

# **Socio-Political Realities in Modern Yemeni Short Story: A Critique of Mohammad Abdul- Wali's Short Stories**

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**Abstract** Few studies, if not at all have been conducted to explore the realistic aspects in Abdul-Wali's short stories. This study attempts to look at how Abdul-Wali employs a western literary genre to reflect the humane dimension through the lens of local issues, as well as to offer non-Arabic speakers an insight of the writings of Yemeni short story with an emphasis on its privacy. Abdul-Wali's stories unequivocally voice a realistic picture of social and political issues with unwavering determination and candor. The study's significance lies in its endeavor to unbosom the striking similarities between ancient and modern occurrences, to put it another way, the old lives in the shadow of the new, the matter that grants the stories a sense of continuum and continuity. It also addresses the unrelenting epidemic of displacement of individuals who turn to emigration as their only avenue of hope. The study uses a postcolonial theory and a descriptive-analytical approach to explore and investigate the primary themes of realism in the stories understudy. The research is mostly a text-based investigation that includes an examination of major primary sources. The study captures a timeless question of national identity, nostalgia, and the universality of human experiences as well as the intimacy of the relationships depicted.

**Keywords** alienation; realism; socio-political issues; women

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## Introduction

According to George (1980), realism, a literary doctrine that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the romantic doctrine “attempts honestly . . . to give a complete picture of behavior and to unveil motivations that are less than admirable” (51). It implies “criticism of the surrounding social reality” and assumes a protest attitude against bourgeois society (Fischer 107-8). It is also related to a person’s political, economic, intellectual, and religious circumstances, as well as society. There is little doubt that a realistic approach that began in France, has affected Arabic literature, and many realistic ideas and visions have been extracted from it. Nonetheless, the realistic approach in Arab fiction did not become a clear trend and complete artistic traits until the forties of the twentieth century, particularly after World War II. In the Arab world, realism emerged as a result of national and revolutionary awareness that emphasizes the need to alter society and do away with its flaws. Notably, the political, social, intellectual, and philosophical elements constitute a natural foundation for the Arab realistic movements, which naturally arose because of literary translation. The writers turned into a realistic approach as it represents a cry in the face of the bad conditions left by the rulers and the bad economic and political conditions. The most prominent representatives of realism in Arabic literature are Abbas Mahmoud Al-Akkad, Amin Al-Rihani, Mikhail Naima, Omar Fakhoury, Fouad Hobeish..etc. Naguib Mahfouz is the one who paves the way for Arab realism with his fictional works that include *New Cairo*, *Khan Al-Khalil*, *Al-Madaq Alley*, and *The Trilogy*. By using real geographical names and supporting the issues of the lower middle class, he demonstrates his realism.

One of the most important concerns of the realistic approach that advocates the use of common, simple, and widely recognized language that anybody can understand, is the prevailing political and social issues in society. Due to the relationship of this literary approach to society and its close relationship with its issues, it can be concluded that this approach is distinguished by its enormous number of followers throughout history and literature around the world. Yet, realism does not mean the literal transfer of reality, but rather searches for the essence of things and discussing opinions and ideas. Due to the direct interest of realism in society, its issues, and destiny, it is the most literary approach that is connected with man and historical reality. It directly reflects reality, especially its painful events and bitter struggles. Several sects appeared after the realistic sect, but this sect has preserved its prestige and position among the other sects due to its unique creations

introduced today.

The short story, a form of modern world literature has developed a realistic approach and the Yemeni short story is no exception. Yet, the Yemeni short story developed late due to some political and socio-economic factors such as the division of the country, the imamate rule, and the British colonization. Al-Maqaleh added that the story didn't really start to take shape until Abdul-Wali appeared, whose stories are marked by the most fundamental technical elements of a story (177). The unstable socio-political and economic conditions of the country led many intellectuals and writers to fly away and live in a diaspora where they can find their humanity. Thus, homesickness and longing for homeland have played a role in shaping their intellect and literary output. The closer contact with a broader spectrum of Arabic and western works of literature results in the natural development of the Yemeni short story. Yemeni experiences of becoming a modern nation are voiced in the short story, especially in the works of Mohammad Abdul-Wali who is, often called "Chekhov of Yemen." The story provides a means of reading society in all its facets because it follows man's activities while he is groaning and carrying his sorrows and pains within himself. These voices appeared sometimes in the form of social critique, sometimes in mirroring the sorrow and suffering of the suppressed classes, and at other times emphasizing the values of freedom.

### **Mohammad Abdul-Wali (1940–1973)**

Abdul-Wali whose writings "marked a radical break from .... Traditional genres by focusing on contemporary themes, and by describing with vivid and compassionate realism the lives of ordinary people, especially the oppressed and socially marginal" (Abdul-Wali, 2001: 1) is undoubtedly the pioneer of the short story in the history of contemporary Yemeni literature. Al-Bakry in *Mohammad Abdul-Wali and Something called Nostalgia* says: Abdul-Wali "was realistic in his critique of reality and romantic in his search for perfection" (2019). Abu Talib adds Abdul-Wali "is one of the sincerest people who has approached literature from a local and human perspective" (32). Muhāmmad adds that what Abdul-Wali discusses or provokes, demonstrates human value, sincerity, honesty, and originality (202). In contrast to other writers' works, such as Ali Ahmad Bakathir's, Abdul-Wali does not use ideological dictates in his writings. Yet, a genuine national identity, a pure Yemeni self, and something from the past is all present in his literary world. All his works, which have a human dimension, highlight the significance of local issues.

Al-Jumly et al state that Mohammad Abdul-Wali "is one of the most masterful

fiction writers not only of Yemen but of the Arab world, particularly among those whose works focus on the flight from their motherland of the persecuted and economically disadvantaged” (41). Yet, his work is not celebrated as it should be particularly his short stories which are set either in Ethiopia or in North Yemen in (1950-1960). He addresses the heroes’ pain and anxiety, using them as a springboard to declaim the concerns of all Yemenis. Although his work has received little attention both locally and internationally, his stories and heroes have become a historical record of Yemeni life at a time the nation’s wounds are still bleeding.

The study is grounded on the researcher’s reading of the Arabic original and translated version of short stories by Abu Baker Bagader and Deborah Akers from the University of Texas. It adopts a postcolonial framework to look at the formation of Yemeni country society, which is still relevant today. In general, the issue of identity and the concept of hybridity occupy an undeniable role in postcolonial fiction. Ronning suggests that “The Literary analysis of identity is often done by the transposition of a character into a strange setting” (3). This is precisely what occurs in the stories understudy. Among the characteristics that set Abdul- Wali’s writings apart from those of his contemporaries are questions of identity and the characters’ Yemenness. Yet, his preoccupation with identity is not about colonial power or colonial discourse, but rather about the homeland and longing for it. Moreover, it is a new discursive strategy in postcolonial Arabic fiction to refer to the country or nation as a woman. Abdul-Wali is perhaps credited with being the first writer to grant voice to women by integrating the body and the land in discourse. This discursive and thematic strategy has been referred to as body politics by both Al-Musawi (2003) and Faulkner (2005). The significance of the study stems from the fact that Abdul-Wali and his legacy particularly short stories display the striking similarities between ancient and modern occurrences. To put it another way, the old lives in the shadow of the new. By and large, writing about Mohammad Abdul-Wali necessitates analyzing the period in which he lived, as well as the issues that preoccupied his age and time, or rather the concepts that impacted him, and then reading his works accordingly.

