CHAPTER THREE

GLOBALIZATION IN SELECT ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ARABIC NOVELS

The new concepts like globalization, market economy, IMF, the New World Order are the new idols... for which we will burn frankincense and produce sacrifices. The sacrifices are the poor nations of Africa and Asia...

(Mustafa Mahmoud, Tourists in God’s Land 46)

3.1. Introduction

In modern Arabic literature, there is a strong post-colonialism-inspired urge to release literature from the limitations of specific disciplines and ideologies, opting for a better engagement with globalization in its many negative and positive facets. Admittedly, on par with a great leap in science and technology, globalization takes place in an age of overpowering capital, with goals and agenda that may endanger treasured social and cultural configurations. Homi K. Bhabha in his “Foreword” to Frantz Fanon’s book The Wretched of the Earth, describes globalization as one of dual economies that “create divided worlds in which uneven and unequal conditions of development can often mask the ubiquitous, underlying factors of persistent poverty and malnutrition, caste and racial injustice, the hidden injuries of class, the exploitation of women’s labor, and the victimization of minorities and refugees” (xii).

The discourse of globalization is “caught between two competing narratives, one of celebration, the other of crisis” (Gikandi 629). Unfortunately, there are very few Arabic writings in this globalized age that explore the conditions in the Arab world. Those that do not deal with globalization concentrate on sleazy issues, titillating the reader and side-stepping the real issues
altogether. This is the major reason for the choice of fiction as the window on the Arab response to globalization. The Arab non-fictional discourse on globalization can be more profitably read intertextually with Arab fiction of globalization. It is for this reason that I have chosen to study some of the fictional works of Sunallah Ibrahim and Subhi Fahmawi, two writers who treat the violence of globalization with the seriousness and sobriety such a topic demands. I have attempted to analyze three anti-globalization novels: *Al-Lajnah* (1981), by the Egyptian novelist Sunallah Ibrahim, which was translated into English in 2001 as *The Committee*, *Dhat* (1998), by the same writer, translated into English as *Zaat* in 2001, and finally *Al hwb fi Zamen Alawlemeh* [Love in the Time of Globalization] (2006), by the Gordian novelist Subhi Fahmawi.

### 3.2. Globalization, Consumerism, Multinational Corporations, Coca-Cola, Capitalism, Black Humour, and the Open-Door Policy in Sunallah Ibrahim’s *The Committee*

[Globalization] play[s] a decisive role in the choice of our mode of life, the inclinations of our tastes, the presidents and kings of our countries, the wars we participated in, and the treaties we entered into.

(Sunallah Ibrahim, *The Committee* 23)

The Egyptian writer Sunallah Ibrahim is one of the leading lights in modern Arabic, and indeed, world literature. He is considered by many literary critics as “a modernist writer and by others as *katib mushakis* [a troublemaking writer]” (Mostafa 422). However, his ‘troublemaking’, and the fact that he has never worked within any cultural institution in Egypt, did not prevent the
Egyptian Higher Council for Culture from awarding him its prize during the second International Conference on the Arab Novel in 2003, an award which Ibrahim declined in public during the ceremony itself, whilst stating: “I publicly decline the prize because it is awarded by a government that, in my opinion, lacks the credibility for bestowing it” (qtd. in Mehrez, *Egypt’s Culture* 75). Such rejection is meant to declare his viewpoint “to denounce, in public, not in fiction, Egypt’s normalization with Israel, the American occupation of Iraq, the impotence of [Arabs] foreign policy, the widespread corruption and the absence of human rights” (74).

Sunallah Ibrahim is a writer whose novels not only document Egypt's most recent history, but also testify to their author's inventiveness, his continuing interest in technique and experimentation, his humane and perceptive portrayal of his characters, and his mastery of different kinds of tone—light-hearted mockery, satire and tragedy. One of the main themes which occurs over and again in Sunallah Ibrahim's fiction since his first novel *Tilka al-Ra' iha* [The Smell of ft] published in 1966 up to *al-Talassus* [Sneaking] published in 2007, is his exploration of the economic hardships which the Egyptian/Arab middle class had gone through before and after the 1952 revolution. *Al-Lajnah*, the novel under scrutiny was published in Arabic in 1981 and was translated into English in 2001 as *The Committee* by Mary St. Germain and Charlene Constable.

*The Committee* is a significant satirical novel on contemporary global capitalism and the open market policy of Egypt, launched during the presidency of Anwar El-Sadat who ruled Egypt from 1970 to 1981. The novel begins with an unnamed man/narrator called to meet an influential, ambiguous, and strong Committee that is made up of members the reader/protagonist is told virtually nothing about except that this Committee will question him. This meeting with
the Committee may determine his future. The narrator spared no time and efforts in his
preparation for this meeting. During his first interrogation/interview with the Committee, the
protagonist is forced to perform a belly dance. His dance, though described in a straightforward,
humorous, and even knowledgeable manner, is painfully disturbing. He hesitates only
momentarily before breaking into an obviously ‘Oriental’ style of dance. He pulls off his tie,
knots it around his waist and begins an impassioned belly dance routine. Shortly thereafter, he
strips naked upon the Committee’s order, and submits himself to rectal examination. This is the
first of the protagonist’s many carefully illustrated failures. Failure is the dominant, perennial
mode of the narrated action. Success is achieved only in perverse moments, culminating in the
spectacular final scene. His (protagonist’s failure) is meant to refer to the Arab authoritarian
regimes’ failure in relation to the West which is referred to in the narrative by the Committee.
Though the setting of the novel is the Arab world and Egypt in particular, the representation of
the Committee reflects a global dimension. For instance, the language of the Committee is not
Arabic, “I [protagonist] devoted myself to studying the language the Committee uses” (The
Committee 6). He does his level best to “to speak their [the Committee’s] language without
serious grammatical mistakes” (10).

The first theme of the tale emerges when the Committee asks the protagonist, "By which
momentous event among the wars, revolutions, or inventions will our century be remembered in
the future?" (16-17). This results in a lecture on globalization (remember this was written over
30 years ago) via a capsule history of Coca-Cola and its proliferation across the world in the
years after World War II. In this first part of the novel, Ibrahim holds the multinational
corporations responsible for destroying nation States, and was ahead of the curve in predicting
the political power they would wield.
The second theme surfaces when the Committee directs the protagonist to write "a study on the greatest contemporary Arab luminary" (31). There is no additional guidance, so his first problem is trying to determine who he should present the study on. Eventually, he decides on a shadowy but important figure known as 'the Doctor'. Thinking this to be his opportunity to shine, the protagonist dives into an extensive research on the Doctor, whose prosperity typifies contemporary Egyptian wealth. However, the Committee is unconvinced of the significance of the Doctor as an object of study. Ironically, he fits perfectly the stereotype of ascendancy and individual power in the late twentieth-century Egypt, having managed to stay behind the scenes as he gained access to successive ruling administrations. His great financial assets are not transparent, but the protagonist learns that much of the Doctor's wealth came from a series of opportunistic acts, beginning with the nationalization of companies upon Gamal Abdel Nasser's rise (Nasser ruled Egypt from 1956 to 1970), then war profiteering, and then negotiations of the private sector explosion under Anwar El-Sadat. Indeed, "the Doctor" symbolizes the character of Anwar El-Sadat, and his open-door economic policies and the entire book is a satirical attack on those policies and the figures behind them. In other words, despite the censorious obstacles in his path, the narrator manages to start uncovering nuggets of truth about "the Doctor." This angers the Committee and the protagonist is commanded to pick another subject. The cruel and continuous humiliation and fear of the narrator leads him to commit a crime. Finally, as a representative of the reader and the Arab citizen, he realizes his mistake that he must stand against the Committee. He appears once again before the Committee, and receives a surreal sentence. Realizing his mistake, the protagonist says: "I wish I was standing before the Committee members again, so that I could make them listen to me. I imagined myself facing them confidently" (155). His wish to stand before the Committee again is to tell them: "I
committed—from the beginning—unpardonable errors. I shouldn’t have stood before you, but against you. Even noble effort on this earth should be aimed at eliminating you” (156).

This novel is pregnant with ideas. Readers thirsty to unmask the real mission of globalization will certainly find their target in this novel and will support Ibrahim’s critique of globalization and its impact on the developing countries. This novel reflects not only Ibrahim’s criticism of globalization, and the Arab dictator regimes, but also his creativity as a contemporary author. The Committee is probably the first Arabic novel to expose the role of the multinational corporations and the effects of El-Sadat’s open-door economic policies on Egyptian/Arab society. Corruption, exploitation, and ever-increasing American influence come to light stunning the reader. What makes the novel interesting, to me, is that, it is a sharp, humorous satire on consumer culture. The forces of globalization represented by the multinational corporations transform the people of poor nations into mere consumers, and this is the strongest message the novels tries to convey. In the narrative, the narrator speaks to the Committee on the role of the multinationals and says “the giant corporations [are]...transforming the workers into machines, the consumers into numbers, and countries into markets” (18).

The relationship between the protagonist/Arab authority and citizen and the Committee/the multinational corporations/America is described as incommensurate, disproportionate, and unequal relation. The novel begins with this sentence “I arrived at the Committee’s headquarter at 8:30 AM, half an hour before my scheduled appointment” (1). From the very outset of the novel, there is unequal, ambiguous, and challenging relation between the narrator and the Committee. Whereas everything about the narrator is known, “a shroud of secrecy [is] veiling their [the Committee’s] names and jobs” (6). They are not well-defined
characters. They are described as "An old man, “with thick medical glasses” ...short stature, ugly face," qualities that do not define a character’s personal identity. Using such hateful terms to describe the Committee members symbolizes the author’s/narrator’s hatred for their presence in his country/Arab world. This inequality between the two powers marks the challenge. The challenge begins when the narrator runs after standing before the Committee despite his knowledge of its strength.

I [protagonist] tried to form a clear idea of the Committee’s work by searching out others who had appeared before it...Most denied ever having gone before the Committee, or even all knowledge of its existence. The rest used the excuse that they had forgotten the details...When I tried to gather information about the Committee members... I found a shroud of secrecy veiling their names and jobs. Everyone whom I asked regarded me with anxious and pitying looks. (6-7)

The challenge is reflected also in the method adopted by the narrator in answering the Committee's questions. He tricks them into believing that he is unable to give speedy and accurate answers to their questions. And that is what the Committee wants so they can declare the candidate’s failure. Such intention is made clear through its inaccurate questions such as: "Where were you during ‘that’ year?" (13), or “we have a reports here saying you couldn’t perform with a certain woman” (15). However, the narrator's reply to these general questions combines accuracy, generality, and ambiguity. His answer to the first question "in jail" is an apt reply to the Committee’s mischievous question (14). Further expression of the challenge is declared as the protagonist says: “I did not want to present a trite answer, something [the Committee] had heard before, ostensibly meant to flatter” (9). Here, the narrator declares his
ability to challenge the Committee despite the unequal power relation. He draws his strength to stand up to the Committee from the sufferings of his community at the hands of the multinationals.

_The Committee_, especially in its emphasis on "Coca-Colonization" and "world-wide cultural standardization," has significance for a culture, says Pieterse ("Globalization as Hybridization" 45). Khaled A. Alkodimi in his article "Satire in Sonallah Ibrahim’s _The Committee_: An Allegory to Ridicule Capitalism," identifies the hegemonic and the exploitative nature of the capitalist system through the establishment of multinational corporations. He writes: "Ibrahim skillfully explores the devastating effects of global capitalism on Third-World nations; by unravelling the mask that shields the domination and exploitation of Egypt" (53). The discussion below shows how these corporations ultimately have transformed Egypt into a mere consumer market, using Ibrahim’s artistic insights as the guide.

Before proceeding to analyze globalization in the context of the Arab world in the company of creative minds like Ibrahim’s, one would do well to note some of the powerful, poignant moments in a novel like _The Committee_, if only to whet one’s intellectual appetite and rouse one’s moral self. _The Committee_ is likely to flourish as a world text, but it also remains an Arab text of rich postcolonial and postmodernist implications that assume full meaning in relation to the nature of a nation-State that has been run by the global capital since President Jamal Abdulnasser’s death in 1970. The Committee is an ambiguous term that applies to a mechanism with a mysterious power and a language that might sound acceptable and promising if this body had not degenerated into a coercive and violently repressive regime of global dimensions. In the narrative, the Committee members referred to in the title stand for the
multinational corporations, with the nameless narrator-protagonist acting on the behalf of his country. Ibrahim manipulates his criticism of these corporations in such a way as to reflect capitalist domination over the Third World nations. During the interview sequence, for instance, the nameless narrator protagonist is ordered to dance in the nude: “Do you know how to dance? ... [protagonist] took my necktie and wound it around my waist just above my hipbones, right where it would emphasize body’s flexibility” (The Committee 12-13). Without showing any satisfaction with this performance, the Committee members then ordered him to take off his clothes: “then he ordered me to take off my pants ... Meanwhile, their eyes settled attentively on my naked parts” (15-16). The narrator as a representative of the Arab community forges an allegorical link with his poor and naked culture. His ‘naked parts’ stand for the Egyptian/Arab world falling under the policies of the West, and at which the latter willingly directs its attention and motives. In other words, the gaze of the West is directed not just at genitals of the poor, unfortunate interviewee. It is a gaze that fixes the socio-cultural identity of the Arab world, one that the West has rendered alien and inferior to itself through exploitation.

