

Levantine Arabic transcript:

ياسر: كاتب عربي.. كاتب روایة عربي اسمه عبد الرحمن منيف. بـلش كتابة الرواية في السبعينات، بـبداية السبعينات. بـلش بـرواية إسمها "الشرق المتوسط" وـهذه الرواية بـتناول موضوع السجن في العالم العربي في الدول العربية. كان همـو الاسـاسي، هوـي طـبعـا درـس علم الاجـتمـاع والإـقـتصـاد البـترـوليـ، لكنـ ما استـمر لـفـترة طـولـهـ فيـ هـذا المـجال لأنـهـ كانـ عنـدوـ هـمـ اـجـتمـاعـيـ وـسيـاسـيـ وـثقـافـيـ بالـدرـجةـ الأولىـ. بـلـاشـ كتابـةـ الروـاـيـةـ، وـكانـ مـعـظـمـ روـاـيـاتـهاـ تـنـتـالـوـ مـوـاضـيعـ سيـاسـيـةـ وـتـارـيـخـيـةـ لـحـدـ بـعـيدـ. فـضـمـنـ هـذـاـ الجـوـ كـانـ هـمـوـ فيـ هـذـهـ الروـاـيـةـ "الـشـرقـ الـمـتوـسـطـ" هوـ عـكـسـ الحـيـزـ. الـحـيـزـ.. الـهـامـ إـلـيـ بـيـاخـذـواـ السـجـنـ فـيـ الدـوـلـ الـعـرـبـيـةـ وـإـلـيـ كـانـ عـمـ بـيـتوـسـعـ خـلـالـ هـذـهـ الفـتـرـةـ. الشـخـصـيـةـ الأـسـاسـيـةـ فـيـ هـذـهـ الروـاـيـةـ، رـجـبـ، هوـ شـخـصـ كـانـ عـمـ بـيـمـضـيـ فـتـرـةـ بـالـسـجـنـ، وـعـمـ بـيـطـلـعـ مـنـ السـجـنـ لـأـنـوـ وـضـعـواـ الصـحـيـ كـانـ سـيـ، وـكـانـ هـمـ الـأسـاسـيـ إـنـوـ مـاـ يـفـسـدـ عـلـىـ أـصـدـقـائـهـ أـوـ أـصـحـابـ السـيـاسـيـينـ. إـلـيـهـ طـبـعـاـ اـمـتـادـ فـيـ إـلـ.. عـدـةـ دـوـلـ عـرـبـيـةـ. كـانـ قـصـدـوـ إـنـوـ يـعـكـسـ الـوـضـعـ فـيـ عـرـاقـ مـثـلـاـ وـفـيـ عـدـةـ بـلـادـ فـيـ الـخـلـيـجـ. بـعـدـ مـاـ بـلـاشـ الروـاـيـةـ نـوـعـاـ مـاـ تـارـيـخـيـةـ، كـانـ عـمـ بـتـنـتـالـوـ فـتـرـةـ زـمـنـيـةـ فـيـ السـعـودـيـةـ، وـكـانتـ حـولـ مـوـضـعـ الـبـترـولـ وـاـكـتـشـافـ الـبـترـولـ وـمـجـيـعـ الـأـمـرـيـكـانـ عـلـىـ هـذـهـ الـبـلـدـ، وـكـانـ هـمـوـ الـأسـاسـيـ إـنـوـ يـعـكـسـ الـوـضـعـ الإـجـتمـاعـيـ وـالـعـادـاتـ وـالـقـافـةـ وـالـتـارـيـخـ وـالـفـلـكـلـورـ طـبـعـاـ الـمـتـواـجـدـ... فـيـ هـذـهـ الـمـنـطـقـةـ. هـايـ الـرـوـاـيـةـ إـسـمـهـ "مـدـنـ الـملـحـ" وـرـوـاـيـةـ نـوـعـاـ مـاـ كـبـيرـهـ مـكـونـهـ مـنـ خـمـسـ أـجـزـاءـ، كـلـ جـزـءـ بـتـنـتـالـوـ فـتـرـةـ زـمـنـيـةـ أـوـ تـارـيـخـيـةـ مـخـتـلـفـةـ. بـلـاشـ مـنـ بـدـاـيـةـ الـقـرنـ الـماـضـيـ وـبـيـنـتـهـيـ بـسـعـينـاتـ الـقـرنـ الـماـضـيـ اـيـضاـ. طـبـعـاـ الـفـكـرـةـ الـاـسـاسـيـةـ هـوـ عـكـسـ حـالـةـ اـجـتمـاعـيـةـ الـلـيـ بـتـنـتـطـورـ بـهـذـيـكـ الـمـكـانـ، وـتـسـلـطـ الـأـمـرـيـكـيـ، أـولـ شـئـ الـإـنـجـليـزـيـ، وـمـنـ ثـمـ الـأـمـيرـكـيـ فـيـ هـذـهـ الـمـنـطـقـةـ، وـالـتـحـالـفـاتـ الـمـخـتـلـفـةـ إـلـيـ بـقـيمـهـاـ الزـعـامـاتـ الـمـحلـيـةـ فـيـ مـاـ يـسـمـيـ الـجـزـيرـةـ الـعـرـبـيـةـ وـمـنـ بـعـدـهـاـ سـمـوـهـاـ السـعـودـيـةـ عـلـىـ اـسـمـ الـعـائـلـةـ الـحـاكـمـةـ هـنـاـكـ. هـذـهـ الـرـوـاـيـةـ اـخـذـتـ تـقـرـيـبـاـ، اـسـتـقـرـرـتـ حـوـالـيـ ثـمـانـ أوـ عـشـرـ سـنـيـنـ لـأـنجـازـهـاـ اوـ كـتابـتـهـاـ. كـانـ لـهـاـ صـدـىـ جـيدـ بـالـعـالـمـ الـعـرـبـيـ، وـحتـىـ تـرـجـمـتـهـاـ لـعـدـةـ لـغـاتـ.