### **Migration and Its Reflections on Abdul-Wali’s Short Stories**

Yemeni migration is unlike any other sort of alienation that modern civilization has witnessed. The European person who has got all kinds of luxury, starts searching for other needs that his civilization has failed to supply. All of his philosophies, literary and artistic works are the product of his searching, suffering, and philosophical musings. On the other hand, Mohammed adds that the Yemeni migration is the

alienation of a human being looking for only a piece of land to call home (21). Al-hilali states that “the history of Yemen is a record of immigration and immigrant... The phenomenon of expatriation or immigration is not newly born but a long-standing and persisting problem that has become synonymous with Yemen” (175). Though some settle down in the societies to which they travel, they have a strong desire to return. The magnitude of the problem is demonstrated by the fact that immigration has become a source of concern for writers, academics, philosophers, and artists who understand what immigration entails. The key to Abdul-Wali’s fame as a storyteller is that he paid great attention to the issue of immigration. He was a hybrid of Yemeni and Ethiopian cultures, which is another factor.

When we delve into one of his stories, we see that the most common causes of immigration are misery and poverty, both of which are exacerbated by the prevailing regime’s cruelty and brutality at the time to the extent “The Yemeni immigration has surpassed that of any other country” (Al-hilali 175). Wahab Romea states: “Emigration is past and present issue of Yemen, an issue suffered by each Yemeni home and every family especially in the countryside ... from almost every home, the village, strongest youth have been taken away by emigration” (Alhilali, 175). Al-Maqalih (1999) remarks in his critical appreciation of *The Fog Way* that: “He who does not emigrate dies, he loses his prestige in the southern Yemeni community city. He is considered an unrespectable person. Emigration is like life for him” (Khisbak 24). Emigration is seen as “the problem of problems for the Yemeni people. There are emigrants from almost every home” (Khisbak 21). The issue of migration is fraught with passion, and poetry finds its function here because it requires feelings that take root in the human soul. Abdullah Al-Baradoni, a famous Yemeni poet, and the conscience of his society says:

My country grieves.  
In its own boundaries  
And even on its own soil  
Suffers the alienation of exile. ([https://adab.com/post/view\\_post/73299](https://adab.com/post/view_post/73299))

Abdul-Wali portrays a gloomy picture of emigration, emphasizing the misery that expatriates go through. Many of his works are about Yemeni immigrants and exiles, as well as Yemeni African marriages. Alienation in Abdul-Wali’s works takes a philosophical and militant character for the revolution. He criticizes it as behavior; claiming “it is a life not worth living,” and some of his heroes were strongly condemned. Abdu Saeed, the protagonist of “They Die Strangers”—is just

a worthless human that left nothing good in his life and did nothing for his country, to die as a foreigner, far from his birthplace, in the end. Even the Italian doctor who treated him did not sympathize with him at all; rather, in the presence of his lying body, he said: “They have left their land, their country, and their people behind for a living. They die running after the morsel before everything. That’s what they think about” (Abdul-Wali 152).

Abdul-Wali whose identity was torn between Yemen and Ethiopia has been tormented by the flames of alienation and distance from his homeland. So, it is not surprising that all his stories center on migration, its effects, and its consequences. His rejection of emigration, urging people to face the reality courageously, and that change can only occur by one’s presence in his homeland is remarkable throughout his stories. He deals with immigration and its issues, as well as the psychological and social consequences for Yemeni society- Diaspora and loss encountered by the immigrant. One might wonder why we feel obligated to examine Abdul-Wali’s writings. This is due to the fact that emigration, in the broadest sense, is not exclusive to one society over another. It is analogous to writing about mothers because we are human beings with sentiments, emotions, and longings that develop through time.

The stories of Abdul-Wali that deal with immigration can be divided into two categories: “The Land, Salma,” “If Only He Had Not Returned,” “Abu Rubbia,” “The Color of Rain” “Something Called Nostalgia,” “Nothing New” deal with immigration’s consequence, the immigrant’s return from exile, the obstacles he encounters in his homeland, and the harmful consequences of his immigration. “Cocotte”—”The Road to Asmara”—”The End” discuss the loss and diaspora that the immigrant experiences in his exile. The immigrant’s alienation isn’t only a personal problem that affects him; on the contrary, it affects everyone with whom he or she has a bond as shown below.

### **“The Land, Salma”**

The story tackles Yemeni migration and its social dimensions. It demonstrates how Yemeni women cope with migration, various migration problems, psychological factors, and social contradictions. It shows Abdul-Wali’s own philosophy of looking at reality, existence, nature, human idealism, and community; the community that is almost entirely made up of women who are solely responsible for building society, while men await the first opportunity to migrate in quest of a better future. Many of these immigrants experience a loss of identity and they turn into strangers in exile. Even though the story was written in 1958, it still carries the same heartbreak as if

it has been written recently. The Yemeni woman works on the farm, raises children, and instills a love of the land in them while the Yemeni man is an expatriate.

Since her husband has been gone for more than five years, Salma, the main character who finds happiness in her husband's presence, is a distressed lady looking for a way out. In the absence of her spouse, she endures a terrible psychological struggle, loneliness, and deprivation. She becomes more physically inclined due to deprivation, and her sensation of aging rendered her more aware of the passage of time. She becomes aware of the intensity of life and the suffering because of social restrictions and the tyranny of tradition. Amid absentmindedness and soliloquy with the soul, she hears a voice whisper: "Salma, finally, you're facing yourself. You must admit the truth; don't try to run away from yourself, for that won't help you. Admit it, you've been waiting for him a long time and you can't bear it any longer... Oh, Salma, five years and you're starting the sixth year of waiting" (Abdul-Wali, 2001, 95). In this soliloquy, Salma's personality as well as the lives of Yemeni women in the countryside, Yemeni men's lives, and the image of a backward and cruel society are all exposed. No matter if they immigrate or not, everyone is a victim of alienation.

Salma has a strong bond with the land because of her devotion to it, possibly because they are both mothers and have characteristics in common that strengthen their connection. The inner voice addresses Salma "Nobody values the land like you do. Your husband and neither will your son when he grows up. He 'll leave it like his father did"(99). Her love for the land leads her to decide to take revenge on immigration by addressing the underlying issues by educating her kid about the worth of the land, which is a practical, reasonable, and palatable answer to her psychological distress. She is adamant about teaching her son to love and respect his country because she believes that only through love Yemen will be revived. "I'll teach him. I 'll teach him to love the land" (99). She realizes that a person who is intimately connected to the land cannot abandon it.

She believes that the only way to protect Yemenis from the migration stream is to adhere to the land at all costs and to encourage young people to love it. Therefore, she decides to instill in her son this supreme value of life, which holds that listening to the voice of the land is the key to independence and self-sufficiency. By emphasizing the land and its allure, Abdul-Wali appears to imply that the emigrants are irresponsible and lack patriotic spirit. Alsebaïl, says: "In stressing the land and its attraction, however, Abdul-Wali seems to impute to the emigrants a measure of irresponsibility and lack of patriotic feeling" (102). Salma seems to be disregarding her husband and her own interests by choosing to bring up her son as a patriot and a

nationalist rather than emulate his father.

In contrast to a man who abandons his hometown, Salma, a Yemeni woman is regarded as the most capable, worthy, and resilient of all men since she continues to care for and love her motherland. The writer may wish for Yemenis to follow Salma's lead and instill a love for their homeland which in return would pass on to their children. This implies that the characters express issues that are broader than their own.