Further humiliation is depicted through the use of humour and exaggeration when the nameless narrator-protagonist is ordered by a member of the Committee to bend over to be examined during the interview session: “the Blond [a member of the Committee] asked me to turn my back. Then he ordered me to bend over. I felt his hand on my naked buttocks. He ordered me to cough. At that moment, I felt a finger inside my body” (16). Ibrahim’s comic sense lies in the disturbing absurdity of the situation, as the body of his protagonist is subjected to a thorough rectal examination. The applicant’s body, particularly his buttocks, seems to be at the centre of the Committee’s focus, instead of his mind. This symbolizes the West’s focus on the Arab’s wealth. While the scene may evoke laughter, one senses that Ibrahim’s intention is far
from comic, but rather geared towards exposing the grim reality of the national situation. Humour, in other words, is used only as a vehicle to make the butt appear ridiculous by "evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (Abrams 275). While the interviewee pretends to amuse the Committee, he himself has become an object of amusement and contempt. The examination of his body can stand for the humiliation and hegemonic domination exercised by foreign companies over poor nations and individuals.

The unnamed narrator protagonist/Arab authority and citizen is turned into a clown, doing the best to please his master/West particularly the Americans. But, while his clownish behaviour may provoke laughter, the situation shows that he is reduced to a puppet that is stripped out of his humanity, turned into an object or an inanimate creature. The authority that the Committee exercises over him is clear when he is ordered to take off his clothes and face them in the nude. The dehumanization of the interviewee starkly displays the power over him. Hence, the sharp contrast between the humiliated nameless protagonist and the powerful interviewers is projected in such a way as to reflect the power of multinational corporations over Egypt/Arab world. The author uses a witty and bitter language that translates/demonstrates the violence of the reality. However, while Ibrahim's intention is to reveal the domination of Western capitalists over Third World countries, he at the same time ridicules the Egyptian/Arab leaders who bow down to facilitate the influx of Western companies and products into the country through the country's open-door policy, inelegantly implied through the 'bending over' of the nameless narrator-protagonist. Ibrahim's intention is to get narrator protagonist/reader to recognise or admit that a vice exists. His recognition must precede correction.
The novel comes to expose foreign domination on Egypt and the Arab world (the narrator's homeland) that seeks blessing at the hands of the American hegemony. This dominance covers all levels: the intellectual, cultural, and political. The Committee has even a military power in Egypt/Arab world penetrating even the most intimate moments in a person's life. For example, in the narrative, the protagonist tells how the Stubby (a member of the Committee) monitors him at his home even during moments of intimacy. He says: "I had no sooner gone into the bathroom, and turned to close the door than I found that he [Stubby] had followed me and pushed the door all the way open. He stood in the doorway, near me, until I'd finished my business" (The Committee 80). He observes him even at bed time for they sleep on the same bed. "I [Stubby] am going to sleep next to you in your bed" (84). The narrator goes further explaining the way he is being watched/censored by the Committee member that "this fellow [Stubby] already had knowledge of the most imitate parts of my body" (85-86).

At the cultural level, the domination is obvious as the Committee guides the narrator to select the topic of his study, "we await a study on the greatest contemporary Arab luminary" (31). On the other hand, the Committee knows each and every detail about the lives of the candidates who stand before it. The researcher is rebuffed wherever he goes. Newspaper files and clippings disappear, and major archives leave nothing of significance for research. Only through the backdoors of little magazines and American weekly publications does he come across the Doctor's many dealings, marriages, connections, and multinational ties. While free movement is allowed, sources of information are blocked, and the protagonist is subtly denied the offers of the global order. Democracy turns into an empty word and freedom into a cage.
This model character’s past is labelled with some creditable deeds such as participating in the war against Israel and defending Arab unification; his present reveals his role in the domestication of progressive thought, through his behaviour and practices that define his reality as a model for other characters in multiple areas, who helped the American colonization of Arab countries. In the following sentences, the author gives a clear notion of the Doctor’s past and present:

We will not find a greater luminary than the Doctor, or anyone with a stronger presence anywhere in the Arab world. It would be enough that the idea of Arab unity is inextricably linked with his name. He is one of its foremost advocates, as is well known... But when he [reader] looks deeper, he finds under that misleading exterior a strong unity, the like of which we have never before witnessed. That unity, for which the Doctor deserves all the credit, is the unity of foreign commodities used by everyone. (70)

To unmask the truth of this model-character, the author mentions to his huge wealth and dissolute life as well as his role in facilitating market and consumption values and his role in assisting the West’s neocolonialism of the Arab countries. The ‘Doctor’ is meant to represent the character of Anwar El-Sadat, who ruled Egypt from 1970 till his assassination in 1981. Thus, the novel is a counter-discourse to reorient an identity in pace with the new challenge. Once more the narrator aims at exploring the domination depending on two levels: image level and text level.

At the image level, there is a cartoon of the Committee at the cover of the Arabic version of the novel. The image looks malformed and unpleasant. It reflects its ugliness and oddity. On
the cover of the English translation, there is a fox image. For the reader and narrator, these images symbolize the hateful political, economic, social, and cultural existence of the Committee/the West in Arab society. At the text level, the hegemony of the Committee is apparent in the name of false values such as freedom, justice, and democracy which reflect and determine the West’s relation with and domination on the Arab world. Baddaih Al-Dhahry in her article “Reading of Sunallah Ibrahim’s The Committee,” remarks that the novel’s context and time is that “...where freedom becomes equivalent to colonialism, democracy for murder and genocide, and justice for caste system and class discrimination.”

Ibrahim demonstrates his great capacity in his selection of words to conjure such feelings and effects in his reader. For instance, Ibrahim uses taboo words and phrases like “naked buttocks” and “a finger inside my body” (The Committee 16). In the Arab world, the buttocks are designated as a part of the body that nobody should see or touch under any circumstances, except for medical purposes; more significantly, doing so is prohibited in Islam. To let someone see or touch your buttocks is a sin, for which both parties should be punished. Using such words and phrases, Ibrahim simultaneously fulfils a dual purpose: first, he makes the protagonist appear very ridiculous by eliciting amusement and contempt towards him; and secondly, he shocks the reader by unveiling the significant metaphorical truth of the scene. In this instance, Ibrahim seems to call for the protagonist to be punished, rather than merely protested against, as his action of exposing his naked self is considered sinful. He reserves similar contempt for the Committee’s collective ‘finger’ that ventures inside the protagonist’s body, a metaphor for the policies of foreign multinationals intrusion into Egyptian/Arab affairs. Ibrahim ridicules the free submission of poor nations to the capitalist world, believing in the promise of assistance and development, but only getting domination and exploitation in return. In other words, Ibrahim
allegorically mocks the foolishness of poor nations who believe in the promises made by their capitalist benefactors.

_The Committee_ is employed with great effectiveness to reveal the greed and the aggressive nature of the multinational corporations that exploit countries and workers. Through the nameless narrator-protagonist, Ibrahim’s bitter criticism of such corporations is sheathed by fulsome praise: “I suspect you agree with me, your honors, that the whole world uses these brand-name products. Just as the giant corporations producing them, in turn, use the world, transforming workers into machines, the consumers into numbers, and countries into markets” (18). The novelist, here, wants to show the nature of the greedy outlook of multinational corporations that reduced nations into mere markets. The narrator-protagonist seems to echo Andre Gunder Frank’s assertion that “once a country or a people are converted into the satellite of an external capitalist metro pole, the exploitative metropolitan satellite structure quickly comes to organize and dominate the domestic, economic, political, and social life of that people” (qtd. in Szymanski 27). By comparing workers into machines, the narrator-protagonist suggests that these people are treated like tools and not as human beings: they are utterly misused and exploited. The tone of criticism is strongly emphasized here by the exaggerated analogy, which is in keeping with Paul D’Amato’s critique of the capitalist aim, which, according to him, is to transform the worker into “a streamline of automation”: “capitalists think that by paying wages they earn the right not only to set a worker to work, but to determine the way in which the work is performed” (58). This idea will receive further attention in the next two novels dealt with in this chapter.
Ibrahim continues his attack on globalization as his spokesman, the narrator-protagonist, eloquently but purposefully chooses Coca-Cola as a symbol of 20th century civilization. He goes for wry comic effect as his observation is based on trivial and vulgar calculations, namely that the bottle is “the right size to fit up anyone’s ass”: “we will not find... anything that embodies the civilization of this century or its accomplishments, let alone its future, like this svelte little bottle, which is just the right size to fit up anyone’s ass” (The Committee 18-19). This downturn from seriousness to crude humour is intended to further ridicule and humiliate the protagonist/Arab authority and citizen; when answering the question posed by the Committee, that of the single most defining achievement of the 20th century, he confidently expounds at great length of the history of Coca-Cola. Thus, by singling out a popular drink and relating to it major historical events, the nameless protagonist seems to be very much under the spell of ‘Coca-Cola Culture’. His long speech on the significance of Coca-Cola and other Western brand consumer products such as “Phillips, Toshiba, Gillette, Michelin, Shell, Kodak, Westinghouse, Ford, Nestle, and Marlboro” makes him the embodiment of a twentieth-century Egyptian/Arab man, who can be reduced to no more than a consumerist with these products as the “century’s scientific and technological achievements” (18). Saying the same thing in different language, the author uses Coca-Cola as a symbol of the American economic hegemony in the whole world. His long speech about Coca-Cola exposes the American exported values to the Arab world which make the Third World nations generally mere consumer markets of the American goods and policies. Arabs are mere consumers and blind imitators of the West who have become the controllers and decision-makers: “this slender bottle . . . played a decisive role in the choice of our mode of life, the inclinations of our tastes, the presidents and kings of our countries, the wars we participated in, and the treaties we entered into” (23).
Furthermore, the narrator debunks the American policy which is based on false values in the name of which the Americans invade the world, but at the level of reality this policy is translated into a barbarous policy based on genocide along with the destruction of cultures and wealth, because America assures that it cannot coexist with other cultures. It has to be a substitute for the invaded civilizations. Firstly, it is a cultural invasion and this is clear by its role in promoting Western cultures, at the expense of national culture. Secondly, it is an economic invasion camouflaged as national movements governed by their internal dynamics. And finally, it is a political invasion seen by its role in financing wars.

Ladies and gentlemen ... the presidents of the [multinational] companies ... created a committee of ten politicians, among them the American president himself and his vice president, Walter Mondale. They represent the American branch of what is called the Trilateral commission, founded by David Rockefeller in 1973. Professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security advisor to the American president, managed it until very recently. It is called the Trilateral commission because it united North America, Western Europe, and Japan for a specific goal to confront the Third World as well as leftist forces in Western Europe. (22-23)

At the beginning of his speech about Coca-Cola, the narrator represents it as one of the main features of this globalized age, and then he states that it is a risk-source product. As for the bottle, it was one product of the American 'war of liberation', the result of "having vanquished the Indians" (20). The reader realizes that American wars, across different eras, were never editorial wars and freedom-seeking, but wars of extermination as in the following example:
Since its advent, Coca-Cola has been linked with the major trend of the age, sometimes sharing to a large extent in their formation. The American pharmacist Pemberton synthesized it in Atlanta, famous as the capital of Georgia, the birthplace of the American president Carter and the notorious Ku Klux Klan. This was during 1886, the every year in which the famous Statue of Liberty, that symbol of the New World, was completed. (19)

Chris Barker notes that “the phrase ‘Coca-Cola Culture’ encapsulates the global reach of this promotional culture and highlights the alleged link between global capitalism, advertising, and cultural homogenization. This is particularly so in the field of consumer culture, where Coca Cola, McDonald’s, Nike, and Microsoft Windows circulate world-wide” (344).

