Raban knows the basic facts of Arabic culture, ...etc., is difficult to guess. Raban’s views of Arabia and Arabic poetry cannot, however, go unchallenged. The fact remains that Arabic poetry is not necessarily “touched by divinity.” The vagabond poets, the 59 pre-Islamic poets [they are: 8 poets from Yemen, 31 poets from Najd, Iraq and Hejaz, in addition to 20 poets from the Banu Adnan.] and so many other poets after the advent of Islam were not affected by the “touch of divinity.”

Islam’s rejection of the personal, its insistence on sharing, its doctrine that society is always more important than the individual, have gone deep into Arab attitudes towards language. Had I been a poet, then God would have been responsible for my language (at first I mistook the enormous esteem in which writers are held in Arabia for a version of Romantic individualism in which the artist is the supreme hero; in fact, the esteem is a species of religious feeling -the language of the poet is touched by divinity, it is a manifestation of Allah. As someone who was simply writing about Arabia, I wasn’t responsible for my language; Society was, and society represented by the Ministry of Information. The logic was unanswerable. If I had tried to explain why the ‘good books’ on the table did not seem to me to be good books at all, I would have had to get into an impossibly complicated theological tangle. As it was, I said lamely that I wasn’t trying to write a political book -a concessionary statement that was gratefully accepted by the official. We took coffee together with obvious relief on both our parts: we had come close to falling into the cultural divide, which we were pretending did not separate us [1, p. 127].

Many of those poets were writing poems preaching morals and ethics that would never be preached by the Prophet Mohammed as a messenger of Divinity. The Arabic poetry introduced outstanding examples of the individual Romantic poetry before the Romantic Movement was known in the eighteenth century. Very few Arab poets were dedicated to Islamic issues [such as: Hassan b. Thabit (d. 669), Kaab b. Zohair (d. 645), Lobaid b. Abi Rabi'ah (d. 656), Al-Hotaib (d. 674), Al-Nabighah Al-Gadiy (d. 604), and Al-Hassan Al-Basri (d. 715)].

Even if there were Islamic poets of the sort, only some of their poems dealt with Islamic topics. Although the prophet Muhammad listened to Hassan b. Thabit - known as the Prophet's poet - and Kaab b. Zohair (of poets of this school) and praised their poetry, we find a whole chapter in the Quran entitled "The Poets (Al Shoaraa)" (Chapter 26, verses 224-27) in which the last four verses are sheer criticism of the poets and what they say or write ["And the poets, -/It is those straying in evil, /Who follow them: /Seest thou not that they? Wander distracted in every/ Valley? - And they say /What they practice not?" [4].

Soon after the advent of Islam, two distinct trends appear in the Arabian Peninsula. The first emerging from within the tribal poetic tradition, place the aloof and imperious beloved on a pedestal while the poet suffered the pangs of love from a distance, often leading to a love-death [5, p. 87].

Poets of this school have carried names of their beloved such as: Jamil Buthaynah (d. 701), Kuthayyir Azza (d. 723), and Kais b. Al-Molawah [known by his nickname Majnun =mad of Layala (d. 685)]. The other tradition, sensual and self-centred, developed in the cities of the Hijaz; it is usually associated with its most famous exponent, 'Umar Ibn Abi Rabi'ah (d. 719). With the gradual development of the genre the two separate strands fused, as can be seen in the works of poets such as Abbas b. al-Ahnaf (d. ca. 807) in the East and Ibn Abd Rabbihi (d. 940) in Al-Andalus (as Islamic Spain was known) [5, p. 87].

As for Raban's interpretation of the Quran as a manifesto of communism, I have to say that it is affected by a superficial understanding of the Quranic passages. A Muslim having four wives - always criticized by the Westerners - is a good example to refute Raban's conclusion that Islam rejects the "personal." If Islam had given more importance to the society than to the person, it would have forbidden marriage to four wives. While decrying the Quran, Raban is perhaps unaware that the Quran has ever been the fountainhead and edifice on which the Arabic language has rested and has flourished.

The description of Paradise in the Quran is very figurative and eloquent to tempt the good believers with the rewards in the other world. On his visit to the Dubai Petroleum Company, Raban was infatuated by the luxury and comfort he saw everywhere in that company. The apex of his surprise was reached when he connected

what was seen with the description of Paradise in the Quran. It “serves pretty well as a rough guide to the glories of the new office complex of the Dubai Petroleum Company.” Before this concluding statement, he gives a translation of some verses from (Surat Al-Rahman) (Chapter 55, verses 46-55) of the Quran:

For those that fear the majesty of their Lord there
 are two (which of your Lord’s blessings would
 you deny?) planted with shady trees. Which of your
 Lord’s blessings would you deny?
 Each is watered by a flowing spring. Which of your
 Lord’s blessings would you deny?
 They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade,
 And within their reach shall hang the fruits of both
 gardens. Which of your Lord’s blessings would you deny?
 A gushing fountain flows in each. Which of your
 Lord’s blessings would you deny?
 Each planted with fruit trees, the palm and the pomegranate.
 Which of your Lord’s blessings would you deny?
 They shall recline on green couches and rich carpets.
 Which of your Lord’s blessings would you deny?

The description of Paradise in the Quran serves pretty well as a rough guide to the glories of the new office complex of the Dubai Petroleum Company [1, p. 196].

Raban seems irreverently and even viciously satirical in his interpretation of the verses on Paradise in the Holy Quran. On comparing Raban’s quotation with the original text of the Quran, I found the following:

1. Ten verses are deleted on purpose without any indication that some lines are missing. He could write three periods on a line (...) to indicate that there are gaps. But I think Raban had deleted those ten lines because they talk about maidens untouched by any men in the Godly Paradise of whom The Dubai Company was unable to avail for its employees or visitors.
2. Raban’s quotation aims at mocking the description of Paradise in the Holy Quran. Raban’s phrase, “a rough guide to the glories of the new office complex of The Dubai Petroleum Company,” could mean that the Quranic Paradise had been maintained on land –in Dubai- and that Sheikh Rashid had achieved what Allah had promised in his “vague” and “anarchic language of the Koran.”
3. Raban must have realized that no man can imitate God’s works. Paradise, in Christianity and Judaism, as well as in Islam, cannot be realized on land. It is promised to the good believers only in the other world.
4. On reading the following authentic translation by Yusuf Ali, we will easily discover that Raban manipulated his quotation twice. First, he skipped ten lines. Second, the

lines "They shall recline on green cushions and rich carpets. / Which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?" – in Raban's quotation - are double placed; at the beginning and at the end. As a matter of fact, these two verses in the Quran itself and in Yusuf Ali's translation are found only at the beginning of the passage.

5. Repeating those two verses, on purpose, shows how Raban is gradually prejudiced against the Arabs and the Moslems: Tendentious manipulation or interpretation of a holy book or any text held holy by a group of believers ought, at all costs, to be deplored.

Raban's practice contributed to enlarging and confirming the stereotype image of the Arabs as lazy, sleepy and keen to celebrate the joys of their life wherever they are; in this world or the other. Moreover, Raban's translation is inadequate if compared with the following passage from Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran (Chapter 55, verses 46-55).

But for such as fear the time when they will stand before (The Judgement Seat Of their Lord, there will be two gardens –

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny?

Containing all kinds (Of trees and delights); -

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

In them (each) will be Two springs flowing (free);

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

In them will be Fruits Of every kind, two and two.

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

They will recline on Carpets, Whose inner linings will be of rich Brocade: the fruit Of the gardens will be Near and easy of reach.