Just like, "The Land, Salma," "If He Only Had Not Returned" revolves around a devastating social issue in Yemeni society, namely, migration. The title suggests an outcry against immigration as the immigrant returns spiritually dead but physically alive, and this is where the disaster begins. The writer expresses his rejection of alienation and emigration from one's homeland, but without explicitly stating what he means. Rather, he provides a clearer and concise explanation of everything. The focus is redirected away from the expatriate's sufferings toward the anguish of his close relatives who are left behind.

The story begins with a scene in which an expatriate returns half dead. "Men were carrying a coffin in which lay the ghost of a man and he was not yet dead" (Abdul-Wali 245). The writer left the expatriate's identity unclear, implying that the immigrant maybe anyone. It is a stark expression of emigration's hostility. When the children learn that their father has arrived, they rush to meet him. A short time later, they are astounded to see a man carried to their house on a stretcher, with no baggage, boxes, or personal belongings. The elder son, who appears surprised to see his father, accosts his mother: "Mother he's... not. (A cry interrupted the utterance) I want water...water...water..." (248). Even though the wife does not utter a single word, the writer conjures up all her emotions in our minds. He captures the psychological setting through the children's dread, bewilderment, and denial of themselves, as well as their eyes. The wife is devastated; the only thing she remembers about her husband is his eyes "Only his eyes showed that he had a face"(248). Though she awaited her husband's arrival in the hope that he would relieve her suffering, the situation turned out to be quite the reverse. The writer continues to track her feelings, behavior, and the ongoing suffering she experienced. A virtuous, illiterate woman has no alternative but to serve her husband in silence, pay visits to mosques, Mawlana, and saints, and squander her children's milk, ghee, and grain by using it to pay for her husband's treatment.

The mother left no stone unturned; she visited every shrine; she held reading recitals of the Holy Quran in every mosque; she gave charity of different kinds-



grain, fat, milk, but he remained in bed, motionless, his eyes fixed to the roof and his head non-moving, but he did not die. (248)

Even though she begins to care for him, nothing she does seems to help. In fact, the rural, backward social framework in which woman lives is one in which women frequently shoulder more responsibility than males. She is observed burying her femininity, silencing her voice, and dedicating herself to continuous hard work. The writer's depiction of some of the social practices common in the rural environment through the expatriate's wife demonstrates the widespread ignorance in Yemeni society before and after the revolution.

The story conveys to us two parallel events, the situation of the bleak village that lives in agony and illness, and the condition of the patient who returns, and who resembles his village. Perhaps the writer is referring to the period of natural drought, psychological and social dryness, and backwardness that afflicted Yemen under the Imamate at that time when he depicted the village and its drought. Both are half-dead, and the village has lost all its men and young, leaving only children and elderly women and it lost any sense of security and hope. "In the village, there were just children and elderly ladies" (245). By emphasizing the human aspect of the issue - the husband who gains nothing from his expatriation, but loses his health and nearly his life, the family that has lost its breadwinner - In a literary sense, the writer demonstrates his command of realism. The theme is realistic, and alienation is a widespread and realistic phenomenon, as it is one of Yemen's most pressing issues. The story takes revenge upon the immigrant husband who prefers to depart his homeland to gather money rather than stay with his family and relatives. However, the ending is left open, beholding that the tragedy will continue.

The tragedy that Yemenis are going through as a result of their emigration and alienation is captured in this story, as it is in other works by Abdul-Wali. Rather, the tragedy affects every member of the immigrant's family, not just the immigrant himself. Although the world of immigration is a sick one, people are unaware of it. Thus, through a sad ending and a painful conclusion for a person who spent most of his life in exile, the story sends an indirect message to every Yemeni that emigration is rejected despite its materialistic gains. Although the writer doesn't explicitly state this refusal, it is clear from his words and the symbols he employed.

Both "The Land, Salma" and "If He Only Had Not Returned" stress the suffering of women and the vital responsibilities they play in society. The returnee's illness reveals that migration is a sick world where many people are unaware of its agony. Only those who have experienced alienation may understand how painful it is.

### **Abu Rubbia**

“Abu Rubbia” story which appears to be based on Abdul-Wali’s early life experience in Addis Ababa, deals with the issue of alienation and immigration. Through the character of Abu Rubia, the dismal and defeated side of immigrant life is exposed successfully. The magnitude of distortion induced by immigration to some immigrants is revealed through this mildly mad character. Labeling Abu Rubia insane is an attempt to lessen his impact on others. Abu Rubbia feels that immigration is motivated solely by self-interest, and advocates for a strong attachment to one’s birthplace. In his views on immigration and the homeland, he appears rational and wise, but people around him are critical of him since his ideas reveal their reality and go against their vision. Ironically enough, although Abu Rubbia opposes immigration, he himself is an immigrant. He only returned to Yemen when he was deported. This character’s paradoxical aspect is a deep manifestation of its turbulent structure, and it completes the image of the profound distortion that immigration has created in certain immigrants’ lives.

Abu Rubbia’s name is both sarcastic as well as symbolic. The fact that the Arabic word “Abu” means (father of) is linked to the foreign name “Rubbia”(currency used in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.) is not coincidental. Abu Rubbia is a Yemeni who has been hurled into a distant place, Addis Ababa, in a quest for wealth or, to put it another way, to alleviate his poverty. This gives us some clues that poverty is the main drive that pushes this man and many thousands out of their country. Although this name carries materialistic implications, this man is revealed to be a man who is unconcerned about money. Yet, he is emotionally and psychologically torn. He has no identity, no money, and no place to call home. However, he wins our respect and admiration as soon as we read his mind and comprehend his life philosophy. He is dissatisfied with his situation as a displaced person. Yemenis, according to him, abandon their homeland in search of livelihood in other countries, just to suffer and die as strangers. Throughout the story, his thoughts are filled with an intense longing to return to his homeland. He condemns alienation as a historical phenomenon brought on by cowardice, disappointment, and a lack of sincerity. “Why do all Yemenis emigrate? they are afraid... They run away, leaving it in the hands of the corrupt. .... They said the Ma’rib dam has been demolished, and whoever demolished it is a small mouse, see liars, they demolished the dam with their corruption” (Abdul-Wali 30-31).

A poor yet cheery man named Abu Rubbia uses his drawings to ridicule people subtly and without offending them. He humorously depicts them as animals. “And

he keeps drawing with perspiration pouring on his face and his sunken eyes are fixed on the picture he drew” (30). The wealthy who do not help the less fortunate and Yemenis who flee their own homeland, abandoning just the women behind, are the targets of his sincere criticism. Noticing that emigration has become an ideology to his fellow men, he calls for an ideology of return. This ideology is inscribed in this displaced poor man, and he is committed to transferring it to those who understand him. On the tongue of Abu Rubbia, Abdul-Wali urges all Yemenis, “Go back to your homes” (30). This imperative style is important for a multitude of reasons. These are the words of a man who has been touched by emigration, the humiliation and loss of identity that come with it. He goes to great lengths to instill a lasting love for Yemen.

He states tacitly and indirectly via the sorrow of the women in the absence of their breadwinners that there is too much goodness in their homeland, and beneath the sky of their country is their pride and protection. The misery prompts him to advise Saeed to return to his own land. He said to Saeed in a moment of emotional attachment to his homeland:

Do you know that your country is out there? It is beautiful, all of it, its mountains, trees, sun, and valleys... “Listen, you need to go to Yemen, there is nothing for you here.” He continues: “Listen, Said, the Yemenis emigrate because they are fearful. They can’t stay in their country, so they escape and leave it to the cursed. They actually started emigrating a thousand years ago. (30)

Abu Rubbia understands the value of his country and the agony of alienation despite all its materialistic advantage. His appearance in tattered clothes and barefoot, on the other hand, depicts the plight of the country and the people who are still struggling under the yoke of colonialism. The Yemenis compelled him to return, yet he is even more estranged and alienated in his homeland than before emigration and this is the tragedy.

“The Color of Rain” story that begins with “Do you know the meaning of that kind of loneliness? I didn’t know until then, but I found it in the bed of that woman on that night when I discovered her kisses were false” (Abdul-Wali,2001 106) sums up the bitterness of alienation that saps the expatriate’s desire to live to the point he has lost interest in anything around him, and nothing piques his attention. “I didn’t feel anything...neither the mountains nor the stars nor even the color of rains, these naked peaks” (105).

The expatriate returns to his nation, family, and loved ones with joy after many years of exile and longing. However, he is taken aback by the fact that he has returned from a long exile to an exile within his own country and among his family. “I ‘ve returned to Yemen after twenty years and I found no one.... I saw a few graves and nothing else” (75). As he evaluates all the variables surrounding him, the expatriate recognizes the mistake of his calculations and recalls his memories of many years ago, remembering the faces that are no more. He is heartbroken since he would not even have had the opportunity to say goodbye to them. Was it all worth it? Will the money he has accumulated be enough to make up for the years he has lost? Of course, No.

“Cocotte” story addresses a social and humanitarian concern with the tragedy of the Muwalldins<sup>1</sup>, who are marginalized, oppressed, and alienated in Ethiopian and Yemeni society. Abdul-Wali (Himself Muwalldin) is the best one who portrays the suffering of the Muwalldins (hybrids) who appear to be ostracized because of the color of their skin. Most of his works, including the one under study, “describe situations which Abdul-Wali probably personally experienced, observed, or heard about firsthand” (Abdul-Wali,2001 4). In fact, immigration’s tragedy impacts not only the immigrants, and the nation, but also confiscates the future. The tragedy here is embodied in the offspring of these Abyssinian immigrants (Muwalldins) who lack a homeland and an identity. They are then unable to secure a new homeland for themselves. They aren’t Yemenis since they know nothing about Yemen other than what they’ve heard nor Abyssinia because it isn’t their own country. They are neither Yemenis nor Ethiopians in their whole. Their grief is exacerbated by the immigrants who are responsible for their suffering, sadness, and alienation. It exposes a part of Muwalldins’ anguish, which is pushed to the point of adaptation by social dispersion and psychological rupture.

The suffering of Muwalldins is manifested through the character of the prostitute who lost not only her breadwinner, but also herself, language, religion, and identity, and she turns to prostitution as a source of revenue and a place to bury her broken, bewildered spirit. “ Why does she torture herself every night? She looked at the street, wishing someone would walk in, she will not ask him for money, it will suffice to save her from herself, from the bitter torment that she sees in her father’s eyes... when he is dying”(Abdul-Wali 250). Flashback is used in which she reminisces about the past and tries to forget it, but its dense presence,

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1 “Muwalldin” is a derogatory term for a person of “mixed blood”- used only to describe people with brown skin who are descended from an African mother or father. The term “Muwalldin” is also used to refer to any person for the purpose of contempt

though, insists on her.

She recalls her father, who emigrated from Yemen, and what occurred to her because of his immigration, as well as her mother, who knows very little about her, her displacement, and the start of her deviance. Sadly enough, she has spent her entire life serving a sentence for a crime committed by her father: "Why did he show up? To plant me and to die a dog's death"(250). Through these quotations, we can perceive the extent of Muwalldins' alienation and rupture. It's a horrible, contradictory scenario, replete with tension and a strong commitment to prostitution while also overtly condemning it and a sincere desire to live a truthful life. The longing for one's roots is something that never leaves her heart. This is the secret that makes her remember Muwalldins (who visit her) more than the others and her strong sympathy for them, as well as the secret of her father's image being mixed in with theirs. She lives with an uninterrupted nostalgia for Muwalldins even though they avoid her because they are ashamed of her. "Why did he not return to her? Did he know the reality, so he fled from her? Did he run away from himself? They are afraid of themselves when they sleep with me, they feel ashamed disgraced"(253). However, she believes that joining their group is a privilege she does not deserve because she is a lady who has betrayed everyone and lost everything:

Even my language, I no longer know anything but primitive words, so why should I give myself the right to be their sister, they don't want me? I'm being eaten alive by their glances. Ah, if I were less white than I am, they don't believe, my blood exposes me in front of everyone. (253)

She feels bereft, lonely, and alienated because she is accepted by none. She wonders "Is it because I'm a hybrid that even the wretches don't want me? Is it because they know I've abandoned the religion in which I was brought up? And she lost in the sea of pain" (249). She tries to assimilate herself into the Ethiopian society by sacrificing her identity, and religion, hoping to be accepted but in vain. She wanted to get away from her present to get away from her reality, just as she wanted to get away from her memories. However, she realizes eventually how wrong she has been "And this cross.... I betrayed everyone, even myself. I was a Muslim...Oh my God...and now! And she smiled sarcastically, the cross on my chest... it's my shame" (249). She does not suffer from the past as much as she does from the stress of the present, so her escape from the past is an attempt to overcome the harshness of the present. She is a woman without roots, a woman whose life has been ruined by alienation or her father's emigration, and by whoredom. The prostitute has a deeply

perplexing view of life and a wide, profound loss of a past that terrifies her with everything in it. She finds the present to be more terrible, and she cannot change the future. Her life is characterized by loss and confusion, and she is desperately trying to find a way out. As in many of his other stories, it should be noted that Abdul-Wali does not resolve the prostitute's dilemma but rather leaves it open-ended. This demonstrates how a problem can never be solved as long as it persists under the same conditions.

The migration experience in this story bears complex, highly intertwined human dimensions. It appears to be the origin of unending misery. What will it be like if it causes endless tragedies? If the professionalization of sin is a tragedy, then what can we say if this professionalism is the fruit of that migration? So, what do we do if the immoral woman feels compelled to hide her individuality as if it were a source of shame? This is the tragedy of the Muwalldins. This reveals Abdul-Wali's philosophical vision of Muwalldins as well as the depth of their agony which is a result of immigration.

In "The End" story, the Muwalldins renounce their fathers' generation who are responsible for their rupture, loss, dryness of their feelings, and even their insignificance. In a conversation between the protagonist of the story and a Muwalldin (woman) he met on an evening outing in Addis Ababa, the protagonist asks her:

Are you Muwalldin? .. Who is your father?

Oh, I don't know him...my mom herself forgot him. Once she says:  
he is Italian and another time she says he is Yemeni.

I don't care..... No matter who my father is, I am a Muwalldin. (198)

They are Muwalldins and sit together, but there is no compassion between them and no common world; the Muwalldin and the woman continue chasing the idea of (non-belonging) until the end. Identity remains in a state of erosion over generations. If the bitterness of parting is the fundamental concern of the immigrant, the Muwalldin's challenge is to lose even the bitterness of feeling parting. They are looking for a land they belong to and an identity that save them from the maze that has engulfed their identity. Such identity crisis is a major issue with diasporic Yemenis who are in limbo and do not even know where they belong throughout the 1970s.

