11

Narratives of (In)Justice in Contemporary Yemeni Novels

Representations of Socio-Political Practices and Normative Constructions

*Osama Ali, Fadhilah Gubari,
Julia Gurol, Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi*

Contents

This Study analyzes narratives of (in)justice in contemporary Yemeni novels. It discusses the nexus between the framing of (in)justice and post-conflict reconciliation and provides an original insight into the understanding and construction of justice and injustice offered to society by Yemeni novelists. In doing so, it treats novels as literary spaces that represent social voices in Yemen. Through a lexical field analysis of nine selected contemporary novels, the paper highlights how (in)justice is framed in narrative literature, both in terms of representations of certain socio-political practices and in terms of normative constructions and the creation of a normative order. It argues that novels represent and discuss the complexities of Yemeni realities, where daily practices and experiences of individuals are entangled with philosophical questions about the meaning of life. Finally, the Study discusses whether and how these narratives of (in)justice can be used to develop more concrete and context-sensitive measures for societal reconciliation in Yemen, and points towards the need for an inclusion of a diversity of social voices and understandings into concrete political reconciliation measures.

Introduction

In 2011, Yemen witnessed country-wide uprisings that resulted in the toppling of the long-seated president 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih a year later, but subsequently failed to create a new and more inclusive political system. Rather, a civil war with regional intervention erupted in 2014/15, a conflict that is still ravaging the country today. For future reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts in the country, the Yemeni literary elite could play an important role. Their novels are not only a platform for Yemeni voices, but they also reflect the efforts of Yemeni intellectuals to contribute to finding solutions to the multifaceted problems in Yemen (al-Rubaidi 2021a). Novels are thus an important source in understanding local concerns, needs and beliefs and their relevance to long-term peacebuilding measures and societal reconciliation. This Study focuses on narratives of justice and injustice[1] in nine contemporary Yemeni novels. Based on a lexical field analysis, it shows how novels as literary spaces represent certain narratives of (in)justice as socio-political practices and normative constructions.

In academic and policy research, transitional justice or the restoration of justice and reconciliation are closely connected. Reconciliation is often understood to be the ultimate objective in all post-conflict societies and post-conflict reconstruction processes (Van Leeuwen & Verkoren 2012). Yet, the term itself

---

1   Over the course of the whole study, 'justice and injustice' and '(in)justice' are used synonymously.

is often vaguely defined, if at all. Reconciliation can take various forms: e.g., as acknowledgement of wrongs committed and repentance from perpetrators and forgiveness from victims (Ayruch & Vejerano 2002); as non-lethal co-existence (Teppermann 2002); or as reintegration (Thompson 2002: 7). It is also closely linked to concepts such as truth, mercy, peace and justice – terms that in themselves are difficult to define (Odendaal 1997). In this Study, we follow the definition of reconciliation as presented by Paul Lederach, stating that reconciliation is "built on and oriented toward the relational aspects of a conflict [...] and create[s] an encounter where people can focus on their relationship" (Lederach 1997: 30).

This paper focuses on justice as a basis for reconciliation and seeks to provide initial insights into the narrations of these concepts by Yemeni intellectuals. In doing so, it examines novels as a comparably open and free space for narration that provides a platform for Yemeni voices (Mendes 2021). In particular, we assess the construction of justice and injustice offered to society by contemporary Yemeni novelists and link them to the wider context of the Yemeni conflict, seeking to provide a baseline for future policy recommendations on long-term peacebuilding and reconciliation measures. The Study is part of a wider project that aims to contribute to peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction in the country and is dedicated to strengthening ties between researchers, academic staff, students and experts in the policy and the development community (see 'About the Project' for further information).

In focusing our analysis on novels, we follow current research that places visual and written popular art and culture at the forefront in social analysis (see, for example, Bleiker 2018; and al-Jeddawy, al-Kholidy & Nvens 2021). This strand of research argues that art, visual culture and novels might contribute to a reimagining of the world in that it might "make us feel, or feel differently [...] make us think, and think again" (Danchev & Lisle 2009: 775). We are therefore not only interested in what forms of knowledge novels produce (Möller 2013: 19), but also whether and how they could help to develop concrete policies in the current and post-conflict setting in Yemen.

This Study is structured as follows: First, we outline the crucial role of novels as literary spaces that represent social voices in Yemen. Subsequently, we introduce our main methodology as well as linguistic specificities and discuss the merits of lexical field analysis for the understanding of how certain words are framed in novels. We then outline the main findings that provide insight into the framing of (in)justice and draw a nexus to reconciliation in the Yemeni conflict. Finally, we close by scrutinizing the implications of the findings for post-conflict reconciliation and justice measures in the Yemeni conflict.

Methodology

Novels as literary narrative spaces with their potential to represent different social voices and to contain different layers of ideological understandings are most likely *the* current literary milieu in Yemen where discourses and claims on (in)justice are manifested.[2] Even though novels reflect primarily the thoughts and attitudes of the educated Yemeni elite, they underline how fiction can be used for propagating ideas that envision nonviolent coexistence and a peaceful future for the country (al-Rubaidi 2018). Through the different styles of plots and allegories used in novels, writers make use of entertainment and fiction to attract their readers to the political and societal reform agendas they seek to advocate.

Poetry, both spoken and written, has been the traditional and predominant form of literary expression in Yemen for centuries, and only in recent decades have novels become a prominent arena to represent social voices. More specifically, novelists in Yemen began to publish more extensively during the 2011 protests. Between 2010 and 2016 alone, 88 novels were published by Yemeni writers (Baqais 2017); while during the current conflict, between 2015 and 2020, more than 50 novels have been released (Baqais 2020). Some politicians, academics and journalists have also notably begun to use novels as a medium to convey their ideas. Moreover, during the past two decades, even poets and authors of short stories have shifted to novel writing. According to 'Ali al-Muqri, a Yemeni poet and novelist, novels have more potential and space to include details and therefore provide a more suitable arena to represent social voices, concerns and beliefs. Thanks to their dialogic and polyphonic structure, novels have become a tool for reflecting the different (social) voices in Yemen and offer them a platform at a time when freedom of expression and public discussions have become limited. The Yemeni novelist and short-story writer Wajdi al-Ahdal summarized the role of novels in the current Yemeni context as follows:

> "We, Yemeni writers, live side by side with corruption, war and poverty. Thus the Yemeni novel, in the honest sense of the word, is a reflection of this reality. Its role is to make people aware of their real issues and to lead enlightenment in the society; our society,

---

2 In contrast to novels, *zawamil* (sg. *zamil*), the most popular genre of Yemeni folkloric poetry (see, for example Caton1990), are used by different groups, particularly the Huthis (who refer to themselves as *Ansar Allah* [partisans of God]), during the current war as a tool for propaganda and mobilization rather than as a platform for constructive visions. *Zawamil* have a reputation as an art of poetry that can be employed for peace and reconciliation (al-Jeddawy, al-Kholidy & Nevens 2021:11; Stohrer 2020), as well as to rally the tribes to war. The last few years have proven that new media and technologies have primarily helped violent groups in Yemen to use this highly symbolic cultural and folkloric heritage to serve their conflict agendas.

which, mostly, has no awareness of what is going on around it. It is our duty to handle these issues through our literature. Critical writing is annoying to the authorities, and it makes trouble for the taken-for-granted social values." (Almawqeapost 2018)

Selection of Novels

The selection of the novels for the analysis proceeded in two steps. First, we selected 22 novels published during the time of the current Yemeni war (2015–2020) and that represent the diverse literary landscape in Yemen in terms of gender, age and geography (Southern and Northern writers). In a second step, we pared our final selection to nine novels based on the frequency of two main terms: justice (*'adl*) and injustice (*zulm*). Novels in which these concepts were mentioned less than five times were excluded. In the following, we briefly sum up the content of the nine selected novels to provide an overview of the themes covered.