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

In them will be (Maidens), Chaste, restraining their glances, Whom no man or Jinn before them has touched; -

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

Like unto rubies and coral,

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny?

Is there any Reward For Good – other than Good?

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

And besides these two, There are two other gardens,

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

Dark-green in color (From plentiful watering)

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

In them (each) will be Two Springs pouring forth water In continuous abundance:

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? -

In them will be Fruits, And dates and pomegranates

Then which of the favors Of your Lord will ye deny? - [4]

The Conflict between Two Cultures: British versus Arabic

In addition to the ready-made and stereotyped images about the Gulf and Arabia in general, Raban has collected information about Arabia from Westerners there [they are represented by: Sally B., Ralph Izzard, Maurice Whale, Dr. Platt (the American

Director of the Falconry Center), Ronald Moon, Dave and Doug (Dalesmen), Marion Hannum Morgan, Merrik and Elizabeth Usherwood, Howard B. Nutcracker, Mr. Blauvert and Ian Morris] or Westernized Arabs like Mr. Hesham Gaddomi [Those are represented by: Fatma, Mohammed Mannei, Abdulrahman Almanni, Emil Alkubrisi, Hamud (in Qatar), Fayez, Mr. Kaddouri, Mohammed (a companion for his sick Qatari friend on medical visits to Europe), Dr. Farouki, Major Barza, Sergeant Qaweira, Zaki Nusseibeh, Aysha Sayyar, Mussa, Mahdi Tajir, Hamud- Ahmed- Hussein- Abdrabu (in Yemen) and Magdi Essam (in Egypt)] . Therefore, the argument about Arabic culture versus British - or Western culture - was based on monopolized partners. *Arabia through the Looking Glass* was expected to start an argument with the aim to bridge the gap between Arabs and Westerners. But Raban monopolized all attitudes towards one end: Anti-Arabism. He managed to bespeak all of his characters, whether Arabs or non-Arabs, against Arabism. The only person representing the opposition to Raban's attitude, Dr. Farouki who was lecturing in favor of Arabism, seems ultimately to have culminated into a figure of fun. Raban had commented very cynically on each word said by Dr. Farouki. By comparing *A Passage to India* (1924) by E. M. Forster (1879-1970) with *Arabia through the Looking Glass*, we find out that Forster had started a debate between the East and the West with almost equal numbers of persons on each side of the debate. Although Forster had concluded that "East will be east and West will be west," Raban's book had concluded nothing at all. Raban seemed to fuel the confrontation between the two cultures. He made no such structures. He was far more sweeping than Forster. He was, also, expressing the Westerners' superiority to the Arabs. Superiority, arrogance, haughtiness and self-conceit exhibited by the Westerners in *Arabia through the Looking Glass* were met with inferiority, submissiveness, modesty and lowliness evidenced by the Arabs or Westernized Arabs in that book. The following pages would be examining those assumptions.

Britons, as well as other Western citizens, can go to any of the Gulf countries with very few restrictions on their entry visas. In addition to that, work laws are more flexible for Westerners than for the citizens of other parts of the Arab world or Asia. As such, this shall be a great privilege given to Western citizens. But Raban is very sarcastic of it through the undertaker's story. Moreover, he sees that Westerners could easily fool the Gulf countries and their citizens to get jobs over there. The undertaker, "an amiable blonde girl" [1, p. 54] wanted to start a nursing agency, which ran into difficulties. Then she started the undertaking job, which needed no Bahraini sponsor.

'You're an undertaker?' I asked. 'I do other things too'.

'How on earth did you land up doing that?'

'I came out to start a nursing agency. It ran into difficulties. The business had to be owned by a Bahraini; undertaking was easier. There weren't so many restrictions. I only bury expats'.

'What do they usually die of?'

'Coronaries. Drink. Cigarettes'.

'What's the age of your average corpse?'

'Oh, about fifty, fifty five ...'

She said that burying the people she liked did rather tend to get her down, but she helped to run a counter service as well, so that brightened things up, and she had another job in an office, and she wrote occasional article for the Gulf Mirror

'You see', said Ralph, 'how easy it is to land in Bahrain' [1, pp. 54-55].

As a matter of fact, the concluding sentence "You see how easy it is to land in Bahrain" might be applied to all Arab countries including the Arab States in the Gulf except for Saudi Arabia. Raban, who had a bad experience with the Saudi embassy in London and was denied an entry visa to Saudi Arabia, thought that it was not quite "easy" to land up in all Arab countries easily. But he found out that Bahrain gave vent to his superiority complex and his pent up feelings.

I agree with Raban on the definition of *rich* in some of the Gulf States. Being a rich country means that it has a good educational system, expertise and technology. Borrowing these things from the advanced countries in Europe and America, as well as from Egypt and Jordan in the case of the Gulf States, is justified for a certain period of time. But depending on those countries' experienced manpower – forever - is not going to contribute to the making of a rich country. This is a major problem in many Arab countries including Egypt and Jordan. Although these two countries are seen as more advanced than the Gulf states and that the work force from them is more skilled, they are not exempted from the bitter ridicule and satirical notes of Raban. But he contradicts himself on saying that even if the work force from Egypt and and Jordan does not have enough experience, they learn very quickly.

But this rich. Rich is just a sound. What is rich? Rich is education ... expertise ... technology. Rich is knowing. We have money, yes. But we are not rich . We are like the child who inherits money from the father he never knew. He has it in his hands; he doesn't know how to use it. If you do not know how to spend money, you are not rich .

'Without this knowledge, this understanding, we are nothing. We import everything . The bricks to make the houses, we import. The men who build them, we import. You go to the market, what is there that is made by Arabs? Nothing. It is Chinese, French, American It is not Arab. Is a country rich which cannot make a brick, or a motorcar, or a book? It is not rich, I think'.

When, I asked, did Mannei expect to see the first Arab automobile rolling off Arab production lines?

'Never. Yes, I would like to see it. But I do not expect it'.

'In your own business, do you employ and train Gulf Arabs?'

'I have to admit to you, no. I will hire a Palestinian, an Egyptian an Indian ... These men have the skills. They work hard. If they are not skilled already, they learn very quickly. If I hire a Bahraini or a Qatari, it is difficult. He is not used to work, he will not learn. So I chose the Egyptian or the Palestinian [1, 57-58 pp.].

The attitude of this Bahraini national may be one of the reasons why Gulf states will remain, for a very long time in the future, dependent on expatriates to do their work for them. Moreover, the cheap foreign labor charge is a major factor in recruiting non-Gulf citizens.

Islam is seen by Raban as a representative of “Utopian spirit” while British or Western thought is seen as a representative of pragmatism and reality in its full sense. The would-be conflict between Islam, as a major component of the Arabic culture, and the West are seen at its best in the following quotation from Levi-Strauss, which Raban incorporates in his cultural argument:

I rediscovered in Islam the world I myself come from; Islam is the West of the East. Or, to be more precise, I had to have experience of Islam in order to appreciate the danger, which today threatens French thought. I cannot easily forgive Islam for showing me our image, and for forcing me to realize to what extent France is beginning to resemble a Moslem country. In Moslems and French people alike, I observe the same bookish attitude, the same Utopian spirit, and the stubborn conviction that it is enough to solve problems on paper to be immediately rid of them [1, p. 60].