Ibrahim critically unmasks the exploitation as well as the cultural impact of global capitalism on Third World nations. Coca-Cola is used as a glowering symbol of the hypocrisy and the exploitative nature of such companies. “It may have been Coca-Cola that first shattered the traditional image of the ad, previously a mere description of a product. Thus, it laid the cornerstone of that towering structure, that leading art of the age, namely, advertising. Certainly, it broke the long-standing illusion of a relationship between thirst and heat through the slogan: Thirst knows no season” (The Committee 20).

While it is usually depicted as a brand phenomenon, this only goes to show the absurdity and hypocrisy of media, that is, somewhat dependant on those companies to affect markets and deceive consumers. Overstatements in The Committee such as “the longstanding illusion,” and “laid the cornerstone” serve to make the unseeing see (20). That is to say, Ibrahim’s intention is to unveil the real motives of such capitalist companies, who exploit the media to deceive the
public. He also seems to suggest that such media is carefully used by the capitalists, by way of which they disseminate their ideas according to their interests.

The Committee highlights some other issues such as Consumerism and Neocolonialism. Ibrahim wants his readers to understand that Egypt/Arab society, as a consumer society, is turned into a colony of sorts for multinational corporations. Consumerism is a “cornerstone” of the capitalist system (Tyson 60). Consumerism is an ideology that says I’m only as good as I buy. Marx himself regarded “the desire to consume as an instance of the ‘commodity fetishism’ induced by capitalism” (qtd. in Scott 39). He demonstrates how capitalism has turned individuals and societies into mere consumers by instilling the “ideology of consumer capitalism” (Hawkes 10). Consumerism is bitterly expressed in the shocking closure of the novel. The nameless narrator-protagonist, for example, finds no other way to express his deep disappointment and frustration at the situation than to consume himself: “then I lifted my wounded arm to my mouth and began to consume myself” (The Committee 158). By taking the protagonist’s consumption to its illogical conclusion, Ibrahim powerfully expresses his condemnation for such strong consumerist values. In other words, Ibrahim uses the narrator-protagonist to allegorically suggest that people of his society are merely consuming themselves. Such an unexpected end is intended to shock the reader, and compel him or her to re-evaluate the status quo. The fact that the order of consumption is issued by the Committee indicates that Arab society is doomed by consumerism that is imposed externally. The unnamed narrator protagonist/Arab citizen is consumed by the hand of the Committee, the very people at whose hands he seeks success. Hence, this end is intended to be exaggerated purposefully to show the Committee’s cruelty and
violence and more importantly to urge the reader to resist the existing social affairs. In the text, the security man says to the protagonist:

In your case, which I have followed with great interest, there is no punishment more severe or rigorous than consumption.

Astonished, [narrator] asked, “Consumption? Who consumes and what does he consume?”

He [security man] looked at me a while, then getting up, said deliberately, “you consume yourself.” (135-136)

By this, the reader has a real image of the violence practised by the United States /Committee against all those trying to defy it.

Ibrahim’s indignation against consumerism can also be understood through what is called the ‘installment plan’, that is merely a trick to create competition among individuals, and not to help people. The narrator-protagonist condemns such capitalist intention when he comments: “with the advent of the great age of installment plans, and neighbour competing with neighbour for the newest model car with the largest trunk, capable of holding enough groceries to fill the largest fridge, Coca-Cola marketed the family-sized bottle, the Maxi” (21).

Indeed, using Coca-Cola as a symbol, Ibrahim reveals the truth of the Arab situation in the modern age i.e. they are nothing more than mere consumers of the Western products. He reveals the real mission of the capitalist corporations, who have influenced Third World countries, changing “the consumers into numbers and countries into markets” (18). These corporations extend their branches to different parts of the world to facilitate their exploitation
for countries. As the protagonist himself explains, “in opening world markets, the company relied on establishing independent franchises headed by well-known local capitalists in every country. This practice produced astounding results. Most strikingly, the American bottle came to symbolise indigenous nationalism” (22). The phrase “symbolize indigenous nationalism” is specifically used to mock the hypocrisy of the local capitalists like the so-called “Doctor” who merely changes the packaging of the bottle into a local brand when it is boycotted. Ibrahim’s intention is thus to reveal the strong influence of those companies and the pretension of local capitalists as well. Lois Tyson points out that: “capitalism’s constant need for new markets in which to sell goods and for new sources of raw materials from which to make goods is also responsible for the spread of imperialism: the military, economic and/or cultural domination of nation by another for the financial benefit of the dominating nation” (63).

Ibrahim seems to suggest that Western capitalism has mutated into imperialism in poorer nations as exploitation becomes more aggressive and severely devastating. He ironically mocks at the deep penetration of Western companies into the country’s socioeconomic system, where local capitalists are turned into mere facilitators, who ensure the flow of foreign products into the local market. But, while the author’s intention seems to expose the extent to which such companies have become influential over our own society, he is simultaneously unraveling and condemning the hypocrisy of the local capitalists created by those corporations. He explicitly reveals the destructive effects of global capitalism on poor nations: “if Coca-Cola has been so influential in the greatest and richest country in the world [America], you can imagine how dominant it is in Third World countries, especially in our poor little country [Egypt]” (The Committee 23). Through his use of the word ‘domination’ Ibrahim is suggesting that Egypt/Arab world is but a colonial stomping ground for multinational corporations. And, indeed, this is the
main satirical message the author is trying to convey throughout The Committee. Ibrahim uses Coca-Cola as a symbol of economic domination, to show how market influence turns into political influence, specifically in poorer nations such as Egypt. By illustrating the influence of capitalism around the globe, Ibrahim hints at its severe results on the Third-World.

The novelist has no patience with the consumer culture created by multinational corporations, which according to him lead to political influence on their part. Via the market route, such corporations have established themselves as the rulers of Egypt in particular and the Arab world in general. Hence, the primary concern of the novelist is to expose the power and deep penetration of such companies over people and society, as well as the central role they play in the whole policy of Third World countries like Egypt: being under an economic, cultural, and political yoke. Ibrahim summarises the situation through his anti-hero, when the latter confesses that he was “entirely under their [the Committee’s] mercy” (24). Like the protagonist, Egypt/Arab world falls under the grip of such foreign companies, which seem to control the country from behind the scenes.

Ibrahim is considered by many critics as a leading figure in what Paul Starkey, in his book Modern Arabic literature refers to as the ‘Generation of the Sixties’. These writers abandoned the “mimetic approach of modern social realism in favour of an ironical fictional approach in the writing of narrative” (Draz 137). Starkey describes The Committee as Ibrahim’s most successful novel which “represents one of the most powerful attacks on dictatorship in the modern Arab world” (142). Also in his article “Heroes and characters,” Starkey points out that this novel “presents a vivid picture of a world in which the individual is entirely at the mercy of the State...” (149). In sum, this novel was written to evaluate a period in the history of the Arab
world and Egypt in particular. In this period Egypt was a subject of criticism by many intellectuals and politicians. It was ruled by Anwar El-Sadat whose rule was characterized by its openness to the United States, abandoning a former strategic ally of the Soviet Union. The novel is critical of the backwardness not only of Egypt, but of the Arab world in general. It is also a warning against the dangers and disadvantage of globalization and the open-door policy.

To conclude, I would like to say that Ibrahim’s aim of writing *The Committee* is to reveal the disease that swept through the Egyptian society during the 1970s and the 1980s. His is a devastating criticism of privatization, globalization, and Westernization. Ibrahim, carefully, weaves together a tapestry of certain events, which ultimately leads the reader to see for himself/herself the continuing intimidation of global capitalism of the Third-World countries. Ibrahim in *The Committee* uses humour as a means to create social awareness. He ridicules the multinational corporations and hidden authorities that have significantly influenced Egypt, the country in which the novel is set, its political and economic systems in particular.

3.3.Globalization, Consumerism, Multinational Corporations, Black Humour, Socialism, Capitalism, and the Open-Door Policy in Sunallah Ibrahim’s *Zaat*

Another novel that focuses on the ills of globalization and its detrimental effects on the Arab world is Sunallah Ibrahim’s *Dhat*. It was published in Arabic in 1998 and was translated into English as *Zaat* by Anthony Calderbank in 2001. In 2013, it was produced as a TV series directed by the Egyptian directors Kamella Abu Zekra and Khairy Bashara. In the TV series, the directors have expanded the tale by adding some important events which took place long after
the novel was published such as the terrorist attacks on 11/9, the Iraq invasion in 2003, and even the Arab Uprisings in 2011. Like The Committee, Zaat criticizes globalization for turning Arabs into mere consumers of Western goods. The novel is about a woman named Dhat, which is not really a woman's name, it is actually a word that means 'self', 'identity'; it is used here to suggest the protagonist's unconventional relationship between herself and the outside world. The title is ambivalent; it suggests that it could be any self, or perhaps all selves, a strategy which displaces the self from the private/individual to the public/collective space. The first page of the text reveals that the title is the name of the main character, who is introduced by an omniscient narrator, and that the protagonist is a woman. So, hereafter I refer to the protagonist as Dhat and to the book as Zaat.

In his previous novels, Ibrahim portrayed the desultory situation of contemporary Egyptian political and social life. What was missing in his work was the solution to the problem. Political activism was impotent. Commenting on his Zaat, in his latest booklet Two Novels, Ibrahim writes: “the whole situation [Arab situation] impelled me to explore the realm of fantasy” (5). In an interview about Zaat, Ibrahim says: “like everyone else, I was thinking about what was happening in the country [Egypt] and I wanted to give my own testimony. I was hoping I could write a modern myth, with character that would overcome all the existing deteriorating circumstances. But when I started writing, the situation changed. The character was transformed into a completely crushed one” (qtd. in Mehrez, Egyptian Writers 130). He adds that his protagonist Dhat is an inspiration from an old Arab folk tale which tells about the adventures of princess Dhat al-Himma (the princess possessed of zeal) who pitted her wits against corrupt officialdom and led battles against the Romans. Ibrahim writes:
I imagined her [princess Dhat] return to lead a group of contemporary revolutionarises who would use modern technology to expose government lies and create a revolutionary consciousness... I called the novel *The Return of the Princess of Zeal*. It was not to happen! My lack of technological knowledge and inherent sense of realism soon overcame my fantasy. And my original heroine, a leader of action, turned out to be a heroine of another kind, a simple woman who is fighting for survival amid changing social conditions. (*Two Novels* 5-6)

After viewing the motives for writing this novel, a brief synopsis of this masterpiece is imperative before evaluating the common concerns and thought patterns. Dhat’s story begins with her marriage to the university dropout, Abdul Almaguid—labelled “Of Course” by the omniscient narrator because of his constant use of the English expression as a means of showing off his language abilities, thus his social status, and as an effective way of intimidating his uninitiated wife. First, Dhat works as a housewife but the hardship of life in this age of globalization enforces her to work in editorial section of a Cairo newspaper. She tries to gain the acceptance of her colleagues, “the transmission machine” who at first boycott and isolate her and spend their working hours “broadcasting” and assessing each others’ lives (*Zaat* 167). Throughout the text, Dhat is engaged in a series of mundane, mediocre adventures which ultimately end in frustration and failure. After her marriage, she tries to keep up with the ‘March of Demolition and Construction” conducted in her building by the neighbours who had been to the gulf, had made money during the infitah (El-Sadat’s open-door policies) or had taken up intimate relations with their wealthy Arab brethren who visit Cairo during the Summer in search of worldly diversions, namely prostitution (46). Dhat has nocturnal visitations from President Abdulnasser who hammer in hand, destroys her antiquated
bathroom, followed by visitations from President El-Sadat who remolds her bathroom with imported ceramic tiles. The novel begins with a slim Dhat in a miniskirt and ends with her in new attire: the long shapeless dress that covers her overweight body and the headcover with dainty 'iqal (headband), which she takes up to ensure her acceptance with the “transmission machines” at work. The physical changes that Dhat herself undergoes during the 1970s and 1980s are parallel to those that occur to her imara (building) and its occupants. Through the transformation that Dhat undergoes, a whole society is exposed—its institutions, mores, contradictions, failures, and mediocrity. Yet throughout the narrative and despite the obstacles she encounters, Dhat does try to resist, but her resistance collapses in the face of the general tide of her social reality. Dhat’s ultimate heroic deed in the text is to try to report the grocer who has sold her an olive can with an expired date of consumption. She goes through the ordeals of Egyptian bureaucracy, but fails to accomplish her heroic deed. Maguid ends up in jail, and Dhat must deal with Egyptian life’s many incongruities. The novel ends with her sitting on the toilet seat, crying, after she has thrown away the rotten, salted fish she has just bought.