"The Road to Asmara" captures the enormity of grief caused by alienation, separation from one's roots, and loss of social belonging. This is a Yemeni merchant

who laments his survival tragedy, which is summed up in his sense of feeling lost and his desire to belong to any community or group. It becomes impossible for him to return to his homeland, where all his roots had been uprooted. The psychological and physical alienation grows when a hero says in a moment of grumbling: “Yemen. I forgot it. I am just waiting for death. No one will know me there if I return. No one stayed with me there, I will not return” (Abdul-Wali 86). By ignoring his homeland and language, he attempts to establish a foothold on which he can stand confidently. He wishes to be one of the Mulladins who at least feel that they are not strangers and that they are local. “Are you a Mulladin? I sincerely hope so. You don’t feel like an outsider... you feel like a son of the land” (81).

To be accepted, he assists Ethiopian rebels, but the truth constantly shouts at him, revealing his alienation. His assistance is rewarded by incarcerating him in jail (p.84). The expatriate’s intense yearning to return is unattainable, not only for himself but also for his children, who represent Yemen’s future generation. “My children may return one day if they know that their father was a stranger... and they may not return... they may remain strangers like me. In his eyes, tears could be seen floating. (86). Abdul-Wali is foresighted, as his prophecy of departure from Yemen owing to insecure conditions appears to be true.

It is obvious that the stories focus on the emigration of Yemeni males whose emigration does not address their socioeconomic concerns; rather, they pay a high price for abandoning their homes, spouses, and children. Not only do the stories criticize those who leave their country, but they also make sure that all the characters fail to fulfill their objectives. “The characters in ‘Abd al-Wali’s stories are typical of those in the genre of critical realism. Most of them fail to achieve their goals most of the time and are left predictably desperate and frustrated” (Abdul-Wali,2001, 110). Regardless of the resentment or suffering that Abdul-Wali’s characters go through; his stories eventually inspire patriotism and nationality.

### **“Ashes’ Friends” & “Something Called Nostalgia”**

These two stories explore the issue of alienation- a kind of alienation within one’s own country as well as the hardships of Yemenis who stay and endeavor to develop their homeland. Despite their determination to defeat the obstacles they encounter, characters are forced to feel like expatriates, a condition that eventually causes them to become expats.

“Ashes’ Friends” attacks the societal corruption that plagues society and provides a comprehensive overview of the societal instability that precedes and follows the revolution. After returning to serve his country with great enthusiasm

after studying medicine in America, the physician has a feeling of alienation. Regrettably, he is dismayed by the prevalent corruption and mismanagement at all levels of society. He is persecuted and exiled rather than putting his experience to good use.

Over his adamant resistance, the authority decides to transfer him, to a small village where there is no hospital or medical equipment. “However, there is no hospital, not even a clinic at all, no medical equipment, no treatments, and not even a building” (Abdul-Wali 300). Abdul-Wali continues to attack the financial and administrative corruption, “I was shocked by the words, and I said..... I am not asking for the impossible. We just have to learn how to stop thefts, bribery and selling patients’ medicines....and.....” (293). The story offers a broad critique of society and government: “Many things have changed, but people have not,” and “The faces are gloomy even if they are not sick” (Abdul-Wali 291). Ultimately, the hero encounters others who have attempted to reform but have failed. He concludes that ignorance is deep-rooted and it “has controlled people and they have become a part of it” (297). Compared to other stories by Abdul-Wali, this one offers a stronger illustration of critical realism. It focuses on several passive aspects of society, including corruption, bureaucratic mindset, opportunism, and the sense of powerlessness felt by characters. Despite being significantly more hopeful than most other characters, the hero ultimately feels hopeless.

“Something Called Nostalgia” is essentially a continuation of “Ashes’ Friends,” with a similar hero. The hero studied in America, then came back to Yemen to be startled by a political and social reality that prompted him to return to the United States to escape the sense of alienation. He is deeply disappointed and frustrated. Having nothing he can do for his country makes him sad. He says what he believes that “it is destined for us, Yemenis, to emigrate. Our country is not for us. .. we are builders of other countries” (Abdul-Wali 264). His loyal friend’s advice is that: “All of this, however, is not a justification for pessimism. Failure once, twice, or ten times does not imply that you should give up and run away”(264-65). However, he attempts to justify his decision to immigrate to further his specialty. This means he is not looking for work like the majority of his countrymen. Nevertheless, his friend is adamant that immigration is ruinous regardless of the circumstances. He tries to persuade his friend to quit his plan. “There is something called longing in every one of our hearts. We flee, we disappear, and we curse everything around us. But nostalgia wins out, and you’ll eventually return one day, I do not know when?” (266). By and large, Abdul-Wali succeeds in capturing and embodying this touching humanitarian situation that affects everyone who leaves his homeland and lives



in a more developed and evolved country. Yet, when he returns home and sees his community again, he loses his equilibrium. He is perplexed as he can never forget his visit to the developed world... nor will he be able to detach himself from the new life he witnessed and experienced. At the same time, he is astounded by his country's dismal backwardness. This states that the story deals with a humanitarian issue that concerns not only Yemen but any developing country in need of its people.

Yet, the story is about a man in quest of himself, rather than work, as most of his people do. I find no difference, you migrate in search of yourself, for something that you lost here and did not find, so you think that it is out there somewhere. Your migration is exactly like theirs, in search of something that you lack, and without which you cannot live. As I said, if this situation goes on, it will drive you mad. This is why you need to migrate to find yourself. (265)

Regardless of the conditions, his friend maintains that emigration is detrimental. Despite the hero's insistence on leaving the country, the story ends before he leaves, implying that he might change his mind. This appears to contradict the preceding assertion that emigrants invariably fail to attain their objectives, but the latter two characters were not true emigrants in the traditional sense. The stories' perspectives on emigration are quite consistent. Not only does the writer criticize people who flee their homelands, but he also ensures that none of the characters realize their objectives. He seeks to improve Yemen's internal situation, raises public awareness, expose the government's manipulations, and raise awareness of the societal problems that have plagued Yemen. His fear is that internal Yemeni conditions will deteriorate, forcing a new generation of Yemenis to emigrate again. The stories that deal with the internal conditions and the abuse that is practiced upon the people of Yemen in general and on the intellectuals, in particular, are: "Uncle Saleh," "Al hila Wolf," "Mr. Majid" etc. His message to the ruling regime is a warning to look for the interests of the people and to respect their humanity. Otherwise, the revolution that overthrew the Imamate rule and colonialism can do so because the national will is stronger than the will of any individual or group.

### **Women in Abdul-Wali's Stories**

Among the postcolonial themes that have assumed a major position in contemporary Arabic narrative are women's issues (Al-Musawi, 2003). The basic objective of this representation is a plea for a shift in women's roles in society. The characters of

women in Abdul-Wali's anecdotal works stand out strongly, especially women in the countryside in Yemen. Abdul-Wali's stories present a picture of the real life of rural Yemeni women's daily lives, emphasizing that it is the woman who bears the burdens and the main roles in domestic work, raising children, caring for livestock, and cultivating the land, whether in her husband's presence or absence.