This attitude is triggered by Ralph, who observes that his Muslim friends do not see that drinking alcohol, then immediately after that, going for prayer is incorrect. Muslims are ordered by God never to go for, or do any prayer while drunken. It is strictly forbidden, for all Muslims, to use any substances that may have the least effect on their memory or mind. God wants them to pray to Him while they are in command of their natural faculty and to be conscious of what they say.

In response to Ralph’s attitude, Raban concludes that, only in theory, Muslims know that it is forbidden to drink; let alone to do prayers while drunken:

I’ve got friends ... been traveling with them for weeks ... we’ve been sharing jokes ... drinking out of the same bottle; and suddenly I’ve found them praying. There’s this chap you know, down on his knees in the dust, and you wonder if you really know him at all.”

“You ought to meet the local Catholic priest. Lovely man. Quite often drops in here for a drink. Scholar. He’s made a study of Islam. I think he envies them, you know –their ... unshakeability. Not like us at all. They don’t make a great palaver about Doubt, like Christians do [1, p. 61].

Theoretically speaking, any Christian, “whether a common person or a Catholic priest” finds no restrictions on drinking, but Muslims are forbidden, according to the Quran, to drink any. In practice, the situation differs a lot not only as related to drinking but also to the code of behavior of the majority of Muslims who changed almost all preaching of Islam into a ‘Utopia’ [any visionary scheme or system for an ideally perfect social order]. Therefore.

Strauss is worried about the possibility of absorbing Muslim Utopian attitude in France. To him, this Utopia is represented in the *bookish attitude* of French, and the *stubborn conviction that it is enough to solve problems on paper to be immediately rid of*. That attitude stands for an upheaval in the pattern of the French thought, which once was leading the whole world to enlightenment and empiricism. “Enlightenment was bound up with the spread of scientific knowledge” [6, pp. 302-303] while empiricism manifested itself in “ ‘laissez faire’ and its rationalization in nineteenth century

Unitarianism. In philosophy it brings to the fore an interest in the theory of knowledge, which has so largely occupied philosophers since then. Descartes' famous formula 'I think, therefore I am' is typical of this individualism, since it throws everyone back on his own personal existence as a basis for knowledge" [6, p. 277].

Raban is concerned with the replacement of *enlightenment* and *empiricism* with Islam in France. His worry seems to depend on the fact that France is the cradle of all Western philosophies. If the French believe in Islam, or even practice some of its rituals, a danger is scented in Strauss's statement: "Islam is the West of the East." That will be a real threat to Western thought and culture in general. French thinkers are usually seen as the pioneers of the Continent. Once they replace their type of thought with Islam, a disaster is expected. To Raban, a 'Utopian Europe' is going to be the apex of that disaster. Therefore, a common Western attitude shall be needed to counteract the Islamic effect on Western societies.

Some practices of Muslims in the Arab world - and many parts of the Muslim world - had contributed extremely to Raban's aggressive attitude towards Islam. As a means to prevent the spread of vice, men are advised not to mix very much with women. Islam has specified certain female relatives with whom a Muslim man may mix while their faces are uncovered. They are: wife, sister, aunt, mother-in-law and maids. In general, a Muslim woman is free to go to work and she has the right to work. She also can drive her own car, she can go shopping and even can start her own business on the condition that she wears decent clothes and covers her hair only. Her face may be uncovered according to some jurisprudential leaders, but no makeup should be used so as to eliminate exciting the public. But some of the Muslim *sheikhs* added a lot of their own to these simple rules which rendered them as backward or, at least, extremely exaggerated. Consequently, special *souks* (markets) only, for women were built. Also, men were totally separated from men in all activities of life; schools for boys, schools for girls in the primary and the intermediate stages, through the high schools and the university. That could be a means to eliminate the spread of vice but it doesn't surely prevent it. In addition to that, the cost of construction and maintenance of these buildings will be too much to cover. It might be ridiculous to find out that separating men from women is not a hundred percent achieved after all of these precautions have been taken. The souks are only for women but the shop attendants are all men. Therefore, the *souk* scene led Raban to believe that "everything grated against everything else."

Everything I had seen of the Arab world up to that point had been obsessed by order and division: the arrangement of the souk, the separation of male from female, the intricate proliferation of lattices, screens, veils. On that street in Doha, the whole delicate structure appeared to have fallen disastrously apart. Objects, people, clothes, traditions and technologies were swirling about in an unholy stew. Nothing matched. Everything grated against everything else. There was a kind of fever in the air as if some violent chemical reaction was going on, creating a new and particularly nasty variety of toxic gas [1, p. 77].

But Raban is totally unjustified in his concept of the past. On visiting Qatar, he goes to the National Museum where he sees two 1940s Cadillacs, a British army truck and a *dhow*, a traditional fishing boat in the Gulf countries.

His concept of the “pastiness” of a thing is bound with the lapse of “several centuries before the present.” This is not true in many cases. The United States of America has lots of antiquities, which do not surpass two centuries in many cases. The United States, as a nation, was declared on 4 July 1776. None of the Americans had rejected the idea of the *pastiness* of Washington because a few centuries had not passed. The same could be said of The Monument of the Vietnam War Memorial where 57,000 names of dead fighters were written on a huge wall after the Vietnamese war was ended in 1972. Also, the personal belongings of John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) [the thirty-fifth president of the United States of America 1961-1963] are considered antiquities by a majority of Americans. Moreover, the pens used to sign historic peace agreements such as the Camp David Treaty (November, 1978) are seen as antiquities although only two decades have passed since the events took place.

Raban’s argument might be right on the pastiness of Egyptian culture; thousands of years separated the pyramids, Pharaonic temples, and mummies from us. Therefore, they are antiquities. I find that Raban’s judgement on the standards of pastiness of Qatari things - “in Qatar more or less anything that happened before 1950 belongs to legend” - often irrationalized. It may, also, be attributed to the roots of his cultural background in which centuries are needed to label anything as belonging to the past.

Outside, antique dhows floated on an ornamental pool. They had been beautifully restored, with full rigging and furled sails. Next to them –more officiously guarded than anything else on display in the museum–were parked two 1940s Cadillacs and a British army truck. One Cadillac was labeled as being ‘the first Cadillac on Qatar’; the other was, presumably, the second. They had been owned by al-Thani. Every culture, I suppose, has a certain point in history beyond which the past is simply the past –where all events seem to take place in the same unreal and unremembered span of time. In most cultures, that point is located several centuries before the present: in Qatar more or less anything that happened before 1950 belongs to legend. The dhows and the Cadillacs came from the same mythical period of antiquity; the venerable cars might just as well have been excavated from Tutankhamun’s grave. They too were folklore [1, p. 83].

A little prejudice against the Qataris is included in the concluding statement in which he ridicules the two Cadillacs, “... the venerable cars might just as well have been excavated from Tutankhamun’s grave. They too were folklore.”

The concept of privacy, as seen by Raban, is another element fuelling the conflict between Muslim/Arabic culture and Western culture. Christianity may not allow religious services in the open or in the streets of cities. Only occasional speeches given by the Pope of the Vatican, to big crowds given in the open, may be exempted from this tradition of “privacy” in practicing religious services. In Islam, the case is different. Muslims are allowed to pray in the streets as well as in the mosques. Although

they are strongly advised to do all prayers at the nearest mosque, every two Muslims - or more - can do their prayer. That will be, more or less, equal to joining a congregation of one hundred Muslims at the mosque. A Muslim can even do the same prayer at home alone, but he is promised only one blessing. Had he done it at the mosque, or with a congregation of two or more, he is promised twenty-seven blessings. Even the Friday prayer, which is a weekly service mainly held at the big mosques of any Muslim land, can be held in the open if there is a congregation of at least forty men or more. That is allowed only in case there are no mosques in the neighborhood or if a good number of Muslims are travelling from one place to another. Praying in the open is very characteristic of Islam.