One of the most fascinating features of the novel, which is really unfound in or unheard of in Arabic literature in general, is that the novel alternates chapters between Dhat’s story and what is going on in the news. Ibrahim presents his ideas in alternating chapters, while one of the chapters presents or focuses on Dhat, the protagonist’s day-to-day life, the other chapter presents what is going on in the news by collecting the headlines and quotes of some well-known Arabic newspapers that offer an insight to the then contemporary life. The novel chapters both the ones that focus on Dhat’s life and those that present the news clippings depict whatever took place in Egypt under the rule of three postcolonial presidents: Jamal Abdulnasser, Anwar El-Sadat, and
Hosni Mubarak with especial concern on El Sadat’s open-door policy. The complementary relationship between the narrative chapters and the newspaper clippings drives home the point: the national is the familial and vice versa. Even though the novel ends with Dhat being alone, crying on the toilet seat, her defeat at the end is one that must be read within the family or national context: it is the defeat of the wife, the mother, the working woman, the individual, and finally, the citizen in the face of Western and Arab capitalist challenge.

As Dhat works, first in a newspaper’s Department of News Monitoring and Assessment and then in the Archives, she is constantly surrounded by the news-bits that fill the other chapters, yet she seldom concerns herself with it. The excerpts of the news of the then days are, for the most part, examples of horrific incompetence and corruption. Ibrahim presents the material well, generally following one or several stories in a chapter—a sequence that almost invariably begins with great promises (by a businessman or politician), then assurances that everything is OK, “the Minister of Health: “Cholera returned to Egypt in the seventies but we used to call it ‘Summer sickness’” (312). And some others [are] reporting a person fleeing the country with enormous sums of money: “Millionaire Henry Michel manages to leave the country despite his name being on the list of those forbidden from traveling, after failing to repay a loan of 35 million pounds he took out of Egyptian banks” (96). There are also government contracts that go awry, business deals with foreign governments and companies that promise the sky and deliver at best shoddy goods, as well as a bit of national and international politics. The ruling and business class are shown at their corrupt worst, and several religious figures don’t come off well either. And the costs of all this to society at large is simply staggering. For example, “the wife of a bank manager borrows... one Million 300 thousand pounds and quarter of a million dollars” (137). At the time, when the elites steal millions, simple workers and unfortunate employees find
nothing to eat even, “a Central Security trooper: we eat rice with stone in it and dirty vegetables. We never see meat except at the feasts. We bathe in cold water with no soap and we go to the toilet in the open air... we get paid six pounds a month, the price of one loaf of foreign bread in the Jolie Ville [hotel]” (163).

The novel is biting and funny, but it also adopts an experimental form that can be challenging, so its popularity here is a mark of the sophistication of local readers. *Zaat* is not laugh-out-loud satire, but it is frequently funny—but Ibrahim's tale is also more serious in life, which is needlessly complicated and fraught with a seemingly endless series of small annoyances. The characters are very well drawn, and without pointing too obviously at them Ibrahim conveys many of the small personal issues—faith, workplace politics, male versus female ambitions and hopes—particularly well. The sex-issues are handled and conveyed very well too, from the brief mentions of female circumcision (Dhat was operated on) to Maguid's resorting to masturbation (along with his neighbour). Indeed, the story beautifully puts together with bitter and cutting irony, corruption, financial bribery, social problems, and foreign debt. The protagonist Dhat symbolizes the ambitions and hopes of ordinary people.

Sunallah Ibrahim's potential goal in his *Zaat* is to continue what he has already started in his *The Committee*, namely, the black humour and the attack on globalization, rapacious capitalism, bureaucracy, and the absurdities of living under a corrupt and greedy authoritarian regime under the yolk of American influence, which Ibrahim discusses in most if not all his novels. The novel is a brilliant social commentary that provides keen insights into how Egypt has come to be the way it is today. It is a piece of skilled comic fiction that adroitly captures the pervasive effects of the ideology of consumerism engulfing so many regions of the world in this
globalized era. To quote some news clippings is shocking: "Heroin returns to Egypt for the first
time since the Second World War" (26), "50 thousand drug addicts in Cairo alone" (289). And
according to a General Security Report: "5,5500 fire in Egypt in one year due to annual stock
taking, negligence, electrical short circuits, and absence of industrial safety equipment" (312).

As a novel, Zaat has attracted critical acclaim, both for its uncompromising view of the
totalitarian government and globalization, as well for its innovative style. Certainly anyone
aware of the hollowness of the corporate elite’s repeated refrain of the benefits of globalization
or the current US administration’s dubious rhetoric of expanding ‘democracy’ to the Middle East
(when it is countries like the US that are responsible for the lack of democracy in that region),
will welcome Zaat’s insights. Moreover, not only is Zaat a hardnosed, skeptical look at the greed
and corruption of modern life, it is also extremely funny, and is a refreshing antidote to what
Ibrahim himself terms “Arabic literature’s suffocating seriousness and unwillingness to simply
tell interesting stories” (qtd. in Kuntz 81). In one news report, the Egyptian ex-president Hosni
Mubarak is cited as saying, “we should not be ashamed that there are poor people in Egypt. What
we should do is work to make our country appear suitably civilized because we need to attract
tourists” (Zaat 127). The sarcasm is too obvious to miss.

In Zaat, Ibrahim interweaves the fictional and the factual, the imaginary and the
documentary by employing archival material in connection with the story of his protagonist
Dhat, to portray the demise of a middle-class Egyptian woman who could never live up to her
aspirations in such a corrupt society torn apart by consumerist culture and bourgeois mediocrity.
The story follows Dhat’s trajectory to investigate her life experience as one of self-exploration
and discovery, and also to reflect on the minute everyday details of life. In this novel, the
newspaper archive becomes a metaphor for society at large, where corruption prevails and people lose their integrity and dignity under severe economic pressures created by the neo-liberal business elite in Egypt. Ibrahim’s stand in opposition to the capitalist system and the Western imperialist interventions in Egypt and the Arab world as a whole has only deepened over the years, and has indeed found expression through various fictional devices and techniques. The Palestinian literary critic Faisal Darraj sums up this point as follows: “As a result of a certain intuition on the part of Ibrahim, an intuition which did not fail him, he later had to shift from his model of the estranged protagonist to the society of objects where people have the features of things rather than the characteristics of living souls” (qtd. in Mostafa 422).

Like *The Committee*, *Zaat*’s theme is a critique of totalitarianism and dictatorship. Quotes of newspapers clips and headlines make the novel seems genuine. Though a simple woman, Dhat’s simplicity and ordinary story work to translate the violence of society’s reality. A newspaper reports: “French police uncover a prostitution ring in Nice run by Abdu Khawaga, personal secretary to Saudi billionaire Adnan Khashoggi” (*Zaat* 26). The same Saudi businessman remarks: “East is East and West is West and whenever they meet there is commission in it for me (71). Ibrahim’s witty play exposes the national bourgeoisie’s role in the depletion of Egypt’s wealth with devastating irony. He unmarks the role of businessmen and the elites in corrupting the Arab society. Their aim is only personal profits at any cost.

Again like *The Committee*, Ibrahim’s essential goal in *Zaat* is to show the corruption of the multinational corporations with the help of their puppets, the Arab capitalists. Among the many newspapers clippings which support this notion I quote these: “Cairo Governorate signed a contract with a fictitious American company called MacCarthy Brothers International to build
multi-storey car parks, and withdrew four million pounds from the Egyptian banks. The governor then wrote off a further two million in fines due to be paid for the eight-month delay in handing over the garages” (189). According to Arab Entrepreneurs Association, “Foreign Construction Companies took 450 billion dollars from the Arab region” (291). Ibrahim also aims to show that the real aim of these companies is profit-making and not to build and develop the Middle East as they proclaim. “Mubarak in Texas: ‘Most American companies that have invested in Egypt have made huge profits’” (65). Besides, Ibrahim elicits that the Americans’ aid is only loans so as to serve their purposes and increase their profits and is not endowment or award as they mislead the public to believe: “President Mubarak thanks the United States and confirms that their aid has no ulterior motives and that they take nothing in return” (63). However, the truth is too obvious to miss when the Egyptian Minister of Planning reports: “Egypt’s debt is 15 billion dollars. That means 648 dollars for every citizen including children” (25). According to the Egyptian Finance Minister: “Egypt’s foreign debt is 44 billion dollars” (25). Also the Egyptian Prime Minister, Kamal Hassan Ali reports: “Egypt’s debt is more than 24 billion dollars” (25). And the World Bank: “Egypt’s debt is 30 billion dollars not including the military debts” (25). Elaborating on nature of these debts, an economist declares: “The American aid is nothing more than loans to Egyptian companies so they can buy American products” (67).

These multinational companies not only take away the Arabs money but they also put their lives in danger, “An American report documents the appearance of blood in the urine of Egyptian peasants on the same day insecticide Galicron was used” (28). However, the Government always intends to mislead the people, “The Egyptian Ministry of Health confirms that it carried out health checks on workers and children ... and that the results show no adverse effects. Latest tests indicate that the insecticide produces no harmful side effects on animals or
humans and it is now being sold again under a new license” (28). Plus, things which are not of any real use in the West are exported to the Middle East, “The Hearld Tribune: ‘USAID exported Phosphil to Egypt. The insecticide, which is banned in the United States, has caused the deaths of a number of Egyptian peasants and their animals” (64). Another news paper reported, “600 tons of rotten chicken imported from West Germany with a merchantable certificate” (131). The malpractices are not confined to food items, it has not spared the domain of health care either. According to a German doctor: “Half of the medicines manufactured in Switzerland and sold to Third World countries do not comply with clinical standards. In fact, some of them are extremely dangerous while others are of no use whatsoever” (215). Hence, due to the ignorance/connivance of governments that leads to the flooding of the market with food stuff well past the ‘use by’ date and the pollution of the environment, people suffer from murderous and deadly diseases such as cancer of various kinds. In the text, Dhat finds herself diagnosed with breast cancer.

Dhat submitted to an examination that was so exact and copious that she thought it highly dubious. The doctor felt her breasts for quite a while and pressed them up and down, and squeezed them and fiddled with their nipples... announced that it was divine intervention that had driven her to him at the right time (for him of course) and that he would be waiting for her in the morning in order to remove one of her breasts in an attempt to save her life. (57)

Zaat echoes the views expressed in The Committee. Ibrahim represents the Arabs as mere consumers of Western products. The West takes Arabs’ oil and in return gives them food and technology.
If we look at the Arab East as a major oil producer with over 60 percent of the world's oil, we find that a major aim of its strategy is to maintain good relations with the West as the consumer of its oil. Consequently it is in the Arabs' best interests to develop these relations with the West. They export the oil and in return they receive the finance and also the technology with which they build a new economic foundation to prepare, from now, for new future after the oil runs out..." (24)

Arabs are represented as non-productive for even their food is imported from the West. According to the American Secretary of Agriculture: "food aid is the most powerful weapon we possess. It will prove an effective force in the coming few decades because it will increase the reliance of numerous countries on our food exports and they will then have to be careful not to incur our displeasure" (24). American fast food is a driving force behind the epidemic of diet-related health conditions, setting Arabs' kids up for a lifetime of health problems. However, Arabs blindly consume such unhealthy food. In the novel, Ibrahim ironically presents this idea in the form of newspaper advertisement claiming fast food to be a sign of modernity.

The Great Awakening
Creating a better life

Americana is pleased to serve you through

The following chains

Wamby, KFC, Hardee's, Chicken Tikka, Felfela, Americana, Americana cake and Baskin Robbins. (128)
Ibrahim intends also to criticize the submission and reliance of the Arabs on the Americans in all fields of life even the political. "El Ahali newspaper: 'American nuclear warships have been passing through the Suez Canal since 1984 as a result of a political decision by the Egyptian government and despite the opposition of experts'" (63). The leader of the Egyptian Air Forces says: "we obtain all our requirements for modern weapons from America and France without any problems" (67). Indeed, the West could make the Arab believe that "cooperation with America is the ideal way to overcome our [Arabs'] problems," reported the Minister of Social Affairs (67).