1) *Happy Land of Plots (Ardh al-mu'amarat al-sa'ida)* (2018), by Wajdi al-Ahdal[3]

This novel tells the story of a girl who is raped and then found guilty by a court while her rapist is set free. The story is set in al-Hudayda and Sana'a before the beginning of the country-wide protests in 2011. The two cities appear in the novel as home to harsh daily realities that destroy the humanity and dignity of their people. Here is where the revolution of 2011 erupts and where people feel that Yemen is no longer a 'happy' land.

2) *A Journey of a Soul (Rihlat ruh)* (2019) by Shuruq 'Utayfa[4]

This is the story of a young Yemeni man, Adam, who lives in Yemen during the current war. The main events of the novel take place in a dream of Adam, who falls asleep in one of the public places in Old Sana'a. He dreams about traveling to the past and meeting people in the time of the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo. The story depicts the people of that former age as tolerant, rational and free, in comparison to the situation in today's Yemen where freedom is restricted and human dignity is oppressed with religious or ideological justifications.

---

3 Wajdi al-Ahdal was born in al-Hudayda, western Yemen, in 1973. He is a novelist, storyteller and playwright, whose works have been published in multiple editions and translated into several languages. Al-Ahdal lives in Sana'a.

4 Shuruq 'Utayfa was born in Rada', al-Baydha'. She is a pharmacist and has published two novels. 'Utayfa has lived in Tunisia, France and the United Arab Emirates, and currently resides in Sana'a.

3) *The Sister (Al-shaqiqa)* (2018), by Muhammad Mus'id[5]

This novel is about a young man from South Yemen who dreams of traveling with his friend to Iram of the Pillars (*iram dhat al-'imad*), a legendary lost city in Hadhramawt. According to the novel, Iram is the sister city of heaven. Unlike unstable and poor Yemen, Iram is framed as a utopian place of pleasure and peace.

4) *The Bullet (Al-rasasa)* (2018), by Muhammad Mu'sid

This book is autobiographical fiction. It is based on the author's life, but its events are connected to fictional elements. The story narrates the personal experiences of the author during the wars in the 1970s and 80s, between the political regimes in the South and the North, as well as during the 1994 civil war. The final chapter of this 'history of bullets' is the author's account of his participation in fighting the Huthi and Salih forces when they invaded Aden in 2015.

5) *The Path of Mawla Matar (Tariq Mawla Matar)* (2019) by 'Ammar BaTawil[6]

This novel is a fictionalization of life in Hadhramawt from the early 1930s to the end of the 1960s. It deals with the history of the resistance of the Badawi tribes against British colonial forces and the sultan in al-Mukalla (the capital of Hadhramawt), who was supported by the British colonial power. The role of women in this struggle, and their taking over responsibility for their families in the absence of the men, is a main theme in this novel.

6) *Abu Suhayb al-'Izzi* (2019) by Walid Dammaj[7]

This novel revolves around the story of Abu Suhayb al-'Izzi, who is accused of being a member of al-Qa'ida, as his name is identical to the name of an actual member of the terrorist organization. When imprisoned, Abu Suhayb has insightful experiences as he meets very different people – Salafis, leftist activists, Bahais, revolutionaries, Islahis, Zaydis as well as intelligence officers. According to the author himself, the novel is about "brutality, injustice and recruiting people against their will".

---

5 Muhammad Mus'id was born in al-Dhali' governorate in 1965. He works as professor of Arabic literature at Aden University. He is a poet, novelist and literary critic and has published six novels.

6 'Ammar BaTawil was born in Hadhramawt in 1981. He now lives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. BaTawil is an essayist and novelist, who also publishes in several Yemeni and other Arabic newspapers. He has published three novels.

7 Walid Dammaj was born in Ibb in 1973. He has published four novels. Since 2015, the author has been living in Cairo due to the war.

7) *Waqash* (2019) by Walid Dammaj

This novel retells the story of the Zaydi sect al-Muṭarafiyya, whose school of thought differed from the main Hadawi school.[8] For this reason, the sect was crushed on the order of the Zaydi Hadawi Imam 'Abdullah bin Hamza (d. 1217). This massacre happened in 1216 in Waqash village, after which the novel is named. Although the novel is a representation of this historical event, it makes strong references to the current situation in Yemen and voices critique of the Huthi movement, which adopts the Hadawi theological convictions, particularly in regard to the right to rule.

8) *Years of Unthoughtfulness (Sanawat al-walah)* (2017), by Shadha al-Khatib[9]

This novel takes place in London. Its main characters are Arab migrants: Yemenis, Libyans, Iraqis, Palestinians, Lebanese and Algerians. In their daily meetings and contact with each other, they discuss different issues – mainly migration problems, love stories and political issues back in their homelands. Timewise, the novel covers the period between the 1986 civil war in the South and the current civil war. The discussions by the Arab migrants in the novel also tackle different events in the region, such as the Iraq war, the Yemeni unification and the 2011 'Arab Spring' uprisings, and their consequences.

9) *The Yemeni (Al-yamani)* (2019) by Shadha al-Shu'aybi[10]

This novel is about a young Yemeni man whose father is Yemeni and whose mother is Egyptian. It focuses on the identity crisis and conflicts of values in the personality of this young man, who gets married to an Egyptian girl. The story critically discusses Yemeni concepts and practices of masculinity. The story is set in Yemen and Cairo during the 'Arab Spring' 2011.

Methodological Considerations and Linguistic Specificities

To examine justice (*'adl*) and injustice (*zulm*) as the two main concepts in the novels, we used a two-tiered approach. First, we identified their synonyms in classical Arabic lexica, as well as in recent philological and conceptual studies on justice.[11] To be able to generate more specific and encompassing results, we included two synonyms of justice: *'adala* (equity and the realization

---

8   In contrast to the Hadawi school, they believed that the Imam of the Muslim nation does not necessarily have to be a descendent of the Prophet Muhammed.

9   Shadha al-Khatib was born in 1975 in Aden. She is a psychotherapist. Currently, she lives in Cairo. She has published four novels.

10   Shadha al-Shu'aybi was born in Sana'a and studied French language and literature at Sana'a University. Currently, she lives in Canada.