As a matter of fact Islam was addressing poor people when it was first revealed. The luxurious mosques or any other places - specially designed for prayers - were not available and were not manageable. Therefore, Muslims had first prayed in the open. The first mosque, built by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina named as Kaba, its walls were made of adobe, the ceiling was made of palm tree trunks and the floor was carpeted with straw. Of course, modern mosques have more complicated designs, more luxurious furniture, and very sophisticated audio-systems. But the prayers themselves are still performed on the floor of any mosque. In other words, no desks or benches are allowed or used. Muslims strongly believe that praying in the open is a good means to make them practice their prayers very punctually. As well, Muslims are allowed to do the five prayers at home, but they are strongly advised to do them at the mosque for more blessings.

Raban, seemingly, has no idea of this background about the places for practicing prayers in Islam. That explains why he is "stricken" by the "public" relationship of Muslims "with God."

An Arab crowd is a very hospitable vehicle. It is travelling warren of talk, full of that easy sociability which comes from men - and men only - doing almost everything in life in public. A Muslim's relation with God is public: he prays in the street without any consciousness that to some eyes there might be an embarrassing contradiction in this casual crossing from the mundane to the sublime and back again. His relations with other men have the same unshy, unguarded quality. This openness can easily strike the visiting Westerner as merely an unnerving disrespect for one's own privacy. In London, people go about like so many stuffed birds in glass domes, encased in invisible armor consisting of ten cubic meters or so of inviolable body-space. The crowd in Dubai had things quite differently organized] [1, p. 183].

But Raban's surprise at the 'openness' of Muslims' relation with their god is accelerated into an uncivilized behavior when dealing with friends and common people: "His relations with other men have the same unshy, unguarded quality." I think this is a misunderstanding of the Muslims' attitude towards 'openness' of speech. Meantime, his verdict contradicts his argument on the vagueness of the Arabic language discussed in the first section of this paper. I think this 'openness' of speech is - in a sense - a

pragmatic attitude defined by linguists as "... the study of actual utterances; the study of use rather than the meaning; the study of that part of meaning which is not purely truth-conditional; the study of performance rather than competence; etc." [7, p. 171].

Arabia, with its openness of language and religious practice, is now seen as the Promised Land of the far Right by the Usherwoods; a Western family living in Dubai for two years who never want to go back to England. According to Usherwoods, any land could be a Promised Land if decent "people pay no taxes", "where immigrants were repatriated the moment that they ceased to be useful" and where they could spend their days in peace and prosperity. To him, Sharia Law is responsible for all of these "goodies."

For the Usherwoods, Arabia was the Promised land of the far Right, a place where miscreants met the noose and the birch, where 'decent people' paid no taxes, where immigrants were repatriated the moment that they ceased to be useful, and where Usherwoods could eke out their days in peace and prosperity. If only Britain could adopt Sharia Law, it would turn into a land fit for Usherwoods. All the tact, good humor and courtesy that I'd seen in Arabia evaporated as Elizabeth extolled its ghastly virtues. As she drilled on, her voice rising in pitch and religious indignation, I ached to get back to the Creek [1, p. 177].

Elizabeth's view of Arabia as a land with no taxation brings about "nostalgia" for a new Britain without taxes. It seems that it is the only concern that drives the Usherwoods and Elizabeth to think of the "promised land" as a land which avails them of the peace of mind and exempts their income from any taxation system. Arabia is their found "promised land," but they are inclined to have it placed in Britain rather than in Arabia. As for Raban, he sees that Elizabeth's statement is sheer hypocrisy on the side of a Briton infatuated by the blessings of "the Promised land of the Far Right."

Raban's rhetoric is at its best when he goes to Egypt. Many reasons could be listed to justify this change of mood: he might have felt more freedom to drink and dance in Egypt; he might have felt that Egypt was more advanced and more liberal than the Gulf countries. When he went to one of the Cairene nightclubs, he gave a fabulous description of a fat Egyptian belly dancer who was believed to keep "a whole farm of tame white mice trapped somewhere between the layers of her skin" [1, p.289].

Cairo was the last Arab city which Raban visited before writing *Arabia through the Looking Glass*. He knew that Egyptian political life allowed a great deal of democracy. Therefore, he felt very much at ease to criticize President Anwar Sadat (1918-1981) President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, (1970-1981). He shared the Nobel Prize for Peace with Menachem Begin, ex-premier of Israel. Sadat was shot dead in the annual October military parade celebrating the Sixth of October day in Egypt riding through Cairo,

At Tahrir bridge I found myself in the middle of a furious commotion. The traffic was blocked solid. The crowd bulged on the sidewalk. Horns were blaring. Soldiers and policemen were charging round in all directions, waving rifles and machine-guns and slapping astray at pedestrians with nightsticks. I wondered for a moment if another food riot had broken out [Raban is referring to the food riot which happened on 18-19 January, 1977. Sadat was shocked at that riot which spread all over Egypt, simultaneously in all of its governorates and capital cities. Sadat called it 'an up rise of thieves' incited by the infidel communists. In fact, this riot was triggered by increases of some foodstuff prices, gas used for cooking, and uplifting some subsidies of food prices- my parenthesis]. The conjuring trick, which followed, was a piece of pure Egyptian magic. Somehow, the bridge was miraculously emptied. There were no cars, no crowds – nothing except a line of soldiers with their guns held upright in front of their noses. It had happened in the space of five minutes. For the first time since I had been there, Cairo went dead silent. Then a motorcade of outriders and limousines came whooping over the bridge. As the second of the cars went by, I saw Sadat's face, impassive behind the bulletproof glass. He disappeared, in stately solitude, into the depths of Gezira. The wail of his escorting sirens faded. Moments later, the city was back to normal; a vast, deafening, angry impasse. It had been like the passing of a lonely ghost. I wondered whether the president's rides through Cairo were always like that. Did he look out of the window of his limousine each day and see only an empty, lamplit city of saluting guards? And when he read in the newspapers about that other place – the stricken cosmopolis of overcrowding, blight and disconnection – did he imagine it to be a fiction, cynically invented by the enemies of his regime? Carried along in the swarm over the bridge, tasting the Khamaseen, I envied the President's singular view of the city. For a few seconds, Cairo had been as quiet and ordered as a well-kept grave [1, p. 301]

Raban's surprise is warranted when he sees the busiest part of Cairo changed from "a vast deafening angry impasse" to "quiet and ordered as well as a well-kept grave" after Sadat's limousine passed like "a ghost." The sequence of questions raised by Raban is direct and said by him personally. There are no Usherwoods to speak for him; out of a feeling of freedom he says whatever he wants to say about Cairo and the Egyptians. Those questions were all about Sadat's domestic policy: did the president think that Cairo was as empty as he used to see it through the windows of the bulletproof glass of his limousine? Did Sadat think of the downtrodden Egyptians? "Did he imagine it to be a fiction, cynically invented by the enemies of his regime?" The last question is investigating the scope of mind of many Arab, as well as Third World, leaders who believe all the time that some foreign enemies are perpetrating plots against them. Raban's cynical question ridicules Sadat's passive attitude towards the problems of Egypt.

