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SELF AND OTHER IN UMAYMAH AL-KHAMIS' *SALMA AL-UMANIYYAH*

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Abstract

This paper explores patterns and perspectives to the construction of Self and Other in Saudi women's fiction through a close reading of one the works of one of the earliest female writers to emerge in the Kingdom. A study of how this female writer arrived at the construction of the Saudi 'Self' in contradistinction to the Other raises pertinent questions on notions of identities across cultures and civilizations. The paper examines series of 'external Others', established by the author; Umaymah Al-Khamis, whose own literary exposition and journeys enabled her to depict the question of national identity from a new standpoint. It also gives a picture of 'internal Other' of women who, for whatever reason, have perceived themselves as occupiers of the peripheries of the society. It draws its theoretical framework from Edward Said and Michel Foucault. In *Salma Al-Umaniyyah*, Umaymah Al-Khamis exemplifies the slippery texture of the Self and Other as well as its implications for socio-cultural harmony in human societies. The paper consequently contemplates the following questions: Why is it that the existing studies on Saudi Arabian literature, dominated by male writers interested in entrenching male dominance, have ignored the expression of 'Self' and 'Other' in the literary tradition of the Kingdom? What extent is a 'Self' and 'Other' factor in the production and consumption of

fiction in Saudi Arabia? Why is it that, the author of *Salma Al-Umaniyyah* is interested in 'Self' and 'Other' in her creativity?

Introduction

Considering the recent strong interest in constructions of 'Self and Other' in modern literary writing, there has been much discussion recently among the Arab critics and the image of the 'theme' in Saudi women's fiction is debatably at its most evident in literary discourse in this contemporary period. This is a time that Saudi women writers are seeking to define their place in a rapidly changing world, using literary texts as means of expression. One can think of a number of reasons for this interest, but one of these has undoubtedly been the strong impact of Arab women quest for identity. This can be said of a Saudi female fiction writer, Umaymah Al-Khamis, born in 1947 in Saudi Arabia, she wrote seven novels and two collections of short stories. She works as a teacher of Arabic Language and Literature in Riyadh at a secondary school. She is best known today in Saudi Arabia and (if at all) in the gulf world for her collections of two short stories, '*Wal dil'u hīna istawa*' (And the Rib when it became straight) 1992, and *Al-Tiryāq* (The Antidote) 2001. Umaymah's personal history can briefly be stated. Growing up in Riyadh and had her primary and secondary educations in Damām. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language and Literature at King Saud University, Riyadh in the year 1980. It was only after she entered the teaching career that fellow teachers encouraged her to develop a shared interest in writing of novel and short story. While the brevity of Umaymah's literary activity is undeniable, her short stories stand out in terms of both their fascinating narrative twists, and their use of an undeniably beautiful poetic prose style. In this paper, I will concentrate mainly on *Salma al-ʿumāniyyah*, published in 2001, in the collection titled *Al-Tiryāq* (The Antidote) in order to discuss one of the major themes of this conference. This paper examines the process of self-identification, not in a vacuum, but in relation to others. In other words, how did author see the women in her work in relation to society and the wider world? Looking at the text as a whole, we see that the writer's fiction has sought many avenues of understanding through contrasting

the 'Self' against a wide variety of 'Others' both inside and outside Saudi.

This work looks at the ways in which the idea of the 'Others' has been problematised in the text, as the author sought to define women's identity in relation to a rapidly changing world. The way in which identity is problematised, defined, and explored in her work hangs on ideas of the 'Self ' as opposed to some kind of 'Other' and the way in which Umaymah chooses to represent this 'Other' that this research takes as its central focus. The 'Other' in the title of my paper thus indicates the imagined entity which the author has constructed as the defining 'Other' for the Saudi 'Self'. My effort to analyse this correlation and the issue of representation, the approach is based on the theories of Edward Said and Michel Foucault, who both used expressions of 'Self and Other' to explain various phenomena in human experience.