A more major concern of this novel is with El-Sadat's open-door Policy, an idea which Ibrahim addressed in his *The Committee*. This open-door policy is termed in Arabic (al-infitah), a coinage of the mid-1970s in the Arab political dictionary. Akin to 'New World Order' in the West, the phrase open-door policy in the Arab world conjures up the starting-point of the race by American business and multinational corporations to dominate the Egyptian pyramid, leading to the subsequent launch of post-colonial and post-industrial globalization. Ibrahim locates himself into the context, telling us that with the advent of the open-door policy, a deep process of economic, social, and political deterioration has set in, propagating a widespread sense of meaninglessness, devaluing culture and education, and giving rise to an upsurge of superstition and all kinds of irrational behaviour. During the 1970s and '80s, as a result of Anwar El-Sadat's open-door policy, Egypt began to deteriorate on different levels. There was a complete reversal of previous president Gamal Abdulnasser's promotion of independence, social justice, and general development of the country. Hence, whereas the name of Anwar El-Sadat is connected with Israel and his period with open-door policy, Abdulnasser's name as that of Dhat has to do with justice, equality and so forth. "Kind generous [Dhat] was a loyal daughter of Gamal Abdel
Nasser’s revolution, brought up on the principle that all people are equal regardless of religion or sex or wealth or rank or position” (89).

Ibrahim shows that the situation of the poor citizen worsens during El Sadat’s open-door policy. Under El-Sadat, the population was forced to adapt to a new reality. The norms and rules were stipulated by a small minority, itself on a path of disintegration. Everybody conspicuously consumed or dreamed of doing so. Productive labour and social solidarity were both rendered meaningless. Education and culture were devalued. Individuals resorted to immigration or crime, or the most shunned of ideologies, one based on metaphysics, superstition, and irrationalism.

Commenting on women’s role in society, Ibrahim compares their role under the socialist rule of Abdulnasser with their role under the capitalist rule of El-Sadat.

I have always been fascinated by women’s potential as constructive members of society, besides being the source of greatest happiness in life. Under the Socialist Policy of Nasser they gained many rights and started to participate actively in the social, economic, and political life of the country. But [under the capitalist policy of El Sadat] their position soon deteriorated and became subject to the most backward and reactionary tendencies. (Two Novels 5)

In the novel, the new society under Abdul Nasser gives Dhat a chance to work. But her young husband prefers that she stays at home since he was able to provide all their life requirements. “Dhat…announced that she wanted to continue her studies so she could work after graduation…he [Maguid] silenced her with a stern look that reminded her of her father before announcing…that the house would need all her time. He would be able to provide all their needs” (Zaat 9). On the other hand, in the days of El-Sadat their financial situation worsens and
forces him (Maguid, the one and the same person who previously forbids her to work) to ask Dhat, his wife to go to work, “Maguid... found her a job in a daily newspaper” (10). What Ibrahim wants to unmask through this episode is that “the capitalist dream that had seemed almost attainable under the socialism of Abdulnasser had amazingly enough, become impossible during the capitalist era of El-Sadat” (14). A further consequence of globalization and El-Sadat’s policy is the disintegration of the family as an iconic institution. In the text, the neighbourly family evening visits, filled with conversations about Egypt’s military victory are replaced by video machines and pornographic films that the male neighbours watch without their wives after midnight, leading to what the narrator, in a clear sexual reference, sarcastically labels “the technique of withdrawal and self-reliance” (83). This unconventional, audacious text looks at the deformation (physical, economic, ideological, and social) of Dhat, the female protagonist.

At the political level, Infitaah (open-door policy) is synonymous with Anwar El-Sadat’s foreign policy which resulted in the Camp David Agreement. This Agreement with the Israeli enemy in 1978 raises many doubts and questions. In the novel, Ibrahim poses many uncomfortable questions regarding El-Sadat’s policy towards the West generally and Israel in particular.

Was Anwar El Sadat sincere deep down inside, or was he stupid, or even mentally retarded in the face of extremely intelligent opponents? Perhaps he was not stupid at all and understood the significance of the role he was playing, fully aware of what was planned for the Arab nation at his hands? Was El Sadat awareness of his role, his willingness to undertake it, and his strange obsession with carrying it out based on any kind of principle? Did he love America and
Israel and hate the Arabs and Egyptian people or was he completely lacking in principles, and played his role knowing full well how despicable and dirty it really was? An arrogant and complex urge drove him to blindly follow the choices he made. A sick and selfish greed, hidden but nevertheless present, and in fact known to some particularly to AbdelNasser. (23)

Zoai is a criticism of the process of normalization with Israel. This normalization with the traditional adversary is the consequence of El-Sadat’s policy under the “intense American pressure on Egypt to encourage normalization with Israel” (69). Israel is indicated in more than fifteen news clips in the first half of the book. Opening an Israeli embassy in Cairo under El-Sadat provokes the public and leads a citizen named Saad Idris Halawa to kidnap two hostages, an act to demonstrate everyone’s disapproval of the existence of the Israeli embassy in Egypt. In the text, Dhat is given a tape recorder by a fellow-worker in which a farmer, Saad Idris Halawa is declaring:

Today is the 26th of February 1980. Today El-Sadat has opened an embassy for Israel in Dokki [street in Cairo] and they have raised their flag over it...I have decided to pay my blood so that we can be on top. I have got two hostages, members of the weary and oppressed people, and if Khedive El Sadat is afraid for their lives, he will expel the Israeli ambassador immediately from Cairo within 24 hours or I will kill the hostages and kill myself. (13)

The name of El-Sadat is associated with the indication of Israel in more than one place in the novel. The first chapter of the newspapers clippings opens with: “the name of Anwar El Sadat is
added to the memorial erected by Israel commemorating the ‘victims of the secret war’” (21). In this Ibrahim unmasks El-Sadat’s role in the process of normalization with Israel.

Ibrahim also touches on the role of the Americans in supporting both Egypt and Israel, “American government allocates 3 billion dollars aid to Israel and 2.3 billion to Egypt” (73). To put it differently, he wonders: “why is America happy to arm Egypt and Israel at the same time?” (22). Immediately, he provides a clarification of this ambiguous American position. He states: “America has a higher strategy that conforms to this position. It has two main goals: to keep petrol flowing from the region at reasonable prices and to remove Soviet influence from the region. As for colonialism, I doubt that that’s America’s goal. Their goal is that we [Arabs] are their friends and not the Soviets’ friends” (22). Then, account of the numbers of dead and wounded during Israel’s invasion of Lebanon: “French News Agency on the anniversary of the Israel invasion of Lebanon: ‘Between June 4 and the end of September 1982, 19 thousand people were killed and 32 thousand were wounded as a result of the invasion’” (22). Indeed, El-Sadat’s policy and that of Mubarak led to increased economic and social disparities within Egypt. President Mubarak: “America has responded to all our demands, and has provided grants with no string attached…. American aid to Egypt has led to an increase in reliance on the United States for food and military assistance” (64).

In the story, the open-door policy is also symbolized by “the march of demolition and construction,” as the narrator satirically calls it (46). Through Dhat’s imara (apartment) and those of her neighbours, Ibrahim chronicles how new capital flow transforms the urban space at the material and social levels and how it impacts new modes of consumption and social behaviour. Dhat’s story is that of the unmaking of the Egyptian middle class and its aspirations
for economic welfare and social equality under the reign of a centralized state economy. Their (Dhat and Abd al-Maguid) choice of their apartment building encapsulates a collective middle-class dream of modernity, homogeneity, and social equity, all symbolized by the very architecture of their modern style in a newly constructed neighbourhood on the limits of the then modern city. To put differently, this process is the mark of the open-door policies, one that encapsulates the same ‘march’ in many of Cairo’s middle- and upper middle-class apartment buildings that since open-door policies witnessed collective illegal and unregulated redesigning of spaces of residence by adding more levels, tearing down walls, creating new rooms, adding on balconies, opening new windows, closing off others etc. These illegal accommodations cut across the social ladder and are not just limited to dwellings of the urban poor. The march of demolition and construction in Zaat is enabled by the changing fortunes of the residents who, as a consequence of the new-found economic and social mobility were transformed both on the economic and social levels—locally (through a market economy), regionally (specifically through the flow of petro-dollars from the Egyptian labour force in the Gulf) and globally (through international investments). The material and social changes in Dhat’s apartment symbolize the transformation of the larger urban space, that is, Cairo/Arab society. As the narrator in Zaat deftly sums it up, it all began when:

The Ministry of Agriculture [man’s]... fortunes began to take a turn for the better after competition flared between the foreign insecticide companies that supplied the ministry. The banner then passed on to the schoolteacher who had worked in Kuwait, then to Hagg Fahmy, the butcher who had just joined the residents of the building more recently, and in the latest way i.e. buying rather than renting, until
eventually it was picked up by the armed forces: the police officer after his return from a security mission in Oman, and the army officer after he took part in a training mission in the United States. (47)

All the residents of the building kept successfully to the marching timetable except for Dhat who holds Abd al-Maguid, her university dropout husband, responsible for their underdeveloped situation. When Dhat fails to keep up with the march, she begins to have dreams: she received “nocturnal visits” from both Gamal Abdel Nasser (the symbol of socialist Egypt) and Anwar El-Sadat (the symbol of capitalism and open-door economy). In Dhat’s dreams, “Gamal Abdel Nasser would regularly turn away from her all of a sudden and charge into the kitchen, pick up a hammer, and lay into the walls and cupboards, then move onto the bathroom” (49). While behind him Anwar El-Sadat, “with great care and attention, was fixing up colorful high-quality ceramic tiles” (55). After Dhat succeeds in catching up with the march of demolition and construction, through the modest renovation of her bathroom and kitchen, “Gamal Abdel Nasser stopped coming with his hammer of demolition, but Anwar El-Sadat continued nocturnal visits with the popular ceramic tiles in his right hand” (61). Additionally, this period was characterized by new forms of consumption and modern styles of economic and social behaviour. In the novel, for example, Dhat’s neighbours begin to acquire “sumptuous blouses and shirts, and chamois and leather jackets, and modern skirts and expensive shoes and contact lenses and Cartier spectacles” and “the miserable Ideal washing machine” is replaced with “a full automatic Westinghouse” (60). Thus, reading the narrative, one finds out that Zaat is not just an individual story but rather a collective one that represents the transformation that Egypt undergoes from being a socialist, state-dominated economy, to becoming an open-door, private sector oriented, and foreign investment—friendly one.
The post-*infitah* period in Egypt that is so comprehensively depicted in *Zaat* becomes the turning point in the history of the national imagination. In his examination of the negative political, economic, cultural, and psychological transformations of Egyptian reality since El-Sadat era, Sabry Hafez argues that these radical changes have engendered and necessitated a transformation in the emerging literary discourse. The writers of the 1990s are heir to *Zaat*’s total defeat of the post-*infitah* period during the 1980s; a generation that has been disempowered both personally and collectively; a generation that has come to know “the impossibility of becoming what you want,” as Hafez succinctly put it (qtd. in Mehrez, *Egypt's Culture* 124-125). It is perhaps their awareness of this dismal reality, at both a personal and a national level that prompts them to write what they want. The result is a literary imaginary that portrays a radically different picture from the dominant national one, especially where the family is concerned.

As has been done in *The Committee*, in this novel too, Ibrahim lampoons the Arab authoritarian regimes whose goal is to seek West’s blessings. He mocks the Arab authority who did and still doing their best so as to please the West and to escape the stigma of ‘Axis of Evil’³. In the words of the former American president Jimmy Carter: “no country in the world has presented such proof of its cooperation with America as Saudi Arabia” (*Zaat* 26). “The BBC World Service,” reported: “Saudi Arabia financed an American arms deal to Iran via Israel worth half a billion dollars, the profits of which were used to finance undercover Israeli operations” (299). At the time when their people suffer from poverty, illiteracy, and lack of basic amenities, Arab leaders spend their nations’ wealth to seek the West’s blessing: “King Fahd, Servant of the Two Holy Places, presents President Reagan with a gift of a huge solid gold egg containing the flags of the two countries. The king’s youngest son donates a million dollars to an American school” (64-65). These Arab leaders/West’s puppets not only seek the blessings of the West, but
also do their best to help in developing and building the West: “His Highness Prince El-Fassi: we have extended the hand of assistance to 24 American cities that complain of unemployment and deprivation. We donated money to a test-tube baby research hospital in Virginia” (128). Here Ibrahim mocks and ridicules the Arabs who contribute to the development of the West, paying no attention to their own people.

Though the Arabs authorities spare no efforts to please the West, they are snubbed or ignored by the West. The relation between the Arabs and the West is a one-sided relation. In the novel, President Mubarak is quoted as saying to Reagan, the American president “I don’t believe that there is any leader more capable than yourself of playing a historic role and accomplishing a sacred mission in the Middle East. Fate has chosen you to lead this great nation” (66). This stands in sharp relief against the rude behaviour of the Americans: “the American Ambassador in Cairo hurls insults at a senior Egyptian official” (68).