The traffic: "blocked solid"; "the commotion: furious"; "the crowd: bulged on sidewalks"; "horns: blaring"; "soldiers and policemen: charging round in all directions, waving rifles and machine-guns"; "slapping at stray pedestrians..." "a motorcade of outsiders: whooping over the bridge" – all these figures of speech make a caricature of Egyptian political life during Sadat's time.

Racism

This section of the study will examine *Arabia through the Looking Glass* with the assumption of racism in the background of my analysis. At the beginning, I find it very helpful for my study to reconsider Raban's concept of the relationship between the size of a certain country, its culture and progress. He is resolved that the relation is direct; the bigger the country the better its culture. Bahrain which is seen by Raban as "just a little bigger than the Isle of Wight" does not deserve to have any features of progress or modernization. Although he is surprised by the "Labyrinthine diversity of a metropolis," he decides that the limits of the "place" are set by "money, machines and the capacity of the chergehand and foremen – who are the real princes of Bahrain." I agree with Raban that the size of Bahrain is very small: 231 square miles (598 square kilometers). But does that size necessarily hinder the growing up of a metropolitan city? Do we have to consider the size of the city in direct relationship with its cultural and intellectual contributions? If we are obliged to answer 'Yes', the history of cities, which stood for the cradles of human culture and intellectual life, has to be rewritten. Athens, the capital of old Western intellectual life and culture, is small compared to China.

Arabia through the Looking Glass may be classified as one of the travel fiction books. Therefore, on investigating its genre, a major question could be asked: how true are the incidents in it? In other words: are the incidents in *Arabia through the Looking Glass* real or fictitious ones? A second question could be: how far did Raban manipulate these incidents to meet his ends as a novelist? Raban is an eyewitness who gives his own version of things and incidents, and the conclusions in his work are based on his own taste, literary qualifications and cultural background. Sholes and Kellogg argued about Swift's exploitation of Gulliver. By the same slogan, we may say that Raban had exploited the Arabs he met in his tours in the Arab world. Sholes and Kelloggs say: "The author, on the other hand, who presents his eye-witness narrator as a legitimate memoirist, giving this narration his own name and naming actual people as the characters in his narrative - Boswell on the Grand Tour, for example - can count on an interest which will make mere fact exciting. ... The impulse to shape, to improve, to present not what was said or what did happen but what should have been said or ought to have happened, inevitably makes its effect felt" [8, p.258]. Therefore, what Raban said about *his Arabs* might be accepted by the English citizen, as Raban might have represented the only code of reference in his culture about Arabia in 1982, the year in which *Arabia through the Looking Glass* was published. Its acceptance was based on a well-written preamble of stereotyped images of the Arabs very similar to those introduced by Raban. Hence, "The powerful circumstantiality of eye witness narration is purchased at the expense of accepting certain limitations. The eyewitness cannot see everything. And he can only know one mind- his own" [8, p. 259].

This leads to many questions on the technique of writing the novel: is the writer responsible for the arrangement of his work? In our case: are the characters created by Raban representative of his "own" mind? Henry James (1843-1916) did not accept Anthony Trollop's (1815-1882) asides or digressions of "make believe" notes, "... he

admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime; it is what I mean by the attitude of apology, and it shocks me every while as much in Trollop as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay" [9, p. 654]. Therefore, the incidents, as well as, the characters made by the writer are affected by his own *experience* even if the "experience consists of impressions" [9, p. 659]. The "sense of reality," which gives the novel its own characters, is connected with the personal experience of the writer although "it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being" [9, p. 659]. It is possible now to conclude that Raban is responsible for arranging the incidents and making the characters in his novel. The "experience of impressions" is shown very clearly in the introduction of the book: the Saudi Embassy in London denied Raban the entry visa to Saudi Arabia which may be one of the reasons for his outrageous attacks on Saudis and the Gulf citizens. Also, the sense of reality of Raban as an eyewitness to the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews, is found everywhere in *Arabia through the Looking Glass*. But the image introduced is that of Raban's "own mind."

Civilization is not limited to a certain country. It is a collection of factors: human power, natural resources, wealth, peace, and security. These represent chemical substances for the human mind to work and develop. Therefore, if any – or all – of those factors is missing, human intellectual life and culture will be crippled. In the case of Bahrain, some of these factors are there, but they are all imported, transplanted into the Bahraini land or too brittle to rely on in building a country. The human power is not national; all workers are from other neighboring Asian or Arab countries. Natural resources are confined and limited to the petrol industry, which is dominated by either British/Europeans or Americans. Nationals have nothing to do but to use the smallest revenues in the shape of sacks of money per month and a few liters of gasoline everyday. What seems to be a good income or huge wealth could be changed into a big zero overnight. The financial disasters which take place, now and then, at the money and stock markets, always damage the Arabs' shares and long-term bonds. Therefore, Arab countries' income could fluctuate to financial crisis in Tokyo, London or Wall Street. As for security and peace, it is always lacking because of the demographic structure of some of the Gulf states. The ethnic groups, in addition to the sectarian strife between the Sunna and Shia may convert a small country like Bahrain into a restless country.

Bahrain is just a little bigger than the Isle of Wight, but it seems carelessly defiant of its own geography. Its towns are little ones, as towns go: Manama has about the same population as Bournemouth. Its desert is, on the map, a handkerchief-sized scrap of wilderness. Yet the city has the labyrinthine diversity of a metropolis, and the desert feels as large and unending as the Empty Quarter. No one, though, appears to have bothered to consult the map: the limits of the place have been the limits set by money, machines, and the capacity of the chargehands and foremen – who are the real princes of Bahrain – to exploit that enormous, footstore army of cheap Pakistani and Korean labor [1, p. 35].

Therefore, I may be obliged to agree with Raban's surprise over the artificially civilized city of Manama. Although depending on foreign human power is not a shame in itself, some Gulf citizens find that depending on experts is essential for the continuation of their businesses for a short time. Meantime, I do not agree with his concept of the direct relationship between the size of a city and its intellectual and cultural life.

Raban, sarcastically, appreciates alms-giving in Muslim culture. He sees a beggar giving two coins to a fellow beggar at the corner of a street; as a "destitute" giving to another one with the same economic condition. He can talk of this practice as a worldwide one without involving Islam, in particular, in this common practice regardless of the religion. I do not think Christianity has anything to do with two beggars giving coins to each other in an underground station in London or in one of the slums in Italy. But Raban has decided to be in confrontation with Islam; the core of ideals of Arabism. He says: "Alms giving is one of the most strictly enjoined duties of the Muslim; even the destitute are bound to make a show of charity to each other" [1, p. 40]. In Islam, only well off Muslims are asked to give alms, but destitutes are not. It could be practiced at certain times of the year such as Ramadan, when all Muslims fast from early dawn till sunset, or the Adha (Sacrifice) Bairam. It is believed that these are of the best times, in the Muslim world, to give alms in the form of money, clothes, or food. Zakat [a very special system of taxation: paying one-fourth of one-tenth (1/40) of the Muslim's annual income to the poor in the form of alms. That applies to farms, crops, land, properties, and even gold bracelets and rings unused for one year], in addition to other alms-giving may enable many Muslims to lead a decent life if practiced the year around. Some Muslims practice alms-giving for showy purposes or during the election rounds in some Muslim democratic countries. In theory, that stands for a good system since it encourages Muslim's to develop a sense of philanthropy and warm feelings towards other. In theory, again, zakat is not paid only to Muslims; it may also be paid to non-Muslims living on Muslim land. Al-Azhar –the biggest religious body in Egypt and the Muslim world– is studying very seriously a proposal for establishing a state department for collecting, distributing and recycling the money collected from zakat and other financial alms. If that is done, according to the Egyptian Mufti, many Egyptians will get Medicare, education, work and housing very easily.