Edward Said asserts that the Arab literary writers have continued to fuel enormous change, struggle and controversy. He is also in line with the argument of Michel Foucault who argues that, the relationship between 'Self and Other' is expressed in terms of power. Examining social structures, Foucault argues further that knowledge is the same as power. If one knows, it enables to identify, define, categorise and criticize. The representation of the 'Other' in other words thus becomes an act of power. This relationship between language, knowledge and power is very strong in Foucault's thinking, and is often referred to in terms of 'discourse', where a 'discursive act' refers to the use of words - whether speech, literature, recorded observations or any other media whereby the speaking subject wields power over the recorded or represented object. The Self thus constructs the Other by way of a particular image of that Other, in the act of representation. But Foucault asks the crucial questions: who decides who is Other? Who writes and represents that Other, in what ways? What is the effect of such representational discourse? These fundamental questions on discursive practice the actions of power inherent in the act of writing necessarily underlie our project. Foucault's concentration on power in society is structured in terms of centre and margins not in a monolithic static system, but in a constantly challenged and reconfigured one, contested by

individuals trying either to hang on to power or to wrest it away from the centre. (Hutchinson and Williams. 2012:156)

Self-versus Other: Discourses of Power

Women's position in Saudi today has been affected by the historical transformations caused by the major shift from the primacy of tribe to the primacy of state which occurred sequel to the establishment of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (Arebi 1994:25). The transformation in the society's power structure has meant that the political arena is dominated by three centers of power: the royal family, the tribal leaders, and the *'ulamā*. In reality, however, the political order is predicated on the king's authority, which often embodies the roles of both tribal and religious leaders. Maintaining a balance of power between these two forces, therefore, becomes crucial to women's survival. This is essential to keep in mind because contemporary discourses on women in Saudi Arabia are greatly affected by the imbalance of power between them. One of the main characteristics of the contemporary political situation is that women are placed at the center of the power struggles, especially between the *'ulamā'* and the state (Altorki and Camillia.1988:30).

The emergence of the nation-state, as a regional demarcation involving control of the social management of space and people, posed a challenged to the tribal social organization. However, the forced and voluntarily established settlement of the Bedouins and the creation of national identity embodied in the state have altered in significant ways the concept of tribe and the role of tribal leaders (Said 1979: 16). But even within the state, the tribes have managed to remain important units whose loyalty and support for the state have to be maintained. The idea of the tribe had to be preserved and even enforced by the state, because its structure, being based on collective will, serves naturally as an effective mechanism of control. Despite the state's catering to the tribal concept and its keen interest in protecting the tribe, however, the double-edged nature of the tribal system remains a potent threat to the state. In order that the state may rely on the support of the tribes, the tribal *shaykhs'* basis of power has altered from one emanating from the people to one that is dependent on the state. It is this detachment of tribal leadership from the tribal members that

makes the state vulnerable in terms of the reliability of tribal support (Lipsky.1959:99).

With political unification, the *'ulamā's* role has also drastically changed. The preservation of religious institutions, according to Islamic political theory, is a function of the state, and the *'ulamā's* role is determined by this function. This has created a mutual dependency in which the state is always in need of religious support for its development plans, while the *'ulamā* depend on the state for their survival (Piscatori1983:24). Within the newly founded structures of Saudi Arabia, the *ulamā* were transformed from being a relatively autonomous institutionalized center of power to being "paid civil servants" appointed by the state, which also regulates their income and general activities (Arebi 1994: 43)

Despite the virtual weakness of the *ulamā*, the appearance of a balance of power between religion and the state had to be preserved; plans have always been gauged in terms of the preservation of religious values and traditions. The state's dependence on religion for legitimacy seems to have decreased as development itself has emerged as a new source of legitimacy. Development has led to the extension of state control in areas as protection, health, and education (Nehme. 1983: 22) In the past some of these areas, such as education and administration of *awqāf* (religious endowment), were traditionally dominated by the religious establishment, which historically secured a degree of independence, ideological as well as economical (Arebi 1994: 44).

Despite the incorporation of these traditional functions of the *ulama* into the newly emergent structure, their loss of power vis-à-vis the state should not be exaggerated (Arebi 1994: 44). The *ulamā's* power throughout Islamic history has always been predicated on the decisive role religion plays in mobilizing popular support with or without that institutional support. The state has no illusion about this; not has religion rationalization always been sought to legitimize political measures but the state also has to make public the *ulamā's* consent on many major issues (Bligh. 1985:37).