An interesting dimension of reading this novel is the emergence of a complex map of urban language(s) in the text. Zaat’s urban space is filled with anglicization such as Abdel al-Maguid “Oov koors” (of Course), the social marker of the then age, and various names of imported commodities and new everyday household words of the open-door period (dressing, heavy duty, ceramic, etc.) (6). Furthermore, in Zaat, Ibrahim is making a connection between two phenomena that are difficult to understand from a Western perspective: materialism, largely imported from the West, and traditionalism, particularly religious traditionalism. The novel begins with a slim Dhat in a miniskirt and ends with her wearing hijab. Western readers might hurriedly equate Dhat’s miniskirt as indicative of Western materialism rather than her hijab, given the perceived connection between abstemiousness of Islam, and the self-indulgence of the
Western culture in the stereotypical portrayal of it. The traditional hijab appears self-evidently non-materialistic even a self-denying gesture. But this is not the main issue from Ibrahim’s point of view. To him, the miniskirt is not better attire than the hijab. He is more concerned with the absence of choice in the wearing of the latter. For Ibrahim, it is a matter of freedom, rather than fashion. He is also aware that the hijab can be a veil in more respects than one, its outer, abstemious appearance concealing a crass materialistic appetite/outlook.

Stefan Meyer in his book *The Experimental Arabic Novel* remarks that Ibrahim is critical of the Arab society at two levels. Economically, it is not a productive society. It is dependent on imported goods. In cultural terms too, the Arab society is not productive. It does not encourage independent thought. Rather, it encourages passivity in the same way that consumerism does. Ibrahim also focuses on what he sees as a collusion or conspiracy between two oligarchies: the capitalist interests and the religious interests. The separation of mosque/church and State does not exist in the Arab world, nor is there the necessary separation between the State and capitalist interests (245).

Thus, Ibrahim’s Zaat is a celebration of the mediocre. It represents a pathetic version of Ibrahim’s own frustrations and disillusionments, ones that he is able to objectify by displacing them, at one level in the text, on the ‘building’, the space that Dhat inhabits. One cannot but appreciate the way this book goes through all the social facts affecting Egyptians lives, starting from political changes such as the war and changes of leaders and ideologies, to economic changes moving on to social changes in their interrelations. It reminds one of a work like *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians* by the economist Galal Amin, with the difference that Galal Amin deals with facts and statistics and analyses the reasons and the factors influencing
the attitude and the lives of the Egyptians. Sunallah in his *Zaat*, on the other hand, deals with the same issues in the act of telling a story. The tale of Dhat and her family, along with newspaper headlines from contemporary events, the way these events affect the life of the female protagonist form the substance of the novel. And though the novelist does not suggest any concrete solution to the current social problems affecting Egyptians, he compels the readers to search for the reasons for the present plight of the Egyptian/Arab society. One of these reasons that I as a reader have discovered during my interaction with the text is the one related to the decline in moral standards. Being made aware of problems, of those facts surrounding one, the cause and the consequences of events, one cannot help endorsing the author’s view that “only a complete recovery of moral standards will pull Egypt out of its economic crisis” (*Zaat* 21).

Ibrahim has been deeply critical of the ruling Egyptian elite and their economic policies, and his fiction is an articulation of his views. In *Zaat*, he depicts the corruption of Egyptian society caused by the collective intervention of religion, politics, culture, and the influence of European and American businesses. Dhat’s story is not an inspiring one, nor is it meant to be – it is an unvarnished view of modern Egyptian life. Dhat, the lower middle-class heroine struggles against the enveloping emotional, spiritual, and intellectual decay and degradation in Egypt’s moral fiber, which are not merely abstract concepts but the immediate context in which she lives. Dhat’s miserable end is intended to shock the reader and to make one realize the frustrated conditions in which the Egyptian/Arab citizen lives, “then she pulled herself together, left the kitchen, and headed with heavy slow steps towards the refuge of tearful withdrawal: the lavatory (*Zaat* 345). Ibrahim thus sets her personal tragedy (firmly and relentlessly) against a perpetually unfolding and expanding public sector horror-story that is conveyed to the reader through news clippings and files. In these clippings, we are served up an entire dossier brimming with
intriguing domestic, regional, and international cases. These clippings document the nation’s downside. *Zaat* is an attempt to experiment with new writing devices, metaphors, and imagery to map out for the readers the contradictions and tensions embedded in the process of modernity in the middle of 20th century Egypt. Renowned for its black humour and ironic commentary on globalization and modern Egyptian life, *Zaat* offers its reader an inside view of the evolution of modern Egypt which parallels an Egyptian woman’s life. *Zaat*, in my view, is a mirror through which Ibrahim reflects the real mission of globalization and the multinational corporations and unmasks the Arab capitalist class’s corruption. Clearly, the society Ibrahim reveals – its prejudices, suspicions, external influences, and aspirations for the future – are all part of the mix that recently brought down Hosni Mubarak.

In all his writings, Ibrahim is driven by the desire to understand the workings of complex systems—whether multinational corporations, crowded apartment buildings, or insect colonies. If, along the way, he can entertain his readers and energize them politically, so much the better. Ibrahim’s remarks that “black humor arises from extending your desire to make fun to a degree where you express a vision of reality you want to change,” is his motto (qtd. in Alkodim 53).


Globalization...consumes oil and oxygen, trees and rivers, mountains and rocks

...it sprays and kills people.

(Subhi Fahmawi, *Love in the Time of Globalization* 176)
I teach ‘Globalization Economy’ at the University, but I cannot teach this amazing economic information found in the novel in a simple and funny way as the novelist does in his entire narrative.

(Ibrahim Alloush, qtd. in “Interview with Fahmawi by Alia Saleh”)

Although globalization advocates claim that its main goal is to build the poor nations, this process comes only to facilitate the economic Western domination on the rest, to impose the monopolization of goods… [it] enchains the world’s poor and enriches its elites.

(Fahmawi, Facebook Message to the Researcher)

The last novel exposing the venality and detriments of globalization to be addressed in this chapter is *Alhub fi Zamen al Awllmeh* (Love in the Time of Globalization) by the Gordian novelist Subhi Fahmawi. It was published in Arabic in 2006, and was translated into Spanish in 2008 by Suliman Al Etar, but it has not been translated into English yet. So, hereafter any quotation from the novel is my translation, and I refer to the book as *Love*.

The entire book is the product of the twenty first century in which one cannot think of any branch of knowledge without making a reference to globalization which has influenced language, science, literature, service sectors, and other domains. My focus in this section is to show that globalization’s impact is a double-edged sword. It offers substantial economic benefits which, undoubtedly, are accompanied by social costs. It is favourable for the capitalist and elite class, but is totally against the poor and deprived classes.
The setting of the novel is an imaginary traditional Arab city, full of pure springs, appetizing fruits and trees, innocent, naïve and beautiful women, and simple men. Suddenly, the hurricanes of globalization fall unexpectedly upon this city. So, merchants and mercenaries, transients and wayfarers, pirates and mafia gangs, the poor and landless, name it “the City of Globalization.” Due to the abundance of movements and travelling in that region, the city expands and develops in no time. Construction booms, streets get wider and bigger. Condominium, skyscrapers, and factories are built. Sewages stream results in the pollution of its fountains, and kill its frilly fish. One of its simple kids, Sa’aed el-Shwawi grows up to become a billionaire. Diseases of the twenty-first century spread. The most disfigure disease is (AIDS). It is a poor and destitute community eaten from head to toe, and suffering from globalization. “This city of globalization is neither in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, or Maghreb nor in the Arabian Peninsula, not even in Somalia or Djibouti, but is located within the common borders of these countries, in a no-man land...The partners Sykes and Picot may forget to install it on the ground ...” (Love 17). The novelist continues to describe this city, “the world has changed and become a small village and there is something new called globalization, which means that the world has become a single network ...they have chosen our neutral city to be a model of globalization...” (94). This novel depicts the humanitarian, social, commercial, and sexual Arab life prevailing in the postmodern era, with the savage capitalism community invading the world, and emblematizing ‘love in the time of globalization’.

Fahmawi’s main concern in this novel is the political, economic, and cultural life which is closely related to the problems of contemporary Arab rights, economic, and cultural crisis. He explores the predicaments created by globalization. He deals ironically with many intellectual, social, and economic spheres of life. The novel’s characters move between the traditional and the
The writer moves from the perceived to the impalpable, from the realistic to the hypothetical. He skillfully moves from one location to another with no lack of knowledge or information. Indeed, from initiation to termination and through the character of Sa’aed el Shwawi, the novelist opposes globalization with all its power and achievements in all social, political, economic, and intellectual walks of life.

At the very beginning of the novel, the author declares that he is inspired by a genie. He begins the novel with a prologue in which he absolves himself of the narrative responsibility, making the genie as the main narrator and inspirer of the novel. He addresses the reader: “a serious matter which I would like to tell you about is that, now I feel that a [genie] may have ridden and controlled my head and mind. Through my mouth, he begins to narrate stories and fabricates many characters for a novel I know nothing about. He told me to name it *Love in the Time of Globalization*” (6). Another inspirer of the author is some quotations and sayings of famous writers and politicians. Before starting the narrative, the novelist quotes Edward Said’s statement: “Novel helps us to understand life,” and Suzan Suntag: “If we want to understand something, all we have to do is to narrate it” (4). By these two quotations, the novelist states that his entire novel is a mirror of the Arabs’ contemporary life. However, there are other quotations and sayings which are not mentioned in the novel. A careful reading of the novel shows that they are the major sources of inspiration for the novelist. In writing the novel, the writer has borrowed some quotations, beginning with the title itself, which is the first clue the reader gets on his/her approaching the text. The title of the novel *Love in the Time of Globalization* refers directly to the famous Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera*. The two titles get separated by just the last two words: Globalization and Cholera. Cleverly, the novelist substitutes globalization for cholera with all the attendant notions. Globalization, in this novel, is depicted as
one of the forms of cholera, a contagious disease seeking to interfere with the personal life of poor people, lumping them together in one global model. In this way, these poor Arab nations have to abandon their history, culture, vision, memory, and dream so as to belong to this global model posed in the novel. This model is presented in the novel as a deformity whose impact is not at all different from that of cholera in erasing mankind. So, the first inspirer of the novelist is the title of the Marquez’s *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

Mohammed Saber Obeed in his article “Writing Thresholds in *Love in the Time of Globalization*” cites some sayings/quotations which shape the main inspirer of the novelist. The first of those sayings is that of the Portuguese novelist Jose Saramago: “the democratic world is governed by institutions that are not democratic. The West represents a backward civilization, so we have to bark against governments.” In this saying as in the novel *Love in the Time of Globalization*, there is a comparison between the democratic world and its ruling institutions which are non-democratic. In this globalized age, the West that has no civilization is ruling the world so it is our duty to stand against such non-democratic regimes. The poor people are represented as dogs that can do nothing but barking, and this is very clear from the very first pages of the entire novel.

Another saying is that of James Carville, President Clinton’s advisor: “Now is the time of money collection, not of distribution. I wanted to come back as the president or the pope ... But now I want to come back as the bond market. You can intimidate everybody.” Here the novelist is inspired by this saying to represent the nexus between money and politics, between the capitalist class and the political ruling class. This relationship is based on the mutuality of interests. The capitalist or rich people provide the politicians with money and in return they
facilitate their business. From the very outset of the novel, Sa’aed el-Shwawi, the representative of the capitalist class aims only to collect money. Even his love and marriage is based on profit-making. He bribes his uncle, the mayor, ministers, and many other government officials with money, beautiful girls and in return they facilitate his business. Thus, with the cooperation between these two classes, they rule the community and threaten their adversaries and the ordinary people. The middle class and needy individuals are at their mercy and can do nothing. Another underlying meaning of this quote is to unmask the goal of the Western multinational corporations.

The last is that of the billionaire Ted Turner, the media mogul and CNN Director: “the world is groaning, governments are bankrupt, and money is in the hands of a few boys ... We may have another French Revolution ... knitting the rich and watching them [elites] come in little ox carts down to the town square to cutoff their heads!” (qtd. in Martin 298). This quote depicts/portrays the contemporary situations. While people are dying of poverty, the world is governed by a few people who control the poor’s fate. The people ruling the world are “not more than 390 billionaires in the world; [they] confiscate the living of more than two and a half billion hungry people on the planet” (Love 174-175). It also pictures the capitalist’s fear of the poor’s revolt. So, in the name of terrorism, and war on terror, they threaten anybody trying to stand in their way. In the narrative, though the main character Sa’aed is unconscious in his bed, he babbles some words that may paint and show his fear and future objectives that he is unable to achieve. It may also reflect his fear of and grudge against the poor.