Raban is not justified in ridiculing the alms-giving system, which was parodied by the two beggars in the following passage.

In the gold-market, I watched a beggar counting his day's takings. He wrapped his bowl up in an old cloth, hoisted himself on to his crutch, and went swinging up the street. At the corner, fifty yards on from his own post, he reached another beggar who was missing both legs: without slowing his pace by a fraction, the first beggar flipped a pair of coins into the second beggar's plate. Alms giving is one of the most strictly enjoined duties of the Muslim, even the destitute are bound to make a show of charity to each other. I wondered if this popular chain of philanthropy extended down to a single wretched man – the one beggar in Manama too desperate and too appallingly crippled to be able to give alms to

another. All day I had been noticing the way in which everything and everybody in the Islamic world is separated, ordered, categorized. Was there a corresponding hierarchy of fine discriminations in rags and deformities? [1, p. 40].

Raban's sheer prejudice against Arabs in general and the Gulf citizens in particular is very clear in eight different situations in addition to his idea about the size of Bahrain and ridiculing the almsgiving system and zakat in Islam.

To Raban, all Gulf Air hostesses are considered no more than prostitutes; they are given the job of airhostess as a camouflage for their real work. The Sheikhs lust after them day and night.

Have you heard about the Gulf Air hostesses? 'No' - 'There's forty of them on the island, right? They're one of the chief amenities of this place, like the Gulf Hotel. They all go to this particular beach, so the sheikhs can inspect them through binoculars. Fact. 'He blinked his way around the dining room. 'Do you know how much a Gulf Air hostess costs? A thousand dinars. Fact [1, pp.43-44].

Even the causeway between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (which was under construction when Raban wrote his book) is going to change Bahrain into a "brothel" for Saudi Arabia, "Well, it's going to turn Bahrain into the brothel of Saudi Arabia, isn't it? He unrolled for me a utopian dream of Scotch whisky and Egyptian whores ... it'll be a ruddy paradise. Of course, most of the buggers will probably fall in on the drive back, but that's another story" [1, p. 45]. That is the only good thing Raban can think of the causeway; a dream of whores and whisky. Therefore, Raban is held responsible for prejudicing against Arabs/Moslems, as much as he is responsible for creating and introducing all of the incidents and events in his book, even if the characters are speaking for him as a technical means maintaining an objective correlative. In a text, there is nothing *accidental* or *irrelevant*. Discussing this point, Berger says, "Readers must always keep in mind that ... nothing that happens in a text irrelevant or accidental. Aristotle has also made this point, as a matter of fact; he suggests that if we take one thing out of a well-constructed work it will suffer. A great deal of what authors do when they write stems from their psyches and functions at an unconscious level. So, they often write and cannot explain why they use this word rather than that one or had a character to do X instead of Y. That is the task of critics" [10, pp. 44-45]. This attitude is in line with what Berger believes as thorough selection of topics practiced by writers. They "select certain things to tell and assume that readers will enrich what they read with their own fund of knowledge" [10, p. 12].

After the 1973 war between the Arabs (Egyptians and Syrians) and the Israelis, the Gulf oil producing countries had imposed an oil embargo on exporting oil to the United States and Europe. That resulted in a jump in oil prices: a barrel of oil, which used to be sold for almost US\$75¢ in the 1960s, was sold right after the embargo for US \$ 38-40. That gave the Gulf countries a total wealth of 12 trillion US dollars. Consequently, a mutation in social and economic life took place. Roads connecting the

different parts of the deserts in these countries were built. Universities of the biggest sizes and capacities were established. Hospitals of huge capacities exceeding 1,000 beds were opened. But most importantly is that the Gulf citizen was affected by the sudden boom of the national income. Tall apartment buildings, villas with swimming pools, and huge palaces were built for the common people as well as for princes and sheikhs. This upswing in the social and economic life was bound to alienate many of the Gulf citizens. They suddenly found themselves estranged from their past which was “not so distant” as Raban said. Therefore, they started going back to some tribal traditions and habits in an attempt to revive their heritage and past. It is common, nowadays, to find a black tent made of pure sheep’s wool (at an average price of US \$ 15,000) inside a huge villa with a swimming pool and central airconditioned rooms. It is a striking paradox: the villa is furnished with the most up-to-date furniture from the United States, Western countries and Japan while the tent is handmade manually and dug onto the ground in the most primitive way man had ever known. Falconry is a second reminder of the past. A baby untrained falcon can be sold for an average of US \$ 12,000-15,000. This is done in an attempt to “recapture” their past. The Gulf citizens are justified to do it even if Raban denies them the way they tried to maintain their past.

The past they are trying to recapture is not so distant; a few decades at most – well within the memory of the older men. The Houbara however is turning into a rare species; on the Gulf it has been hunted to the verge of extinction. Hawks, too, are increasingly expensive; a good peregrine falcon is an important symbol of status. The rich now travel in hunting parties to Syria and Pakistan – the only places where the Houbara Bustard is still common. Dr. Platt’s experiments in breeding both hawks and bustards were being treated as an important investment in Arab culture; for a people who had good reason to fear that they were irretrievably losing their past, falconry had become a symbolic bridgehead.

... ‘I don’t know if you have a knife?’ said Dr. Platt. ‘I’d like to open one up for you, show you the flesh’. I was glad that the best Sheikh Khalid could produce was an ivory paper –knife, too blunt to open up a quail. He took a bird in one hand and stroked its head with his forefinger [1, pp. 47-49].

Raban’s racism against Qataris, in this situation, is clear in two points. First, he deprives the Qataris of their right to celebrate their past in the way they like. Second, he introduced Sheikh Khalid –a fictional name in the book for a real Qatari Sheikh—as a primitive man using his hands and fingers to slaughter or kill a bird; a sheer barbarism observed by a Westerner. It also stands for an offence to the Arabs and the way they behave. Moreover, Dr. Platt—the Falconry Center Director—is introduced as superior to the national Qataris who recruited him to breed falcons for them. He evaluates Dr. Platt’s work in the Falconry Center as “an important investment in Arab culture.” That is an unaccepted generalization unless Raban wants to replace “Arab culture” for “Qatari culture.” But Raban is, from the very opening of his book, against all Arabs and their cultures. If Dr. Platt is paid by the Qataris to keep their heritage—represented in falconry, the Qataris are paying some other foreigners to keep their memory “intact” for them:

deported right from the airport to the country they came from even with the genuine visas they have in their passports. Had Raban known any of the sort about Palestinians' residence conditions, he would not have been prejudiced against Gaddomi and the other Palestinian expatriates in the Gulf.

Comparing Palestinians with the ancient Jews after the latter's diaspora is unfair. The Jews were granted fully fledged by the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, while the Palestinians are denied the right to visit their families and relatives in Palestine. The only good thing about this comparison is its recognition of the Palestinians' genius, creativity and ability to absorb all the shocks of their lives. It also shows the Palestinians' ability to start anew after each big loss in money and bodies: "He looked as if he - Gaddomi - might go off and build a dozen more metropolitan cities after he had finished with Doha."

If Dr. Platt is in charge of keeping the Qatari heritage through directing the Falconry Center, Mr. Kaddouri is in charge of keeping their memories intact. Mr. Kaddouri will be fighting the battle of the Qataris for them.