11   Such as 'On justice in the current Arab context' by Azmi Bishara (2013).

of justice), and *insaf* (fairness). For injustice, we included the following synonyms: *jawr* (oppression/tyranny); *hayf* (deviation from the straightforward path of justice); *qahr* (oppression and the feeling of it); and *'adam insaf* (lack of fairness). These synonyms were selected based on two criteria: First, they are close in meaning to the core concepts of justice or injustice.[12] Second, the frequency of their word usage in modern Arabic.[13] To examine the frequency and the usage of the different synonyms of these two central concepts of justice and injustice, we consulted the modern Arabic-Arabic dictionary *Al-mu'jam al-wasit*, compiled by the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo.

When analyzing the selected novels, we focused on sets of three sentences as producers of a meaningful context: 1) The main sentence, in which the word justice or injustice or/and any of their selected synonyms appear; 2) the sentence directly before this main sentence, and 3) the sentence directly after the main sentence. We then identified the nouns used in these three sentences and coded them. We specifically focused on nouns because they convey most of the meaning in a sentence.[14] For semantic purposes, we followed a specific definition of what constitutes a sentence in Arabic grammar: "a set of independent meaningful compounded utterances" (al-Samirrai 2007: 11). Hence, a sentence is understood as a sequence of words that contains a complete information structure of theme and rhyme. It can either be nominal – a sentence that starts with a noun; or verbal – a sentence that starts with a verb (ibid.: 12). By adhering to this linguistic framing of what constitutes a meaningful context, deducing interpretations from incomplete or incoherent contexts could be avoided.

Two specificities needed to be kept in mind when translating Arabic words into English: First, the contextual meanings of the words play an important role. The roots of many words can imply very different meanings according to their connections with other words. For instance, *'adl* can mean the noun 'justice' or the adjective 'just'. It can also mean 'one who enjoys good manners', 'one of the names of God', or 'chief of a town or a village' in the central areas of Yemen. Another example is *fasad*. This word can collocate with other words – with vastly different meanings. For instance, *fasad al-ta'am* would be translated as 'food spoilage', while *fasad al-ra'i* means 'wrongness of an opinion'. *Al-fasad al-siyasi aw al-akhlaqi* would point towards 'political or moral

---

12 For example, we excluded *baghi* (lit. transgression). While it is seemingly synonymous to *zulm*, it has other, stronger connotations. For instance, in Islamic jurisprudence *baghi* or *bughat* designates a set of rulings about irregular warfare and the law of rebellion in Islam.

13 For example, we excluded *hadhm* even though it is considered a synonym of *zulm*. Its meaning is archaic and it has another central meaning in modern Arabic, namely the digestion of food.

14 However, in some specific contexts, we opted for both nouns and verbs that would contribute into building the holistic significance of a given context.

corruption'. Second, the same word can have various connotations and nuances. For example, the word *qahr* means 'subjugation and oppression', but it can also imply 'the feeling of being oppressed' as it designates an emotional state of being morally or physically defeated, oppressed or mistreated.

Novels are mainly written in standard Arabic, but some of these terms come up in dialogues that are performed in one of the Yemeni dialects. The terminology used for conceptualizing (in)justice in novels can differ in significant aspects from the colloquial meanings of the same concepts in daily oral interactions. The word justice (*'adl/'adala*) is rarely used in daily language, as people frequently tend to use synonyms. Some examples for these synonyms that come up in the novels and were therefore coded as (in)justice are the following: *qahr* and *ghabn* (feelings of being oppressed or mistreated); *batil* (nullified, unjust and hence unacceptable); *wafa* (perfect); *haqq* (obligation, right, truth, claim, just, fair, proper) (Rosen 2002: 3)*;* and *amana* (fulfilling or upholding trust). *'Adal* (equivalence) is another concept derived from *'adl* (justice), and is a central term in tribal mediations. It is used when the disputants turn over their daggers or rifles to a third party as a signal or material guarantor that the disputants accept their arbitration and judgment. Moreover, *'adal* is a guaranty that justice will be achieved (Adra 2011: 2–3; Heinze 2014: 85–87).

Analysis:
The Framing of (In)justice in Yemeni Novels

Based on our coding, six dominant semantic word families could be determined that revolve around the concepts of justice and injustice in the novels under investigation. These fields are: religion; homeland/migration; living conditions; statehood/formal judicial system; family; and youth/gender. These six main themes that appear in the nine assessed novels can roughly be classified into two categories: First, themes that tackle the **social, political and economic realities** in Yemen (family, living conditions, homeland/migration). Second, themes that are related to the **normative order** in the Yemen (religion, statehood/formal judicial system, and youth/gender). The contextual relations of these two thematic groups with (in)justice indicate that the authors are committed to representing the whole 'lived experience' in Yemen during the current moment of conflict. They build their fictional worlds while referring to the main contested issues and debates that tackle two main questions: First: what are the possible social, economic and political circumstances that might bring about good governance, peace and stability

in Yemen? Second: what went wrong in terms of the norms and values advocated in private spaces, such as homes, or in the public sphere, such as mosques, markets and schools?

In this sense, the novels represent and/or discuss the complexities of Yemeni realities where daily practices and experiences of individuals are entangled with the philosophical questions about the sense of life and what might come after death. Thus, the narratives under scrutiny frame justice and injustice as both **social and political practice** and as conceptualizations about a dominant **normative order** in Yemen. Along the lines of these two readings, it is possible to extract the intentions embedded in these narrative texts. The Yemeni conflict with its social, economic, political and moral implications is at the core of the narrative program of these novels. To establish their political and social relevance, the novels are thematic more than fictional,[15] as they, in an allegorical manner, maintain arguments of the authors that have to do with possible reforms in Yemen. In short: they emphasize 'thought' over 'plot' (Frye 2020). In the following two sections, we will describe these two types of framing of justice and injustice as they appear in relation to the six main themes that we identified based on our quantified semantic research.

(In)Justice as Social and Political Practices

The first type of narrative framings of (in)justice provides concrete information about certain social and political practices in which justice and injustice are rooted. Building on the thematic structures of the novels analyzed, we can extract three major themes that constantly (re)produce these social and political practices. These are living conditions, family structures as well as narrations about homeland.

Living conditions

Unsurprisingly, given the humanitarian situation in Yemen, one of the contexts within which justice and injustice frequently appears is related to living conditions of people, such as livelihoods, food, shelter and housing, education, and conditions of poverty and illiteracy. Based on the protracted nature of the Yemeni war, justice is connected to these social and economic elements, which have worsened during the conflict and thus affect peoples' livelihood. The seven-year-long conflict in Yemen has impacted both urban and rural livelihoods, leaving more than 80 percent of the entire population requiring some form of humanitarian assistance and protection (OCHA 2020). More and more people are being pushed into poverty, with their economic activities

---

15 This distinction of these two modes of literary writings is attributed to the literary critic Northrop Frye.

severely reduced. Social conflict dynamics in Yemen are complex phenomena involving long-standing customs that are now being impacted by current wide-ranging socio-economic and political changes, all which directly affect the living conditions of the population.

In multiple locations within the novels, where injustice appears connected with social living conditions, writers refer to injustice affecting a whole society as a result of its ignorance and illiteracy. In doing so, they address the inherited culture of a patient and religious society as accepting or forgiving of injustice, without full control over future decisions. Education also frequently appears with close reference to injustice, pointing to the need for education of the oppressed to achieve justice.