However, the state's monopoly of force and resources has occasionally been challenged by religious rebellions. The seizure by religious elements of the Grand Mosque in 1979 was the most

serious such attempt in the state's recent history. For one thing, this action showed the regime its weak basis of legitimacy; for another, it brought the *ulama* to the center stage and served as a reminder to them of their real role (Al-Munajjed. 1997: 31). The scorn and contempt for those *ulamā* who are, in the words of the leader of the rebellious group, brought up by a corrupt regime with money and promises of promotion finds resonance among many unsatisfied groups, even those with secular tendencies (Al-Munajjed. 1997: 33). These groups, while they are often at variance with both *ulamā* and state, have always constituted a potential support for one or the other of the Grand Mosque. The state always intend to satisfy secular groups by promising for the third time in past thirty years the establishment of a consultative assembly, something that has never materialized. But the threat of insurrection also forced the state to take a stance, if not to demonstrate more commitment to the enforcement of the *shari'ah* (Islamic law) then to reconsider its relationship to the *ulamā*. The state's first initiatives after this rebellion were geared toward making symbolic gestures to confirm its commitment to Islam, especially through measures that restrict women, raising the *ulamā's* salaries and allocating money to build more mosques and religious institution at home and abroad (Al-Yassini, 1985: 128).

Between Self and Other: Women's Education in Saudi Arabia

The edifice of women's legitimisation as writers is built, first of all, on their education. Before 1960 girls received their education from private female tutors or immediate male family members. A few private elementary schools were established in larger cities, such as al-Jamjun in Jeddah and others in Makkah, Madinah, and to a lesser extent in Riyadh. By the early 1950s some elite families entrusted their girls to boarding schools in Egypt and Lebanon (Arebi. 1994: 49). Although the first girls' school was built in 1956, formal education for females in Saudi Arabia was introduced in 1960 after a long period of opposition in which it was viewed as compromising to female morality and a vehicle of Westernization (Al-Baadi. 2007:95). However, when the royal decree institutionalizing female education was finally issued at the end of 1959, it had to be rationalized in religious

terms. Assurances were given then or at a later date that female education would not introduce change in Kingdom beliefs. (Al-Baadi. 2007: 95).

The expansion of female education ultimately led to the creation of college and university facilities for women. Female undergraduates were also allowed to study at home and obtain degrees from some of these colleges. In the years 1960-61 only four women were enrolled in evening classes at Al-Riyadh University, by 1990 thousands graduated and tens of thousands were female students. The enrollment of women in the seven Saudi universities exceeds that of men as at the year. Whether in the fields of the humanities or sciences, women's educational institutions are all segregated from those for men. Often the women's facilities do not enjoy comparable funding, and administratively they are treated as auxiliary to the male institutions. The lack of female instructors for women is usually compensated for by transmitting lectures given by male professors in the male sections through closed-circuit television. Women students may interact with their instructors but only through the media (Arebi.1994: 50).

 The first generation of women writers was educated in private schools, and some continued their education in Beirut or Cairo. Few pursued higher education in the United States. Those who were born in the 1950s and 1960s, who by far constitute the majority were largely educated locally and to more advanced levels. Most of this group holds college degrees. Some of the women have M.A. degrees, while a few have Ph.D's. Their fields of specialization are usually in humanities (i.e. sociology, history, and Arabic and English literature) (Al-Baadi. 2007: 102).

These educational patterns have affected women's professional options. The types of jobs they hold are mainly in the field of girls' education. They work as lecturers, teachers, teacher's supervisors, deans of departments, or administrators at various levels. However, there are some exceptions. A number of business women conduct independent or family businesses, and a woman writer in the country could also be a physician. But it seems that whatever their vocational choices, all women writers are involved in jobs that require a high degree of proficiency in reading and writing (Al-Baadi. 2007: 106).

One may speculate that an adequate education of fewer professional options may have in fact played a role in channeling many capable women into writing. But it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which women's participation in writing can be explained in terms of exclusion or restrict on from other domains of work. For one thing, one has to take into consideration that what women lack in the number of fields available to them is compensated for by their opportunity to be recruited to the highest levels of the professional ladder within the fields that are open to them (El-Sanabary1994: 148). It seems that because of the very nature of segregated work places for women, these women are not put to major disadvantage by having to compete with men to fill certain positions (El-Sanabary 1994: 148).

Women's Words and Fiction Writing in Saudi Arabia

The ambiguity that surrounds those who create words is generally even more intense when we speak of women. The relationship between women and words becomes doubly problematic particularly in a society that is historically characterised by the primacy of genealogy and language and where women and words share the function of being a bond that unites people and as symbols of identity. In such society, both women and words usually become wrapped in the ambiguities and double-edged nature of the binary opposition of self/other, strong/weak, good/bad, sacred/profane. The campaign for the protection of Arabic language and women has always been at the heart of the response to Arabs cultural crisis and of Western civilisation's challenges. Women and words, being at the heart of ideological formations in society, not only emerge as objects of control but also as idioms and instruments by and through which the whole society is controlled.

Women's participation in the institution of literature however, provides them with the opportunity not only to be in control of themselves but also in control of language. This usually challenges existing cultural hierarchies and interrogate patriarchal claims as protectors of women. This equally represents a cultural dilemma. The dilemma is rooted in the problematic relationship of women as a private category and words as a public one. Their sheer presence in this Arabian society as women who traffic in words at the heart of a literary

enterprise that is, by definition, public is culturally problematic. For one thing, women are considered the most private of the private (*awrah*) to be governed by strict rules of concealment. Words, on the other hand, are considered not only public or a means of publication (in the sense of publishing, as well as in the sense of making public) but also operate as agents of revelation, both in the sacred and secular sense. For another, while women submit to the cultural and religious rules of physical concealment in their emergence as writers, they also through the medium of the words become agents with distinctive voices, which according to the Wahhabis is in itself *awrah*.

Imagining Self and Other in Production and Publication of Literary Writing

Publishing houses also complain of the unprofitability of publishing separately from distribution. Selling books by mail is not a developed business idea for a variety of reasons, one of which is the high cost. Also, there are no book clubs to facilitate advance subscriptions. Publishers more often than not follow the contours of the market. In their assessment, Islamic books are the one in most demand, followed by history and literature (Hashim. 1981:30). Universities constitute a part of this market, but they themselves have turned to publishing graduate dissertations and books of an academic nature.

These factors constrain the relationship between publishing houses and authors and make it less than a natural alliance. Though writers may be given a percentage from each copy sold, usually about 20 percent, or the publisher may offer to buy the rights to publication from the writer for a few thousand SR. the number of copies printed rarely exceeds ten thousand (Hashim 1981:30). Before 1980, publication centers were concentrated in Makkah, Jeddah, and Al-Madina. A shift has occurred in the last ten years toward Al-Riyadh where over 50 percent of all books are now published. Writers must be in close proximity to publishers, booksellers, and printing houses in order for their books to be published and properly distributed.

Representation of Internal Other in *Salma Al-Umanniyah*
Otherness in the literary study is defined by difference, marked by outward signs like race and gender. As such, otherness has

also been associated predominantly with marginalised people, those who by virtue of their difference from the dominant group, have been disempowered, robbed of a voice in the social, religious, and political world. (Lisa Onbelet 2008: 24). Difference, in literature is often articulated as either some kind of weakness or superior strength or intellect depending on the sympathies of the dominant cultural voice. For example, in Saudi literature, written by male authors, the hero is portrayed as the innocent. Without the permission from the dominant social group to speak, marginalised people cannot tell their own story, cannot define themselves, but rather, must submit to the descriptions assigned to them by the dominant group. So not only are they robbed of their voice, they are also robbed of their identity, their sense of self, and their sense of value (Lisa Onbelet 2008: 26).

The focus on the 'Other' in Saudi women's fiction is clearly seen in the fact that one of the most enduring and popular literary forms in Saudi has been termed *Al-ākhar*. Since I will be referring extensively to '*Salma al-ʿumāniyyah*', it might be useful to provide a very brief synopsis of the text. In Umaymah's story, the heroine named Salma is the one around whom the story revolves. She has a mother and a sister with whom she lives with in a place called Dharan. She is abducted one night while sleeping outside with her mother and sister by the legendary Abū Dustayn. Abū Dustayn has been credited with many stories of abduction of girls and their deaths. No one in the entire place had ever seen him. Mothers have learnt to use his name to curb the excessive tendencies of their headstrong daughters. Any incidence of the disappearance of a girl in the village is credited to Abu Dustayn.

Salma lives in Abu Dustayn's place across the mountain for many years as a kidnapped. Having spent several years in bondage of a wicked man, she is freed and sold to another man across the sea where she meets Sayf, a guard at the place. The two of them work together in Mr Kenneth's apartment in the city of Oman. Kenneth is a diplomat, who works for the United Nation. Mr Kenneth is happily married with two grown-up daughters. Sayf and Salma fall in love and married each other to concretise their affection, although all her children died at young age.

Exploitation and Psychological Trauma of the "Other" in *Salma al-ʿumāniyyah*

The story triggers feelings of pain in readers, who cannot help but sympathise with a society that is subjected to the harsh forms of oppression, for no reason other than some of its members were born as females. ʿUmaymah al-khamīs puts forth her subtle denigration of the treatment of women in her story, *Salma al-ʿumāniyyah*. The story explores the kidnapping of a young girl and her subjection to a life of drudgery and slavery in a place far away from her place of birth. The kidnap of the heroine, Salma, shows a blatant disregard for freedom of movement. Salma is forcefully captured and taken across the sea to an unfamiliar territory. She is made to live her life like that of a slave. In describing Salma's capture, the author recounts:

حين أصبح فوق رأس سلمى تماما، انحنى منقضا،
ووضع يده حول فمها انتزع شماغه بسرعة، وحشا به
بسرعة, وحشا به فمها, أما عقاله فقد قيدها به كذبيحة,
وقبل أن تقبل الموجه الثانية وترتد. كان قد وضعها في
(زنبيل) وأمّ بها درب الجبل الغربي.

And when he climbed over Salma and he bent down. The first thing he did was to put his hand over her mouth. Thereafter he swiftly took off his headscarf and used this to stuff her mouth. He used his headband to tie her hands, as he would do with game he hunted. And before the next wave could break onto the beach, he would have put Salma in a zambeel bag and was on his way to the west side of the mountain. (Akewula, 2014: 119)

Salma, during her capture, is treated no better than a game of hunting. Gagged with a cloth and tied up in a bag, this is indeed a terrible experience which does not befit any living being. It simply puts forth man's inhumanity to woman. A most interesting aspect of this story is that the kidnapper, Abu Dustayn who specialises in capturing females and has become so adept at this that he has become something of a legend. Girls of all ages live in fear of him and pray that they do not become his next victim. The word *Abū* used by the narrator simply means

father. It symbolises the wickedness of male folks to their female counterparts in a closed environment. In the hand of Abu Dustayn, that represents men, female are victims and do not have free will to challenge this oppressive authority. Added to the fear in this text is the terrible agony the parents of the kidnap girls pass through, living in fear of the imagined atrocities their children will go through at the hands of Abu Dustayn and the continued hope of seeing their children alive again. These treatments of these girls leave a debilitating experience on both the victims and their parents. They are exposed to a reality which they can never imagine in their wildest dreams. The narrator says:

في الصباح وجدت الأم أحد الكلاب صريعا, موزة تنتفض تحت تأثير كابوس مرعب, وسلمى قد اختفت, عندها علمت أن النساء الذهرانيات الفاتنات لا يختفين فقط بداخل جذع نخل مجوف, بل أيضا بزنبيل يحملهن إلى درب الجبل الغربي وفي الطريق إلى نجد, وعندما اختفت رائحة البحر وأشرعت الصحراء ودروبها العميقة ابتدأت بازعيق, تصرخ بالنياع بصوت يبدأ قويا ثم يذوى شيئا فشيئا كطلقة, ثم يغز فجأة ليسترد زحمه الأول.

In the morning, the mother found one of the dogs killed. Mawza trembles from a fearful nightmare and Salma gone. As for Salma, she knew now that beautiful Dharan women didn't just vanish inside a hollowed palm trunk; they were carried off, too, in a Zanbeel bag and taken to the west side of the mountain on the way to Najd. As the smell of the sea receded, and the desert opened onto its far-reaching pathways, she began to scream. She screamed in agony. Her voice breaking strongly out, then fading slowly away like the whine of a bullet, only to start as strongly once more. (Akewula. 2014: 120).

Through the use of simple diction and vivid imagery, the narrator portrays the fright and agony of Salma as Other to the Self Abu Dustayn on her trip away from home. In a way, it brings to mind the experience of the middle passage; the experience of Africans carted away from African soil through the Atlantic Ocean to the America. In much the same way, the journey over the sea serves as Salma's middle passage to a life of slavery and serfdom in Dharan. It signifies the transition from a free-born to a slave.

Obviously, a most appalling circumstance of Salma's life in Oman is her inability to have children coupled with her constant cases of epilepsy. By a twist of fate, Salma is unable to have any child to succeed her despite her various mates and she constantly suffers from seizures of epilepsy. Due to old age and her increasing cases of ill-health, Salma's mistress decided to lay her off. In the words of the narrator:

> تـداولتها الأيدى والسنون, بينما كان أطفالها يموتون بعد
> ولادتهم بأيام, مما دعا النسوة بنصحها بالتمائم والتعاويذ
> لحما يتها من مختطفى الأطفال لكن يبدو أن مرض الصرع
> الذي أخذت تكثر نوباته عليها, جعل الكثير من سكان
> القصر يتطيرون منها ويتناقلون بأنها ممسوسة. لم يخطئ
> الهرم طريقة إليها, فاسودت خواتم الفضة فى يديها
> الناحلتين مما دعا سيدتها لترقب الفرص لعتقها. ووفاء لنذر
> السيدة بعتق رقبة إن عاد ابنها الغائب في العراق, أصبحت
> سلمى حرة من جديد.

As the years passed, Salma knew many intimacies. Meanwhile, her children continue to die few days after their birth. Therefore, the other women advised her to wear charms, to protect her against those who bore children away, she suffered, too, from constant seizures, and this made people in the palace fear her and say she was possessed. At least old age found its ways to Salma. The silver rings darkened on her learn fingers, and her mistress began to look for the chance to set her free. Salma's freedom came as the fulfillment of a vow her mistress had made, concerning the return of her son from Iraq. (Akewula, 2014: 121).

Obviously, by the time Salma had attained old age, she had outlived her usefulness. The fact that she cannot perform the duties she used to perform at a younger age, coupled with her seizures and lack of offsprings made her easily disposable. Invariably, the passage of years made it impossible for her to return home. This would have been a futile attempt because she does not know the route back home. Her freedom comes as a result of a final seizure which lasted longer than the others, with her mistress finally deciding to deposit her at an old people's home.

The story of Salma's life is one which elicits sympathy and pity. At the prime of her life she is deprived her mother's love and the comfortable familiarity of home. She is thrust into an unfamiliar environment and made to leave the life of a slave and above all, she is left in an old people's home to fend for herself when she has outlived her usefulness and is believed to be a burden to her master's family. Her story simply illustrates man's inhumanity to woman as Salma's welfare and emotional stability was never considered by her kidnappers and masters. Looking at the experiences of women from another angle, one is privy to the fact that women are constantly used as chattels as well as means to an end.

Imagining the External 'Other' in the Story of Umaymah Al-Khamis

So far, I have examined Umaymah's articulation of the relationship between Self and Other in terms of the personal experience of heroine in her immediate environment, but I would like to expand my discussion here to investigate how this relationship may be understood as part of the wider social environment in which heroine played out her role. In this connection, some comments by (Oladosu. 2008: 113) are useful in indicating that Umaymah's heroine is certainly not alone in the manner of her engagement with the internal and external 'Other'. For instance, Oladosu notes that there is Self and Other in *al-mar'ah al- Sūdāniyyah*, where the difference between British-Sudanese and typical Sudanese women can be identified.

Umaymah's work also addresses the concept of realities, and particularly concept of Others, in a literal way. In her text, details of the main heroine, Salma is related in the third person. At several points, Umaymah's heroine pauses to observe modern life from the window of a room, and closer examination of these particular scenes suggests that the heroine constitutes less a fully integrated identity than an amalgam of diverse elements.

لو كنت ولدت في بلادهم لكان خيرا لي......... ....
.......it would have been better, if I was born in their land.....
(Translation is mine)

Edward Said's portrayal of all texts as 'protean things; they are tied to circumstances and to politics large and small, and these require attention and criticism (Said 1994: 385). Indeed, for all the considerable criticism and discussion of the relevance of Said to Saudi. The question is one to which Said was particularly attuned. To be sure, he acknowledges, there can be no justification for a 'reductive' reading in which the 'richness of the text' is overlooked. But, as he continues, 'it is a much graver mistake to read [such texts] stripped of their affiliations with the facts of power which informed and enabled them' (Said 1994: 195).

The result was a generation that, while conforming closely with Said's template for those subjected to colonial domination (they did, perforce, 'bear their past within them – as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a post-colonial future' (Said 1994: 256), sought simultaneously to come to terms with its own history of aggression on the East Asian mainland.

But this is not the whole story. Locked in a symbiotic relationship with the misery, the resentment, the struggle for daily survival and purpose among the ruins were the hopes, the dreams, the visions of a brighter future and the new opportunities for liberation that, as Said is at pains to point out, often arise out of the anger engendered by such a relationship of domination. At this point, it is liberation and the pursuit of freedom, as opposed to nationalist independence, that comes to represent the new alternative, a 'liberation which by its very nature involves . . . a transformation of social consciousness beyond national consciousness' (Said 1994: 278).

Umaymah Al-Khamis' story also reflects urban life of Salma; a Saudi Arabian woman in a lessen gradation, but even the streets of the city where she is sent to is associated with 'traditional' Arab culture centered on "Self and Other". Umaymah's writing reflects a more general conflict between the undeniable attraction of a view that what she calls the 'Islamic values' of everyday Saudi Arabians' life were being lost gradually because they were not adhere to the true teaching of Islam especially after the oil boomed, a national mood of self-reflection emerged in which 'there was no lack of thoughtful and

anxious concern for the developing significance of interest (humanity) and the concealment of spirituality.

خلقهم متعدى من حدود الله

Their life style has been deviated from Allah's
bound
(Translation is my own)

Of course, such unease was not entirely new; an anxiety that modern, largely imported values threatened the 'Islamic culture' was a dominant theme at least from the beginning of 1990 and early 2000 literature was characterized by a great deal of soul-searching about an 'authentic' Saudi self, as exemplified in the literary work of Khayriyyah As-Saqafi's best-selling fiction *Wakhtalafat Al-Khutwah* (And the Step Changed) published in 2002. However, what makes Umaymah's writing stand out is not so much her preoccupation with introverted speculation, in this she was simply reflecting the concerns of 'Self and Other' in her own generation, but her literary attempt to break down these apparently clear-cut dichotomies.

Conclusion

This paper confirms that 'Self and Other' had a great impact on the Umaymah's processes of writing. The author illustrates certain area in which Self is referred to male folks and Other to the female counterpart. On the other hand, she explores the external Other to the foreigners who live in Arab land. Said and Focault's theories have had a huge impact in raising the question of how human consciousness engages with external phenomena, and this same theme has been the subject of much modernist literature and critical discourse, particularly in relation to the Arab world. Umaymah, too, reflects such ideas to the extent that her story challenges the very notion of the stable self by casting a critical eye on apparently clear-cut boundaries between an internally contained self and the external world.

The observation concerning Umaymah's articulation of self-identity connects with the point that her fiction is modern because it expresses matter of interest globally. This also has relevance in the sense that the Umaymah presents internal and

external Other that exist simultaneously or even overlap with each other within a single text.

I hope to have shown that, though Umaymah's literary career has contributed immensely to the literary output in Saudi Arabia, the quality of her writing and the themes she touches on are well worth further study. In particular, the affinity between Self and Other is a question that still resonates in her time.