Yet Kaddouri was prepared to play against it with loyal determination on behalf of the Qataris. This was not his country. He would probably never be allowed to take the Qatari citizenship. He had no facile optimism about the likely outcome of the process in which his own center was a key institution; nevertheless he was committed to realizing the dream. Like Kobrussi, the television producer, his loyalty to the Qataris was fuelled by anger at the indifference he saw displayed by the European and American visitors to the country [1, p. 105].

Raban is not satisfied with this system at all. Therefore, he expects Kaddouri and Gaddomi to hate the Gulf citizens and treat them as haughtily as the Europeans, working in the Gulf, do. We may scent a touch of sorrow for the oil profits going to the Gulf citizens. Raban may think that oil profits are misplaced and he may assume that these profits should all go to the Western countries because their citizens—the oil experts—dug for and discovered the oil. He wants all expatriates in Qatar to share with him the same mental attitude whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs. By so doing, Raban annihilates all family and sanguinity relationships among the Arabs. He also obliterates the religious and the brotherhood factors as unifying – unofficially – all of the Arabs. There are three factors which, if considered, will account for Mr. Kaddouri's anger at the indifference "displayed by the European and American visitors" to the Qatari Museum. They are sanguinity, Islam and Arabism. Sanguinity may be attributed to the intermarriages between Arabs from different countries of the Arab world. Islam is the religion of the majority of the citizens. Even those who are not Muslims are taught and instructed in Arabic. Therefore, Islamic culture is introduced to them indirectly through the vehicle of the language. As for Arabism, it includes, but is not confined to, the Arabic culture that represents a uniform attitude towards literature, art, thought, hopes, pains, and sufferings in the past and the future. But it seems that Raban's racism is extended to all the Arab *personae* he created in his book, or the real Arab characters he

met in his travels to Arabia. Dr. Farouki, as well as Kaddouri and Gaddoumi, is ridiculed.

I disliked the professor long before he arrived. When he did show up, he satisfied my worst expectations. Barrel-shaped, in an electric-blue suit and silver tie, Dr. Farouki looked like the sort of corporation vice-president one sees on television putting up implausible defenses of his company after it has been charged with corrupt business practices [1, p. 110].

Raban's discrimination against Gulf affairs is not only confined to its citizens and Arab expatriates but also to its cars, concept of time and plantation life. The two-year expectancy of cars in Abu Dhabi is attributed to the "short, fast, dangerous life on the Abu-Dhabi freeways" [1, p. 144]. That period is "roughly the same weight as a decade in Europe." A two-year period is also connected with contracts, which expire in two years, investments and the whole of the "accelerated" life of the Gulf. This acceleration is also extended to the life of plants and trees in Abu Dhabi. They are watered with very expensive desalinated water, fed with the most expensive nutritions, and bands of gardeners are always there taking care of them. But the growth of plants – as Raban sees it—does not respond to this accelerated rhythm of life in the Gulf. These two paradoxical descriptions contribute to the rhetoric of Raban's language. They help him manifest his opinions by contrasting two things juxtaposed to each other.

The average life expectancy of a car in the Gulf is two years. Two years, in fact, is a key measure of time here. It is the period in which investments are reckoned to make a full return. Two years in the Gulf have roughly the same weight as a decade in Europe. They represent as much of the past as can comfortably be remembered; as much of the future as any sensible man would dare to anticipate. In two years, cars turn to scrap, contracts expire, investments come home, and the whole vastly accelerated cycle of life starts up again. This biennial whirligig gives an insistent edge of temporariness to everything. Only the trees are exempt. Toiling bands of Baluchi gardeners work day and night to make them grow faster, mollycoddling them with the latest in nutritious soil substitutes, heaping their roots with fertilizers, spraying them continually with expensive desalinated water; but they rise at their own dogged, vegetable pace while all around them cars, buildings, people and projects boom and crash [1, p. 144].

This technique is also applied when he introduces Mahdi Tajer. We presume that Mahdi Tajer is a fictitious character created for fictional purposes. Mahdi is a common name in the Arab world. In addition to what Raban introduces as meanings to this name, Mahdi means the person selected by God, blessed by Him and endowed with wisdom, brains, and piety. These good qualities will be contradictory to some of the tاجر's –a merchant's - individual qualities. Merchants are traders. Many of them are well principled and well mannered. Others are known for their wickedness and morally ruined behaviors. There is a common belief in the Arab world that merchants are not well mannered and are morally ruined because they are always seen as caring for their interests only. Therefore, juxtaposing *Mahdi* and *Tajer* with the different connotations and references of the two words is a successful technique used by Raban. Hence, the

spell of *Mahdi Tajer's* name is valid. Raban had created that 'spell' to enable him to ridicule Arabic culture by putting *trade* and *piety* together in the hands of one person.

Mahdi means pure sheer, unadulterated, downright. Tajir means merchant, trader, businessman. For once, Arabic is not ambiguous and Mahdi Tajir really is a pure, sheer, unadulterated merchant, trader and businessman. Whether his name was a kind of totemic spell cast on him at birth, or whether he acquired it much later, as a simple description of what he had become, I do not know. I rather doubted whether he was a human being at all: his existence in the Gulf was institutional, like Tiffany's or the Ritz [1, p. 188].

Raban's message is that all rich Arabs are similar to Mahdi Tajir: an extravagant, a spendthrift and a pious Moslem meantime. It is one of the generalizations, which Raban produces in an attempt to fuel his prejudice against Arabs and Muslims.

The same attitude can be detected in his visit to Yemen. All Yemenis are seen as *qat* eaters. *Qat* is a small narcotic plant whose leaves are masticated, but not swallowed. *Qat* eaters spit the remains of these leaves on the floor out of half sleepy-mouths. The scene is disgusting and uncivilized. Dealing in, growing and eating *qat* is a major problem in Yemen. Huge amounts of money are paid by well off people who use *qat* as a narcotic. It is a very expensive bad habit as it is accompanied by drinking whisky, or any cheap wine. Also, a lot of meat is specially cooked for *qat* eaters who spend the whole day eating *qat*, meat and drinking. But we cannot accept this illogical generalization that all Yemenis are on *qat*. There is a percentage of Yemenis who are addicted to it. But the rest of the Yemenis lead a decent life without *qat*. The united Yemen now is doing its best to develop the social, economic and political life for all Yemenis.

The Yemenis were given over to chewing *qat*. Everyone in his bunch of privet, with a wad of leaves as big as a cricket ball bulging in one cheek. ... most men were reckoned to be spending fifty pounds a week on *qat*. They were also getting through three or four packs of cigarettes a day, and many were buying two or three bottles of black-market whisky a week, at about ten pounds a bottle. (*Qat* keeps one awake; so one needs whisky to get to sleep.) [1, pp. 212-217].

The technique of generalization hits even the Arabic words abused by Arabs. *Inshaallah* - God willing - is one of the words which is interpreted derogatorily by Raban. To him, it conveys "the general unreliability of the world." In the Quran (Chapter 18, verse 23), Muslims are asked not to do anything in the future unless they say *Inshallah*: "Nor say of Anything, / 'I shall be sure to do / So and so tomorrow' - / Without adding 'So please God'" [4]. This phrase is overused by some Arabs to cover up their inability or lack of seriousness over doing something. *Inshallah* is understood by many Arabs as a phrase labeling all things which are promised but will never be fulfilled. But this derogatory usage of the phrase is not used by all Arabs/Muslims as Raban assumes. Incorporating it in the scene of *qat* chewers is adding to the abuse of the phrase. Readers of this scene may take it for granted that *Inshallah* is mainly used by people addicted to drugs and narcotics only.