In the novel *Waqash* (2019) by Walid Dammaj, for example, the writer describes how people's living conditions are linked with justice and injustice in terms of adhering to religiously accepted and allowed means of obtaining income and livelihoods. The writer stresses God's justice in equal distribution of livelihoods among all people fairly, and highlights that all differences in people's livelihoods are related to their good or bad deeds (Dammaj 2019: 89).

In *The Yemeni* (2019) by Shadha al-Shu'aybi, peoples' suffering and deteriorated living conditions are also linked to social injustice, highlighting how people are not able to look for better lives and demand change when all their energies go into daily living (al-Shu'aybi 2019: 180). The living conditions of women, in particular, are affected by the culture and norms of their societies. They experience injustice from their husbands and from their society. When husbands travel to work to seek a better income, they leave their women to struggle in rural areas: grazing livestock between mountains, fetching water from far areas, and taking care of the children and household needs (BaTawil 2019: 35).

Family

Besides individual experiences of justice or injustice, some contexts in the novels explicitly refer to collective family experiences. In *Lands of Happy Plots*, Jalila, an orphaned girl, is raped and it is her grandfather who tries to bring the perpetrator to justice (al-Ahdal 2018: 19). This story shows that the elderly, as guardians for orphans, often cannot provide adequate protection. Hence justice, in the context of this novel, is shown as out of reach for the weak or poor families in Yemen.

The authors of the selected novels mention different experiences of (in)justice in family contexts. While the injustice often happens to individuals, there is also a certain temporal component, in that over the course of the conflict existing family ties become stronger. Similarly, the roles of distinct family members for providing support are mentioned. While these include fathers,

mothers, and brothers, it is interesting that references are also often made to members of the extended family. In *Abu Suhayb al-'Izzi* (2019), it is the extended family that supports one of their young men who is in jail for political reasons. The family members here function as a safety net, even if they have no power to defy the government oppression (Dammaj 2019b: 165–175). In a country where the official justice system is inefficient and corrupt, families, clans and tribes, particularly in tribal areas, usually act as defenders of their members, be they innocent or guilty.

In one of the intellectual dialogues in *A Journey of a Soul* (2019), justice is seen as an imperative principle to be followed both in the private and in the public sphere. A king should be fair and just in his kingdom, and in his family alike ('Utayfa 2019: 100). This wisdom has its roots in religious and folkloric traditions: To be good to others, you should first be good to your family. In the Yemeni society, this value is connected to one's creditability and eligibility for respect from others.

Homeland/Migration

The authors of the selected novels, in differing contexts, link the words injustice and justice with the people's connection to their homeland, referring to injustice as a reason for displacement. Historically, emigration and flight of Yemenis are linked to persecution, conflict, economic hardship, social alienation and, in most cases, the pursuit of dignity (Peutz 2019). Some of the novels describe people's experiences of displacement as directly or indirectly caused by the ongoing conflict and the injustice faced at individual, family or community levels.[16] These hard experiences that Yemeni individuals face during the time of war have found their ways into fictional texts produced during the last few years.

In *The Path of Mawla Matar* (2019) by 'Ammar BaTawil, the phenomenon of emigration from Hadhramawt to different places in Asia and Africa is linked to the suffering of wives who had to take over all household responsibilities when their husbands left. The men are framed as victims of oppression in their country and of the unknown fates in their places of migration. Women, in turn, experience injustice mainly from their own society.

In the fictional spaces of the novels, emigrating from Yemen during a time of war can take an imaginative visionary form which reflects a psychological compensatory escapism. Adam, the main character of *A Journey of a Soul* (2019) by Shuruq 'Utayfa, sets out with a madman, who lives in Old Sana'a during the current war, on a journey to the past. They travel to twelfth-century Cairo, namely

---

16 Migration and displacement are some of the catastrophic results of the Yemeni conflict. In 2020 alone, displacement exceeded 100,000 individuals (IOM 2020), and more people are continuing to flee while facing dire humanitarian conditions as well as risks of COVID-19 (Human Rights Watch 2020).

during the Fatimid dynasty. Likewise, the two main characters in *The Sister* (2019), by Muhammad Mus'id, leave their village in al-Dhali' governorate during the current war in Yemen and take a trip to the underworld, namely to 'Iram of the Pillars', a legendary lost city in the southern Arabian sands of Hadhramawt.

By this narrative frame of escaping through dreams to former utopian times or different legendary places, the two novels level critique at the current situation in Yemen where freedom is restricted, and the dignity of human beings is oppressed. The two novels are dystopian in tone; they depict Yemen as a place unable to promise a dignified life. In a nutshell, these two novels present emigration as a result of injustice and oppression. In one of his conversations with his companion in the journey to the underworld, Muhammad in *The Sister* (2019) presents his own definition of homeland:

> "A homeland that is full of killing, fear, prisons and silencing voices is not my homeland; it is rather a prison. A homeland where man is oppressed by another man is not a place for staying; leaving it is much better. In such a case, searching for another homeland is an imperative. Homeland is a choice, one is free to choose a homeland where he/she can enjoy a dignified life, safety, peace and contentment." (Mus'id 2019: 85–86)

According to the Zaydi doctrine of *hijra,*[17] emigrating from a land under an unjust ruler is obligatory. In *Waqash* (2019) by Walid Dammaj, this religious principle is addressed within a broader context which will be part of our analysis in the coming section.

(In)Justice as a Conceptualization of Normative Order

The narrative framings of (in)justice as a conceptualization of normative order go beyond representing daily practical manifestations of justice and injustice, and also take place on a more theoretical level. This inherently reflects the historical context in which these novels are produced. The far-reaching events that shook Yemen in the past two decades, such as the ongoing civil war, have provoked Yemeni fiction writers to go beyond merely representing these events as such, but rather to represent a complex set of emotional, physical and intellectual reactions to them. Among the represented issues and reactions are the moral debates and discourses that are taking place in various media outlets and private spaces, such as qat sessions. Various scenes

---

17 *Hijra* (literally 'emigration') is an old Yemeni term used in the pre-Islamic period to designate the old sacred Himyaritic towns. Up until today, several Yemeni villages and towns are called Hajar, Hijrah, Hujyrah or Hajrain. Zaydis, in the North, have appropriated this tradition to refer to their sacred villages. Similarly, in the South, Hawta stands out as a sacred protected town.

and dialogues in the nine novels are thus permeated with diverse views that suggest new ways of thinking about the dominant normative order in Yemen, views that might lead to the wished-for reforms.

Building on the thematic structures of the novels analyzed, three themes can be identified as particularly relevant to normative constructions related to justice and injustice: 1) religion; 2) statehood/formal judicial system; and 3) youth/gender. In the following, each theme is examined separately.

1) Religion

According to our semantic analysis, religious themes attached to justice and injustice have the highest frequency in the nine novels. This can be attributed to the fact that religion is one of the key moral frames in Yemeni realities (Dahlgren 2011: 5). Religion is a "knowledge that is not directly linked to the Islamic holy texts; rather it is humanly mediated" (ibid.: 20). And, to go a step further, the knowledge of Islam is not one concrete set of beliefs shared across society, but it is "embedded in other 'knowledges', contributing to a variety of local religious and ideological manifestations" (ibid.: 20–21). Though some of the novels under scrutiny reflect these reality-based manifestations of religion as one of the main moral frames and as a knowledge interlinked with other social forms of knowledge, the fictional representations of religion differ from real daily social practices in one aspect: in some of the passages where religious knowledge is addressed, there is a direct linkage to Islamic holy texts, i.e. quotations of Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions. This is expected from written texts where textual religious knowledge is recalled for polemical and rhetorical reasons.

In the novels, concepts of justice and injustice are contextualized within religious knowledge in two different modes: first, as a strategy for reform; and second, as a form of resorting to Islamic scriptures in politically derived argumentations.

Strategy for Reform

In this regard, fictional writing is used for staging the efforts of Yemeni intellectuals in suggesting reforms through different discursive strategies. The following two examples, extracted from the novels, illustrate this.

The novel *Waqash* (2019) by Walid Dammaj, stands out from the selected novels in terms of the occurrences of terms related to (in)justice. While justice is mentioned 66 times throughout the novel, injustice is mentioned 51 times. This is due to the fact that this novel retells the story of the Zaydi religious group al-Mutarafiyya. Mutarafis advocated the theological principles of the

Mu'tazila,[18] which most of the Zaydi scholars then adopted (Zaid 1997). However, Mutarafis differed from the main Zaydi Shi'i line of thinking that requires the imam of a Muslim society should be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Instead, Mutarafis put to the fore human equality and "reserved nobility as a term to be identified with those who worked hard and did good deeds" (al-Shamahi 2003: 54). In line with this belief, Mutarafis considered justice as one of the main principles of faith in God. They believed in the absolute justice of God, and as consequence assumed that human beings have free will. Mutarafis were against unjust and tyrant rulers: "Mutarafis kept a close scrutiny on Imam Abdullah bin Hamzah's actions and judgment" (al-Shamahi 2003: 55). In the novel, Mutarafis represent justice, based on their belief in the Zaydi theological principle of rebellion against unjust rulers (Dammaj 2019a: 343). In *Waqash*, the leader of the Mutarafis speaks of the reason behind the Mutarrafis' residence in sacred Zaydi towns:

> "I still remember the response of Shaykh Mutaraf to a person who would criticize Mutarafis' seclusion in their *hijra*. He said that they seek refuge with their almighty God and they escape mixing with oppressors and those who accept to be oppressed. He explained they rejected the society of injustice and corruption." (Dammaj 2019a: 20)

In general, Mutarafis are represented in current Yemeni writings, be they academic or literary, as being defenders of equal citizenship and justice as well as of scientific and rational thinking. Their representation comes as a reaction against social stratification inequalities and against current prevailing religious ideas that human beings have no control over their actions and that they are being steered in fatalistic fashion. In this novel, the concept of justice is framed within these theological and political meanings and connotations. The history of the Mutarafis is narrated for its relevance to the Yemeni context where Zaydi ideas about politics have been debated, especially since the rise of the Huthi movement in the late 1990s. Moreover, Mutarafis, as mentioned before, adhered to the principles of the Mu'tazila, whose rational philosophy and ethical reasonings on justice, equality and human agency in determining good and evil have become part and parcel of reform agendas of a contemporary intellectual trend in the Arab world (Hildebrandt 2007). The novelist Walid Dammaj states:

> "The novel [*Waqash*] uncovers a number of reasons that stand behind repeated civil wars in Yemen, such as: injustice, social hierarchical order, poverty, scarcity of resources, war economy and the official policies of leaving people ignorant." (al-Ajri 2020)

---

18 The Mu'tazila is a school of Islam whose rationalism revolves around three major principles: oneness and justice of God, human freedom of action, and the creation of the Qur'an.

Similarly, the novel *A Journey of a Soul* (2019) by Shuruq 'Utayfa connects some terms of Islamic normative judgements (such as wine drinking, adultery and atheism) and reinterprets them within a more tolerant and humanistic perspective. Likewise, justice and injustice are reinterpreted and ascribed a high moral value as norms according to which an individual belief or unbelief in God is determined. Nafisa, one of the major characters of the novel, teaches 'Abdallah the meaning of atheism:

> "Whosoever deviates from justice is an atheist, and whosoever practices deviation from the meanings of God's beautiful names is an atheist; God is Justice, and if any Muslim practices injustice, then he is an atheist Muslim, i.e. he is a deviator from the path of justice." ('Utayfa 2019: 263–264)

She bases her argument on a Qur'anic verse that states: "To God belong the Names Most Beautiful; so call Him by them, and leave those who blaspheme [practice deviation from the meaning of] His Names – they shall assuredly be recompensed for the things they did" (Qur'an 7: 180). Following a recurrent etymological method in the novel in reinterpreting terms, the word *ilhad* (atheism) is reinterpreted based on the literal sense of its root 'l-h-d': incline or deviate. Accordingly, Nafisa believes that if God is justice, then those who deviate from the meanings and implications of the holy name 'justice' are not believers. According to Nafisa, what really matters and what makes people real believers is being just ('Utayfa 2019: 263). This alludes to a more tolerant, liberal and contemporary interpretation of religion and implies a more peaceful coexistence of different religious believers.

Resorting to Islamic Scriptures

Besides that, justice and injustice are also contextualized as a form of resorting to Islamic scriptures in politically driven argumentations. In the novel *Abu Suhayb al-'Izzi* (2019), a group of people who belong to different Yemeni political parties and religious sects meet in prison. The nature of (in)justice is one of the dominant topics of these educated prisoners. The oppression, inefficiency and corruption of the Yemeni state are the main topics under discussion. While Yemen's constitution is not cited by any one of the interlocutors, Marxist ideas and Islamic texts related to (in)justice are present in a remarkable manner. In this novel, Islamist characters who undergo torture in prison raise the issue of (in)justice from their Islamic perspective as a strategy to oppose the tyrannical behavior of the modern state in Yemen. For instance, one of the characters who is accused of affiliation to al-Qa'ida and is tortured in the prison cites this Qur'anic verse:

"Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition." (Qur'an 16: 90, cited in Dammaj 2019b: 200)

Justice, according to this character, is what gives legitimacy to the state and its leadership. Hence, without justice, political leaders in the country would have no right to rule.

2) Statehood/Formal Judicial System

Court, judiciary and lawyers are three key legal terms that are associated with (in)justice under the category 'statehood/formal judicial system'. This is not surprising as the state is, theoretically, the formal apparatus where justice ought to be enforced through law. However, a review of the contexts where these legal notions appear, particularly in *Happy Land of Plots* (2018) by Wajdi al-Ahdal, shows that the delivery of justice in Yemen is seen as being impeded by competing formal and informal authorities; namely, the executive branch of the government, tribal leaders, media outlets and clergymen. *Happy Land of Plots* does not only reflect on the collusion of the different state and social authorities through patronage networks and how they obstruct justice; it also hints to the fact that the inefficiency and lack of independence of the Yemeni justice system hinder progress in terms of democracy and freedom of expression. In the novel, a journalist who follows the case of a raped girl is assassinated after he publishes reports about this tragic event. The rapist, a tribal *shaykh*, is declared innocent by the court and journalistic reports are published supporting him, depicting those who accused him as unjust. Here, injustice is not only institutionalized, but also presented to the society in a manipulative and distortive way that consolidates and normalizes the oppression of powerful classes against the weak. As seen in this novel, gender is another theme that is addressed in the novels to discuss the background patriarchal structures standing behind this type of framing of (in)justice.