English translation:

Yasser: ... an Arab writer who wrote an Arabic novel, his name is Abdul Rahman Munif.¹ He started writing in the 1970s, in the beginning of the 70s. He started out with a novel titled *East of the Mediterranean* and this novel tackles the subject of prison in Arab world, in Arab countries ... ah ... his main concern was ... he of course studied Sociology and ... ah ... petroleum economics but he didn't work in this field for a long time because he had social and political and mostly cultural concerns. So he started writing novels during the 1970s, and most of his novels addressed political or historical subjects to a big extent ... ah .. so in this atmosphere, his main concern in this novel *East of the Mediterranean* was to reflect ... ah ... I mean the ... ah ... the issue ... ah ... the important space ... ah ... that a prison occupies in Arab countries, a space that expanded during that time. The ... ah ... the main character in this novel is *Rajab*. He's a man who spent some time in a prison and left the prison because his health was not good ... ah ... and his only concern was not to tell on his friends or political comrades. And it [the novel] has ... ah ... roots in several Arab countries. He [Munif] meant to reflect the situation in Iraq, for instance and in Syria and in several Gulf states. After that, he started

¹Abdul Rahman Munif (1933-2004): was one of the most daring Saudi novelists of his time. He wrote different novels that addressed the issues of prison, torture, corruption, and oil in Arab countries. Most of his novels are banned in some Arab countries. He wrote two famous novels that affected his life and made him well-known. The first novel is titled *East of the Mediterranean* (1975) which talks about torture in Arab prisons (particularly in Iraq and Syria), and the second one is *Cities of Salt* (1984-1989), a five-part novel written between 1984 and 1989 that deals with the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia and the accompanying effects on Bedouin Saudi society.

writing a historical novel that dealt with a certain time period in Saudi Arabia and it was about the subject of petroleum, the discovery of petroleum and the arrival of ... ah ... of Americans to this country ... ah His main concern was to reflect the social situation and customs and culture and history and ... ah ... the ... ah ... the...ah ... the folklore of course that ... ah ... was present in that area. This novel is titled *Cities of Salt*; it's somewhat a bulky novel ... ah ... consisting of five parts. Each part tackles a different period, starting from the end of the past century and ends with the 70s of the same century.

Certainly the main theme is to reflect a social situation that started to develop in that time, in that place ... ah ... and the American control, or first the British, then the American in this area, and the different pacts by local leaders ... ah ... in what is then-called the Arab Peninsula, then changed into Saudi Arabia after the name of the ruling family over there ... ah This novel ... ah ... took about 8 or 10 years to finish ... ah It was well received in Arab world, and it was even translated into many languages.

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