In fact, Inshallah nicely conveys the general unreliability of the world. It inflects the promises and expectations, which it always follows with a proper degree of caution. After my first taste of qat I felt that a great deal of caution was in order." 'Inshallah', said the man, and laughed civilly. His teeth must have been worth a small fortune. By the light of the Tilley lamp, his mouth looked like Aladdin's cave. 'All Yemenis like qat'. It was my deal [1, p. 216].

As for the Yemeni women, Raban sees them all as 'laundry bundles.' This is sheer prejudice contributing to racism against Arab women in Yemen and Arabism in general. Raban realizes that there are Yemeni women at the university wearing modern clothes. There are many Yemeni women who go to school and to work everyday. But Raban ignores this fact to stress and enlarge the image of Arabs as backward people living two or three centuries behind our time.

The women lined the side of the road to Sana'a. They were completely covered under half a dozen layers of grubby cotton prints and woollen shawls, and looked more like laundry bundles than human beings. By this time, it did not strike me as a paradox worth noting that the most heavily veiled women in the whole of Arabia should be out hitchhiking on a Friday morning [1, p. 219].

Technically speaking, Raban had magnificently used all possible relations between his text and the reader. He could have seemed less convincing to his Western readers had he used other techniques. The English reader is asked very kindly to annihilate all beautiful images he may have of the Arabs/Muslims. This process of negating the familiar is the basis of one of the most recent critical theories. The reader's response, as advocated by Wolfgang Iser could be helpful in understanding *Arabia through the Looking Glass*. That Raban aroused some "expectations" in his readers, "by allusions to things he knows or thinks he knows are frustrated; through this negation we know that the standards and models alluded to are somehow to be transcended, though no longer on their own terms" [2, p. 87]. The result, of course, is to remove any beautiful image of the Arabs and locate it into the past, which cannot be reintroduced, or reproduced into our present. These now appear to be, as Iser said "Things of the past; what follows cannot be stated, but has to be realized. This negation can be seen as the inducement to realization - which is the reader's production of the meaning of the text. It initiates the act of imagination by which the reader makes the virtual actual, proceeding from the now obsolete norms of the past right through to the nonfigurative meaning of the newly formed present. This is why we often have the impression when reading that we are experiencing the story as an event in our own lives" [2, pp. 87-88].

The relations between Raban and his readers were used to the full of their capacity throughout his text, which we can clarify by borrowing the following diagram from Berger [10, p.13].

Relations between Texts and Reader

Texts	(Work)	Reader
Author (<i>Jonathan Raban, in our case</i>)	<i>Arabia through the Looking Glass</i>	Reader, audience
Artistic plane		Aesthetic plane
Sender		Receiver
Creates a text		Realizes a text
Text as a system of signs to be understood		Text a site for creation of meaning

These pairs of relations give a lot of credibility to Iser's theory of the reader's response. But the most important pair of relations is: sender → receiver, which is situated in the middle of the diagram as it represents the core of writing any novel. The other four pairs could be seen and explained in terms of premises and deductions. Author → reader, audience and artistic plane → aesthetic plane could be seen as premises or preparations for the real function of the writer as sender and also to the real function of the reader as a receiver. The last pair of relations: creates a text → realizes a text and text as a system of signs to be understood → text as a site for creation of meaning are seen as a deduction by the reader on the aesthetic plane, or as a conclusion to the creative effort practiced by the author/writer/sender on the artistic plane.

Conclusion

This paper had investigated anti-Arabism in Jonathan Raban's *Arabia through the Looking Glass* concentrating on: demeriting the Arabic language; the conflict of two cultures, the British versus the Arabic; and racism. Although Raban's book may be classified as a piece of travel literature, it still has a lot to do with anti-Arabism as an attitude adopted by some white Western writers humiliating and ridiculing all Arabs and, sometimes, all Muslims.

The Arabic language, habits, traditions, buildings and the Arab individuals - men or women - in Raban's book, are all ridiculed, satirized, and made fun of. This is a common practice throughout his book. Raban is gifted at ridiculing the concept of the past in the Arab countries, including Egypt with its Pharoanic, Coptic, and Islamic legacies. He is inconsistent in his argument on the relationship between the past and the civilization. To him, fifty years - which is the history of modern Bahrain - is not a sufficient period of time to achieve an adequate concept of the past, and, consequently, Bahrain is deprived of its right to civilization. Therefore, we expect a country like Egypt, with five thousand years of history, will avail an ideal representation for his concept. But, we are surprised to find that the history of Egypt has added nothing to its present day status. The Egyptians are seen by Raban as bad as any other Arabs. The long history and achievements of the ancestors of the Egyptians are totally ignored by Raban. He sees Cairo as a dead city void of any living human beings except for Sadat who moves in its streets at a rocketing speed. The only achievement of the contemporary Egyptians is

بلاغة عداء العربية في رواية "بلاد العرب في المرآة" لجوناثان ريبان

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ملخص البحث يقوم هذا البحث على دراسة الأساليب البلاغية المستخدمة في كتاب "بلاد العرب في المرآة" (1987) لجوناثان ريبان. وقد لاحظت الدراسة أنه يصعب تحديد الجنس الأدبي لهذا الكتاب؛ فمرة هو من أدب الرحلات، حيث تنقل كاتبه من بلد إلى آخر في المنطقة العربية، ومرة هو رواية حيث تجلت روعة الأسلوب السردي والحكاية وإجراء الحوار على لسان شخصو الكتاب. وتتمحور الدراسة حول نقاط ثلاث هي: تحقير اللغة العربية والظعن فيها والتيل من لفظها ومصطلحها ووصفها باللغة المهلامية الفضاضة التي يدار حولها كي نصل إلى معناها؛ الصراع بين الحضارتين الإنجليزية والعربية وما بينهما، سواء في منطقة الخليج أو مصر من عداء قديم يتصور فيه الإنجليزي أنه ما يزال سيدا حتى بعد تحوير تلك الدول، وبذا يحتقر أهالي تلك البلاد الذين ما عادوا يحملون قيمة السيد الممثل لذلك الإنجليزي ممثلا في الشخصو الذين يقدمهم ريبان- وإن كان ريبان يقدم شخصو الإنجليز في صورة مستعمرين للأعمال والاقتصاد وحتى متعهدي جث الموتى- فإنه يقدم شخصو العرب في صورة التابعين للإنجليز في ثقافتهم وفكرهم وتوجههم، وكأنه بذلك يفسرغ المسطقة العربية من مواطنها ويحاول جعلها مستعمرات بريطانية متفرقة حتى وهي دول حرة ذات سيادة. أما ثالث العناصر التي تتمركز عليها الدراسة فهي عنصرية هذا العمل حيث التمادي في وصم كل ما هو عربي بالتخلف والاضمحلال وعدم الصلاحية والريف، ويتبلور كل ذلك في الهجوم على معاني القرآن والابتسار في ترجمته وتفسيره، وهذا ما أثبتته الدراسة، ويحاول الباحث ريبان في جميع ما قدم من مجالات محاولا تصحيح وجهة نظره أو تعديلها. وتدعو الدراسة دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية وأداها إلى دراسة أعمال أخرى مشاهة وإقامة حوار مع مؤلفها حتى يتسنى لنا أن نصل إلى إمكانية سد الفجوة الثقافية بيننا وبين مفكري وكتاب العرب.