3) Social Stratification and Youth/Gender Relations

References to customs and traditions constitute one of the main themes in the novels. In this context, concepts of justice and injustice are related to categories that can be subsumed under two normative frames of reference in Yemen: social stratification and youth/gender. The analyzed novels show very clearly that injustice is experienced differently by men and women. They portray women as more vulnerable in various themes, including intimate relationships and war, and illustrate this by reference to crying, tears, and weakness when writing about women. Masculinity, in contrast, is often constructed as

taking part in resistance, fighting for freedom and a public display of honor. This shows the authors belief that the conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Yemen affect men, women, boys and girls differently, due to both their different roles in society and to the deeply rooted socio-cultural and economic inequalities that have been exacerbated during the crisis. Gender relations in Yemen have been shaped by religious, cultural, social and political traditions, which diverge between Yemen's different regions, as well as between rural and urban areas and between certain tribes. While historically, women and girls are less powerful in society than men and boys, they have been and remain the primary care givers at the household level (CARE 2015: 2; Gressmann 2016: 3, 13; Heinze 2016: 2; Heinze & Stevens 2018).

Generalization about continuity of traditions in Yemen can be misleading (Scheele & Shryock 2019: 35). Traditions in Yemen are highly diverse, and in modern times the nation's state interventions have impacted key normative notions and practices in remarkable ways (Dahlgren 2011: 5). For instance, the Marxist-socialist People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY-South Yemen, 1970–1990) applied a policy that aimed at eliminating social stratification by empowering non-tribal groups and enforcing laws that equated privileged sultans with other citizens. In the aftermath of Yemeni unification, however, an attempt at social re-stratification was made (Rodionov 2006). A more recent change that emerged during the war is related to the status of tribal *shaykh*s in northern areas who enjoyed privileges during the rule of 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih (1978–2012). Now, the Huthi de facto authorities tend to give more power to their appointed 'Huthi supervisors' at the expense of the well-established tribal families of *shaykh*s (Dashela 2020), while at the same time pushing for the re-empowerment of the Hashemite elites who had lost power and influence during the Salih era. Similar examples can be given about the changes in notions and practices of gender relations that have taken place during the past centuries, which mirrored the different waves of ideological and political changes. These reconfigurations, emerging over space and time in contemporary Yemen, have by now, manifested in literature in different ways.

Within this dichotomy of weak female/strong male, the girl Jalila in *Happy Land of Plots* by Wajdi al-Ahdal, is raped by a strong tribal man, Shaykh Bakri Hasan. Instead of bringing justice to the girl, the formal judicial system supports the male rapist. Similarly, other girls, belonging to the weak social group of dark-skinned Yemenis, appear in this novel as victims to men who are privileged by their affiliation with the ruling party or strong tribes. The novel treats this dichotomy within a broader and more complex matrix of power relations:

women who belong to the social category of Yemeni *akhdam*[19] are oppressed by a patriarchal structure where social, religious and political norms are mutually reinforcing. The novel *Happy Land of Plots* reflects the stereotypical representations of female *akhdam* in the dominant social imaginary of a pluralistic Yemeni society as being without honor. Female *akhdam* are represented as a form of *homo sacer*, who, according to Giorgio Agamben, is excluded from the protection of law (Agamben 1998: 46–47). As a group situated at the bottom of the social ladder, *akhdam* are viewed as people without 'good manners' that do not deserve respect or honor (Dahlgren 2011:10). Thus, any offensive action against an individual of this group passes silently and perpetrators will not be punished. This is also strongly reflected in the novel when Muna, a beautiful black girl, is handed over to a journalist by the tribal Shaikh Bakri Hasan as a gift for the journalist's services in writing benevolent reports about the *shaykh* (al-Ahdal 2019: 80). In the end, Muna and Jalila are discarded as victims and the perpetrators continue living their lives as if nothing happened. This can be interpreted as a strong critique at asymmetrical gender, and, more generally, power relations that still characterize contemporary Yemen.

The novel *The Path of Mawla Matar* (2019) by 'Ammar BaTawil takes a similar stance on gender relations. It describes patriarchal norms that affect women on many different levels. In his novel, BaTawil addresses (in)justice on the level of historical and documentary recognition or non-recognition of justice and injustice.

In *The Yemeni* (2019) by Shadha al-Shu'aybi, male-dominant Yemeni traditions and their unjust norms concerning women are criticized from a different angle. The young Yemeni man Ra'fat marries an Egyptian girl and thus faces to a difficult test regarding his perceptions of values with view to the relationship between a man and a woman. The feeling of injustice is dominant in the novel. One of the terms of injustice that appears frequently is *qahr*, which implies the feeling of being defeated, oppressed and mistreated. This feeling is expressed by both male and female characters, albeit with more frequency on the female side. This indicates that these individuals suffer from injustice in their intersubjective relations as part of their suffering from the social conditions and norms that encompass their everyday practices. Just like his wife, Ra'fat experiences injustice. He is shackled with the traditional values and expectations about the meanings of manhood, gender relations and honor. The feelings of injustice and mistreatment are related in some sections of the

---

19 Yemenis with dark skin are called *akhdam* (servants). They are treated as outcasts in Yemeni society, being perceived as the lowest ranking strata of Yemeni society. They cannot own land and often live in slums with no access to water and electricity. They face difficulties enrolling their children in schools and accessing employment beyond the most menial of tasks, such as street-sweeping (Nevola 13.02.2018).

novel to the tyrannical and brutal practices of the two political regimes in Egypt and Yemen during the 2011 'Arab Spring' uprisings in both countries. These feelings of injustice and resentment are expressed by both genders. It is thus safe to induce that behaviors of injustice that take place between males and females are generated and normatively framed by a more macro socio-political structure of injustice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The nine novels analyzed in this Study portray a myriad of varying perspectives of justice and injustice that reflect the existential concerns of Yemeni individuals and communities, and their struggles for a better life in a country mired in violence, instability and uncertainty for decades. We have started from the assumption that novels are literary spaces that represent social voices and thus sought to analyze the way in which their authors frame (in)justice in the narratives they created. Such a literary analysis can provide insights into the societal understandings of justice and injustice, as well as the associated elements of everyday life. More than merely reflecting and critiquing unjust social and political practices, novels as literary spaces present views that can motivate the reader to reconsider certain ideas and convictions related to religious, legal and social normative frames in Yemen.