We [businessmen] will dispense with all the workers...All of them are dogs, thieves! We take them, teach them, employ, and pay them... then you find them
busy with 'terrorism' against us... We feed them with our own hands, however they bite the hand which helps them. But we businessmen know how to behave! We will throw them in the streets with no jobs. We will run all our works with computers. (177-178)

Fahmawi, by presenting a novel on globalization raises questions about the pros and cons of this process and those who are related to it. He monitors the changes in the fabric of the Arab world through unknown Arab-city which the author named "City of Globalization." Through this city, Fahmawi depicts offensive stream of modernity, and shows how social life and human relations between individuals have been changed by globalization which combines the ancient to the modern material.

Though globalization has led people to live in new environment with many advantages, Fahmawi concerns himself only with the birth of certain curses. The first affliction is consumerism, a disservice of globalization, addressed in the previous two novels discussed in this chapter. With the ever growing global scene, among various offshoots of globalization, 'consumerism' comes through as one of the major ills. In Fahmawi's novel consumerism is criticized as an unjustifiable behaviour: a kind of craze to get hold of things, when you don't really need them. In the novel, Arabs are presented as animals who consume whatever they find in their way. They lose their wealth and put their lives at risk, "we give our residues to the Third World countries and in return these countries provide us with raw materials such as oil, metals, fertilizers, and timber," says Rooif, Sa'aed’s American consultant (158). To inject and promote this behaviour, sometimes advertisement agencies sell all kind of nonsense ideas. The subtle observation of the writer at one point definitely makes us reflect on the nonsense fair that we
have been wandering through. In the novel, "globalization, my friend, consumes oil and oxygen, trees and rivers, mountains and rocks ... it sprays people, kills them ..." (176). Arabs are presented as mere consumers of the Western products. They consume everything even those that are well past the 'use by' date and not for human use. In the text, the American consultant reports:

Western countries produce crops and pesticides but do not allow their consumption to the same country .... This is because the chemicals used make them inconsumable for use in the West, but perfectly safe for consumption in poor countries and even those expired in Western countries, are consumable in the sleeping countries!

Sa'aed laughs and says: Roolf, their name is the developing countries; not the sleeping!

Roolf replies: if they were sleeping, that would be better, there would be a justification for their delay... Imagine Sa'aed if we [Americans] let these people without the American wheat even if it is expired in America... What will happen? People in sleeping... [Developing nations], as you said, will die... if they eat these foods ... they will live an average of 50 years... What you think; you let them die of hunger in the average age of thirty or prolong their age to fifty-rate? We help them. (157)

Giving the Arab nations this name, 'sleeping countries,' the author aims to ridicule the Arabs who are reclining on the West's goods. He may also aim to shock the Arab readers so that they may wake up of their sleep/state of backwardness. Fahmawi sums up the same notion (the
conditions of slumber/consumption) in which the Arabs live in the form of a TV song. After mentioning a very long list of life requirements he writes:

Everything my eye light upon
Are things imported from the East,
Imported from the West,
From the lowest bidder,
Regardless of his location,
As we Arabs,
Neither agriculture, nor industry
Neither commerce, nor civilization, have
Neither reading, nor writing, claim
What matters most is women. (40)

The second disaster of globalization is the erosion and devaluation of human fundamentals and values. Like the West, in this era of globalization, the Arabs believe in the material and leave the spiritual alone. Globalization paralyses/ benumbs man's consciousness and spirit.

One dimension of development process which is totally ignored in the recent years is that of erosion of 'Values' in society....As a result of excessive emphasis on cut throat competition for maximum acquisition of materialistic benefits. many cherished values of life are getting fast eroded....'value of contentment', 'value of cooperation', 'value of self-restraint in consumerism',....'value of independence in thinking', 'value of providing ideal leadership', 'value of managing oneself before
managing other', 'value of knowledge and commitment as prime movers of action', the 'value of duties as against right', etc., are all getting eroded in the highly materialistic paradigm of development and structural changes that are taking place around us with immense speed and complexity. (Panachmukhi 30-32)

In the novel, Sa’aed, the main character, his father-in-law, and many other government officials are selfish men whose main aim is money-making at any cost. Also, Reham, the Arab girl, breaks all taboos and abandons all values for the sake of money. She cheats her people twice, first with Roolf, Sa’aed’s American consultant, as they open a fake company in the name of selling them some pieces of land which are non-existent in reality. And secondly with Nicolas, when they open an immigration fake company. She even has sex with them for the sake of money.

In addition to breaking all religious taboos, traditions, customs, and moral values, globalization for the novelist provides excuses for pornography, adultery, and fornication. Meha, the beautiful girls’ guide (prostitutes’ pimp) says about herself and her girls:

We are highly clean and beautiful, respectable women and girls of a sophisticated society ...one of them [prostitutes] is a divorced living without a husband for five years; another is a teacher not in harmony with her husband; some other wants to apply the theory of multiple husbands ...; one another wants to enter the world of men ....And the next is interested in love as a hobby...I myself appreciate the idea of love as a kind of hobby. (Love 111)
Moreover, in this globalized age, money has replaced all the values. Describing the novel’s main character, Sa’aed el-Shwawi, the novelist says that he is one of “globalization pillars, not a follower, but supporter…..a man who knows nothing but Piaster [currency]” (86). He and the like “have no God and know nobody but dollar” (105). This character is created by the novelist to symbolize the shortcomings of globalization, and the corruption of the elite capitalist class in the Arab society. He is the main character to whom the novel’s themes and characters are connected from the beginning to the end of the novel. His character is built carefully, starting with the name. I believe that the author intentionally gives him this name because in Arabic, it has to do with sovereignty. While the first name (Sa’aed) means master/leader, the second section of the name (Shwawi) in Arabic is derived from the word (grill or roast) which fall under the word ‘burn’. The significance of the second syllable of the name is that it is fully in line with the actions of this man which is grilling/ burning of simple and innocent people. Here, the novelist does not intend the literal meaning of the word that is, ‘burning’. But he wants to convey the sufferings and hardship that the poor suffer from because of him. He exploits their harsh conditions and seizes opportunities to cheat them and buy their properties at low prices.

Sa’aed fails to obtain basic educational qualifications, but he is successful in his career. He becomes a model for the individual personality emerging economically in the era of globalization. By deception and fraud, he builds wealth and prestige, even love plays a role in increasing his capital. Advised by Tagreed, Director of Commerce Bank, he builds a love affair culminated with marriage to Asmahan, daughter of Hamad Kafri, Chairman of the Bank. This marriage increases his capital, and enhances his economic and social status. Ibrahim Al-Hamd in his article, “The Main Characters,” writes that “Sa’aed is the greatest character in the novel,
regardless of the pros or cons of his personality. He is a great man, frightening, simple, giant, trivial, superficial, smart, double-dealer, tricky, poor, and so forth.” Having grown out of nothing and nowhere, he becomes a billionaire, not a millionaire, moving in all directions, in order to gain quickly, but in the end loses himself! Nay, from the very outset of the novel, he is presented as a thing of the past. Sa’aed suffers not only from physical disease (AIDS), but also from his authoritarian ideas towards humans. To Sa’aed and the like, there is no place for friendship also. Their slogan in life is “business knows no friendship”. When taking her commission for convincing Asmahan to buy new flat, Samera says to herself: “commission is not a defect; true, she [Asmahan] is my friend, but business is business” (109).

Another infliction of globalization is raising anxieties, fears, and stress. Most, if not all the characters in the novel are constantly under pressure. Obviously, they themselves are to be blamed for it but one cannot deny that globalization is also responsible for it. In the narrative, the capitalist class’s selfishness leads them to reduce the number of workers and employees, and this puts all the people under pressure. The poor are under pressure due to the poverty they suffer from. The capitalist are also under pressure because they are afraid of the poor’s revolt against them. In the novel, as in this globalized age, there is no place for the poor ‘terrorist’ as they are named by the elites. Workers are replaced by computers, security men with alarming machines, even the muezzins, actors, actresses, supermodel, servants, etc. are replaced by electric machines which require no salary, do not fall sick, make no complaints, or protest as humans do. In the text, Sa’aed’s American consultant tells him:

You [Sa’aed] are required to act immediately to reduce corporations’ expenses installing more computers to replace workers...to replace security men with warning machines and to use big trucks instead of ordinary trucks so as to
economize the salaries of drivers and their assistants ... As for the working hours, ten hours instead of eight working hours. In addition, reduce the wages of workers and employees. (123-124)

Everything is made for the rich class, "the earth will rotate around us [elites] instead of revolving around the sun ... Man has become the creator of all his needs! ... It is the era of globalization" (179). They claim that they "serve humanity ... this is the philosophy of globalization ... It is giving without borders ... It is capitalism with no limits" (158). In doing so, they pretend that they "apply the theory of globalization" (138). In fact, in the novel as in real day-to-day life, globalization widens the gap between the rich and the poor. The rich get richer and vice versa. The capitalists' selfishness lead them to forget that "the above persecutions will naturally and undoubtedly result in the escalation of violence and terrorism ... thieves and bandits will be more and social tensions will increase also" (127).

The next misfortune of globalization discussed in the novel is that it is the main reason beyond the Arabs' degradation, backwardness, and weakness which is at the same time the source of the West's strength and power. Through Soraya [Sa'aed's daughter], the novelist presents the Arabs' condition: "it seems that the Arab elites are still sleeping, lying down on the thighs of beautiful girls.... While the world is running at the speed of light to catch up with business progress... Is there a defect/shame more than all this?" (34-35). Fahmawi is of the view that the West takes the Arabs' civilization. Arabs are the source of inspiration for the West. They imitate the Arabs' art in architecture and many other walks of life. In the text, Fahmawi gives the example of the French gardens which are only imitation of the Indonesians'. Roelf Wood says to Sa'aed: "I wish to visit the Middle East, the Arab country... I like the Arabian nights and the Arabian dance, and the Arabian oil... I have read more about the East... We, the Americans..."
feel we are dwarfs in front of your country's deep-rooted history... we come to smell the fragrance of history which we miss” (122-123). Knowing that they are nothing in comparison to the Arabs’ great civilization, the Westerners’ animosity leads them to spare no efforts to fragment the Arabs’ nations, because they know that they “will not be a superpower nation unless they execute the whole Arab nation from the Atlantic to the Gulf” (81). Fahmawi shows that Arabs’ weakness is a synonymous with the West’s strength, “they [Westerners] are fascinated by Arabs and Muslims! And jealous of [them] and working to break, and fragment [them] so as to make themselves and others around them feel they are great because they break greats. They break the [Arab] country and consume [their] oil...” (82).

Arabs’ submission to the West is not only in the economic affairs but in the cultural realm too. Arabs are expected to follow the West even in their weekends and festivals “they [Westerners] decide for us [Arabs] to have a two-day holiday a week ..., And to have two other Happy Festivals: Charismas and New Year’s Day” (95). After all this kind of submission, subservience, and obedience in which the Arabs live, their elites say nothing, but “we are required to play with them to achieve our goals ....We do not have any other choice... we have to accept to live” (95-96).

The fifth fatality of globalization has to do with wealth and environment. At the time when Western corporations take Arab wealth, they give them pollution in return: “the West has stolen even our soil...environment pollution for us and our kids, however the profits of the factory go to the West... what we get from the factory in return is only dust, gas, and environment pollution” (42). Globalization brings about the scarcity of natural resources and replaces all that is natural with harmful materials. Rivers are changed into sewerage. Mehran
Sarhan 155

Says to Soraya: “Ein Algazal [a river] got dried, Aldafllah Valley is changed into sewerages, and all fish died!... I feel, Soraya, that there is someone who plans to destroy our lives” (58-59). Arabs are also required to submit all their natural and artificial sources of income to the Western companies.

