**Dystopian World in *Quarantine Philosopher* of Wajdi Al-Ahdal**

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**Abstract:**

Dystopian literature has appeared with the approach of the 21 century as a response to the utopian literature. It comes to reveal unseen threats that result from the new discoveries, cause environmental damage to the earth and its inhabitants. It creates imagined communities that feel dehumanized and frightened. It goes further and beyond its definition targeting young adults who become familiar with and aware of the advance of technology and science. For that, this research aims at deciphering some dystopic features in Wajdi Al-Ahdal’s *Quarantine Philosopher*. It brings to light how life becomes difficult and unbearable to sustain. *Quarantine Philosopher* comes out with a philosophical view of the dystopic world Arab that Arab live in that is created by dictatorship and the foreign colonizer. The study is a critical trace and analysis to the dystopic city, Zimah. Al-Ahdal provides his reader with some views and perceptions on the political and social practices that led to the chaotic situation in Arab world. He designs an imaginative world that Arabs are to be caged in due to the colonial and postcolonial politics.

**Keywords:** dystopia, hyperrealism, *Quarantine Philosopher*, oil.

**عالم الديستوبيا في رواية فيسلوف الكرنتينة لوجدي الأهدل**

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**ملخص:**

ظهر الأدب الديستوبي مع اقتراب القرن الحادي والعشرين كرد فعل على الأدب الطوباوي. يتعلق الأمر بالكشف عن التهديدات غير المرئية التي تنتج عن الاكتشافات الجديدة وتسبب أضرارًا بيئية للأرض وسكانها. إنه يخلق مجتمعات متخيلة تشعر بالخوف والإنسانية. إنه يذهب إلى أبعد من تعريفه ويستهدف الشباب الذين أصبحوا على دراية بتقدم التكنولوجيا والعلوم ووعيهم بها. ومن أجل ذلك يهدف هذا البحث إلى فك بعض الملامح الديستوبية في رواية فيلسوف الكرنتينة لوجدي الأهدل. إنه يسلط الضوء على مدى صعوبة الحياة وعدم تحملها. تقدم رواية فيلسوف الكرنتينة رؤية فلسفية للعالم العربي البائس الذي يعيش فيه العرب والذي خلقته الدكتاتورية والمستعمر الأجنبي. تمثل هذه الدراسة تتبعًا وتحليلًا نقديًا للمدينة البائسة، زيمة. يقدم الأهدل لقارئه بعض الآراء والتصورات حول الممارسات السياسية والاجتماعية التي أدت إلى حالة الفوضى التي يعيشها العالم العربي. إنه يصمم عالماً خيالياً يُحبس فيه العرب بسبب السياسات الاستعمارية وما بعد الاستعمارية.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** الديستوبيا، الواقعية المفرطة، فيلسوف الكرنتينة، النفط.

**Introduction**

Dystopia is a concept that has been around for centuries, appearing in literature and other works of art since ancient times. Dystopia is defined as a society or community that is characterized by extreme human suffering, oppressive social control, and a general lack of hope for the future. It is a form of social critique that is often used to warn against the dangers of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and other forms of oppressive government. In literature, dystopia is a popular genre that has been explored in many different ways. This article will explore some of the different ways that dystopia has been portrayed in Wajdi Al-Ahda’s novel, *Quarantine Philosopher*, as well as what these works can talk about Arab society.

***Quarantine Philosopher***

Wajdi Al-Ahdal is a renowned Yemeni novelist, short story writer, and playwright. His works, such as *Quarantine Philosopher*, offer a satirical and dystopic message. In this novel, the setting is a cemetery known as Zimah. Al-Ahdal describes it as “a world unknown to you” (*Quarantine Philosopher* 4). This could be seen as a reference to the Gulf countries, which are often referred to as desert lands. The word Zimah, which is used as both a name for a camel dwelling and a familiar name for those who inhabit the desert, serves as an ironic reminder of the current political systems in the region. *Quarantine Philosopher* is dystopian in nature, exploring oppressive social systems and the power of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Its works differ significantly in terms of setting and tone. It is set in a past world where a powerful oligarchy has seized control of the government.

However, *Quarantine Philosopher* looks like it is set in the present day, with its characters living in a dystopian city called Zimah. In addition, it is largely a work of political commentary. Also, it is more focused on the personal stories of its characters. It uses dystopian themes to explore the power of the human spirit in the face of adversity. In *Quarantine Philosopher*, the protagonists’ struggle against the oppressive oligarchy serves as a symbol of the power of the human spirit. The characters’ resilience and determination in the face of a seemingly insurmountable challenge serve as a symbol of the strength of the human spirit. It explores the power of hope in the face of despair. Mesha’el struggles against the oligarchy serves as a symbol of hope in the face of oppression. *Quarantine Philosopher* critiques imperialism and its destructive effects while creating a space for those seeking an alternate utopia. The novel serves as a dystopic narrative, showing the undesirable reality outside of utopia.

**Dystopia and Humanity**

For a long time, scholars and critics have engaged in debate around the definitions of dystopia and utopia. New interpretations and perspectives have been developed to keep up with changes and transformations in politics, social issues, culture, economics, technology, and science. Dystopia has been described as an “anti-utopia” and a “literary utopia’s shadow” and is used to critique the negative aspects of the world. With the increased pace of globalization leading to the blurring of boundaries and the transition from totalitarian nation-states to seemingly libertarian global societies, contemporary dystopia has diverged from earlier examples in terms of its motivations, temporality, and plot mechanisms.

In the twentieth century, literature began to be used for critiquing the evils of terrorism and disenchantment with utopia. Dystopia emerged as a critical response to the growing terrors of the era and as an antithesis to the utopian ideals of modernity. It has been referred to as an “anti-utopia,” “negative utopia,” “literary utopia’s shadow,” and even the “essence of utopia” (Claeys, 15; 107; Moylan and Baccolini, 111). Through its literary presence, dystopia can be used to critique the negative aspects of our world and to serve as a warning against the dangers of unchecked progress.

The blurring of national boundaries and the diminishing of distinctions between people due to globalization has led to a transition from national sovereignty to a globalized society, resulting in the decentralization of power. This has led to a divergence in contemporary dystopia from earlier examples in terms of its representation, temporality, and plot mechanisms. Rather than depicting a possible future that is worse than the present, this type of dystopia often portrays an imaginary and almost allegorical version of the present society, which could not get worse than its current state (Nebioglu, 2).

Dystopian writers of old sought to break away from the utopian worlds that were often created by authors for their readers. These challenging works sought to diagnose the reality of the present, examining its highs and lows, and beyond. Their stories left no detail or fact untouched, allowing for closer inspection and investigation. This gave rise to the emergence of a new type of dystopia that similarly approaches its themes and readers. While not necessarily sharing the same motivations, this new form of dystopia often takes into account the latest scientific advancements. Rather than predicting a future that is worse than the present, these stories raise awareness of potential threats and dangers that could lead the world to catastrophe. Contemporary dystopian authors also attempt to challenge people’s perception of the current state of society, by providing an alternate view and allowing readers to recognize the prison they are in (Nebioglu, 34). This sort of perception is viewed in “*Quarantine Philosopher*,” where Yemeni/Arab society is depicted as a worm colony, that is to say, a dystopian land. It reflects on hypocrisy, injustice, and political folly. It carries a satirical aspect that deals with the political situation in the Yemeni/Arab world.

Al-Ahdal, similar to other modern dystopian authors, captivates his audience, drawing them into the dystopia and motivating them to seek a peaceful resolution to the predicament. It is an attempt at understanding the so-called “critical dystopia” (Moylan and Baccolini 7). Here, hope is not lost; a horizon of healing can be glimpsed, shifting the anti-utopian dystopia toward a utopian one. Sargent refers to this process as

a non-existent society […] that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society but normally includes at least one utopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a utopia. (222)

 Al-Ahdal transports his reader to the dystopian realm of Zimah, a society that appears to be grave, and helps him instill hope for survival despite the worst imaginable conditions. Mish’al al-Hijazi, the focal point of the *Quarantine Philosopher*, serves as an example of hope for survival. Through his journey from radical Islam to rationalist philosophy, al-Hijazi sought to provide his people with a way out of their ruined world. This is made evident through his visit to the Grave of London. Upon his return to the Grave of Zimah, he endeavored to spread his newfound knowledge through his book, Together on the Road to Humanization, which emphasizes the importance of reason and the fostering of a sense of humanity and coexistence. The story takes place in the context of a nation of worms, which feed on corpses and drink oil instead of water, yet, they form a society similar to those of the Middle East. The philosopher believes that by following his vision, the worms can achieve “humanity.”

By providing a glimpse of hope, Al-Ahdal motivates and inspires his readers to strive for a better future. It is a reminder that everyone has the power to make a difference and that hope exists even in the darkest of places.

**Road to Humanization**

In the world of worms, a cast of characters from modern cultural and political life is present. The Grave of Zimah is ruled by the “Great Qahtani,” a figure that mirrors the stereotypical autocratic ruler of today. He is arrogant and unpredictable, often manipulating political figures to maintain his power, yet he is frequently taken advantage of by individuals with great influence. These people include the ambassador from the Grave of the Hamburger and “Imam al-Madi,” a play on al-Imam al-Mahdi, the revered leader of Muslims during the end times. Through these characters, the story is propelled by the dangerous political events that transpire in the Grave of Zimah. Additionally, the philosopher finds companionship in Hissa, her disabled younger sister, and the former employees of the now defunct “Centre for Scientific Studies.”

The book “*Together on the Road to Humanisation*” contains the libertarian axiom of striving to be the best in the world at whatever one does in order to gain humanity. This ideology proved to be successful in lifting some citizens out of poverty and misery in Zimah. However, the novel’s protagonist begins to experience pushback from the country’s powerful figures, such as the Great Qahtani, who, with the assistance of Ambassador Wilson, arrests the philosopher and imprisons him for two decades.

The philosopher’s time in prison leaves him in a state of misery. Upon his release, he discovers that many of his peers have fallen into difficult circumstances, and his daughter, who has become increasingly religious, rejects him for fear of damaging her reputation. This is a devastating blow, leading the philosopher to abandon life and refuse to eat. Fortunately, he discovers that consuming books improves his health and he shares this insight with his friend Hissa, her handicapped sister, and her blind daughter. Though Hissa has become affluent through her adherence to liberalist philosophy, she feels disconnected from humanity. It turns out, however, that the philosopher’s new discovery can cure both her sister and daughter, setting off his second rise. He then begins to promote a diet of books and water as a substitute for human flesh and oil, which is met with much controversy due to the lack of water and the prevalence of oil in Zimah. In order to overcome their dire circumstances and reach a state of humanity, the philosopher and his followers set out to find a hidden source of water, thus culminating in the philosopher’s story.

**Politics versus Religion**

Regarding the other main characters, there is an intense political deadlock between Ambassador Wilson and Imam al-Madi. Wilson is deeply concerned with the terrorist attacks that have occurred in his “home grave,” Grave of Hamburger, and attempts to regain control by influencing the Great Qahtani. This strategy weakens public resistance to domination, yet it ultimately facilitates the spread of al-Madi’s autocratic version of the “Doctrine of Sand,” the primary religion of the Grave of Zimah.

The main theme of *Quarantine Philosopher* includes recognizing any nonobvious concepts that may be revealed through an examination of the distribution, placement, and repetition of key terms. Establishing these ideas serves to provide a foundation and support for subsequent narrative analysis. Such an analysis seeks to determine the novel’s connections to preexisting texts and contexts, thus indicating the specific national and international communities and genres it links to. The following section will provide a thematic overview of the novel, specifically exploring two major themes: nation and politics, and spirituality. This is done in order to better understand how nation and religion are portrayed in the novel.

*Quarantine Philosopher* explores the Doctrine of Sand, a faith subscribed to by Zimis, through its focus on religious personalities, institutions, and authorities, particularly Imam al-Madi, his ties to terror, and his capacity to mobilize destructive forces in society. The moral quandary of the protagonist’s daughter, who is apprehensive of the social stigma associated with her father, is also a key theme. Moreover, the creator of the Doctrine, ibn Zimah, is said to have a “preference for imitating things,” which may be a reference to the title of the book. Thus, while Islam is present in the novel, it is not its primary focus. Instead, the novel examines the exploitation of religion by Imam al-Madi in his power struggles, as well as the philosopher’s mission to the Grave of Homburger in London, sent by a fanatical religious group.

The nation of Zimah bears traces of Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Arab world, making it difficult to assert that Yemen is the novel’s sole ideological target. What makes the story seem more about Yemen/Saudi Arabia is the configuration of characteristics, which place Zimah in a similar geographic region to Yemen/Saudi Arabia and with parallels in terms of culture (homogenous, religious), society (conservative), material wealth, power, and stability. Additionally, the association of Yemen is further reinforced by symbolic names such as the Great Qahtani (Qahtan being the legendary forefather of the southern Arabs (Lambert). In addition to the small village of Zimah that was located near Jeddah, the character Addakhil, the counselor of the Great Qahtani, is a real figure and counselor to the Saudi rulers.

**Healing Process**

The juxtaposition of the Grave of London, where al-Hijazi became a philosopher, and the Grave of the Hamburger brings the East-West dichotomy to the forefront of the novel, as do the two distinct philosophies propagated by al-Hijazi. The first, a liberalist version, is acquired in London, while the second—involving the consumption of books and drinking of water—is reminiscent of Eastern values, such as those of Buddhism and Taoism, particularly as it is through the consumption of Lao Tse that it arises for the original perfection (Creel). This dichotomy places the novel in the context of Arabic politically charged literature, as the theme of the Arab world versus the West is a prominent element of modern Arabic literary history (Klemm). However, on a political level, the East-West dichotomy is dissolved via the equal and negative appraisal of all political agents.

The beginning of the story evokes the familiar concept of exile versus struggle at the dystopian home through its depiction of a return from abroad. Ironically, such a theme seems to be the center of the main story as it reappears in the depiction of Yemen, nor does it result in a crisis for any of the major characters. This serves as a link to the first body of Yemeni political literature and history because the ongoing civil war makes it unsafe to travel from one place to another.

In the satirically charged literary form of *Quarantine Philosopher*, Al-Ahdal paints a picture of life as a nightmare, brought on by the foreign colonizer’s exploitation and destruction of Arab land. Through this, he portrays how the colonizer has drained the region of its oil, stunted its progress, left its people in poverty, and radicalized them. Through this, *Quarantine Philosopher* aims to empower its readers to think critically and to imagine a future in which the present is averted to prevent a dystopian disaster. In this imagined future, a cemetery, Zimah, is divided into two unequal parts, connected by a bridge called the al-Adalah (Justice) Bridge. One side of the bridge is a luxurious area reserved for the king and his oligarchs, while the other is a backward area for the poor and dissidents.

Mesha’el, the philosopher, arrived at the Bridge of Justice, which divided the cemetery into two, and was astounded by its name. He believed this to be a cynical reference to the concept of justice and felt it was nothing more than rhetoric. Ascending the bridge, he was struck by the sight of the southern part of Tahlia Street, which was populated by decrepit, low-income buildings, and seemed to be in a state of disarray and grime. This stark contrast between the affluent north and the destitute south, separated by a mere few meters, filled Mesha’el with sadness. (Quarantine Philosopher 15)

Al-Ahdal creates a parallel universe and an extrapolation of the world, allowing his characters to inhabit an imaginary utopia. Through his writing, he attempts to reimagine and remember a utopian world where humans are treated with dignity. Utopia is a desirable state of reality that is not existent, while dystopia is undesirable and a “bad place” one would not want to live in. Through his work, Al-Ahdal provides the reader with a free image of where politics intends to take a nation.

*Quarantine Philosopher* is a dystopian fantasy set in a world of “would-not-like presence.” Its characters are transformed into worms that subsist on waste food and oily water, implying that the surface of the earth has been rendered uninhabitable. The book suggests that oil has seeped into the minds of people, driving them to become selfish and greedy. This has made the lives of the impoverished in the Arab Peninsula almost impossible, due to the unseen colonialism, greed, and backwardness that plague the region. The novel *Quarantine Philosopher* can be seen as a parody of George Orwell’s Animal Farm, as it employs caricature and black humor to allegorically depict the Arab world’s recent history, similarly to Al-Ahdal’s first novel, *Mountainous Boats*.

Offering a remedy for the Arab world*, Quarantine Philosopher* is set in a mass graveyard in the Arabian Peninsula and follows the character, Mesha’el Hijazi, a philosopher and missionary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs sent to Europe to teach the Eastern Prayer and Islamic affairs. After Mesha’el completes his mission, he abandons the doctrine and pursues philosophy, hoping to return to his country with a new thought to bring reform to his fragile culture. Through Mesha’el’s transformation from Islamic extremist to liberalist, Al-Ahdal paints a picture of political dictators and religious extremists whose cooperation has destroyed the dreams of the people. In this work, the author attempts to help his society by proposing a restored solution to the deviated behavior caused by political and religious issues. By following the advice to “be human,” Al-Ahdal seeks to develop an optimal structure for his society.

The Great Qahtani, ruler of the Zimah cemetery, finally carried out the will to finance a sun-manufacturing project with the assistance of the engineers from the Hamburger cemetery. This project provided light and warmth to the thirsty worms of Zimah’s cemetery for many years, but it was made from petrochemical waste and instead of helping to bring clarity to our reality, it filled it with fallacies. (Quarantine Philosopher 5)

Mesha’el Hijazi, the protagonist of *Quarantine Philosopher*, speaks of the humiliation and marginalization endured by those who have been reduced to the status of worms. He reveals how political corruption and oppression create an imbalanced, paralyzed society in which those who would not submit are subjected to radicalization. Scientists and intellectuals are sent to prison, even as they try to offer solutions to their ruined home of Zimah and its corrupt economic system. Women, too, with such inspirations have chosen to contribute practically and theoretically to social works, breaking the social taboos that constrain women’s freedom to participate and work outside the home.

In *Quarantine Philosopher*, dystopia is depicted as a process of redefining an unbearable world, and Yemen is no exception. Gregory Claeys' book Dystopia: A Natural History asserts that dystopia has been reprocessed, reformed, and reproduced since the Second World War, transforming into a “post-totalitarian” form with the rise of “liberal non-totalitarian societies” (447). Likewise, Gottlieb’s book Dystopian Fiction East, and West: Universe of Terror and Trial argues that dystopian writers offer “militant criticism” of present social-political systems by demonstrating their monstrous potential outcomes in the future (13). Such criticism is evident in the chaotic political situation in some Arab countries, including Yemen.

In her article “Living in Dystopia,” Raffaella Baccolini argues that society is gradually approaching a “soft regime” that does not necessarily abolish dystopia. She posits that “today, more than ever, dystopia matters” (45). As an illustration, the dystopian nation of Zimah reveals how citizens were subject to the despotic rule of Great Gahtani and his regime, consequently forcing them to resist the adulterated political system. This means that despite the bleakness of dystopia, it offers the potential for a new understanding of life.

**Resistance and Hope**

In his dystopian novel *Quarantine Philosopher*, Al-Ahdal offers a unique form of resistance to the dystopian narrative. He suggests that the cure for incurable diseases and permanent impairments is the transition to the human phase, as he states: “the congenital deformities that some [people] are born with will disappear, as if they were not, if they succeeded in ascending themselves to humanity, because the whole body interacts with its parts in a proper manner, heals itself from diseases, and the missing limbs grow by themselves like the branches of a living tree” (129). Moreover, Al-Ahdal hints at and predicts the future of some Arab nations, with Yemen as an example. Ali Ammar and Yashodhan Ghropade explain that “in its seventh year of conflict, facing successive shocks and a heightened risk of famine, Yemen has been termed the world’s ‘worst humanitarian crisis’” (1). In *Quarantine Philosopher*, Yemen is given an underground dimension, with characters portrayed as worms, creating an emotional and realistic image.

Through his dystopian narrative, *Quarantine Philosopher* provides a powerful form of resistance and offers a valuable lesson for present and future generations. He emphasizes the importance of ascending to humanity, which can aid in curing incurable diseases and permanent impairments. He also draws attention to the dire situation in Yemen and other Arab nations, as well as the emotional reality of the conflict.

There is a tension between the character and setting in Al-Ahdal’s work, which he uses to illustrate the male domination in the Arab world and his attempts to reshape and design women’s space and happiness. Mesha'el and his companions in Zimahh represent a type of hyperreality, with their worm-encased bodies living in an eerie cemetery that is designed to look realistic and motivate the reader to seek refuge from such an unbearable world. Al-Ahdal is attempting a new style of imagined art, creating a highly realistic graphic representation of the situation. This is in line with the view of Jean Baudrillard, who claims that society has replaced reality and meaning with symbols and signs and that human experience is a simulation of reality (54).

**The Oil’s Curse**

Oil is often portrayed as a great misfortune for certain Arab countries, such as Yemen. The UNOCHA estimated in February 2019 that 24 million people needed aid, with more than 20 million facing food insecurity and 14.3 million in acute need of assistance, while an estimated 4.3 million have been forced to flee their homes (Cordesman et al. 12). *Quarantine Philosopher* views oil as a curse leading Arab countries to be colonially moderated by Western powers, particularly the United States. In their article, Economic Development Assumptions and the Elusive Curse of Oil, Ryan Kennedy and Lydia Tiede note that various scholars have argued that oil resources may lead to inadequate institutions and governance, resulting in slower economic growth, increased risk of civil war, and other severe problems (760).

In “The Grave of Zimah,” water serves as a central theme, with the protagonist’s search for a source of freshwater representing the ongoing struggle of Yemenis for a reliable supply of water. This struggle is deeply rooted in the history of the nation, as Yemen has long suffered from water shortages. Through its exploration of this critical issue, the novel connects the current crisis with the ancient civilization of Yemen.

In *Quarantine Philosopher*, oil is a symbol of power, as demonstrated by Great Qahtani’s ceremonious introduction of the philosopher to drinking oil instead of water. Oil is also linked to the artificial sun that illuminates the Grave of Zimah, which the despot controls with a remote device. This serves to emphasize the debasing influence of oil on the human soul and society in comparison to the purity and life-giving properties of water.

Upon departing the Emirate, the philosopher Mesha’el took a tour along Tahlia Street, the most renowned thoroughfare at the Zimah cemetery. He felt the lethargy and weakness that weighed upon his nerves and observed his surroundings. He surmised that the lack of access to clean water was preventing the populace from being able to produce, innovate, and develop, resulting in a monotonous and sterile existence. (Quarantine Philosopher 15)

 Al-Ahdal reveals how oil has not fulfilled its promise of providing prosperity for the Arab people but rather has led to slavery and oppression. Rather than investing in education and the development of a strong economy, rulers have used the revenue generated from oil to maintain dominance over their citizens, thus creating a society in which different social classes are pitted against one another in terms of political and economic power. Ultimately, oil has not brought any tangible benefits to the Arab people, leaving them worse off than before.

State violence is manifested in various ways, including systemic underinvestment in our communities, incarceration of our people, exploitation of our neighborhoods by the state and private entities, government policies leading to water pollution and land theft, schools that criminalize rather than educate our children, economic practices that exploit our labor, and wars on our Trans and Queer family that deny them their rights (Shange, 2019).

**Conclusion**

Al-Ahdal offers a unique fictional narrative that illuminates the present and future destiny of some Arab countries. Through his *Quarantine Philosopher*, Al-Ahdal calls for an examination of the role of his literary peers and their works not only in Yemen but also throughout the Arab world. The work provides a hyperrealistic image of the social and religious colonization of these countries, as well as their economic and political powerlessness. It calls for the creation of a quarantine center to host and rehabilitate citizens, emphasizing the need for individuals to travel to themselves in order to reconcile and rethink. Freud’s insight that human desire will clash with civilization is also highlighted, along with his warning that human cultural development must succeed in mastering the instinct of aggression and self-destruction in order to survive. *Quarantine Philosopher* thus serves as a warning to the extent to which industrial human disturbances have caused greediness, ignorance, defenselessness, and violence to plague some Arab societies.

The emotional and material worlds portrayed in the nation of Zimah are characterized by a spiritual deficit, violence, deception, and inhumanity, as well as poverty, illness, and decay. This portrayal of Yemen is common in Yemeni writing. Water and oil are juxtaposed as complementary, highlighting their unusual significance and the history of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as current resource scarcity and international dependency. Political, economic, and religious power are also expressed through tyranny, injustice, and corruption.

There is a spirituality based on humanism, an interest in philosophy and art, and a focus on aesthetic quality. The themes of Yemeni-ness, migration, and “earth” are also present in “*Quarantined Philosopher*,” but they are peripheral to the plot. Migration is no longer the main crisis but rather an element that may have both positive and negative outcomes. “Earth” is also not an object of value but functions as an intertextual marker that signals to readers what kind of story this is and how it should be read. The idea presented is that a transformation of the nation can begin as an individual process of enlightenment, education, and spiritual awakening. In Al-Ahdal’s national project, the focus is largely unrelated to material issues, such as earth and politics, and instead deals with more sophisticated themes, such as diplomacy and the science community. The plot progresses in a way that further enhances this view.

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