Our main finding is that the novels refer to (in)justice in two ways. First, they allude to the social, political and economic realities in Yemen, and second, they relate to a certain normative order in Yemen. Thereby, the novels build their fictional worlds while referencing the main contested issues and the debates that tackle two main questions: First, what are the possible social, economic and political circumstances that might bring about good governance, peace and stability in Yemen? This multi-faceted question is, of course, what has also been driving the many different initiatives that attempt, ever since the beginning of the war, to contribute to stabilization and peacebuilding in Yemen. Second, what went wrong in terms of the norms and values advocated in private spaces, such as homes, or in the public sphere, such as mosques, markets and schools? This latter question, related to the normative order, is what Yemeni writers, educators and sometimes even politicians often ask when reflecting on the current state of their homeland.

In narrating certain socio-political practices, the novels provide a concrete basis for future reforms in terms of reconciling unjust social and political relations in Yemeni society and establishing justice and accountability in the

context of the ongoing civil war. The nine novels often refer to the living conditions of the Yemeni people or discuss the role of families as a place of justice and belonging. Moreover, they make reference to the themes of homeland and migration, presenting a strong narrative frame of escaping through dreams to old utopian times or different legendary places. Through such narratives, the novels criticize the current situation in Yemen where freedom is restricted, and the dignity of human beings is oppressed.

In conceptualizing a certain normative vision, the novels go beyond representing daily practical manifestations of justice and injustice; rather, they provide a complex set of emotional, physical and intellectual reactions to (in)justice. Hence, in terms of application to the future justice and reconciliation efforts, the selected novels serve as a platform for expressing and reflecting Yemeni social voices that would otherwise remain unheard; provide unique insights into the understanding, wishes and needs of contemporary Yemeni society; and highlight diverse ways of thinking about a post-conflict normative and political order. Importantly, understanding how justice and injustice are framed within Yemeni society can provide valuable information for peacebuilding and reconciliation endeavors. For instance, the selected novels powerfully point towards gender equality as an important factor for reconciliation and justice. They also stress the importance of the youth – including boys, but especially girls – as a generation that holds much potential for peacebuilding. Thus, the framing of (in)justice as extracted from the novels has political as well as literary relevance. These insights can and should be used to formulate more precise and suitable policy recommendations for peacebuilding and reconciliation by taking into account a diversity of social voices and a societal understanding of (in)justice.

Literature

Adra, Najwa (2011): *Tribal Mediation in Yemen and its Implications to Development*, AAS Working Papers in Social Anthropology. Available at *http://www.najwaadra.net/tribalmediation.pdf* (12.02.2022).

Agamben, Giorgio (1998): *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford.

Almawqeapost (21.12.2018): 'Hiwar ma'a Wajdi al-Ahdal [An interview with Wajdi al-Ahdal]', in: *Almawqeapost*. Available at: *https://almawqeapost.net/interviews/36795* (12.02.2022).

Ayruch, Kevin and Beatriz Vejerano (2002): 'Truth and reconciliation commissions. A review essay and annotated bibliography', in: *The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 4/2, pp. 37–76.

Baqais, A. (25.02.2020): 'Al-riwaya al-yamaniyya fi zaman al-harb' [The Yemeni novel in times of war], in: *Nizwa Magazine*. Available at *https://www.nizwa.com/?p=10591* (22.02.2022).

——— (03.01.2017): 'Biblioghrafiya mawsu'a al-riwaya al-yamaniyya shimalan wajanuban khilal al-fitra 2010-2015' [Encyclopedic bibliography of novels in South and North Yemen during the years 2010-2015], in: *al-Umana' Newspaper.*

Bishara, Azmi (2013): 'On justice in the current Arab context', in: *The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies* 5, pp. 7–26.

Bleiker, Roland (2018): *Visual Global Politics*, London.

CARE (2015): *Rapid Gender Analysis: Yemen*, CARE. Available at *https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/care_rapid_gender_analysis_yemen.pdf* (12.02.2022).

Caton, Stephen Charles (1990): *Peaks of Yemen I Summon. Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*, Berkeley.

Dahlgren, Susanne (2011): *Contesting Realities. The Public Sphere and Morality in Southern Yemen*, Syracuse.

Danchev, Alex and Debbie Lisle (2009): 'Introduction. Art, politics, purpose', in: *Review of International Studies* 35/4, pp. 775–79.

Dashela, Alex (06.11.2020): 'Coercing compliance. The Houthis and the tribes of Northern Yemen', in: *Washington Institute*. Available at *https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/coercing-compliance-houthis-and-tribes-northern-yemen (12.02.2022).*

Frye, Northrop (2020): *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton.

Gressmann, Wolfgang (2016): *From the Ground Up: Gender and Conflict Analysis in Yemen*, Oxfam. Available at *https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/from-the-ground-up-gender-and-conflict-analysis-in-yemen-620112/* (12.02.2022).

Heinze, Marie-Christine (2016): *Literature Review: Women's Role in Peace and Security in Yemen*, Saferworld/CARPO/YPC. Available at *https://carpo-bonn.org/en/womens-role-in-peace-and-security-in-yemen-literature-review-2/* (12.02.2022).

——— (2014): 'On "gun culture" and "civil statehood" in Yemen', in: *Journal of Arabian Studies* 4/1, pp. 70–95.

Heinze, Marie-Christine and Sophie Stevens (June 2018): *Women as Peacebuilders in Yemen*, SDD/YPC Report. Available at *https://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1571/sdd_yemenreport_full_v5.pdf* (12.02.2022).

Hildebrandt, Thomas (2007): *Neo-Mu'tazilismus. Intention und Kontext im Modernen Arabischen Umgang mit dem Rationalistischen Erbe des Islam*, Leiden.

International Center for Transitional Justice (2020): *What is Transitional Justice?* Available at *https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice* (12.02.2022).

IOM (21.07.2020): *Internal Displacement in Yemen Exceeds 100,000 in 2020 with COVID-19 an Emerging New Cause.* Available at *https://www.iom.int/news/internal-displacement-yemen-exceeds-100000-2020-covid-19-emerging-new-cause* (12.02.2022).

al-Jeddawy, Yazeed, Maged al-Kholidy and Kate Nevens (25.03.2021): *Broken People Can't Heal a Nation. The Role of Arts in Peacebuilding in Yemen*, CARPO/YPC/YWBOD Report 08. Available at *https://carpo-bonn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/neu-carpo_policy_report_08_2021.pdf* (12.02.2022).

Lederach, Paul (1997): *Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, DC.

Mendes, Martes-Abrantes (2021): *A Passage to Justice. Selected Yemeni Civil Society Views for Transitional Justice and Long-Term Accountability in Yemen*, Open Society Foundations. Available at *https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/publications/a-passage-to-justice* (12.02.2022).

Möller, Frank (2013): *Visual Peace. Images, Spectatorship and the Politics of Violence*, Basingstoke.

Nevola, Luca (13.02.2018): 'On colour and origin. The case of the akhdam in Yemen', in: *openDemocracy.* Available at *https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/on-colour-and-origin-case-of-akhdam-in-yemen/* (12.02.2022).

OCHA (2020): *Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan Extension, June-December 2020*. Available at *https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/yemen-humanitarian-response-plan-extension-june-december-2020-enar* (11.02.2022).