In "The Land, Salma," Salma is compelled to marry at the age of 16 or younger, and after only seven days of marriage, she returned to her terrible old life "Only sixteen years old, living in your father's house...after the seven days-the wedding days- you began your duty as wife, to serve her husbands and his family"(Abdul-Wali,2001 95-96). In a patriarchal society, a woman lives primarily to serve and obey a man's dictates, and because she is seen as a weak creature with flaws, her life is only significant in his presence. Thus, Salma's marriage does not elevate her position; rather, it strengthens her enslavement because she only has one employer, her father, who is now her spouse. "It's the same life you used to live at your father's house. Nothing has changed except your boss-first your father, then your husband" (97). At the moment of self-discovery and confrontation, Salma not only discovers her present, which she sues, but she also sues her entire past. In this sense, she discovers a social time rather than an individual moment. Society has imposed upon her an early marriage with a husband who is unaware of the sincerity of her feelings for him and the reality of her position in himself. "But Salma, did you really love Dirham? No, I did n't think you did"(Abdul-Wali,2001 96).

Based on its traditions and customs, society places a siege on women, denying them a voice in marriage and divorce. "Do you ask for a divorce? If you do that, where will your child go? And who will marry you?... The young men of the village seek out only the young girls" (Abdulwali 98).). In this way, society crushes the rest of her humanity. A woman's plight is identical to Yemen's as if Yemen's reality is symbolized by the woman who grows and ages before her time. Her only source of release and rejuvenation is her connection to the land. As a result, she decides to teach her son about the country and create a passion for it.

What makes Abdul-Wali so postcolonial is his capacity to create alienated and downtrodden individuals that can easily fit into a postcolonial milieu. He established a link between women, land, and patriotic awareness, allowing the story to be placed in a postcolonial context. Abdul- Wali's works frequently refer to the relationship between the body and the land. "The Land, Salma," for example, establishes a strong link between the immigrant protagonist's longing for the land and his wife, who has been left behind to care for it. By employing this trope of association between women and land, Abdul-Wali aspires to free women's bodies

from patriarchal practices. He shows sincere concern for the fate of the land and abandoned women. The first title, "The Land," refers to Yemen's "motherland," and the second, "Salma," to the woman, her passion, and the deprivation she feels because of her lack of an immigrant husband. They have been abandoned by their males for many years, much like Yemen which has been deserted by its youth.

### **Desire**

Abdul-Wali is notably postcolonial in his capacity to develop underprivileged characters that are appropriate for a post-colonial setting. The story, "Desire" depicts Akhdam community (marginalized class in Yemen), which has been treated with extreme discrimination, repression, and social marginalization. An old Yemeni saying describes Akhdam people as "disgusting": "Clean your plate if it is touched by a dog but break it if it's touched by Khadam (singular)" (Akhadam 2005). Yet, it is ironic when it comes to Akhadam women. Despite being involved in menial jobs like sweeping and cleaning, the Akhdam women endured greater physical assaults than other women. They have been exposed to sexual violence and harassment by the community. The story narrates a brutal rape by a 28-year-old man of a poor 14-year-old girl working as a street cleaner "I rushed towards her like an animal, imprinting kisses on her nigger lips. She was trying to escape from me... and I was stronger than her" (Abdul-Wali 203). The writer manifests the class differentiation in society, as the young man is the son of a wealthy merchant, and the girl is from the class of Akhdam. From this perspective, rape becomes a normal act. The victim is a girl with no social standing. Even after he tore her dress, he brought her a semi-new silk dress, but she refused to take it, because she was not used to wearing such clothes monopolized by Masters, so she sewed her torn dress. "Dress up. She whooped when she saw the almost new silk dress. No I don't like this... Do you have a needle and thread? Why? She pointed to her torn dress" (205).

In "Cocotte," the archaic socioeconomic situation, whether in Yemen or in the diaspora, oppresses women. Abdul-Wali sympathizes with women by exposing the human aspects of prostitutes, who are frequently stripped of their humanity by society. They are victims of a primitive social reality. They couldn't make a living through honest jobs, so they sold their bodies in Ethiopia rather than in Yemen, where society is conservative. Yet, "Al Ghoul" story introduces a strong, steadfast woman who can courageously defend herself and her children. A crushed woman defeated by life and people found herself alone with her child, who was abandoned by his father years ago. She sacrificed everything she had to save her only son.

It may be argued that Abdul-Wali's ability to create marginalized and oppressed

individuals who fit in a postcolonial context is what makes him postcolonial. In the context of Yemen, he seemed sympathetic to the “subaltern,” whether they were Ethiopian whores or Yemeni women who had been abandoned. Establishing a link between women, land, and national consciousness allows his stories to be placed in a postcolonial framework. It is claimed that “In the nationalist discourse land is equated to the female body and both are held as sacred. The enemy should not be allowed to defile them, as they stand for honor and should enlist, therefore, male sacrifice” (Al-Musawi 212).

### **Political and Social Issues**

The political and social realism of Yemen has captivated short story writers, and barely a story, whether written before or after the September and October revolutions, escapes the aspects of this reality. In “If Only He Had Not Returned” which depicts the village and its drought, Abdul-Wali may have been alluding to the time of natural drought, psychological drought, social drought, and backwardness that was prevalent in Yemen during the Imamate rule. “The village is surrounded by a gloomy sun, the wind is creaking, and the land is waiting for rain, and the sky foreshadows nothing... The year is another year of drought” (Abdul-Wali 245). To give the story a general character, Abdul-Wali avoids using specific names in his writing and “highlights the damage emigration causes”(Albalawi 107). The returnee can be a symbol for every expatriate at any time and anywhere, and because the phenomenon of immigration is a general phenomenon, therefore it is not specified. The writer uses some suggestive and expressive phrases in this story, such as: (If Only He Had Not Returned) the title, (but he did not die) at the end of the story. They emphasize the cry of rejection of alienation, as the immigrant returns spiritually dead but physically alive, and this is the tragedy. The writer then shifts gears to show common ignorance through the character of the mother, who goes to whatever length to get her sick husband treated. It suggests and demonstrates the severity of the mother’s ignorance, which is dominated by her superstitious culture and her inability to read the letter sent to her.

The mother left no stone unturned; she visited every shrine; she held reading recitals of the Holy Quran in every mosque; she gave charity of different kinds-grain, fat, milk, but he remained in bed, motionless, his eyes fixed to the roof and his head non-moving, but he did not die (Abdul-Wali 248).

“Al- Ghoul” is the first story to combine art and politics, as well as reality, and myth. The ghoul is nothing more than a ghost in the minds of the villagers and their legends that reproduce fear in their generation after generation. It seems that

ignorance is a deep-rooted disease in Yemen, caused by an intertwined system of outdated convictions and complex customs, which is encouraged by governments that are either ignorant or uninterested. This is how Hind decided to go up the mountain and challenge the ghoul in his cave. Thus, the ghoul is defeated just because someone decided to confront him. Thus, Hind won once she decided to confront the ghoul. The villagers weave legends around it, turning it into a source of humiliating slavery and translating their fear of it into hallowed reverence in their life. Their descendants will inherit this terror and veneration, as well as the royalties, taxes, flocks, and farms that come with it. The ghoul or bad ghost terrorizing the community represents North Yemen's imam (Al-Badr, the last imam was sheltered in a cave during the civil war). The poor widow's decapitation of the ghoul reflects nothing more than the decapitation of the imamate in the republican revolution of 1962, while the recovery of her sick son represents Yemen's renaissance as a republic. The story demonstrates that the Arab ruling regimes, which had terrorized the populace for decades with the help of repressive security services and the media, had been proved to be nothing more than an illusion.

### **Ya Khabiiir**

The regional sectarian problem that arose in Yemen during the Imamate era is addressed in this fascinating story with its patriotic, unitary, and brotherly theme. The Imamate's authorities believed that it could persuade common people to fight in defense of illusions and tribal or regional advantages. At that moment, the absent authority's function will be confined to preserving an imaginary balance and enforcing the divide-and-rule policy among people. The aim is to divert people's attention away from the reality of the struggle and turn diversity and geographical differences into a tool for shattering national unity (Al-Maqaleh 181).

The writer explores the concerns that soldiers and peasants have in common as well as the tactics used by dictatorship to create a chasm of mistrust between them, which has consequences until now. The story aims to bridge the gap between the soldier and the citizen by suggesting a prospective reconciliation between the two in which a plethora of wonderful ideas and values are embodied. Both are victims of the Imamate's oppression and dispossession; the priestly enemy arose from the former's credulity and the latter's weakness, as well as the growing hatred divisions between them. "I answered, a sense of loathing filling me. As much as I hate death, I detest soldiers even more" (Abdul-Wali 79). The soldier's dealings with civilians are marked by arrogance and cruelty. Since the soldier is perceived as the regime's hand, the image of the soldier is permanently imprinted in the Yemeni person's

mind, surrounded by a terrifying aura.

I trembled slightly when I saw a man.. wearing a short sarong and carrying a gun. We civilians had come to see the soldiers as a force for repression and injustice. They were the ones who carried out the governor's orders. We Yemenis could never forget how the soldiers abused us. (81)

On the other hand, the soldier talks about oppression and criticizes people who bestow their wealth to rulers and crooked officials at a time they are in dire need of help. The soldier is seen addressing one of the subjects, "Those fat bellies only get fat with your money" (81). The storyteller succeeds in exposing the imamate authoritarian exploitation of the subjects by pushing people to dispute, so they turn to the sheikh or the government for help, which is one of the ways of exploiting the subjects. It is one of the most obvious manifestations of exploitation in the northern rural society, and its consequences have persisted until recently. The soldier continues addressing the subject:

Ya Khabiiir, did you have a law case? My God, what's it with you people from Hujariyyah, that makes you love going to court? Any one of you has two coins in his pocket files a lawsuit. Why can't live in peace like the rest of God's creatures....Or do you think that there's justice.. Justice is dead; It was eaten by those with fat bellies. (80-81)

The shock hits him like a ton of bricks since the soldier is the last person, he expects to discuss injustice and the law. The soldier describes his condition as penniless whose land is looted by the sheikhs. "Look, the soldier is no different from you; another governor steals from him in his own hometown, both justly and unjustly... The Sheiks took our land from us" (81). The words hint that persecution is occurring in all regions of Yemen, with the distinction between what is occurring in one region and what is happening in another based on the severity of the persecution. In another place, the soldier describes life in the Hashid area, to which he belongs, and the misery of the residents there. "You live in Qutabah and I live in Hashid. There I have a home, a family, a wife, and children, thank God. But we have no money, no land. The Sheiks took our land from us, and we became soldiers trying to get an income" (81). Such quotation explains why individuals in tribal communities turn to military professionalism for a variety of reasons. These arguments are based on a lack of other options for obtaining a living, as the land is under the jurisdiction of

the sheikhs. Joining the military does not provide troops with enough livelihood, therefore they have no choice but to compensate for their lack of resources by looting people in the places to which the rulers dispatch them. "Okay, but why do you loot and steal from people?"(81).

The soldier opposes the corrupt regime and prefers to send his children to school instead of enlisting them in the army. He also attacks the jurists whom he finds worse than the regime. They don't comprehend anything and corrupt the world with their lies and employ religion to further their personal interests. It might be concluded that some of the phenomena that existed prior to the revolution are still there to some extent.

Sir, I swear to God, I wish that my children would be educated and not become ignorant soldiers like me. We only have a local fellow, a local teacher, a religious faqeeh. These people are even worse than governors. All they care about money... They don't know the meaning of the Quran. They lie to us. They corrupt the world with their lies. (82)

The study renders Abdul-Wali a postcolonial writer since postcolonialism doesn't only talk about western subjection, but also talks about a wide range of issues such as injustice, female dominance, social class, and so on. It portrays what happens in our everyday lives in a realistic way. It is based on the concept that one voice may improve people's lives and society.

### **Technique in Abdul-Wali's Stories**

In Abdul-Wali's stories, dialogue is by far the most crucial device. It comes into forms: external and internal (monologue), as demonstrated in "The Land, Salma," when Salma can be heard talking to herself. It is a dominant device in this story because through it, Salma can only convey her thoughts and feelings. Even though "The Land, Salma" is primarily a monologue, the majority of it is presented as a conversation between Salma, the only character, and her subconscious. "Something Called Nostalgia" is simply dialogue, interspersed with brief descriptions of the weather and landscape, which assist the reader to visualize the scenario. In "Abu Rubbia," the writer tries to make the dialogue genuine by using a schoolboy as the narrator, who is in search of information to better understand his history and to be convinced of the tragic and negative sides of migration. Abdul-Wali utilizes both formal and informal language depending on the speaker's educational background. On the one hand, the entire dialogue of "Abu Rubbia" appears in the colloquial

whereas “Something Called Nostalgia” and “Ashes’ Friends” have dialogue that is totally in Fusha (Standard). But not always does the characters’ use of Fusha and colloquialism correspond to their degree of education. For instance, in “If Only He Had Not Returned,” the characters are uneducated women and very little children, but the discourse is in Fusha. In the story of “Abu Rubbia,” the writer employed the colloquial because he might want to communicate a message in the language of the community in which he lived so that it would resonate more strongly and have a bigger influence.

The writer draws the characters in a realistic manner, with everyone speaking in his own language and thinking in his own way so that each person could play his part. He paid close attention to the personality of the immigrant who fled Yemen owing to the country’s political and economic circumstances. The language in Abdul-Wali’s stories is tinged with pain since he had experienced what it was like to be an expatriate living in exile. He mostly uses internal monologues to reveal his characters’ inner worlds and the desperate situations they find themselves in as in the story of “If Only He Had Not Returned.” He neither specifies the name of the hero’s character nor draws its artistic dimensions. He focuses on the significance of the event and the effect of alienation on his health and his return as a helpless paralyzed body. “Men were carrying a coffin in which lay the ghost of a man and he was not yet dead” (Abdul-Wali 245). With such a tragic and sad beginning, Abdul-Wali illustrates the tragedy of the scene and the outcome of alienation. A semi-dead man is seen carried on shoulders, unable to move. Abdul-Wali is interested in the character of the immigrant who had fled Yemen due to the country’s political and economic conditions. “In portraying the negative aspects of society, critical realism does not provide defined alternatives for what is criticized... However, the honest portrayal of society’s negative aspects may have the effect of contributing indirectly to societal reform” (Alsebil 86).

The critical realism genre’s archetypal characters are found in Abdul-Wali’s stories. Most of them frequently fall short of their objectives, which results in predictable desperation and frustration. The mad character in the story of “Uncle Saleh Al-Omrani,” who loved a Jewish girl, went insane because society rejected his marriage to a Jew girl, and after the girl left, he went crazy because he had lost her. Though Islam permits marriage to a Jew, society’s refusal demonstrates ignorance, backwardness, and radicalism. Through the character of the mad, the writer portrays a disenfranchised group of people whose rights are violated and who lack the most basic human rights. He sought to draw society’s attention to this class, which had lost the most valuable asset a person owns for one reason or another.



The female character is frequently portrayed as a good-hearted, tenderhearted woman who can withstand life's ups and downs. Even though she is depicted as perverse in some of the stories, the storyteller still seeks an excuse for her. She is a helpless victim of several societal factors, as well as a victim of immigration and its consequences. To refer to the land or nation as a woman is a new discursive approach in the postcolonial Arabic novel, as seen in the works of Assia Dejjbar, Naguib Mahfouz, and Tawfiq Al-Haqim, to name a few. The narration of Abdul-Wali is characterized by a realism that uses historical events, to explain the tragedy of man, and his struggle with the cruelty of rulers, disease, and ignorance.

Most of the stories chosen concentrate on a single episode that takes place over a relatively short period of time. Some stories, on the other hand, include multiple episodes. In Abdul-Wali's stories, time is divided into a terrible past rife with aches, a sick present replete with the remnants of the past still clinging to it, and a future that he sees as mysterious at times and brilliant at others.

The setting adds a lot of realism to the stories. The place is closely related to inner feelings and emotions. In "Something Called Nostalgia," the setting dominates the narrative; one gets a sense of the place's intimacy and magnificence. "In front of us, there is a lofty Manakha mountain.... Calmness prevails over the area... The regions are high above the peaks of the Haraz Mountains, Yemen has become a green oasis, but it has become again barren" (Abdul-Wali 265). In "The Saturday Market," the landscape is beautiful. The traveler is overwhelmed by the sight, sounds, and smell of the market which stroke his anxiety to get home. "Before us stood the lofty and rocky Hujariayah mountains, embracing villages, and green land rich growing wheat" (109). No matter how hard a person tries to get away from his place, he finds himself drawn back to the same place as a symbol of a high sense of belonging to one's motherland, as well as its magical and aesthetic motives. The status of the place is presented in "The Saturday market," not to show us the state of the market and the movement of buying and selling, but rather as a tool to show the suffering of society, especially the separation that has divided Yemen into two sections; between the south defeated by English colonialism and the north engulfed in the ignorance of the Imamate. "The market was big. Nearby was a hill with a British flag raised, a white building, a camp, and an armed guard in his police uniform. Saturday Market is the border point between North and South Yemen" (Abdul-Wali, 2001 110).

Many critics and writers agree that the use of time adds realism to the plot, and it also provides a lot of imagination. Like other writers who prefer to go back in time, Abdul-Wali successfully resorts to flashbacks to reveal episodes in "Ashes's

Friends” that remind us of the hero who was successful in his earlier life in the USA. Such a technique provides a psychological transformation for a hero undergoing internal stress in his current situation. “Such a technique provides psychological diversion for a hero enduring mounting stress in his current situation. His inability to succeed in his own country emphasizes the difficulty of the circumstances” (Alsebaile 110).

“The Land, Salma” depicts Salma’s lifestyle as a rural woman living a life of suffering away from her family and husband. “Salma ran to open the irrigation canals to water the fields near the house. By the time she came back, the sky had already opened its gate, and rain poured down, feeding the thirsty earth”(Abdul-Wali,2001 95). With this beginning, the writer starts with the heroine of his story in the present, then moves back to a time long ago, which was the fundamental reason for her painful reality. The writer employs psychological time to convey a certain idea in highlighting the strength or weakness of the character, as we saw with Salma. After she became suspicious of her husband, her mind and heart remind her of what is more important which is the land and how to love the land and to hold on to it. “Your land, Salma, you’ve worked for it, shed blood for it.... Isn’t the land your life?”(99). It can be said that in Abdul-Wali’s stories, time crystallizes between a terrible past burdened with wounds, complaints, and rejection, a present plagued by the remnants of the past still clung to it, and an ambiguous future.

Symbols and images are employed to re-enforce the theme of longing and belonging. Saeed’s character which means ‘happy’ in Arabic, as an innocent and uncorrupted human being stands for the lost innocence among the Yemeni emigrants in Ethiopia. The image of the rain is also another significant factor that contributes to strengthening the theme of longing and belonging to a homeland. In Arabic culture, rain stands for hope, health, remedy, rebirth, beauty, and new life. The narrative opens with “a few raindrops” and a boy. Both stand for hope, purity, and new life. Then there is another figurative association between women and the land. This body-land association is vigorous, and it serves many purposes. In what is known as a body-land relationship, these two constructions are figuratively linked. Abdul-Wali stands in reverence of the woman, listing her doughty deeds, appreciating her sacrifice, and sympathizing with her suffering.

## **Conclusion**

Yemeni short story, a relatively new genre, has dealt with highly sensitive social and political topics in Yemeni culture since its inception. Abdul-Wali, the pioneer of the Yemeni short story, successfully communicates Yemen’s perplexing social

and political reality through his familiarity and awareness of his society's issues and concerns he witnessed without adhering to any of the human philosophies. He primarily tackles the dilemma of immigration and the unknown fate that awaits the expatriate because of loss, dispersal, disintegration, loss of identity and belonging as well as families of migrants, and society at large. Women are left behind and the country continues to lag behind because of the best males leaving. Yet, migration is not the only thing that bothers him, his stories deal with universal phenomena and philosophical concerns that pay as much attention to individual issues as group issues. Abdul Wali's achievement in raising public opinion in favor of immigrants and Muwallidins, who endure discrimination and fragmentation, does not absolve him of responsibility to free his society from the weight of backwardness and oppression. The love of the homeland is one of the most fundamental motifs that runs through his stories. Regardless of how sad or anguished his characters are, his writings ultimately inspire patriotism and get us at least halfway to identifying the requirements for investigating national identity and determining the function of cultural heritage in identity construction.

A noteworthy feature of Abdul-Wali's stories is that the political system is not the only one to be blamed; rather, it is a critique of other forces such as social norms, traditions, ignorance, and the people's deep-seated belief in the superiority of the upper-class as shown in "Desir" story. It is through this lens that he paints a brutal, yet very real portrayal of his society. He aims to enlighten Yemenis, awaken social consciousness, and raise awareness among them about the negative effects of emigration on the entire nation, as well as the experiences of émigrés in their homeland. The study establishes a link between these stories and Yemen's current tragic situation, which forces many Yemenis to flee their homeland and cross into foreign lands. By exposing the perils of emigration and the tribulations of diaspora life, he urges Yemenis to remain in their land and build it. The story's brilliance lies in eliciting sympathetic responses from readers towards this unfortunate diaspora, which is suffering from the effects of being strangers in a strange land. The stories are intriguing because of the simplicity of language, universality of the situations recounted, and intimacy of the relationships depicted.

Abdul-Wali advocates for a change in women's roles in Yemeni society that allows them to participate in all aspects of life. He believes that by creating a strong relationship between women and land, they will play a significant part in shaping the fate of Yemen. A woman is presented in her pure and sacrificial image for the sake of her family and her country. In his stories, he exposes the weariness and anguish that women experience since their efforts frequently exceed their human

limitations. Even if a woman is portrayed as immoral in a few of his stories e.g., “Cocotte,” he still looks for a reason to justify her behavior. She is a powerless victim of a multitude of societal factors, as well as a victim of immigration and its consequences. Abdul-Wali might be comparable to the greatest writers in Europe and around the world because of his ability to compose stories that are committed to objectivity and impartiality in portraying real life.

In short, the study is a cry of pain, a search for oneself, and an invitation to stay, to return

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