

Levantine Arabic transcript:

ياسر: كاتب عربي. كاتب رواية عربي إسمو عبد الرحمن منيف. بلش كتابة الرواية في السبعينات، ببداية السبعينات. بلش برواية إسمها "الشرق المتوسط" وهذه الرواية بتتناول موضوع السجن في العالم العربي في الدول العربية. كان همو الاساسي، هوي طبعا درس علم الاجتماع والإقتصاد البترولي، لكن ما استمر لفترة طويلة في هذا المجال لأنو كان عندو هم اجتماعي وسياسي وثقافي بالدرجة الأولى. فبلش كتابة الرواية، وكان معظم رواياتو تتناول مواضيع سياسية وتاريخية لحد بعيد. فضمن هذا الجو كان همو في هذه الرواية "الشرق المتوسط" هو عكس الحيز. الحيز.. الهام إلي بيأخذوا السجن في الدول العربية و إلي كان عم بيتوسع خلال هذه الفترة. الشخصية الأساسية في هذه الرواية، رجب، هو شخص كان عم بيمضي فترة بالسجن، وعم بيطلع من السجن لأنو وضعوا الصحي كان سيء، وكان الهم الاساسي إنو ما يفسد على اصدقائه أو أصحابه السياسيين. وإلها طبعا امتداد في.. إل.. عدة دول عربية. كان قصدو انو يعكس الوضع في العراق مثلا وفي سوريا وفي عدة بلدان في الخليج. بعدن مما بلش الرواية نوعا ما تاريخية، كان عم بتتناول فترة زمنية في السعودية، وكانت حول موضوع البترول واكتشاف البترول ومجئ الأمريكان على هذه البلد، وكان همو الاساسي انو يعكس الوضع الاجتماعي والعادات والثقافة والتاريخ والفلكلور طبعا المتواجد... في هذه المنطقة. هاي الرواية اسمها "مدن الملح" ورواية نوعا ما كبيره مكونه من خمس أجزاء، كل جزء بتتناول فترة زمنية أو تاريخية مختلفة. ببلش من بداية القرن الماضي وبينتهي بسبعينات القرن الماضي ايضا. طبعا الفكرة الاساسية هو عكس حالة اجتماعية اللي بتتطور بهذيك الفترة بهذالك المكان، وتسلط الأمريكي، أول شئ الإنجليزي، ومن ثم الاميركي في هذه المنطقة، والتحالفات المختلفة إلي بقيمها الزعامات المحلية في ما يسمى الجزيرة العربية ومن بعدها سموها السعودية على اسم العائلة الحاكمة هناك. هذه الرواية اخذت تقريبا، استقرقت حوالي ثمان أو عشر سنين لأنجازها او كتابتها. كان لها صدى جيد بالعالم العربي، وحتى تم ترجمتها لعدة لغات.

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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