Odendaal, Andries (1997): 'For all its flaws. The TRC as a peacebuilding tool', in: *Constructive Approaches to Community and Political Conflict* 6/3, n.p.

Peutz, Nathalie (2019): 'The fault of our grandfathers. Yemen's third-generation migrants seeking refuge from displacement', in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51/3, pp. 357–76.

Rodionov, Mikhail (2006): 'Social restratification in modern Ḥaḍhramawt', in: *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 1, pp. 181–90.

Rosen, Lawrence (2002): *The Justice of Islam*, Oxford.

al-Rubaidi, Abdulsalam (2021a): *Reading Between the Lines. Political Solutions in Yemeni Fiction Writing*, Yemen Policy Center. Available at *https://www.yemenpolicy.org/reading-between-the-lines-political-solutions-in-yemeni-fiction-writing/* (12.02.2022).

——— (2021b): 'Wajdi al-Ahdal. His childhood reads, current project, and advice for young Yemeni writers', in: *Arablit Quarterly.* Available at *https://arablit.org/2021/02/09/wajdi-al-ahdal-his-childhood-reads-current-project-and-advice-for-young-yemeni-writers/* (12.02.2022).

——— (20.11.2018): *Imagining an Alternative Homeland: Humanism in Contemporary Yemeni Novels*, CARPO/IOA/GDRSC Study 06. Available at *https://carpo-bonn.org/en/imagining-an-alternative-homeland-humanism-in-contemporary-yemeni-novels-en/* (12.02.2022).

al-Samirrai, Fadhil (2007): *Al-jumla al-'arabiyya. Ta'lifuha wa-aqsamuha [The Sentence in Arabic. Its Formation and Types]*, Amman.

Scheele, Judith and Andrew Shryock (2019): *The Scandal of Continuity in Middle East Anthropology. Form, Duration, Difference.* Indiana.

Seils, Paul (2017): *The Place of Reconciliation in Transitional Justice*, ICTJ Briefing. Available at *https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Briefing-Paper-Reconciliation-TJ-2017.pdf* (12.02.2022).

al-Shamahi, Abdulla (2003): *Al-Imam al-Manṣur 'Abdullah b. Ḥamzah b. Sulayman (d. 614/1217). A Biography by al-Faqih Ḥumayd b. Ahmad al Muḥalli (d. 652/1254)*, unpublished PhD thesis, Glasgow.

Stohrer, Ulrike (2020): *Bar'a as an Expression of Liminality. Ritual Performance, Identity and Conflict Prevention in the Highlands of Yemen*, CARPO Study 08. Available at *https://carpo-bonn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/carpo_study_08.pdf* (12.02.2022).

Teppermann, Jonathan D. (2002): 'Truth and consequences', in: *Foreign Affairs* 81/2, pp. 128–45.

Van Leeuwen, Mathijs and Willemijn Verkoren (2012): 'Complexities and challenges for civil society building in post-conflict settings', in: *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 7/1, pp. 81–94.

Zaid, A. (1997): *Tayyarat mu'tazila al-yaman fi al-qarn al-sadis al-hijri [Trends of the Yemeni Mu'tazila in the Sixth Hijri Century]*, Sana'a.

Analyzed Novels

al-Ahdal, Wajdi (2018): *Happy Lands of Plots [Ardh al-mu'amarat al-sa'ida]*, Beirut.

Batawil, 'Ammar (2019): *The Path of Mawla Matar [Tariq Mawla Matar]*, Abu Dhabi.

Dammaj, Walid (2019a): *Waqash*, Algeria.

——— (2019b): *Abu Suhayb al-'Izzi*, Cairo.

al-Khatib, Shadha (2017): *Years of Unthoughtfulness [Sanawat al-walah]*, Cairo.

Mus'id, Muhammad (2018): *The Sister [Al-shaqiqa]*, Aden.

——— (2018): *The Bullet [Al-rasasa]*, Sana'a.

al-Shu'aybi, Shadha (2019): *The Yemeni [Al-ramani]*, Cairo.

'Utayfa, Shuruq (2019): *A Journey of a Soul [Rihlat ruh]*, Abu Dhabi.

About the Authors

Osama Ali is currently enrolled in a Master's program in International Development and Gender Studies at GDRSC in Sana'a University and holds a BSc degree in Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering from Ta'iz University. Osama has over nine years of experience in humanitarian and development programs including agriculture, food security, resilience, private sector development, water and national resources, peacebuilding, protection and GBV, both as an employee and a consultant.

Contact: ie.engosama@gmail.com

Fadhilah Gubari is currently enrolled in a master program in Public Policy at the University of Reading (UK). She holds a diploma in International Development and Gender Studies, from the GDRSC at Sana'a University, and a bachelor degree in Communications and Electronics Engineering from Sana'a University. She has nine years of experience in development and humanitarian programs, amongst others as a humanitarian affairs officer at MSF. Previously, she was the national consultant to establish the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network. She was also an advisor for the Yemen Economic Stabilization and Success program of USAID-MENA in Sana'a. In addition, she worked with the Federation of Yemen Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Contact: fgubari@gmail.com

Dr. **Julia Gurol** holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Freiburg. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Chair for International Relations at Freiburg University and an Associate Fellow at CARPO. Julia's areas of expertise are transregional authoritarian practices, global governance in the global south, social movements, regime stability and transformation as well as conflict dynamics and transformation; her regional foci are China and the Middle East.

Contact: gurol@carpo-bonn.org

Dr. **Abdulsalam al-Rubaidi** holds a PhD in Near and Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Bonn, Germany, and a master in Arabic Language and Literature from Sana'a University, Yemen. He is a lecturer at the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Education at al-Baydha' University, and a lecturer at the Gender Development Research and Studies Center (GDRSC) at Sana'a University, Yemen. From 2012 to 2014, he was a researcher at the Yemen Polling Center (YPC) in Sana'a in the VW-Foundation-funded project on 'Framing the Revolution in Yemen', co-implemented with the University of Bonn. He is also an Associate Fellow at CARPO.

Contact: alrubaidi_abdulsallam@yahoo.com

About the Project

This Study results out of the project "Teaching and Advising on Post-Conflict Reconstruction", which was funded through the German Academic Exchange Service's (DAAD) Transformation Partnership between May 2019 and December 2021. The partners in the project were the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies at the University of Bonn, the Gender Development Research & Studies Center at the University of Sana'a, and CARPO. Against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Yemen, this project aimed at contributing to post-conflict reconstruction in the country, amongst others by strengthening ties between researchers, academic staff, students and experts in the policy and development community through personal encounters as well as a series of publications.

About CARPO

CARPO was founded in 2014 by Germany-based academics trained in the fields of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Political Science and Social Anthropology. Its work is situated at the nexus of research, consultancy and exchange with a focus on implementing projects in close cooperation and partnership with stakeholders in the Orient. The researchers in CARPO's network believe that a prosperous and peaceful future for the region can best be achieved through inclusive policy making and economic investment that engages the creative and resourceful potential of all relevant actors. Therefore, CARPO opens enduring channels for interactive knowledge transfer between academics, citizens, entrepreneurs, and policy makers.

Website: https://carpo-bonn.org
Facebook / Twitter: @CARPObonn