Computer competes with and replaces workers. Life has changed in the 21st century. We [Arabs] are required to sell electricity and water sources, airlines and public transport, telecommunications, and postal services, and manufacturers of natural resources to foreign companies, and to disguise they renamed it (strategic partner)... they asked us to allow the companies working in our country to reduce wages and increase working hours for workers and employees... they also require to reduce state aid to the needy and to abandon the social welfare system in order to prepare the working people to adapt and normalize with the new globalized order! (94)

As in Zaat, globalization in Love in the Time of Globalization results in the family disintegration. The novelist focuses on the new careless generations. He wonders how the young people run after their entertainment and forget their duty towards their parents and people surrounding them. The global trend has not left the society untouched. Due to free incoming of values, costumes, dresses, and the living habits of Western world, the basis of Arab culture has been greatly influenced. Through the character of Sufian, Sa’aed’s spoiled and indulged son, the novelist attacks Arab careless youths. In the novel, the chapter entitled “Rally Sport” (Car Race) expresses this notion. Though his father is dying, Sufian gives no attention to him nor to the wealth that he is about to inherit after the death of his father. Instead, he is busy with his car race.
Indeed, today’s youths “think only of songs, pornographic films... mobile phone..., and the romantic relationships” (83-84). The same issue is addressed in Zaat through the character of Hassan, Dhat’s brother who travels to America and forgets all about his family and country.

The worst disaster of globalization, in the novel, is the spread of deadly diseases. Soraya says to her mother: “It’s a major scourge... that viruses of dirty sex spread, love got polluted, and computer viruses spread.....Does science success in the development of life and get defeated by the age diseases? (12). In this time, a man feels strength and weakness: he feels strength due to the power he has and the achievements he has fulfilled, however he feels weak before disease. A man (Sa’aed) who thinks himself to be able of everything cannot protect himself from humiliating and shameful disease (Aids). So, the novel is a reflection on our modern time which combines beauty and ugliness, strengths and weakness, ability and disability etc. It is a time entitled ‘The Curse of the Capital’. Furthermore, intelligently, the novelist differentiates between the old and present times. Whereas the old days were the days of hunger and poverty, these days are the days of disease. In the texts, Sa’aed says: “we spent the first half of our lives deprived of sugar by the order of hunger; and the other half of our lives are prevented from sugar by the order of the physician” (69).

The theme I discussed in the first and second chapters of this dissertation shapes the key idea of this novel. It is a criticism of the Westerners who come to the Middle East in the name of human right, democracy, improving of economy, education, health, and so on. However, their real intentions and goals have nothing to do with the aforesaid values. They come only for their own benefit which is the Arab oil and wealth, and the Iraq war is a case in point (a point that I discussed in chapter one). In the novel, an American Richard Nicolas ironically says to his Arab
assistant and secretary Reham: "We want you redneck Arabs to be ... civilized. We want you to deal with each other democratically. We have come to teach you (business, freedom, and democracy). We have come to liberate you as we did with the Iraqi people! And we are working on the reconstruction of the (Iraqi) country! Our goal is to rebuild the country, where ever we go!" (206).

Before the above ironical declaration, he says: “frankly America wants this land to be a heaven of investment, democratic, and free ... this is oil region where the world's oil tank exists. And people consume everything. Tourism from all the Arab nations will be channelled here. And foreigners from the East and West will meet in the Middle East” (220-221).

After discussing the curses of globalization presented in the novel, let me turn to the novel’s basic theme which is indicated in the title itself, that is, 'love'. Love in the Time of Globalization highlights the new modernist values of prevailing love, where there is no place for lofty and noble sentiments. Love in this time is physical, with a heightened sense of the individual, and it is a convenient arrangement more than anything else. This era has cancelled out the emotional, moral, and ethical values from the notion of love. It is a time of the conflict between love and hate, between existence and cancellation, between the homogeneous and heterogeneous, between inside and outside, between right and wrong, between truth and illusion, between the actual and what is to be done.

Contemplating the title of the novel Love in the Time of Globalization, I find that the title carries obvious connotations and rich suggestions. There may be a kind of prejudice and temptation, but it includes a series of questions which revolve in the mind of the recipient: Does love in a time of globalization have specifications and deficiencies different from love in earlier
times? Does this love occupy a larger space? Do many people fall under its umbrella? Are these people happy? Does the passion of such love overwhelm the passion of hatred? To answer these questions, I must say that love in this time of globalization has specifications and deficiencies which are derived from all ages of love. It is a mixture of underdevelopment and urbanization. Love in this globalized time is exploited for the benefit of the capital which is devoid of mercy, emotion, and kind feelings. It is business or some other motive appearing in the garb of love as in the love and marriage of Sa’ead and Asmahan. It is love for the sake of conducting business as in the case of Reham. Love in this time is like commodity with different prices and different colours as in the beautiful maid bodyguards. After all, the only thing that all lovers and players share in this globalized age is the love and fondness of money. The attitude of youths towards love, marriage, and sex is not at all emotional; it is quite casual.

In Arab history, we come across virgin love, sexual love, and the trade of sex, but we do not know such love as love of the dollar. Love here is not for beauty, and not for the pleasure of sex, but it is the love of the dollar. It’s like a stubborn and incurable disease. The more money the person has, the greedier he/she becomes. It is a kind of money worship. In the text, the catchphrase is “money is everything”. Nicolas says to Reham:

This global city is parentless, no father, no mother, no friends... I and myself first...Money for me is everything...time is money...our age is accounted by money...how much dollars you have? Means how long you live...for by money you can buy, travel, watch everything...build the best house...by money you can even buy the best youths to have sex with you...money makes your age longer...dollar is first. (207-208)
In the narrative, love is controlled by money. It has become more practical and material. Sa’aed marries Asmahan not for her intellect or beauty but for her money and banking facilities to be provided by her father who is the chairman of Global Bank. He introduces himself to her as a lover, but the fact is that love is planned and motivated by her money. After their marriage, Asmahan plays a major role in supporting his empire. Her father offers banking facilities to her husband, and her relationships with her elite friends make him a member of the Central Bank. Through this job, he could pass resolutions that fit his work. Indeed, marriage is not based on pure and romantic love/relation, but on the mutuality of interests between lovers. Sa’aed says: “love to me, is subjected to some standards, specifications, and mutual interests ...If a girl is beautiful and polite...and having a bank stock, why not? On the contrary, it is the best wish” (99). Indeed, globalization makes “the thrill of profits exceeds the thrill of sex” (102).

Throughout the novel, the novelist portrays and attacks the stream of modernity, and how social life and human relations between individuals have been changed by this age of globalization. In a reply to a Facebook message that I addressed to the author asking him to comment on his own work, he wrote to me:

Whatever I wanted to say, I wrote in the novel...I think that love in this time of globalization differs from other kinds of love. Love that we usually know is a kind emotion based on real and innocent friendship, sex, and even interests. However, love in this time of globalization is based on the love/worship of the dollar. The phenomenon usually called globalization is the biggest myth of the time. Although globalization advocates claim that its main goal is to build the poor nations, this process comes only to facilitate the Western domination on the
rest, to impose the monopolization of goods, ... Globalization enchains the world’s poor and enriches its elite class... Moreover, in this age of globalization, woman is treated and bought off as any other commodity. Yesterday, a very well-known American actress said that she was paid 1.7 million dollar to spend one night with a rich Arab. Hence, in this age everything is bought and sold as goods, even conscience, honour, nations, and so forth. Globalization is a black malediction that cannot continue longer and has to stop, for the poor one day will wake up from their slumber and demand their loaf of bread/rights.

Yet globalization cannot eliminate all that is beautiful and intimate. It is under the umbrella of this globalized age that a true and romantic love may exist as in the case of the pure love between Soraya and her professor Mehran. Soraya is a “rich, nice, friendly, courteous, tactful, gorgeous, and beautiful” (23). Her father wants her to be Bank Director so as to serve his illegal purposes. However, she is not the kind of person her father wants her to be. In her own words:

I am that who do not hope to have palaces and billions ...I wish to live with a remarkable young man like Mehran ... in small apartment ...I want affection ... I do not want money, more than my need to spend... I am ready to walk if car is not there, I am ready to use public transport, but I am not ready to relinquish love: love of father, love of mother, love of brother, and love of lover, fiancé, and husband. (182-183)

Soraya’s love with Mehran is founded on the basis of true and noble humanitarian emotion. It marks a paradox and conflict with what we have learned from the other love stories in the novel. Soraya, though living in a globalized family, has ethics and rejects the false values
brought by globalization. "I do not like injustice and looting of the rights of others, neither by deception nor by force," she avers (24). This statement reflects her stance vis-à-vis love. Soraya gathers glory and beauty, mind and heart. Her true love is marked by tenderness. It is she who sacrifices herself for the sake of the others. She donates her blood to save the life of her father: "I and my soul ransom for dad ... I wish I were the reason for healing dad from this dreadful disease" (29). In short, Soraya is one of Fahmawi's characters who know what they are doing. In spite of all the noble and humane qualities that she has, her wealth stands in the way of her happiness. It is money and wealth that prevent her from marryng her lover Mehran. Thus, money in this age of globalization is a double-edged sword. It provides Soraya with a luxurious life; however, it gets in the way of her true and innocent love with Mehran because he is not rich.

The novel ends with the burning of two globalization pillars Reham and Roold, the owner of a fake immigration company. Also Sa'aed is still suffering from the shameful and incurable disease (Aids). This shameful and hateful end of all these characters reflects the end of the globalization model in the Arab society. The burning of the office of the immigration fake company by a young deceived man at the end of the novel symbolizes the Arab youths' resistance and rejection of this global model. This end is intended by the author to represent his view that one day the poor people will wake up of their slumber and demand for their loaf of bread.

Thus, Fahmawi's Love in the Time of Globalization reflects the changing urban realities in globalizing Middle East. Through this work, he subtly portrays the fast growing cities and urban zones along with all the global factors, affecting the life, experience, dreams, and attitudes of today's youth. Fahmawi very comfortably depicts women's empowerment as one of the
positive effects of globalization, at the same time, consumerism, eroding values, and rising fears and anxieties of urban cities as some of the negative offshoots of it. The work can be considered as the subjective fictional stories of the changing Arab world. It is a mirror through which Fahmawi educates his readers on the real purposes of globalization and multinationals. It has been advised by lecturers and scholars specialized in the field of globalization to read Fahmawi’s novel for the valuable information it provides. Salim Said Sari, a professor at the University of Philadelphia is cited in an interview with Fahmawi by Alia Saleh as saying to his students: “if you want to know something about globalization, read the novel Love in the Time of Globalization”. Also, Dr. Abdullah Abu Heev, advisor of the Syrian Culture Minister, is cited in the same interview as saying “I have lectured a lot about globalization, but I learned through this novel new amazing things!”

Today not only literature in English, but also Arabic literature is influenced by global changes and manifests the effects of globalization. Some Arab novelists have successfully drawn the picture of the Arab society which has been affected by globalization. They believe that the present values are affected and changed by this same effect. Sunallah Ibrahim and Subhi Fahmawi are two of those novelists who try to represent the cons of globalization. This chapter presents how these two novelists in their texts depict the negative effects of globalization on the Arab citizen and society. The novels lift the veil of ideological oppression and economic exploitation from the face of globalization. The novels’ essential goal is to show that globalization is the main reason for the spread of incurable diseases, the growing corruption, unemployment, poverty, increasing population, the scarcity of natural resources, slums, illegal acquisition of lands by the capitalist class, the dislodging of farmers, terrorism, immigration, and so on. In fact, globalization has brought in new things that have changed the living conditions of
The texts reveal the impact of globalization on Arab society politically, economically, culturally, and socially.

The significance of these novels lies in the fact that they are an effective critique of globalization that takes the lay reader on a journey from the familiar territory to a newer realm of experience. The reader at first confronts only characters and situations that she/he is familiar with. But in following the stories of these characters, the reader begins to see the forces that shape his/her reality—forces that are not readily visible to the reader when he/she finds himself/herself in comparable situations in his/her everyday routine. The writers thus educate their readers on certain important aspects of contemporary society. The Arab novelists’ efforts to fulfil their role as reformers are visible through their choice of themes and form. In choosing to deal with the themes pertaining to existence in a fast-changing world, and in choosing socialist realism as the form to deal with these themes, these novelists demonstrate their social commitment.
Notes

1) On 23 July 1952, Jamal Abdulnaser (President of Egypt 1956-1970) led a military coup which resulted in the defeat of the then Egyptian monarchy and the exile of King Farouk. On 18 June 1953, Egypt was declared as republic.

2) The Camp David Agreement is a ‘peace a treaty’ between Egypt and Israel. It was signed by the then Egyptian President Anwar El-Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin on 17 September 1978, at the White House under the supervision of the American President Jimmy Carter. Due to this agreement, El-Sadat and Begin received the shared 1978 Nobel Peace Prize.

3) ‘Axis of evil’ is a term initially used by the former President of America George W. Bush in his address on 29 January 2002 and often repeated throughout his presidency, describing governments that he accused of helping terrorism and seeking of mass destruction such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea.