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CULTURE THROUGH LITERATURE: A GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING MATERIALS FOR SPEAKERS OF ARABIC IN EGYPT AND THE LEVANT

by

Elizabeth Ruth Tuers

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Harold V. King, Chairman
Assistant Professor Floyd L. Bergman
Assistant Professor John von B. Rodenbeck
Associate Professor Ronald Wardhaugh

ABSTRACT

CULTURE THROUGH LITERATURE: A GUIDE TO THE PREPARATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING MATERIALS FOR SPEAKERS OF ARABIC IN EGYPT AND THE LEVANT

by

Elizabeth Ruth Tuers

Chairman: Harold V. King

The purpose of this dissertation has been to consider one aspect of the problem of teaching reading to speakers of other languages, specifically, the speakers of Arabic in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. It is generally agreed that culture is a significant factor in language learning. This is especially true in reading the literature of a particular language. When a student is totally ignorant of the target culture, no amount of grammatical or semantic knowledge will insure his comprehension of the literature. In the Middle East this problem cannot be solved merely by teaching American (the target) culture since the problem is compounded by what has been called the "resistance reaction." The

attempt to acquaint students with American culture often engenders resistance, resentment, even hostility. The problem, then, becomes one of motivation.

It is the thesis of this dissertation that the motivation can be accomplished through the medium of the students' native literature in English translation. Beginning thus with familiar material satisfies the pedagogical principle that learning should proceed from the known to the unknown. Furthermore, to know oneself and one's own culture patterns is prerequisite to understanding another culture. Finally, through the excitement of exploring one's own culture will come the motivation to examine a different culture.

The first step in the preparation of materials for such an approach has been the compilation of a check-list by which to analyze both Arab and American cultures. Five major categories have been used: social patterns, economic patterns, environmental relationships, educational patterns, and value concepts and attitudes. Both the source (native) and the target cultures have then been analyzed according to these categories.

In the two following steps--the selection of appropriate works in the literature of the two cultures--the short story has been chosen as the genre best suited to the purpose. In both structure and function it is a microcosm of the real world, permitting it to be studied under the cultural micro-

scope. Furthermore, its brevity precludes loss of interest on the part of the student.

For the model reading materials, six Arabic short stories, two from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, have been analyzed, followed by ten American stories, four analyzed in detail, six annotated for the principal element of culture they reveal.

Such a cultural approach to the teaching of reading can stimulate not only an interest in reading American literature but also an interest in studying the culture that produced that literature. Through such interest can come cross-cultural understanding, a condition vitally needed in the modern world.

PREFACE

Because this dissertation concerns itself with a pedagogical problem, namely, the teaching of reading to speakers of other languages, it addresses itself primarily to teachers of such students. It is the hope of the writer that the information, ideas, and bibliography contained herein will prove helpful to teachers faced with the problem of teaching American literature and culture to speakers of other languages.

Many people have been long suffering during the preparation of this dissertation. I wish to express my gratitude to all the members of my doctoral committee for their time spent on my behalf and for their helpful suggestions and comments. My added appreciation goes to my Chairman, Professor Harold V. King, for his patience and continued encouragement throughout the months of study and writing. Two special words of thanks are in order: one to Professor John Rodenbeck for giving helpful suggestions and information on Egyptian life and culture; the other to Professor Trevor Le Gassick for putting me on the trail of modern Arabic literature in English translation and for permission to use his unpublished collection of stories of Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus. Finally, a great deal of thanks goes to Mrs. Kathryn Notestine, whose speed and excellence of performance on the typewriter enabled me to meet the deadline.

Language is more than a series of standardized sounds produced to express human wants; more than a vehicle to convey and sometimes conceal meaning; more than a treasury wherein the cultural achievement of a people is stored; more than an anthology which preserves their literature; more than a mirror which reflects their highest hopes and aspirations; more than a permanent record of their civilization and a key to their prehistoric ideas and attainments. Language is all of these and something more; something relating to man's spiritual being. Above all language is both the symbol and the bulwark of a people's spiritual unity.

---Nabih A. Faris

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INTRODUCTION

It is now a widely accepted fact that culture is a significant factor in language learning; that a person cannot learn a language well, cannot feel at home in the language, unless he is at home in the culture of that language. However, in working with students in the Middle East, I have found that there is often antagonism toward the culture of the West, especially toward that of England and America, representative in their minds of imperialism and colonialism. Yet these students must learn English if they are to study in the advanced sciences and technology. What can be done to overcome this seeming impasse?

It is my belief that foreign students in language learning--particularly in reading--should be introduced to the concept of culture first through acquaintance with the elements of their own culture. I believe there is no better way for this to be accomplished than through the medium of their nation's own literature in translation. Our sympathetic interest in their literature and culture will serve not only to prepare them for the study of American literature and culture, but may also serve to alleviate some of the misunderstanding of and resentment toward Western culture.

This dissertation is an attempt to present a model for the preparation of reading materials which would teach the target literature and culture, in this case American, by way of the native literature and culture of the Middle East, specifically Egypt and the Levant. The first chapter presents definitions, relationships and principles concerned with cultural interference in reading English as a second language. It, of necessity, draws heavily upon present relevant scholarship as proof of the existing problem. Chapter two introduces the general concept of culture and presents a checklist of cultural elements which can be used in comparing American and Arab cultures. The third and fourth chapters discuss, respectively elements in Arab and American cultures, and the final chapters present the model of reading materials for teaching the two cultures. This model is designed primarily for use with advanced students, although the idea could be adapted to various levels of language learning.

To be sure, what I am proposing is not a panacea, a be-all and end-all; there <u>is</u> none. There is no one answer to the problem of teaching reading--or, to the teaching of anything. Every situation is different, every class is different, every student is different. There are two certainties, however: a need for flexibility and a need for understanding.

A teacher must be ready to experiment and adapt. He must be ready, if necessary, to change horses in midstream if the first horse stumbles on a rock, breaks a leg, or is just plain ornery and refuses to move ahead; he should also be willing to turn the horse around and try a different route.

CHAPTER I

CULTURAL INTERFERENCE IN READING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: DEFINITIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND PRINCIPLES

Definition of Culture

> To learn just a language narrowly conceived, without an understanding of the people's way of life, is not enough for cooperation between peoples in the modern world. Language, moreover, is not self-dependent: it cannot be wholly understood without reference to the culture of which it is a part and the social relations which it mediates. Literature, likewise, cannot be wholly understood without reference to the culture that produced it. . . .
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> ---Howard Lee Nostrand
> "Describing and Teaching the Sociological Context of a Foreign Language and Literature"

In 1871 Edward B. Tylor defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."[1] Edward Sapir, writing in this century, defines culture similarly as "general attitudes, views of life, and specific manifestations of civilization that give a

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[1] Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom (London, 1871), I, p. 1.

particular people its distinctive place in the world."[2] But he and other modern scholars go beyond this definition, placing the emphasis "not so much on what is done and believed by a people as on how what is done and believed functions in the whole life of that people, on what significance it has for them."[3]

The kind of society in which men live affects not only their physical well being but also their thoughts and feelings. The established set of habits which is their culture becomes their pattern of behavior. This pattern of behavior, says Robert Lado, is meant to operate within a single culture and usually does not operate across cultures. Therefore, when there is "contact across cultures, many instances of predictable misinterpretation take place."[4] In other words, the same "element of civilization" which may be a "vital strand in the culture of one people" may be a "well-nigh negligible factor in the culture of another."[5] Modern cultural anthropologists and psychologists corroborate this view. Things appear different in different cultures according to the values given to them, and "what is perceived depends upon the ob-

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[2]Culture, Language and Personality, selected essays ed. by David Mandelbaum (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1949), p. 83.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Linguistics Across Cultures (Ann Arbor, 1957), p. 114.

[5]Sapir, Culture, p. 83.

server's perceptual frame of reference."[6]

Examples of Cultural Interference and Transference

Time, for example, has a different significance in the culture of the Middle East than it has in American culture. Western diplomats have been known to feel insulted by being kept waiting for an hour at an appointment with a Middle Eastern dignitary; yet in such a situation, one hour in Middle Eastern culture is equivalent to about ten minutes in American culture and therefore nothing to take offense at. To arrive on time for a dinner party is almost unheard of in much of Middle Eastern society; you are likely to find that your host is still in the bath. Thus, time in the Arab world seems to be relative and social--related to the social consensus, rather than fixed and mechanical--fixed by the clock.

Similarly, attitudes toward work, especially any sort of manual labor, differ radically in Eastern and Western cultures. In Syria, for example, many scholarship students in a private school were insulted if they were asked to do certain kinds of work; office work, yes, but cleaning or any other kind of manual labor, no. An educated man does not work with his hands. This attitude is found even in the villages, in the division of labor; the man who owns land usually does not work it himself. This attitude makes it difficult for Middle

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[6]Robert T. Oliver, "Foreword," Philosophy, Rhetoric and Argumentation, ed. Maurice Nathanson and Harry W. Johnstone, Jr. (University Park, Pa., 1965), pp. x-xi.

Easterners to understand Americans who insist upon doing their own housekeeping or gardening, or who like "do-it-yourself" projects. In the Arab world, it would seem, work is modal rather than material. A man's profession is much more important as a social designation than as a description of work-function.

Language, too, is an important part of the pattern of behavior of a people. It is not only part of their "cultural achievement," but it also "transmits the rest of their culture system."[7] Therefore, it is "an illusion to think that we can understand the significant outlines of a culture through sheer observation and without the guide of the linguistic symbolism which makes these outlines significant and intelligible to society. . . . The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached . . .. We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation."[8] To

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[7]David Abercrombie, "The Social Basis of Language," Teaching English as a Second Language, ed. Harold B. Allen (New York, 1965), p. 22.

[8]Sapir, "The Status of Linguistics as a Science," Selected Writings of Edward Sapir, ed. David Mandelbaum (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1949), pp. 161-62.

put it succinctly, "if Aristotle had been Mexican, his logic would have been different."[9]

Leo Spitzer in his article, "Language--the Basis of Science, Philosophy and Poetry," voices and enlarges upon the same idea: "Every language offers to its speakers a ready-made interpretation of the world, truly, a Weltanschauung, a metaphysical word-picture which, after having originated in the thinking of our ancestors, tends to impose itself ever anew on posterity. Take for instance a simple sentence such as 'I see him. . . .' This means that English . . . presents the impressions made on our senses predominantly as human activities, brought about by our will. But the Eskimos in Greenland say not 'I see him' but 'he appears to me. . . .' Thus the Indo-European speaker conceives as workings of his activities what the fatalistic Eskimo sees as events that happen to him."[10]

In a different corner of the same problem of different linguistic interpretations of the world, bullfighting holds two very different meanings for Spaniards and for Americans because the interpretation of the word animal is quite different in each culture. Lado finds linguistic evidence for this fact in the vocabulary items applicable to the anatomy of

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[9]Robert B. Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education," Language Learning, XVI, Nos. 1 and 2 (1966), p. 3.

[10]Studies in Intellectual History, ed. George Boas et al. (Baltimore, 1953), pp. 83-84, quoted by Robert Kaplan, Language Learning, p. 3.

animals and humans. In English, many items are applicable to both, e.g., leg, neck, back, head. Spanish, however, has separate words for animal legs (patas) and human legs (piernas), for an animal's back (lomo) and a human back (espalda), and for an animal's neck (pescuego) and a human neck (cuella). In English, both animals and humans can be sent to hospitals and can be buried in cemeteries, while in Spanish neither of these events can happen to animals. In other words, "in Hispanic culture the distinction between man and animal seems very great, certainly greater than that in American culture,"[11] which leads to a completely different attitude on the part of Americans toward bullfighting, a complete uncomprehension of the Spanish aficion. As Hemingway puts it in The Sun Also Rises: "Somehow it was taken for granted that an American could not have aficion. He might simulate it or confuse it with excitement, but he could not really have it."[12]

The problem, therefore, is not only one of interference of the native language and culture, but also their transference into the target language and culture. In the teaching of English to French speakers, G. Capelle and D. Girard recognize this problem. The student always has the tendency, they declare, to express his ideas in the molds which seem the most appropriate

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[11]Lado, Linguistics, p. 116.

[12]New York: 1926, p. 132.

to his experience, and to make cultural contexts coincide with his own.[13]

The Relation between Culture and Literature

Since there is so close a connection between language and culture, there must also be an association between literature and culture, as literature is the symbolization of spoken language. How close is this association? How much does the literature of a people reflect their culture?

As literature cannot exist apart from society, it is, at least by implication, concerned with society--with its traditions and conventions, its myths and symbols. "Literature occurs only . . . as part of a culture, in a milieu. . . . The most immediate setting of a work of literature . . . is its linguistic and literary tradition, and this tradition in turn is encompassed by a general tradition, and this tradition in turn is encompassed by a general cultural 'climate'."[14] To appreciate fully a literary work it is necessary to understand more than the language in which it is written. "Fullest appreciation comes through adopting the point of view of the target culture itself, rather than that of an outsider looking in."[15] To understand a simple poem, for example, involves, as

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[13]Principes Méthodologiques de Passport to English et Conseils D'Utilisation (Paris, 1962), pp. 10-16.

[14]René Wellek and Austin Warren, The Theory of Literature (New York, 1949), p. 105.

[15]Lado, Language Teaching (New York, 1964), p. 155.

Sapir points out, not just an understanding of each word "but a full comprehension of the whole life of the community as it is mirrored in the words, or as it is suggested in the overtones."[16] Complete comprehension of Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Wall," requires knowledge of the character of New England farms and farmers and understanding of the overtones from history, theology, superstition, economics, and more.

Specialists agree that there is far more to learning a second language than merely learning "how things are said"; it is important also to learn "what is said--which is another way of saying that the learner must come to know the culture of those who speak the second language."[17] And many agree that one of the best ways of obtaining cultural orientation is through the study of literature. Since literature, "like an artifact, is typically a product of a given culture, and commonly functions as an inclusive model of that culture" by isolating "the aesthetic, moral, spiritual, and social values that a given community cherishes"--values and behavior patterns which often escape the casual observer[18]--what better way could be found to study a given culture than to study its literature? In fact, according to Henry Commager, if documentary records were lost, we would probably be able to

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[16]Sapir, Selected Writings, pp. 223-24.

[17]Charles T. Scott, "Literature in the ESL Program," Teaching English as a Second Language, op. cit., p. 292.

[18]Ibid., p. 293.

reconstruct contemporary life from "imaginative literature."[19]

Milton C. Albrecht poses three hypotheses for the relationship between literature and culture. The first is that literature reflects society. This theory, he says, dates back as far as 1800, when Madame de Stael wrote De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions socials. The second, an opposing hypothesis, states that literature shapes society; and the third calls literature a maintaining and stabilizing force in society. In addition, literature has been variously called an expression of society and a mirror of life. "Probably the commonest conception has been that literature reflects predominantly the significant values and norms of a culture." Perhaps, too, literature "may be an index of cultural change . . . a symptom, not a cause."[20]

In his article, "The Introduction of Hispanic Literature to Americans," Miguel Enguidanos affirms that literature must be regarded as "one of the deepest expressions of the ethos of a nation . . . literature is life . . . ."[21] It cannot be understood in a vacuum outside of the culture that produced it. Rather, it is one of the great achievements of civilization, a measure of the height of that civilization.[22]

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[19]The American Mind (New Haven, 1950), p. 56.

[20]"The Relationship of Literature and Society," The American Journal of Sociology, LIX, No. 5 (1954), pp. 425-26.

[21]Trends in Language Teaching, ed. Albert Valdman (New York, 1966), p. 29.

[22]John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York, 1934), pp. 334-49.

Granted, then, that there is an unquestioned relationship between the literature and the culture of a people, can the latter be taught through the medium of literature? Or, more particularly, can the culture of the target language be taught to students through the medium of the literature of that language?

Here we run into the same problem encountered in teaching the language itself: interference from the native culture, transference of the native culture concepts to the study of the target culture, which may seriously "limit or distort"[23] the understanding of the new culture.

In a report of "Cross-Cultural Testing: An Aspect of the Resistance Reaction," Fathi S. Yousef found that "students interpreted literature in terms of their own native culture. Many times, a behavioral pattern had opposite meanings in American and Middle Eastern culture." For example, take the case of the American who admits that his ability to speak Arabic is poor. For him, this is an honest admission of a fact. The Middle Easterner, on the other hand, would be embarrassed by such an admission, for in his culture a man does not admit a weakness.[24] How, then, can this interference of the native culture be combatted?

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[23]Maurice Imhoof, "Controlling Cultural Variations in the Preparation of TESOL Materials," TESOL Quarterly, II, No. 1 (1968), p. 39.

[24]Language Learning, XVIII, Nos. 3 and 4 (1968), pp. 227-234.

Principles of Learning Involved in Cultural Interference

Three principles of learning should be considered in cultural interference in language learning: 1) "Learning is change in the individual as a result of experience";[25] 2) an individual learns more easily and more readily "activities which are facilitated by prior acquisitions, and will learn less readily those activities which are not facilitated or are perhaps inhibited by prior learning";[26] and 3) motivation, important in any learning, is crucial in language learning.

The first of these principles--learning is change in the individual as a result of experience--has as an obvious corollary, the principle that "without experience he [the individual] has nothing to learn."[27] Both principle and corollary are certainly applicable to second language learning and, specifically, to reading in a second language. Without experience in the culture of the second language, reading becomes purely verbalization, for meaning is based on experience.

Since no two cultures are the same, "mere translation [of the foreign culture] into native terms" will not provide understanding of the second language situation. To understand

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[25]Albert J. Harris, Effective Teaching of Reading (New York, 1962), p. 3.

[26]Wallace E. Lambert, "Psychological Approaches to the Study of Language," Teaching English as a Second Language, op. cit., p. 37.

[27]Harris, p. 3.

the meanings of the words and the meaning of the situation, "students need familiarity with the whole life experience of native users of the language. It is impossible to achieve this through direct experience, so some substitute experience must be provided which will give the cultural basis for meanings. . . .This substitute experiential background may be acquired through a study of selected works of literature, works chosen for their honesty in depicting the culture and their scope in covering wide sections of it."[28]

Such substitute experience, however, comes only when the reader has such complete understanding of the material that he becomes almost a participant in the action. To put it in the words of Miguel Enguidanos, he must re-create in his reading "what was felt and intuited by the original, active author. . . ."[29] This brings us to the second principle: an individual learns more readily things associated with prior experience; he must move from the known to the unknown. As John Dewey suggests, ". . . the organism hungers naturally for satisfaction in the material of experience . . . ."[30] Applied to reading materials, this principle implies that the individual will learn more readily through ideas he has already acquired, in

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[28]Walter P. Allen, Selecting Reading Materials for Foreign Students (Washington, 1955), pp. 6-7.

[29]Trends, p. 29.

[30]Art, p. 343.

other words, through concepts of his own culture.

The objective in teaching reading to speakers of other languages is two-fold. The first, of course, is obvious: to teach the student to read with comprehension the printed page in English (the target language). The second--to enable the student to gain insight into and understanding of the culture of the target language--might be considered the primary objective, for without such understanding there can be no comprehension of the printed page. Students must be able to interpret not only the language but also the behavior of the speakers of the target language. Therefore, what better way to accomplish both of these objectives than to start with the known, with the elements of the student's own culture? As Margaret Mead suggests, bring "to the fore in the mind of the students what their own family is, what their own region has," and they will then be prepared to learn about another culture more easily.[31]

This leads to the third principle: motivation is crucial in language learning. Present-day studies, as reflected in Wallace E. Lambert's "Psychological Approaches to the Study of Language," indicate that "the learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his attitudes toward the other group are be-

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[31]"Culture in Foreign Language Teaching: The Anthropologist's Point of View," Report on a Conference on the Meaning and Role of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching, ed. E. D. Woodworth (Washington, 1963), p. 10.

lieved to determine his success in learning the new language. His motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes and by his orientation toward learning a second language.[32] Studies carried out with English-speaking Montreal high school students studying French showed that their achievement was dependent not only upon aptitude and intelligence but also to a great extent upon a "sympathetic orientation" toward French culture and people. Similarly, in a study of Franco-American students in Maine and Louisiana, it was found that the attitudinal, and thus the motivational, variable had a great deal to do with the students' success in learning French. Where there was "pride in their French heritage," there was also "superiority in French skills."[33]

The Principles Applied to the Teaching of Reading in the Middle East

The first and second principles--that learning is change in the individual as a result of experience, and that an individual learns more easily and quickly what is based on prior knowledge--hold true in any area. The third principle, that motivation is crucial in language learning, is especially true in the Middle East. In most cases there is strong motivation on the part of the students for learning the language, but often, especially of late years, there has been unsympa-

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[32]Lambert, Teaching English, p. 39.

[33]Ibid., pp. 40-44.

thetic orientation toward American culture and American people. The attitude borders on--sometimes crosses the border into--resentment, even hostility. It is in the development of reading skills that this attitude is most apparent, for it is in this phase of language study that authors of materials, thinking to promote understanding of the target language, have gone "all out" to sell American culture. But if there is no "sympathetic orientation" on the part of the student, there can be no sale.

Fathi Yousef, in the article, quoted on page 13 above, found that often the problem was not inability to communicate in English, but rather "an unwillingness or inability to understand or accept the culture of the target language. The teachers found the students . . . were unable to understand, accept or live with American culture." (p. 6).

Yet it is apparent that a language cannot be thoroughly understood without an understanding of the culture of that language. It is apparent, too, that understanding among peoples is desperately needed. One must agree with Howard L. Nostrand: "If it is true that literary studies can give insight into a culture and society we should make the most of that possibility today, when such insight is so badly needed for the sake of a better cross-cultural understanding and communication."[34] How, then, can teachers prevent resentment on

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34"Literature in the Describing of a Literate Culture," French Review, XXXVII (December, 1963), p. 145.

the part of students at what they feel to be an overdose of American culture-bound reading materials and, at the same time, provide insight into and understanding of American culture?

It is my belief that the study of culture through literature should begin with the literature and culture of the native country. Since the purpose is to teach English (the target language), one must take the literature of the native country in English translation. Since the goal, too, is to reveal elements in modern Arab culture, one must choose works from modern Arabic literature. For this purpose there is a relatively ample supply of material in the form of short stories and a few novels and plays by Syrian, Lebanese, and Egyptian authors which have been translated into English. These works are not only enjoyable to read, but, what is more important, they throw light on elements of contemporary Arab culture.

It can be exciting to find familiar characters, scenes, and familiar ideas couched in a different language. This will not only help to motivate students in their study of English, but it will also please them to find American interest in their culture and literature. Once students have become aware of the elements in their own culture as portrayed in some of their literature, and after a good foundation has been established in their reading of English, then one can turn to

modern American literature, letting the students discover elements in American culture conveyed through the literature. In both cases it is most important to remember that neither culture is being judged or evaluated. The approach to the study of cultural differences must be made "intellectually"[35] and objectively, with a sympathetic and tolerant spirit on both sides of the desk.

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[35]Lawrence Wylie, in Report on Conference on Culture in Foreign Language Teaching, p. 33

CHAPTER II

A CHECKLIST OF CULTURE CONCEPTS: THE CRITERIA BY WHICH TO TEST A CULTURE

> Civilization is uncivil because human beings are divided into non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques.
>
> ---John Dewey
> Art as Experience

If one is to approach the teaching of reading to non-native users of the language from the standpoint of culture, he must first set forth certain criteria--a checklist, if you will--of culture concepts by which to test each culture. Since this is not to be an anthropological study, the list will not be a complicated one but will be limited to the following broad categories:

I. Social Patterns

II. Economic Patterns

III. Environmental Relationships

IV. Educational Patterns

V. Value Concepts

Included under Social Patterns are kinship and family structure. This encompasses family size and organization, re-

lationship between the sexes and differences in their training, husband-wife relationships, parent-child relationships, patterns of child-rearing, and patterns of inheritance. Included also in this category are the patterns of relationship among children, their forms of play, and their relation to the whole adult world; as well as the position of the aged in the society. Another sub-grouping in the social category is religion, including beliefs, ceremonies and symbols, festivals, superstitions, attitude toward other religions, and attitude toward life and death. A further sub-category might be called social grouping and includes urban-village classifications, class levels and status grouping. Within a society differences also occur in language patterns, differences in dialect and in metalanguage patterns. Such differences frequently occur, for example, between urban and village communities and between the educated and uneducated. The final sub-category which might be explored under social patterns is leisure time activities.

Under the second broad category, Economic Patterns, such divisions as employment, ownership of property, economic exchange, labor organizations, and attitudes toward work might be included.

Environmental Relationships refers to such things as the effect of climate on the culture, the kinds of dwellings, the kinds of clothing, foods, cooking, and eating habits, and

the modes of transportation used.

Educational Patterns refers to methods of formal education and subsumes such items as responsibility for schools (government or private), scope of education (compulsory or voluntary), level of education (primary, secondary, higher), and teachers. Included, also, might be the differences in education between the sexes.

The final category under consideration concerns Value Concepts or attitudes in the culture. These include attitudes toward the individual and his place in society, attitudes toward the display of emotion, ethical values, and aesthetic values. Ethical values subsume such things as the cultural concept of right and wrong, the society's attitude toward suicide, toward vengeance and family feuding, and toward the law. Aesthetic values include the art forms used by the culture and the attitudes toward art and intellectual activity.

Divining, interpreting, and understanding the values of a culture, the attitudes behind the behavior of a people, is probably the most important task in cross-cultural understand-

ing and, at the same time, the most difficult to achieve. As Charles Johnson observes, this requires a "considerable degree of cultural and intellectual sophistication,"[36] a sophistication usually lacking in students brought up in a traditional, authoritarian society where neither original, independent, nor critical thinking is a part of the cultural or educational pattern. For a good part of the Middle East the traditional authorities are specific: for the Muslims, the Qur'an; for the Christians, the Maronite Church or Catholicism, and the French educational system. Combatting the effects of such authoritarian teaching is difficult. However, if students can be led to discover and understand their own culture, perhaps the method can be transferred to discovering and understanding a foreign culture, in this case the target American culture.

Two things must be guarded against in attempting to understand a culture through its literature, whether it be one's own or a foreign culture. The first is the tendency to generalize national traits or culture concepts from statements made in fictional literature. The danger lies in the fact that, to be interesting as an art form, a novel, story or play must contain an element of the unusual or atypical. The second danger is associated with the first: accepting the

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36"A Pedagogical Study in Contrastive Cultural Analysis Illustrated by Steinbeck's Travels With Charley in Search of America," unpublished dissertation, University of Michigan, 1966.

word for the deed; that is, accepting stated conduct for actual conduct.[37] Therefore, one must be able to interpret the fictional in the light of the actual.

Such interpretive skill is, of course, easier to acquire in the study of one's own culture and literature. Thus, for example, a Lebanese student may be made aware, through the medium of Lebanese literature, of the pattern of behavior between parent and child in his culture. He will discover this quite easily either unassisted or with a little guidance from the teacher. "Yes," he will say, "I know families like that"--even "That's just like my father and me"; or he may have a negative reaction, a more likely one since fiction more often presents the unusual: "That never happens in our families!" But one gets at the pattern, whether it be by the front door or the back door.

Thus, after reading, let us say, Walid Ikhlassi's "The Dead Afternoon" and discovering through it a pattern of adult-child relationship, students will be better prepared to understand another such pattern in, for example, Hemingway's "A Day's Wait" and to make comparisons. In this way can begin an exciting search for cultural understanding, starting with the student's own literature and culture and subsequently crossing over into another literature and culture; for once

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[37]Nostrand, "Describing and Teaching the Sociocultural Context of a Foreign Language and Literature," (see Note 21), pp. 14-15.

the student has acquired the skill of discovering and interpreting his native culture through his native literature, the transition to the target culture through its literature will be less difficult, less of a shock, and can lead him through his own interest to a new cross-cultural understanding.

There is one final point that should be made in connection with the use of the cultural concepts listed at the beginning of this chapter. This involves the purpose of the language study; that is, whether the student is studying English as a second language or as a foreign language. In either case, some insight into the culture of the target language is necessary for satisfactory comprehension of the language, and it is certainly desirable from the standpoint of cross-cultural understanding. Nevertheless, there may be a difference in the intensity of such a cultural approach to reading English. Obviously, the student of English as a second language, especially if he intends to reside for some years in the United States, should be much more thoroughly conversant with American culture than a student of English as a foreign language, whose sole purpose in learning English is the pursuit of a technical study either in his own or a neighboring country within his own cultural area.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF ARAB CULTURE AS SEEN IN EGYPT AND THE LEVANT

> Languages divide up the world in different ways . . . . They decide that different kinds of actions are related to each other in different ways. [Every time one learns a new language he learns] a different way of looking at reality.
>
> --Katherine Bateson Kassarjian

Although all of the Middle East is, in varying degrees, a culture in transition, which makes it difficult to describe and even more difficult to understand, there are certain patterns which emerge fairly consistently. Of necessity, these patterns will not be discussed in detail. The outline serves only as a basis for teachers in their preparation of materials and in their own understanding of the culture. Teachers may wish to dwell upon one or two patterns, omitting others.[38]

Social Patterns

The family in the Middle East is based on a patriarchal

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[38]The sources listed in the following footnotes constitute a small portion of those available. A more comprehensive list is found in the bibliography. A goodly portion of the material is also based on the writer's personal experience of twelve years of teaching in Syria and Lebanon and of travel throughout the Middle East.

structure of society; that is, the authority figure is the senior male in the extended family which is composed of all the relatives. Although adult males accept responsibility for their own relatives, the wife's parents and siblings are not usually included among the extra members of the household.[39] The name and reputation of the family means a great deal to each member. A person will often make great personal sacrifice for the good of the whole family.[40] To a large extent, mutual assistance is given within the lineage; what does occur outside the kinship level is usually only political reciprocity.

In the cities, on the other hand, less responsibility is exercised beyond the immediate family. More attention is paid to maternal kin, and there is more reciprocity between families related by marriage. In the cities the need is not so great, for there are guilds and syndicates which unite people on the basis of their trade. However, family loyalty is still strong, and if the need arises, young people will still take their parents or other relatives into their home to live. Although it has always been the responsibility of the male to take care of the females in the family, this is changing with the shift away from the kinship unit.

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[39]Edwin Terry Prothro, Child Rearing in Lebanon (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), p. 46.

[40]Marie Karam Khayat, Lebanon, Land of the Cedars (Beirut, 1960), p. 15.

In low-income groups an extended family sometimes lives in a one-room house (excluding the kitchen). Children and parents, therefore, often sleep in the same room, sometimes even with in-laws. In a survey made by Dr. Jamal Harfouche in Lebanon, it was found that out of the 365 infants studied, 232 slept with parents and siblings.[41] Several generations often share income, food, and living quarters. Household duties are divided under a strict hierarchy. The old father manages the income and does the marketing, even for the women's clothing, for the women stay at home.[42] A new bride moves in with her husband's family. This occurs even in urban centers, and there, too, the new couple have only a bedroom to themselves.

In higher income groups the large patriarchal household has the aspects of a "formal institution" with a considerable staff of servants. It can handle most of the needs of its members in preparing food and clothing, supplemented by the neighborhood bake ovens, the steam bath, and the corner grocery.[43] The house is built within a walled compound with a courtyard and garden in the center. The apartments of the women are segregated from those of the men.

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[41]Social Structures of Low-Income Families in Lebanon (Beirut, 1965), pp. 64-65.

[42]Khayat, Lebanon, p. 16.

[43]Carleton S. Coon, Caravan: The Story of the Middle East, rev. ed. (New York, 1965) p. 258.

In both village and city a woman always keeps her home neat and clean, ready to receive guests at any time.[44] Friends or relatives are likely to appear at any time of the day or evening and must be entertained. Turkish coffee is always served--even on the most casual call--and often cakes and fruits as well. The fact that relatives may stay on for a meal, or for several nights, does not daunt the hostess. Even without guests the housewife busily serves her husband and children before she eats.

In Syrian villages the entertainment of guests is a "major sociopolitical activity" and is controlled by the man of the household. "Making and serving tea or Arab coffee for guests is done by men only,"[45] although Turkish coffee is made by the women. The host serves the food for the guests; and the women never appear.

The village peasant woman leads a hard life. Her family is large, and her days are filled with work, since she helps her husband in the fields as well as doing her own housework. Except to visit neighbors or relatives in the same village or perhaps to attend church, she rarely leaves her home.

Urban upper and middle class women are relieved of many household chores by at least one maid, who may also do the

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[44]Khayat, Lebanon, p. 20.

[45]Louise E. Sweet, Tell Toqaan: A Syrian Village (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 155.

cooking. The children may be looked after by a nursemaid, which leaves the wife free for an active social life, which in turn demands much attention to clothes, coiffure, and make-up. There is a growing number of women, especially in Lebanon, however, who combine homemaking with work either charitable or professional outside their homes.

Age still inspires respect and gives status in the Middle East. For example, the aged are served first at meals and are given preference on social occasions. "Their presence in a home is often considered a blessing, rather than a burden."[46] To care for them in time of illness or economic distress is considered an act of charity in accordance with their religion. There is an Arab proverb which says, "If you have no elderly person in your family, you had better buy one." The grandmother is important in the transmission of tradition. Her experience is sought in child care and rearing and in the treatment of illness.[47] Children are trained to respect age and the wisdom which, the Middle Easterner feels, comes with age. The mother is revered by her children, and there is a strong filial attachment, which makes farewells and reunions of families very emotional affairs.

Consanguinity in marriage, that is, blood relationship between husband and wife, is still quite common in the Middle

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[46]Harfouche, Social Structures, p. 34.

[47]Ibid.

East. Marriage of first cousins is common among both Maronites and Sunni Muslims. The father's brother's son, if there is one, is given first choice to marry his cousin, or, if he waives this privilege, to give his permission for her to marry someone else. The reasons for this practice are socio-economic. Girls in conservative communities have very little opportunity to meet strangers of the opposite sex because dating outside the home is still frowned upon in conservative families. Then, too, "kinship gives a feeling of security";[48] the family can intervene in case of trouble. Related couples have much in common, and it also simplifies the problem of inheritance, property, and housing.

The marriage, especially in low-income groups, is still arranged by the family. Although the actual arrangements are made by the males in the family, the mother may have a strong voice in the matter since the bride will come under her jurisdiction. She will have been looking over the possibilities for some time before the decision is made. In the villages a very strong criterion for the choice of a wife is her ability to work. Of course, good family and good looks are also considered. A "bride price" is paid by the prospective groom, which, in the villages of Syria, for example, amounts to 1,000 Syrian pounds (roughly $300) or more for pastoralist

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[48]Harfouche, Social Structures, pp. 41-42.

or peasant girls.[49]

There is a pattern of early marriage among women and late marriage among men, especially among Muslims. The man must be established first before he takes on the responsibility of a family. This results, of course, in greater discrepancies in age between the husband and wife in the Middle East than in the United States.

In only a small percentage of families--and those in the urban centers--do both husband and wife work. Since the family occupies a central place in Middle Eastern culture, bearing children is the wife's chief role. "A wife without children, or even without male children, is pitied by her friends and, among Moslems in particular, threatened by divorce."[50]

Among Christians in the Middle East divorce is still uncommon and difficult to obtain. There is also very little divorce among low-income groups of any religious persuasion. Illegitimacy is rare in comparison with Western culture, and when it does occur, the family honor must be avenged--often by killing both parties. Unmarried mothers, if they survive, are usually renounced by their families and the community. The methods of avenging the family honor is less severe in Egypt than in Lebanon and Syria.

Mixed marriages among Muslims and Christians or even

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[49]Sweet, Tell Toqaan, p. 176.

[50]Prothro, Child Rearing, p. 52.

among different sects within each group are rare. There are still instances of the killing of both parties to such a marriage, especially if a Muslim girl marries a Christian man, for the man is head of the household and inheritance is patrilineal. If indeed they exist, the penalties are less severe in Egypt.

Many child-rearing practices in the Middle East differ from those in America. In many areas the newborn child is still carefully swaddled. He can then be safely left on the sidelines while his mother works in the fields or goes about her household chores. All children are taught to respect age, but girls in particular learn obedience early, making it easier for them to accept the subordinate position in their husband's household. They are taught to obey their husband and to give priority to his wishes. In many parts of the Middle East, notably in Egypt, there has been a long tradition of women as the power behind the throne. They have perfected the art of connubial diplomacy, the art of getting their own way while making it appear as their husband's way.

The mother's love for her children is strong. She is often indulgent with infants and very young children. This indulgence becomes excessive in the wealthier classes, while non-existent among the poor.[51] The father's discipline often

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[51]Edward W. Lane, Customs and Manners of the Modern Egyptians (New York and London, 1908), p. 55.

seems inconsistent: one moment he may smother his son with affection, the next, beat him, with no attempt to give the reason for either. This often results in insecurity and erratic behavior in the child. Threats, which are rarely--if ever--carried out, are the favorite method of control; the parents' technique of discipline is, on the whole, one of "control rather than training."[52] Arab parents use physical punishment more frequently than American parents; they rarely discuss a problem with the child or give reasons for a desired behavior. Food is often used as a control or disciplinary agent. If the baby cries, he is nursed; if the young child screams, he is given a piece of bread to keep him quiet. Food is also given as a reward for good behavior.

In the past young people were closely sheltered and kept under their parents' supervision even after they were grown. Parents often interfered even in the lives of married children. Although this pattern is changing, especially in the cities with increased education, there is still a general pattern of acceptance of parental discipline and a "taboo on aggression toward parents."[53] Aggression of any sort is suppressed by parents, especially Muslins, for in Islam disobedience to parents is considered one of the greatest sins.[54] The ideal

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[52]Prothro, Child Rearing, p. 94.

[53]Prothro, Child Rearing, p. 94.

[54]Lane, Customs and Manners, p. 56.

child is "obedient, polite, neat, and not aggressive."[55] Parents are not always successful, of course, and even if they do manage to keep the aggression away from themselves, it is then taken out on siblings--unless there are external threats. An Arab proverb states: "I against my brother, my brother and I against my cousin, my cousin and I against the stranger."[56] This rivalry among siblings, if not the result of, is certainly aggravated by a favorite practice of control, that of "shaming one child by comparing him with another."[57]

Since families are usually large, children, contrary to the American pattern, have no need to seek out the neighbors' children. According to Prothro's study, the majority prefer to play with members of their own family, and some never play with anyone outside their own family.[58]

There are strong emotional family ties. A sister's love for her brother may be equal to the mother's. A sister will frequently work to support a younger brother if there is no older brother, and it is common for an elder brother or sister to work to put the younger siblings through school and college.

In the village, children begin to help with the work at a very early age--"as soon as they can follow directions, and

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[55]Prothro, pp. 98-99.

[56]Quoted by Prothro, p. 94.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., p. 95.

responsibility begins at six or seven." By the age of fourteen or fifteen "both boys and girls are contributing in paid labor or skill to the household . . . . A man works until he has sons to do man's work; he then retires to . . . management and direction . . . ."[59] By the same token, when women have grown daughters or acquire daughters-in-law, they can supervise and order the household while performing a minimum of the work.

It is still uncommon for unmarried women to be self-supporting. Even though education is fast liberating the Middle Eastern woman, and although many Western ways have been adopted, the "bachelor business girl" or the career woman is still a rarity. Most unmarried women with little or no formal education live with and work for their relatives. Even young women who have been educated are sometimes prevented by their parents from taking a job. There are, of course, notable exceptions of outstanding career women in the fields of education, medicine, science, and even politics.

Included in the social patterns of a culture are the religious practices of that culture. Arab culture is predominantly Muslim and has been greatly influenced by Islam. In Lebanon, however, approximately one-half of the population is Christian. Even in Syria and Egypt there are a large number of Christians. Whether Muslim or Christian, the highest level of participation in religious practices occurs in the villages, and the widest

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[59]Sweet, Tell Toqaan, p. 156.

range in the cities, where it can be from 0% to 100% participation. On the whole, religiosity is highly valued, but there is little actual knowledge of religion or theology. One memorizes the Book. Below the level of the great city mosques, Muslim religious institutions are simple. For both Christians and Muslims the highest level of religious understanding is in the urban centers, where one finds the outstanding religious teachers in the great mosques and churches. In the cities, too, are the religious minorities and the consequent confrontation of different religious sects.

Exposure to scientific knowledge has brought with it a shift from the religious to the secular in many areas. If there is a prolonged drought, some farmers have learned it is no longer necessary to say this is the will of Allah and go hungry; they can do something about it. Despite this knowledge, however, there is still a great deal of superstition and belief in fate, luck, and magic. As an example, the Arab is ever mindful of the "evil eye," which must be constantly guarded against and counteracted by any and all means: the blue bead on the child's forehead, on the horse's halter, on the windshield of the car; or the many verbal formulas for warding off evil or ill luck. Nevertheless, the superstitions of the Muslims, in particular, have "never corrupted the essence of his faith." The Muslim knows that "God is the Prime

Mover and First Cause of all existence . . . ."[60]

Language is another important facet of a culture, and its eloquent use is especially important in Arab culture. "Eloquence is accounted one of the cardinal virtues of the great man, ranking with courage and generosity; the spoken word can be literally intoxicating. . . ."[61] According to anthropologists, there is an emotional fix on language because it is associated with divine revelation and memory of the Golden Age; in addition, it is an art form and a prime form of recreation. Bargaining is a natural outgrowth of the cultural importance of language, and business dealings always begin with elaborate greetings and inquiries into one another's health and the health of the families, for social manners follow a very formal and regular pattern. Edward Lane makes a statement about Egyptian society which can be repeated for both Syrian and Lebanese as well: "The ordinary set compliments in use in Egyptian society are so numerous, that a dozen pages of this work would not suffice for the mention of those which may be heard almost every day."[62]

Although the colloquial language has developed into innumerable dialects, classical Arabic, because it is the language

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[60]Henry Habib Ayrout, The Egyptian Peasant, tr. John Alden Williams (Boston, 1963), p. 148.

[61]Edwin Hole, Syrian Harvest (London, 1956), p. 45.

[62]Lane, Customs and Manners, pp. 203, 206.

of the Qur'an, has remained virtually unchanged over the centuries. In recent times, however, a common and simplified language of journalism has developed, known as modern literary Arabic, which is also the language of radio and television, permitting better communication and furthering unity throughout the Arab world. Even this language is often filled with "clichés, stock phrases, synonyms and antonyms on which writers depend for effect. Its so called precision is grammatical and syntactical rather than logical and the source of its colourfulness is the imitation of ancient writers. Most of its eminent writers become so drunk with style and so fascinated by the subtleties expressing relations between words that they are led away from what they want to say. . . ."[63] In Arabic, all too often, it is not what you say but the way you say it that is applauded.

Conversation is at the center of Middle Eastern life and may be said to be the primary leisure-time activity. The men gather in the coffee houses, the women in their homes, to sip a cup of coffee and gossip and exchange views. For the men the chief topic of conversation is usually politics, over which they will argue for hours, interspersing it with coffee and tric-trac, the favorite table game--a kind of backgammon. In the villages the gossip is about everything and everybody; there are no secrets!

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[63]M. M. Mosharrafa, Cultural Survey of Modern Egypt, Part II (London and New York, 1947), p. 57.

Although visiting friends is the most common recreation in the Middle East, in the large cities movies, cabarets, and discotheques now compete for first place. In cities like Beirut and Cairo, concerts and theatrical performances also help to fill up the leisure time. In Lebanon, too, skiing has become popular in winter and swimming, water skiing, and boating in summer.

Clubs are not a part of Middle Eastern culture, as they are in American, except within certain ethnic groups, and these are usually sports clubs. In recent years, however, women's clubs and societies have developed "along with the independence of women. Many exist to encourage the participation of women in community life."[64]

In the villages, recreation centers about the home. In winter, card games and story telling take up the leisure time, with an occasional burghol-grinding bee involving several families. During the latter the cracking of the wheat is accompanied by singing and general good-fun. Spring brings everyone out of doors, but it also brings with it more work in the fields. Thus, from late spring till autumn there is no time for recreation; every day--and all day--is a work day.

Economic Patterns

Basically, Egypt and Syria are agricultural, while Lebanon's economy is based on trade and services. The latter,

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[64]Khayat, Lebanon, pp. 127-28.

therefore, is the most urban of the Arab states. The economy of all three countries is still based for the most part on the "mosaic system," a division of labor which proved very efficient in an environment where both settlements and sources of raw materials were far apart.[65] This system also means that a businessman concerns himself only with business. He will not cook his own breakfast; he will not even go to the store to buy a pound of meat; nor will he cultivate his own garden or repair anything in his own home. He will have servants to do these things for him. And only a gardener does the gardening; only a carpenter builds cabinets; only an electrician re-wires a lamp. Even in villages there is a division of labor, based on class and sex.

The American ideal is to draw workmen from many ethnic, religious, and racial groups and keep them working together peacefully in large scale production. In the Middle East, on the contrary, the ideal is "a streetful of small, independent shops" in each of which are "three or four highly skilled men, all kin, all brought up in a single tradition, and all doing the same thing at once."[66] Thus, from the copper <u>suq</u> comes the cacophony of many individuals pounding out their cooking pots, and in the silver <u>suq</u> each little cubby-hole of a shop contains its skilled jewelry makers. There is a separate shop

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[65] Coon, <u>Caravan</u>, pp. 4-5.

[66] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 154.

for selling fruits and vegetables, another for baked goods, another for candy, another for toys, and so on. The shops are often small and windowless, with walls on three sides lined from floor to ceiling with shelves of merchandise. Sometimes the merchandise displayed on the sidewalk or street in front of the shop exceeds what is inside. Small general stores may have an "on the street montage" ranging from "feather dusters and canned peaches through Kleenex and large pink brassieres."[67] At night all such merchandise is brought in and the shop is closed by a large metal shutter. To hear for the first time the crashing of one after another of these shutters at closing time is a shattering experience!

Workmen are paid by the job rather than by the hour.[68] Thus a master coppersmith who makes serving trays works at his own speed, when and if the spirit moves; he has no regular hours; when he finishes the tray, he sells it and starts another. He doesn't have to punch a time clock or report to a boss. Business, too, is still largely conducted in the same individual-oriented way. A merchant and his customer may argue over the price of a piece of merchandise for half an hour. Why waste so much time? To the Middle Easterner this is not a waste of time; he enjoys bargaining and dealing with people on a personal basis. He is less interested in gadgets than in people.[69]

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[67]Khayat, Lebanon, p. 63.

[68]Coon, Caravan, p. 6.

[69]Ibid., p. 7.

In rural areas the peasants live together in villages and go out each day to their fields. The isolated dwelling found in many parts of rural America is unknown in the Middle East. The reason is three-fold: the need for defense, for a water supply, and for social intercourse. With the exception of certain areas in northeastern Syria, most of the farms are relatively small. Even in the Beqa'a valley in Lebanon, the average farm is about sixteen acres. Farmers in the Middle East do not own all the land they cultivate, although the percentage is better than it used to be. Often the farms are small-scale enterprises that can be worked by the extended family units with simple, even primitive equipment. In Egypt the fellah works all year round, taking a holiday only on the important feasts--about ten days each year. He spends from eleven to fifteen hours a day in the fields, "exposed to the elements at a mean temperature of 80° F. in summer and 53° F. in winter, and he works barefooted and often bareheaded. . . . Besides his hands he uses only a few primitive tools. . . ."[70] There is a trend toward operations on a larger scale and toward the use of mechanized equipment rather than human and animal labor, particularly in Syria and Lebanon. As Mosharrafa says, the only reason the peasants do not use modern methods and machinery is that they "cannot afford either to experiment or to buy the machinery." Backwardness in the Middle East,

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[70]Ayrout, Egyptian Peasant, p. 35.

contrary to the belief of most Westerners, is not always caused by ignorance. "The fellah is neither conservative nor unprogressive, but simply poor."[71] According to one of his own sayings, he "remains poor as a needle, which clothes others but remains itself unclad."[72] The Middle Eastern peasant has had and still has the ingenuity to make the desert bloom and could do so if he had the money to purchase the necessary equipment. But the individual annual income in the Middle East is still very low by Western standards. About a decade ago it amounted to only $92 a year.[73]

The socio-economic pattern is one of economic stratification, that is, segregation on the basis of economic status. There is a small, very wealthy upper class, a small (by comparison to the United States) emerging middle class, and a lower class. Anyone with some education is considered in the middle class. Anyone who works with his hands is considered in the lower class.

There is a certain amount of social mobility, but more often than not economic opportunities are provided by relatives, not strangers. To put it another way, there is a great deal of what we would call nepotism, but without the stigma attached

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[71]Mosharrafa, Modern Egypt, Part I, p. 18.

[72]Quoted by Ayrout, Egyptian Peasant, p. 58.

[73]Ibid., p. 155.

to it in our culture. Changes are taking place, however, extending opportunities beyond the kinship unit. Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon are adopting modern methods of farming and are beginning to use modern means of manufacture.[74]

The mosaic system has another facet, one which divides people into "nations" so that, regardless of their country of residence, their loyalty is to their private people or ethnic group even though they may have no national home at present, or if they have one they have no intention of going to it. The Armenians in Aleppo, for example, usually send their children to Armenian primary schools and, until quite recently, to French or American secondary schools and colleges, where they learned very little, if any, Arabic, even though they are citizens of an Arab country. Thus the mosaic system has come into conflict with modern nationalism which demands loyalty to one's country of citizenship or permanent residence.

According to Coon, even behavior and personality can be typed according to ethnic groups in the Middle East, and it behooves the individual to behave as expected in his contacts with other groups, to conform to the pattern of his group whether or not this suits his natural tendencies, thus accentuating ethnic divisions.[75] This differs markedly from the

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[74]Nabih Amin Faris and Mohammed Tawfik Husayn, The Crescent in Crisis: An Interpretive Study of the Modern Arab World, Lawrence, Kansas, 1955, pp. 162-63.

[75]Coon, Caravan, p. 169.

"melting pot" of American society. However, it must be remembered, first, that the Middle Easterner was and is always free to express his personality within his own ethnic group; and, second, that barriers between ethnic groups are breaking down with improvements in health and in opportunities for education and occupation.

Environmental Relationships

Environment plays a large part in the life of the Middle Easterner. Climate affects all classes, and what appears to be indolence is merely the result of the heat. The villager in the Middle East leads a hard, healthy, but monotonous outdoor life in a community which usually doesn't change in size from year to year. He knows what is going to happen each hour of the day, each day of the year. His "calendar has been prearranged for hundreds of years."[76] In the lives of both the pastoralist and the agriculturalist in the Middle East animals have for centuries played an important role. The attitude toward animals, however, is very different from the American view. Basically, the Middle Easterner's attitude is one of non-intervention: animals are there to contribute to his prosperity and comfort, and he does not feel the need for any gratitude or affection on that account.[77]

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[76] Ibid., p. 193.

[77] Hole, Syrian Harvest, p. 134.

The preference for sheep and goats and the prohibition of pigs have their bases in economics and environment. In a poor economy, as much as possible of the animal must be utilized, and consideration must be given to the cost of his feeding. Sheep and goats can be grazed most economically yet will give the greatest return, in milk, wool and hair, hide, and meat. Pigs, on the other hand, are more difficult to feed and are good for nothing but their meat and possibly their hide. They, therefore, constitute an extravagance.

Animals are still used for transport in many rural and desert areas--the camel on the desert, the donkey and horse on mountain and plain. While motor transport has taken over completely in the cities, it is fast becoming standard in rural areas as well. More or less the same situation prevails in the use of animals for power; that is, in plowing, pumping water, threshing grain, and the like. Although mechanization has begun, there are many areas where animal power is still used.

The clothing worn by the villagers and the desert tribes is eminently suited to the climate. But most city dwellers have adopted Western style dress, which is not as comfortable under a Mediterranean sun. For city women, however, the Western style is a liberation from the veil, the long sleeves and coat worn even in summer. Today town women are known for their chic clothes, especially in Lebanon. Local coutouriers

copy models of the latest French and Italian fashions, and women spend a good deal of time having fittings.

In many rural areas cooking is still done over charcoal fires. In Lebanon--and probably in other parts of the Middle East--gas stoves were not introduced until after World War II. It was only after World War I that primus stoves (small kerosene burning stoves) were introduced; before that, wood and charcoal had been in use for centuries.[78] The type of fuel as well as the type of cooking utensil used are indeces of modernization or urbanization. Pottery is the oldest type of cooking utensil. Copper came next and remains widely used in both villages and cities. Aluminum was introduced recently and has become popular among town dwellers. Village cooking is done out of doors in good weather. Since most village homes have no ovens, baking is done in the town oven, the food having been prepared at home.

Bread is the staple food in the diet of the poorer classes, together with olives, a small amount of cheese or meat, and in season some greens and boiled vegetables. In Syria, burghol (cracked wheat) in some form is the main dish. In fruit-growing areas, especially in Lebanon, there is fresh fruit in season. Only for feasts is lamb roasted and served with quantities of rice. Since refrigerators are still rare in the villages, just enough food for each day is prepared and

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[78]Harfouche, Social Structure, p. 59.

eaten, but certain foods are dried for use in winter. Family meals are eaten from a common pot placed on a mat in the center of the floor where the men of the family gather to eat first. City dwellers eat in Western style and have more variety in their diet, benefitting from imported food as well as their own.

In Syrian villages, as in other parts of the Middle East, the custom of "reciprocity in kind"[79] is common; that is, anything borrowed must be returned in kind: bread for bread, tobacco for tobacco, flour for flour, and so forth; money is never given in return for an item borrowed. Similarly, in many parts of the Middle East, it is common to return a gift of food with something of one's own cooking; in other words, one never returns an empty dish or pan.

The most common house design in the Middle East is flat-roofed, with the exception of the "beehive" villages in Syria. Both designs are well suited to the climate. Building materials range from handmade mud bricks to hand-cut blocks of native stone. Because of its scarcity, wood is never used except in a few places, notably Aleppo, where there are a few very old houses with small wooden balconies. The basic floor plan of the Middle Eastern house consists of a common main room and may include one or more smaller rooms at the back. It is customary to build almost literally "stone by stone" as

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[79]Sweet, Tell Toqaan, p. 143.

the money is available. Therefore, one sees many buildings with iron reinforcing rods protruding from what appears to be the roof. This indicates that the building is not finished, that the owner intends eventually to build at least one more story. This also allows the owner or the builder to change his mind about the floor plan many times.

The interior of the village house is very simple; there is no furniture, except perhaps a low stool. Rush mats cover the earthen floor. The ancient custom of leaving one's shoes at the door is still followed in the villages. Such a custom is the natural outgrowth of the environment, for shoes become coated with dust in summer and with mud in winter.

The sleeping arrangement in most village houses consists of mattresses placed on the floor. The one nearest the door is for the head of the household. His wife is next to him and the youngest son next to her.[80]

The people spend as much time as possible out of doors during the long summer. Some people move their beds or mattresses out onto the flat roofs or out into the garden. Winter is the rainy season in most of the Middle East, with snow falling in the mountainous areas. Life then centers around the charcoal fire in the village houses. In the cities, although there is some central heating, the majority of homes and apartments are still heated by space heaters using very

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[80]Sweet, Tell Toqaan, p. 142.

crude oil. If the family can afford it, there may be a heater in each room; more frequently, there will be one in the living room but none in the bedrooms.

Many village houses do not have running water, so the village woman's day begins with a trip to the village well or fountain to fill water jars for cooking and drinking. The washing of clothes in the village is usually done outdoors by hand with locally made soap. In some Syrian and Egyptian villages the washing is done in streams or irrigation ditches. The clothes are then draped over bushes to dry in the sun. The city housewife usually has a washwoman to do her washing for her. Relatively few, the elite, own electric washing machines and teach their maids to operate them even though hired help requires very close supervision in the use of electrical appliances.

Educational Patterns

The Middle East has always had respect for learning, but the "literacy ratio reflects the urban-rural pattern and the income-distribution pattern."[81]

In the old type Muslim schools, education was limited to the superficialities of Muslim culture. It focused on grammatical and literary problems, religious arguments, and legal disputations; it ignored modern scientific subjects. Nor did

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[81]Prothro, Child Rearing, p. 14.

it use modern methods of education. The graduates of these schools had only a superficial education, narrow horizons, stagnant minds, with traditional and reactionary outlooks.[82]

New schools "have opened the eyes of students to the deplorable state of Arab society, have loosened the fetters of tradition and fanaticism."[83] Students are now being trained to investigate and understand the social and economic problems of their countries. Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt have made considerable educational progress. The number of educated men and women is steadily increasing. There are many more schools, colleges, and universities being opened. Private and public libraries have appeared in the towns and cities. Although cultural progress still lags far behind in the rural areas, the people are eager to educate their children, often depriving themselves of the necessities of life in order to get their children into the government schools.[84]

In some Syrian villages (and this occurs in Lebanese and Egyptian villages also), the one teacher contracts with the father of each child for the type of training he is to receive. For fifty Syrian pounds a year (c. $16), the child will be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and the Qur'an. For thirty-five pounds (c. $12) a year he will be taught only

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[82]Faris, Crescent in Crisis, p. 31.

[83]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[84]Mosharrafa, Modern Egypt, Part I, p. 18.

reading, writing, and arithmetic. Smaller children who do not attend regularly are charged fifteen pounds (c. $5). Perhaps only about one-fourth of the class will be girls.[85] The equipment, including textbooks, is very meager. Although there is still a long way to go by Western standards, in Syria and Egypt government schools have been built in many villages, with a resultant upgrading in quality of education. In Lebanon there are very few government schools, either in village or city; as late as 1964-65 there were only twenty-four in the entire country. Education is provided largely by private organizations--both religious and secular, foreign and local. Villagers who can afford it send their children to boarding schools in the city. Those who cannot afford such education often remain uneducated. Although there is compulsory elementary education in all three countries, it is not enforced in the villages, mainly because the children are needed to help with the work. In Egypt, for example, in 1956 there was still only about 42 per cent of the boys six to twelve years old going to school and only 25 per cent of the girls.[86]

"The position of woman in society is one of the best standards for measuring the cultural development of that society." Arab society on the whole still neglects the woman,

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[85]Sweet, Tell Toqaan, p. 61.

[86]Ayrout, Egyptian Peasant, p. 157.

"leaving her illiterate, ignorant, and ignored.[87] The position of woman, however, is better in Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt than in most of the remaining Arab world. This is especially true in the urban centers.

Value Concepts and Attitudes

As previously mentioned, Middle Eastern attitudes are greatly affected by Islam, which depersonalizes the individual. It reminds man of his lowly beginnings: "We have created man of an extract of clay." (Qur'an 23:12) People are important not as individuals but "for what they signify in the great order of being."[88] This attitude combines with a blind belief in the influence of the unseen, in fate (the Inshallah or God willing in all things). The resulting surrender to the unknown causes economic and social backwardness as well as intellectual stagnation because it stifles creativity. The Middle Easterner is wont to dream of the past, of the glories of the Golden Age, rather than apply himself to doing something constructive about the present. This belief in fate prevents the Arab from taking responsibility for his own actions. If something goes wrong, the reaction may be either to say it was God's will or to blame it on someone else or on circumstances.

Islam is interested in making life for the believer

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[87]Faris, Crescent in Crisis, p. 172.

[88]Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation, 2nd edition (Chicago, 1953), p. 221.

easier; therefore, usefulness is the criterion for the selection of knowledge. But this does not necessarily mean practical knowledge for the here and now. "Man is to be directed and guided toward salvation rather than educated to develop his self in developing this world. . . ."[89] One of the early poets, Abu Hanifa, declares:

> Whoso strives for knowledge for the life to come
> saves himself because of an increase in righteousness.
> But woe to those that strive for it to obtain
> advantage over their fellow-servants.[90]

This is the direct antithesis of the American pattern of competition and self-advancement.

Islamic interest in reform was limited to "reforming one's self," and the purpose of conduct has remained the "static ideal of happiness" rather than the American "dynamic of the 'pursuit of happiness'."[91]

The Arab's attitude toward time is closely associated with his fatalistic attitude. There is no urgency to get things done. Tomorrow will do just as well; and in the work of the peasant in particular, there is little that can be done in an hour "which may not be done within a week without detriment."[92]

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[89] Ibid., p. 230.

[90] Quoted by Az-Zarniji in Ta'lim al-muta'allim (Cairo, n.d.), tr. T.M. Abel and G. von Grunebaum, p. 5. Quoted by von Grunebaum in Medieval Islam, p. 235.

[91] von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, pp. 232-33.

[92] Mosharrafa, Modern Egypt, Part I, p. 19.

In his study of child-rearing practices in Lebanon, Prothro presents the hypothesis that "differences in rate of economic development in different countries might be attributable not to natural resources, available investment capital, or technological skills alone, but also to the amount of achievement motive found in the inhabitants of that nation." He found that "individuals differed widely in their need for achievement."[93] If one can generalize at all, it is safe to say that the achievement motive is not so strong among Arabs as it is among Americans. Of the three countries under study here, the Lebanese have, on the whole, the highest achievement motivation, while it is possible that the fellahin of Egypt have the lowest. Their antithetical attitude is exemplified in one of their sayings: "Greed is a humiliation, but satisfaction with one's lot is a full purse."[94] A complementary attitude is the Muslim's hatred of change. "The ideal life and the ideal community are static. The West expects change to be for the better; the Muslim knows it to be for the worse."[95]

Although Islam submerges the self and the extended family submerges the individual, beyond the tribe the Middle Easterner is extremely individualistic. He finds it very difficult to be loyal to any established authority except when he is forced

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[93]Prothro, Child Rearing, p. 25.

[94]Quoted by Ayrout, Egyptian Peasant, p. 145.

[95]von Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, p. 240.

to. This results in a negative attitude toward the law and law enforcement authorities. In rural areas the villagers usually take the law into their own hands. If law enforcement officials appear on the scene, they rarely meet with cooperation, more often with hostility. In murder cases involving two different tribes, tribal law is usually preferred to state law which hangs a convicted murderer. Under tribal law, the matter can be settled by the "blood price" arrangement, whereby 100 gold pounds is collected from the family of the murderer and paid to the family of the deceased. Of course, in many areas such a settlement would be considered disgraceful and dishonorable; therefore, family and tribal feuds and the law of vengeance still prevail.

One of the most blatant manifestations of individualism among the urban population is their conduct on the highway. One is inclined to believe the common pronouncement that the personality of the Middle Easterner changes completely when he gets behind the wheel of an automobile. More accurately, it is not a change of personality but rather a part of the pattern of individualism and indifference to any authority outside of the kinship unit. Other drivers are not part of his kinship unit so he is completely oblivious of them.

In addition to the Arab's individualism, there is another reason for his disregard for the law. Centuries of conquerors have caused a hatred of all established authority. Subjuga-

tion of the people by despotic governments, mostly foreign, instilled in them a fear of government. It also caused their suspicion of strangers which even now prevents their cooperating with others. It has made the individual more provincial, quick to take part in tribal, partisan, or sectarian feuds without thinking of the greater national welfare.[96]

On the other hand, the Arab is interested in people causing him to ask very personal questions of mere acquaintances, such things as one's age, salary, rent, and the like. For him, however, these questions are perfectly natural and not at all discourteous. Quite the contrary, the Arab is extremely courteous. For him "courtesy is a fine art."[97]

According to Mosharrafa, the peasant of Egypt has a "love of gaiety and adornment, of music and dancing; there is a lightness of heart, a slowness of movement, a sense of fate and a surprising capacity for suffering. . . ."[98] This description can be applied also to the Syrian and Lebanese peasant even though the tolerance of suffering is perhaps lowest in the Lebanese villager.

The Arab is a person of strong emotions and will readily show his emotions, even by weeping which is not considered unmanly. His natural desire is to share emotional experience,

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[96]Faris, Crescent in Crisis, Note 5, p. 179.

[97]Hole, Syrian Harvest, p. 183.

[98]Modern Egypt, Part I, p. 19.

and this finds expression in times of both joy and sorrow; in other words, on occasions of birth and marriage, sickness and death.[99] For example, the villager is always on hand to help his relatives or friends in times of illness. He will visit the patient every day--sometimes several times a day--and the women will help with the cooking and cleaning. The women, too, will often assist in nursing the patient and in receiving the many guests who come to ask about the patient. Even when the patient is in the hospital, the family and many friends literally move in with him and assist in caring for him.

The Arab's hospitality has been discussed under social patterns. His attitude toward hospitality and the people toward whom he is hospitable often differs from the Western pattern. The Middle Easterner is hospitable "without nice calculations"; that is, he will put himself out for any person whether the latter be a "Personage" or not.[100]

The Middle Eastern attitude toward work and certain professions has been alluded to previously. A person who does manual labor is still looked down upon, and the educated man will not work with his hands. Engineering, medicine, and law are the prestige professions and therefore highly sought after.

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[99]Khayat, Lebanon, p. 115.

[100]Hole, Syrian Harvest, p. 182.

The primary status symbol for the modern Middle Easterner is the automobile. In the old pastoralist culture, the horse was the symbol of affluence; today it is the Cadillac. Of course, as in American culture, one's profession, his house and its location are also status symbols.

Contrary to popular opinion, the Arab is not aggressive or warlike. With the exception of his religious wars, the sedentary Arab has usually preferred paying tribute or taxes to fighting the invader or the conqueror.[101] This is seen in the way he rears his children, to be obedient and non-aggressive. The attitude has its practical base as well: he prefers being taxed to losing his crops or livestock in warfare. However, if sufficiently provoked or if faced with the fait accompli of the loss of his lands, the Arab will eventually fight back.

Because the Arabs were originally a "traveling people--whether as nomads, merchants, or caravan men"--they had to have an artistic medium that could easily be carried with them. This medium was the vocal cords, the speech mechanism of the poet.[102] Thus, language became their means of aesthetic expression rather than just a means of communication. They developed a sensibility to music as well as to the spoken word, music with a far greater number of modes than Western music. The art and the duty of the minstrel, early defined in

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[101] Coon, Caravan, p. 193.

[102] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

great detail, are still observed today: "The first requisites are an extensive repertory . . . , the ability to strike a note without recourse to any instrument, [and] a command of rhythm. . . ."[103]

Arab intellectual activity today, according to Faris, is concerned with the problem of freedom, "freedom of thought and freedom of expression. In spite of the various features of material progress in the means of writing, printing, publishing, and promotion, the Arab book is still exposed to the danger of confiscation if it does not toe the official line."[104] This is particularly true in Syria at the present time. Remarkably enough, it is not true in Egypt. Here, after the revolution, writers "began to use fiction to analyze social and psychological themes. . . . The conflict between the traditional society in which they were raised and the brighter future of which they dreamed is manifested in their writings."[105] Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus, for example, in his novel, Nothing Matters, deals courageously and "with surprising directness . . . with some of the most serious problems existing in socialist Egypt."[106] The work of contemporary Egyptian writers "provides a brilliant mirror of the times through which they

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[103]Hole, Syrian Harvest, p. 164.

[104]Faris, Crescent in Crisis, p. 173.

[105]Matti I. Moosa, "Growth of Modern Arabic Fiction," Critique, XI, 1 (1968), 11.

[106]Trevor LeGassick, "A Malaise in Cairo," The Middle East Journal, 21, 2 (1967), 154.

are passing and therefore is fulfilling one of the accepted roles of imaginative literature in human society."[107]

The Muslim artist has always had "certain traditional forms handed down to him which . . . forbade him to make images of man and animals in the naturalistic manner. Yet there was no lack of realism, no stiffness of form. . . . He suppressed his individuality and fused the nature of his subject matter in the material upon which he worked and in the technique he used."[108] Even among the peasants of the Middle East there is a tradition of "beautifying all the things in daily use. . . ."[109] Donkey carts are carefully carved or painted. Donkeys and horses are bedecked with beads, beautifully braided halters, and brass ornaments. The sherbet and cold drink peddlers have highly polished brass dispensers, and even the shoe shine boys vie with one another to keep their shoe shine stands the most highly polished. "I have seen," says Mosharrafa, "in the most sordid quarters of Cairo, geraniums, sweet basil, and marjoram growing on window-sill pots."[110] The writer has observed the same scene in Syria and Lebanon.

Granted the Arab's sensitivity to beauty, how can one account for the inharmonious conglomeration of furnishings in

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[107] Ibid., pp. 155-56.

[108] Mosharrafa, Modern Egypt, Part I, p. 29.

[109] Ibid., p. 31.

[110] Ibid.

the modern Arab house--Arabesque, Louis XVI, Victorian, Pharaonic (in Egypt), plus a sprinkling of modern steel chairs and glass tables? It typifies the conflict of life in the Middle East today, the "diversity of thought, language, taste, and education."[111] Speaking specifically of Egypt, Mosharrafa observes that a century ago a traveller in Cairo would not have seen "the incongruity of dress and architecture, of manners and crowds which one sees to-day [sic] in our cities."[112] What is said of Egypt is equally true of Syria and Lebanon. These are the marks of a culture in transition. Furthermore, a "leisured sensibility is indispensable to an aesthetic judgment."[113] This is lacking in the modern Middle East, harassed as it is by more pressing economic and political problems.

To conclude, Western art and literature, a descendant of the Greek, puts Man, "the microcosm in the strictest sense," in the center of the universe. It is not very much concerned with the "wonder and mystery of the world and rarely by the sense of a human destiny beyond the visible and tangible. Such things were fundamental in Arab Muslim thought. In their daily lives, certainly, the Arabs were not less 'materialistic' than the Greeks, but they were aware, as few Greeks were aware,

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[111] Ibid., p. 44.

[112] Mosharrafa, Modern Egypt, p. 44.

[113] Ibid., p. 42.

that man is not the measure of all things." This attitude is still "an integral element of any Middle Eastern culture."[114]

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[114]H.A.R. Gibb, Studies in the Civilization of Islam, Boston, 1962, p. 325.

CHAPTER IV

SOME ELEMENTS IN AMERICAN CULTURE COMPARED AND CONTRASTED WITH ARAB CULTURE

> Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.
>
> ---Edward T. Hall

Social Patterns

The basic orientation of American culture is almost diametrically opposed to that of the Middle East. American culture can be characterized as an "individual-centered world."[115] Although the Middle Easterner, too, is individualistic, his individualism lies within the family and kinship group. On the contrary, the American's individualism has no base in the family or clan but is oriented toward self-reliance. He is "conditioned to think for himself, to make his own decisions, and to carve out his future by his own hands. . . . The very definition of growing-up and manhood in his world means rejection of familial protection and dependence is a totally undesirable state for all except married women and children."[116]

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[115]Francis L. K. Hsu, Clan, Caste and Club (Princeton, 1963), p. 1.

[116]Ibid., pp. 1-7.

With the struggle to be free of parental bonds comes also the struggle against moral and religious yokes, leaving the American, all too often, without anything or anyone to live for. Then, without any meaning outside of himself, he tries to achieve a kind of meaning "by conquering the material universe . . . or by exploiting or aggressively improving his fellow human beings in his own or other societies. . . . If the world is not all as he desires it, then it should be changed by his own hands. . . ." Such a society is "dynamic, for it has great internal impetus for change."[117] Middle Eastern society, on the other hand, has been more static. Because in a clan-ordered society the individual's membership in the extended family is automatic and permanent, there is little incentive for him to leave the security of the clan for wider relationships in the outside world. This results in a more static society and culture. It is only recently that the Middle East has experienced the impetus for social change.

In such "tradition-directed" culture as that of the Middle East, children can be prepared at an early age to assume an adult role, for that role is "almost unchanging from generation to generation,"[118] and children learn simply by

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[117] Ibid., p. 3.

[118] David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character with the collaboration of Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer (New Haven, 1950), p. 39.

watching the adults around them. "The parents train the child to succeed them, rather than to 'succeed' by rising in the social system."[119] Because rank is a matter of age, a person rises naturally; very little within him has to be changed. Nor does he have to make many choices.

In the individual-centered American family, on the other hand, the uncertainty and insecurity are great. Success is the individual's own, but so is defeat; there is no one to turn to or depend on without damaging his ego, his self-respect. The American solution to this problem, according to anthropologists, is the formation of clubs among peers. These clubs play an extraordinarily important part in American culture. "The association is the perfect social instrument for those Americans who wish to be private citizens and free individuals and yet, at the same time, public men who are socially bound in their daily lives."[120]

Because of the highly competitive nature of American society, the individual is constantly beset with fears and anxieties, either that he is not getting ahead fast enough, or that someone else will surpass him or encroach on his position. His greatest fear is of failure, for whereas everyone will welcome him when he succeeds, there is no one who will take him in as a matter of course if he fails. In Middle

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[119] Ibid, p. 40.

[120] W. Lloyd Warner, American Life: Dream and Reality (Chicago, 1953 and 1962), p. 227.

Eastern culture the extended family serves the latter function.

There is a social-class system in America, although it is not the same as an economic class system. "Social class refers to levels which are recognizable in the general behavior and social attitudes of the people of the whole community where the level exists. Although economic factors are of prime importance . . . they are insufficient to account for all social-class behavior or for its presence in contemporary America."[121] A child inherits the social status of his family, but this status is not permanently fixed, either for the individual or the family. He may move up (or down) the scale; in other words, there is vertical social mobility. This can be accomplished through several channels: advanced education; intellectual, artistic, or economic achievement; marriage. Today, however, the principal route lies in advanced education. In the contemporary Middle East, social mobility is also possible, but it is far more difficult than in the United States because of the lack of educational opportunity for all individuals. Change of social status through marriage is rare in the Middle East.

A social-class society demands that the mobile individuals be very flexible in their behavior. They must learn new behavior and, what is even more difficult, unlearn old behavior. They must, therefore, be "highly adaptable emotionally

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[121] Ibid., p. 72.

and intellectually to be able to tolerate continuing uncertainties and to live in insecure situations."[122] According to David Riesman, social mobility in contemporary society depends less on what one is or does than on "what others think of one--and how competent one is in manipulating others and being oneself manipulated . . . the product now in demand . . . is personality."[123]

In contrast to a social-class society, caste societies fix the permanent rank of an individual and a family and regulate marriage within each level. Within the social-class system in the United States there has been, and frequently still is, a color-caste system. This has resulted in a strange "status configuration"[124] and in conflict, which is producing rapid social change. The rules of color caste are less well defined in the North than in the South. Interracial marriage, for example, has been legally impossible in the deep South. In the North it is often legally possible but socially disapproved.[125]

Up to the present time, marriage within the same religion and within the same sect of that religion, within the same

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[122]Warner, American Life, p. 134.

[123]The Lonely Crowd, p. 46.

[124]Warner, p. 89.

[125]Ibid., p. 94.

race, and within the same socio-economic group has been thought a more desirable pattern than marriage outside any one of these. In recent years there have been many exceptions to that pattern, but it is fairly safe to say that it is still the pattern of the majority. In this respect, American culture parallels that of the Middle East. The difference lies in the penalties imposed for non-conformance to this pattern. In American culture the extreme penalties are social ostracism and disinheritance, though the latter is very rare in contemporary society. In cases of exogamy in America, if the person marries above his social level, he is said to have made a "good marriage"; if, however, he marries below, there are usually "raised eyebrows" and "elaborate explanations"[126]--nothing more. In the Middle East, on the contrary, the penalties can be far more severe and still are in the majority of cases.

In the United States the age of marriage is often related to status: the upper class tend to marry late, while the lower class marry young. Size of family, too, can follow class structure, with the upper class having small families, the lower, large.[127] Other factors, such as religion, can alter this pattern. However, one of the principal reasons

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[126]Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[127]W. L. Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven, 1941), p. 252.

for the decrease in family size in recent years is the fact that "children, once received as potential added hands who soon could earn their keep, have become in the industrial age mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, and minds to educate. Today children are financial liabilities from birth through their schooling."[128]

"In order to get ahead in the world young families have become mobile, migrating for added education, better jobs, and in response to the demands of military service." Compared with Middle Eastern culture and, in fact, with all other countries in the world, "we are a people on wheels--one family in five moves annually and one in three of these crosses country lines every year."[129]

Within the family in America the usual pattern, especially in the middle class, shows the father as "breadwinner and playmate of the children," and the mother as housekeeper and "disciplinarian, not only of the children but also of the husband."[130] There is nothing of the patriarchal pattern in American culture. On the contrary, the theoretical equality of the sexes is almost a reality.[131]

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[128]Reuben Hill, "The American Family Today," Issues of the Sixties, ed. Leonard Freedman and Cornelius P. Cotter (Belmont, California, 1961), p. 235.

[129]Ibid., p. 236.

[130]Hsu, Clan, p. 193.

[131]Ibid.

In contrast to the Arab pattern of patrilineal inheritance, an American man can, in general, make his own will in any way he wishes. Although he usually cannot disinherit his wife, he can cut off his children, but this latter is not a general pattern.

Both men and women can marry as frequently as they are widowed or divorced, and "there is no significant stigma against either,"[132] while in Middle Eastern society there are definite rules governing both situations.

The majority of marriages in the United States are still performed in a church, and the type of ceremony varies with the church and the individual. In the Middle East variation occurs, of course, between Muslim and Christian; but there is also a great difference in the ceremony between the urban and rural communities. In the United States, unlike the Middle East, there are also many civil marriages, although this is not the common pattern.

Divorce is much more common in the United States than in the Middle East, despite the supposedly easy formula in Islam. The cultures differ also in their treatment of the children of a divorced couple. In America it depends upon the situation, the judge in the case awarding the children to whichever parent he sees fit, although perhaps more frequently they are awarded to the mother. In the Middle East, on the contrary, especially

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[132] Ibid.

among Muslims, the children belong to the father.

In contrast to traditional Middle Eastern culture, especially rural culture, where the child is introduced early to his duties and obligations within the family, American culture emphasizes the child's "adjustment." The child is taught "to exercise his freedoms and his rights."[133] In the majority of families, especially in the middle class, the infant and the child are the center of attention. Youth is glorified--almost worshipped--with the result that children and young people grow up with an "overwhelming sense of self-importance."[134] Very little importance is given to the older people who brought them up. Instead the child is oriented very early in life, "not to his ancestors, not to his parents or to his image of their exalted selves, but to his peers; that is, the other kids on the block, the other kids at school, the people who will do a great deal of the job of socializing him. . . . The parents are anxious and judge their success with their children by how the children get along, how popular they are; the parents act as chauffeurs and managers for the continuous stage performance of their children in the peer group."[135]

Because the individual in American culture has no fore-

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[133]Hsu, Clan, p. 194.

[134]Ibid., p. 195.

[135]David Riesman, "From Morality to Morale," The Character of Americans, ed. Michael McGiffert (Homewood, Illinois, 1964), pp. 252-53.

ordained place in society, he must make a place for himself on his own merit, and this usually entails cutting himself off from his family. He has been "conditioned to think in terms of the first person singular, here and now: his own status, and his own chances for advancement. . . ."[136]

Although the American child is encouraged to be independent, to think for himself, his parents refuse to let him enter the adult world. Children are left with sitters while their parents go out to their parties. If the parents entertain at home, the children are fed and put to bed before the guests arrive. When children have little part in their parents' social activities, they tend to develop a world of their own, which parents are supposed to keep out of. By the same token, parents are not supposed to "burden their children" with adult problems. Children live in a "near-ideal realm" of their nursery tales while their parents "struggle in a world of tough competition where cunning and falsehood are often rewarded and respected. . . . [Thus] the majority of Americans enter adolescence with a romantic concept of life. Unprepared for the imperfections of the real world, they tend to be easily disillusioned."[137] This, of course, is true primarily of the middle class. Among the very poor, among a large proportion of blacks and the immigrants from southern

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[136]Hsu, Clan, p. 195.

[137]Ibid., pp. 200-201.

and eastern Europe, the brush with reality comes early in life. In the lower classes, too, there are fewer restrictions and inhibitions. The lower-class adolescent expresses his aggression through fist-fights, the middle-class youth through "initiative, ambition, verbal dexterity, and learned economic skills."[138]

Another aspect of the social patterns of a culture, religion, in America has many faces, with every major religion being represented, and those divided into many different denominations and sects. According to anthropologist Francis Hsu, the struggle among the different churches and missions tends "to revolve around earthly glamour and prestige derivable from size, power, and popularity. . . ."[139] However that may be, religion in American culture is more diversified than in the Middle East.

On the whole, American society is far more secular than that of the Middle East. Religion does not enter the marketplace, nor the government (except ostensibly at certain ceremonies), nor the courts of law; nor does it have any influence upon education, except in the small minority of parochial schools. Americans tend to "compartmentalize" religion. In the Middle East, on the contrary, Islam affects all aspects of the culture, especially education, and is sometimes the only

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[138]Warner, American Life, p. 110.

[139]Clan, p. 228.

law practiced. Even in the predominantly Christian areas of the Middle East, religion--or at least the forms of religion--plays a more important role in the culture than it does in America.

"Language is an absolute necessity to a social system, not only as the medium of social relations at a given moment but also as the medium by which the cultural forms of a society are transmitted from one point in time to another. It is . . . inextricably interwoven with the structure of which it is a part."[140] To put it another way, "language . . . is the effect and the expression of a certain world view that is manifested in the culture. . . ."[141] Thus, English presents impressions made on our senses as human activities brought about by our will (see Note 10). This would appear to be significant since American culture is active and dynamic; and activities, including change, it is believed, are brought about by the individual will rather than by fate.

Both logic and rhetoric are "evolved out of culture" and are not universal but vary "from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture at a given time."[142] Modern American English reflects our pragmatic society in both its vocabulary and its rhetorical patterns. The precise word,

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[140]Warner, American Life, pp. 185-86.

[141]Kaplan, in Language Learning, op. cit., p. 2.

[142]Ibid.

the concise paragraph, and logical development of the essay seem to be the accepted pattern of modern non-fictional prose. In Arabic, "paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative."[143] In a paper written by an Arabic-speaking student, 80 per cent of the sentences in the first paragraph began with a coordinating element, 50 per cent in the second paragraph. In the whole passage (210 words) there were thirteen coordinators. In other words, almost all the ideas were coordinately linked rather than subordinately.

The vocabulary of modern English seems, also, to reflect the emphasis on technology, and every so-called science has its own jargon. There is the vocabulary of social science, political science, library science, linguistics, and so on, each one quite incomprehensible to the other. Despite these specialized vocabularies, the language of modern English itself--devoid of ideas--is not considered an art form as the Arabic language is. Modern American culture seems to reward precise, concise language in prose, poetry and speech; while Arab culture rewards the florid, turgid style.

The way a people spend their leisure time is also indicative of their social patterns. Much of American play involves competition; it is "seldom an autonomous activity."[144]

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[143] Ibid., p. 6.

[144] Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (New York, 1959), p. 57.

There is great interest in spectator sports, especially baseball and football, watched either at the scene or over TV. However, there is also an increasing number of people actively engaged in all kinds of sports, both winter and summer. With the advent of the trailer and camper, more and more families go camping together. As the amount of leisure time increases in America, more activities must be designed to fill it. Hobbies of all sorts are encouraged, as well as do-it-yourself projects.

The situation is quite different in Middle Eastern culture. A great deal of their leisure time is spent by men in the coffee houses talking about politics and other issues, and by women at coffee parties in their homes, where they gossip or play cards. About the only spectator sports are football (our soccer) and horse racing, and these do not have the almost universal appeal that spectator sports have in this country. There is by no means the comparable number of active sports enthusiasts in the Middle East, with the possible exception of the city of Beirut, Lebanon, where water sports and skiing are very popular. Family camping for pleasure is unheard of in the Middle East, as are do-it-yourself projects, and hobbies in general are rare.

Economic Patterns

In the United States the economic pattern, whether industrial or agricultural, has become one of large scale pro-

duction. The small shopkeeper, the small farmer, the small factory owner have all but disappeared. In their place are the gigantic industrial complex. Technology reigns in the American economy. In place of the artisan who took pride in his work, the assembly line rolls inexorably by the human automatons, who do nothing all day but place a screw in a certain spot or a bolt in another on what, miles later, will become the finished product. The supplier has got farther and farther away from the consumer, making the transaction ever more impersonal.

The ideal of craftsmanship is now all but lost. For the artisan there is no "ulterior motive in work other than the product being made and the processes of its creation. The details of daily work are meaningful because they are not detached in the worker's mind from the product of the work. There is no split of work and play, or work and culture. The craftman's way of livelihood determines and infuses his entire mode of living."[145] This fits the Middle Eastern pattern but no longer the American. Today the American workman is alienated from the product; he owns neither the product nor the tools of production. "In the labor contract he sells his time, energy, and skill into the power of others."[146] In the

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[145]C. Wright Mills, White Collar: The American Middle Class (New York, 1953), p. 220.

[146]Ibid., p. 225.

nineteenth century Thoreau objected "to the division of labor since it divided the worker, not merely the work, reduced him from a man to an operative, and enriched the few at the expense of the many."[147] The twentieth century has seen a tremendous increase in this pattern.

"In the realm of business, which is the dominant model of United States life, tradition is equated with experience, and experience is thought of as being very close to if not synonymous with know-how. Know-how is one of our prized possessions. . . ."[148]

Ours is an inflationary economy, with wages and prices racing each other to the top. Built into the economy is the idea of planned obsolescence; nothing is made to last too long; and, goaded by repetitious advertising, Americans buy and buy and discard what is still good in favor of the new model or a different gadget. Americans waste a tremendous amount of things; food and paper are just two examples. The amount of food thrown away by one American family in one day would feed several families in much of the Middle East. The amount of paper strewn over United States campuses or city streets and highways would wrap thousands of loaves of bread in the Middle East, where bread is wrapped in yesterday's newspaper, if it is wrapped at all, because paper is so scarce.

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[147]Quoted by Mills, p. 225.

[148]Hall, Silent Language, p. 21.

Environmental Relationships

Perhaps nowhere else in the world has man done as much to modify his environment as he has in the United States. "Man has developed extensions for practically everything he used to do with his body,"[149] from air-conditioned and heated houses to power tools and TV.

In American cities people live in high-rise apartment buildings, while the pattern in the suburbs, towns, and rural areas is predominantly the one-family dwelling. These, for the most part, are centrally heated, and many are air-conditioned in summer. There is no common floor plan, but the majority of homes and apartments have a separate living room, kitchen, bath, and at least one bedroom. The modern American home is equipped with all sorts of labor-saving devices and gadgets, products of American technical know-how. The more gadgets, the happier the housewife.

At the disposal of the American cook is an infinite variety of foods, products not only of our own diversified economy but augmented by products from all over the world.

In the realm of environmental relationships, perhaps more than anywhere else, is American short-sightedness, the inability to see time in terms of the long view, evident. Or is it another facet of our culture--the greed for material things? In any event, Americans have learned to tame their

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[149]Hall, Silent Language, p. 60.

environment, to conserve it, to rehabilitate it; yet they also constantly pollute and destroy it.

Educational Patterns

The American approach to education is primarily pragmatic, with the emphasis more and more upon the sciences and technology rather than upon the humanities. The attempt is to train the student to think for himself, to be logical, critical, and creative. Supposedly, he learns by doing. In contrast, until very recently, education in the Middle East has been primarily religious and philosophic, based upon the teachings of Islam. Due, also, to the strong influence of France upon Syria and Lebanon during the past century and more, the educational systems of these two countries are based almost totally upon the French system, with its emphasis on humanism, its rote method of learning, and its preparation for government examinations. Subject matter is systematically imparted to the students, reviewed and reviewed, and regurgitated on the examination.

American education is decentralized, while in the Middle East public education is completely government controlled. However, in Lebanon almost all education above the primary level is done by private organizations, predominantly French and American.

For many years universities in the Middle East have been centers of political activity, to the detriment of academic

pursuits. In Syria, for example, weeks--even months--have been lost from classes due to strikes and demonstrations related to politics. Until recently, American college students gave little or no thought to politics; such activity was farthest from the students' minds. Although they have always tended to exhibit resistance to authority, in the past such resistance has been aimed primarily at parental authority and, by extension, at the university as the restraining father figure away from home. They exhibited a "need for peer acceptance and personal independence."[150] The present generation of college students in the United States is taking a much clearer look at American politics, and, although a very vocal minority is bent on destruction alone, there are many more who constructively desire to seek a better system. The American student is usually "spontaneous and imaginative."[151] The Middle Eastern student, on the contrary, often lacks imination. His revolutionary activity, like that of the American minority, is bent on tearing down the old with no idea of how to rebuild or replace. This lack on the part of Middle Eastern students, however, is more understandable and excusable when one realizes the long years of foreign domination in the area and the resultant lack of experience and training in self-government in these countries.

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[150] Hsu, Clan, p. 279.

[151] Ibid.

Value Concepts and Attitudes

The so-called middle class ethic, for good or ill, forms the principal values of American culture. The emphasis, again, is on pragmatic goals, on technological progress, and on traditional virtues, including accumulation and achievement--on "putting off today's pleasures for tomorrow's gain."[152] Stress is laid upon the principle of success, especially economic success, and social mobility is the driving force. This concept --that "man could accomplish anything," that through work he could become "creator"--"evolved in the Renaissance."[153] The Protestant middle class ethic that developed along with this concept "encouraged and justified the social development of a type of man capable of ceaseless, methodical labor. The psychology of the religious man and of the economic man thus coincided. . . ."[154]

Americans give at least lip service to the democratic ideals, trying also to fit others into the same mold regardless of the readiness or willingness of another culture to accept our pattern.

Respect for law and for authority, whether or not it ever existed in America, is at a distinctly low ebb at the present time. There is disregard for law in the Middle East also, but

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[152]Warner, American Life, p. 124.

[153]Mills, White Collar, p. 217.

[154]Ibid.

the basic reasons for it differ. Middle Eastern indifference to law stems from the Arab's traditional individualism and loyalty to his tribe rather than to any governmental authority; whereas the American's disregard for law is more in the nature of a protest against what the authority stands for. In Arab countries the culture does much of the work of the law. If your pocket is picked, you shout and scream and rouse the street to help you, for to waste time looking for a policeman would insure the thief's escape. In America, on the other hand, the populace, afraid of becoming involved, would stand idly by or might call the police. The prime effort in the Middle East is to stay <u>out</u> of court, and so you call on that characteristic lay institution, the <u>mediator</u>, to help you, rather than hiring a lawyer.

Attitudes toward work differ in America and in the Middle East. In American culture there is no stigma attached to manual labor. Except in the very upper class, very few American families have servants. American women are used to doing their own cooking and housework. In some households even the men help with the housework and do some of the cooking. A Middle Easterner would not understand the cartoon which appeared recently in a popular magazine, showing a very young couple in their back yard, <u>he</u> standing helplessly over the outdoor grill while the hamburgers were going up in smoke, and <u>she</u> saying indignantly: "Didn't your father ever teach you to

cook?" The Middle Easterner would be puzzled both from the standpoint of attitude toward work, and more particularly from the standpoint of bisexuality; that is, the differentiation between the behavior pattern of the sexes.[155] A man in the Middle East would never take on what have always been the duties of a woman. There is no unisex there.

Both men and women in the United States work in their gardens, often repair their own cars, and do repair work around the house. With various do-it-yourself kits they build new furniture, refinish old furniture, sometimes even build their own homes. Among the comparable class in the Middle East such activities are unthinkable.

Many college students in America do all kinds of work, including manual labor, to pay for their tuition. In the Middle East, on the contrary, it is difficult to get even the poorest students to do any kind of work with their hands, for it is considered undignified and beneath the status of even a partially educated man. By the same token, nursing--in America a respected profession for women for the better part of a century--has only recently been accepted as a profession for respectable girls in the Middle East.

The attitude toward work in America has been changing from the old "gospel of work" to a "leisure ethic" resulting in a "split between work and leisure." This alienation means

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[155]Hall, Silent Language, p. 49.

that people work hard to make money in order to "live"; it means "boredom and the frustration of potentially creative effort"; it means the seeking of "values that matter . . . outside of work."[156] On the contrary, in the Middle East if a man has leisure at all, it is woven more closely into the fabric of his life; there is not the same dichotomy between work and leisure found in American culture.

Americans and Middle Easterners put a different value on time. Americans tend to think of time as something fixed, "something around us . . . from which one cannot escape. . . ." It is thought of as a road "stretching into the future, along which one progresses." The road has separate "segments or compartments" which must be "kept discrete ('one thing at a time')."[157] Americans consider people impractical who cannot schedule time or follow a prearranged schedule. "Promptness is also valued highly. . . . If people are not prompt, it is often taken as an insult or as an indication that they are not quite responsible."[158] Great importance is placed upon promises to meet deadlines and appointments, and there are penalties for being late and for not keeping commitments. The Middle Easterner has no such feeling about time. Being an hour late to an appointment entails no penalty, for it is equivalent

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[156]Mills, White Collar, p. 236.

[157]Hall, Silent Language, p. 19.

[158]Ibid., p. 21.

to only five or ten minutes in his culture.

In American culture people should look forward to and plan for the future, not dwell too much on the past. But for the American the "future is not very far ahead of him. Results must be obtained in the foreseeable future--one or two years or, at the most, five or ten. . . . This makes it almost impossible for us as a nation to engage in long-range planning."[159] The Arab, on the other hand, looks back to his history of from three to six thousand years and lays less stress upon the future. If something doesn't get done today, Ma'lesh, bukra; never mind, tomorrow it will get done. And if the goals aren't accomplished in five or ten years, never mind, perhaps in twenty-five or fifty years they will be. Meanwhile, just today is to be lived.

But Americans never have enough time. In a recent article, newspaper columnist Erma Bombeck tells of a youngster's essay on "What I didn't do last summer" calling it "quite a commentary on the American way of life.":

> My dad and I were going fishing but we didn't have the time. We were going to an amusement park, but we couldn't make it. We were going camping and just goof around, but we ran out of weekends.[160]

Dad was too busy making a living to live.

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[159] Ibid., p. 134.

[160] The Ann Arbor News, October 8, 1969, p. 30.

American culture is "monochronic"; that is, people tend to do one thing at a time.[161] If a person has an appointment with another, he deals exclusively with that person during that time. Not so the Middle Easterner. An American finds it quite disconcerting to encounter many things going on at the same time in one office--a veritable three-ring circus at times--and he tends to resent all the interruptions which are dealt with during the time of his appointment.

Not only are patterns of time or the scheduling of time quite inflexible in the United States, but also the agenda on that schedule. Deviations from the plan are not looked upon kindly. In the Middle East, on the contrary, "refusal of one party to come to the point and discuss the topic of a meeting often means he cannot agree to your terms but doesn't want to turn you down, or simply that he cannot discuss the matters under consideration because the time is not yet ripe," and he will not think it improper "to meet without ever touching on the topic of the meeting."[162]

Americans' attitude toward space, or territoriality, is also different from that of Middle Easterners. Americans queue up to buy tickets and the like, while in the Middle East people are likely to crowd in together, all trying to get to the ticket window or the counter at once. The pattern of

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[161]Hall, Silent Language, p. 138.

[162]Ibid., p. 141.

American culture discourages bodily contact with strangers.[163] Such contact doesn't bother the Middle Easterner; he enjoys crowds. He loves crowded beaches, for example, and can't understand the American's desire to find a quiet, uninhabited cove for his swim.

In American culture space, as well as time, is organized and numbered. In cities, towns, and even rural districts streets are named or numbered, and houses are numbered. Quite the contrary in the Middle Eastern city: there may be no street names, except on a map or in the minds of the citizenry--never on street signs--and there are no house numbers. However, all buildings are named, and to everyone but the stranger, finding a certain address is quite simple.

American culture is an "active" culture. People are not considered to be <u>doing</u> anything unless they are active. Just sitting is not considered doing anything.[164] This is not true of Arab culture. In American culture a person has to work to get ahead. It is not an automatic thing based on the family, as it generally is in much of the Middle East.

Variety is demanded in American life--variety in work, in entertainment, in food, clothing, and material objects. The wife and mother must consider what new dish to serve for dinner, or her family will complain that "we had that <u>last</u>

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[163] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 149.

[164] <u>Ibid</u>., 139.

night!" The young lady looks over her wardrobe to see what she should wear today. It would never do to wear the same outfit she had on yesterday. The wife complains to her husband that she doesn't have a thing to wear. What she means is that she hasn't anything new to wear. Children demand new toys even though they have a room full already; father must have a new car although the present one is only two years old and in good running condition; and mother must have new clothes because last year's wardrobe is out of style. Planned obsolescence and planned change are part of our economy and our culture.

On the contrary, in much of the Middle East the family knows exactly what it will eat for breakfast, dinner and supper, day in and day out. The day's schedule for many people varies little, if any, from year to year. Except in cities like Beirut and Cairo--and there only among the upper and upper middle classes--clothing and other possessions are made to last a long time and must do so; an individual's wardrobe is too small to afford many changes.

Finally, aesthetic values and art forms differ from culture to culture. In contemporary America aesthetic values seem to reveal Americans' preoccupation with technology: electronic music, the use of "utilitarian" materials in sculpture and other art forms, utilitarian architecture, and so on. American literature, too, began with the turn of the century

to reflect the problems of industrialization and capitalism, and developed this theme with a high degree of "skill and intensity"[165] during the twenties and thirties. With the advance of the "machine age" came a great increase in the entertainment arts: movies, popular music, popular magazine stories, the comic strip, and finally television. However, American culture has "exhibited, on the one hand, an immense vitality and, on the other hand, a prevailing sense of chaos and a lack of positive values." To a large degree popular art has been escapist, "grotesque or macabre"; it has sought "novel effects by dissonance and incongruity, or to play on that suppressed propensity toward violence that [is] one of the most pervasive moods of urban capitalist society."[166] On the face of it, it seems a strange phenomenon that a country that had always prided itself on its optimism and that had, on the whole, "more substantial reasons for optimism than . . . any other country" should produce art "so largely concerned with frustration and maladjustment."[167] However, there are several reasons for this phenomenon. In the first place, the artist in American culture has always held a somewhat "anomalous position." Because pragmatic American society has "never shown sufficient friendliness

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[165]Henry Bamford Parkes, The American Experience: An Interpretation of the History and Civilization of the American People (New York, 1947), p. 278.

[166]Ibid., p. 282.

[167]Ibid., p. 283.

or respect for aesthetic activities," the artist "was likely to feel a sense of isolation and maladjustment. . . ."[168] Another and perhaps more important reason is the disillusionment of the artist with American society. Americans had always believed that "evil could be overcome" by the "assertion and tension of the will." But after the "triumph of industrial capitalism, the disparity between the original ideal and the reality grew wider, and the possibility of a successful assertion of the will diminished. Yet American culture offered only the alternatives of success and failure . . . there was no middle ground, so that the acceptance of failure could lead only to cynicism or despair, not to profounder wisdom."[169]

With World War II and the subsequent threat of nuclear annihilation, came the final disillusion, which has alienated the artist from American society. Seeing no order in reality, seeing life as absurd, he resorts to the absurd in his art. Or, seeing the evils in modern society, he protests through acerbic satire or shocking revulsion. Contemporary Middle Eastern literature comes closer to the latter in its protest against the social ills in its own society, although it is far from as violent in its protest as American literature.

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[168] Ibid., p. 284.

[169] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

MODEL READING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ARAB CULTURE

> Lionel Trilling once likened culture to a prison. It is in fact a prison unless one knows there is a key to unlock it.
>
> ---Edward T. Hall

Armed with some of the keys to unlock the cultures of America and the Middle East, we will first try the door of Arab culture through contemporary Arabic short stories, attempting through them to acquaint the students with the concepts of their own culture. With an understanding of their own culture, with an awareness of what culture means in this context, and with the knowledge of what to look for in another culture, the students can then assault the door of American culture through modern American short stories (which will be discussed in Chapter VI).[170]

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[170] A word to teachers of other languages: although this discussion is aimed at teachers of English to speakers of Arabic in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, the basic principle can be applied to many languages and cultures. There are, for example, several fine contemporary novels from Latin America which have been translated into English and which portray the society and culture of those countries. There are, too, several excellent collections of modern Japanese short stories, as well as contemporary Japanese novels translated into English.

It is fitting that the short story should be the vehicle for our purpose, not only because of its effectiveness as literature and as the purveyor of culture, but also because of its particular historical significance in Arab culture. "The Arab genius for storytelling and romance expressed itself from earliest recorded times; the desert campfire, after a hard day's travelling . . . by its intimacy encouraged the flow of talk about past glories and present trials. . . . Modern Arab authors are building upon the foundations laboriously laid by their predecessors."[171] This Chapter will use as models two stories from Syria, two from Lebanon, and two from Egypt.[172]

Syria

"The Dead Afternoon," by Walid Ikhlassi,[173] is the story of one afternoon in the lives of a boy, his little sister, and their grandmother in the city of Aleppo. It illustrates to perfection the attitude toward time and activity. Contrary to the attitude in much of American culture, for the Arab time does not always have to be spent in doing something. Shown, too, is the importance of the older generation; they are an accepted and respected part of the household. The story

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[171] A. J. Arberry, "Introduction," Modern Arabic Short Stories, sel. and tr. by Denys Johnson-Davies (London, 1967), pp. vii-viii.

[172] The Appendix contains sample pages showing a possible way in which these stories might be handled in a reader.

[173] In Modern Arabic Short Stories, tr. Johnson-Davies, pp. 19-21.

illustrates, also, the importance of the forms of religion to the Muslim.

> The wall-clock struck five, filling the house with its ringing. I was watching the swallows from my window as they crossed the city sky. . . .
>
> The evening, meanwhile, prepared to occupy its place in a new day.
>
> 'May they find favour with God,' I said to my grandmother, who had finished her prayers.
>
> 'I was late performing the afternoon prayer,' she answered sadly.
>
> 'Never mind, there will be other afternoons.'
>
> . . . .
>
> I looked at an enormous fly squatting on the outside of the window-pane: it seemed to be defying me, sitting there so close to my nose.
>
> 'This fly has annoyed me all day,' I said, 'and I haven't been able to kill it.'
>
> I was not conscious of the passage of time: the fly had taken up so much of it.
>
> . . . .
>
> Turning again to the window, I was surprised to find that the fly was still asleep.

Shortly thereafter, the clock strikes seven. Two hours have passed with no activity but the contemplation of the fly, some brief conversation, and the switching on of the radio. A brief urge on the part of the boy to get out of the room dies aborning:

> All at once I wanted to get out of that room, but I had nowhere particular to go, so I changed my mind and stayed where I was.

Returning to the window, he continues to watch the sleeping fly but is jarred from his contemplation by the shrill announcement from his little sister that the fly is dead. With the striking of the clock, indicating further passage of time, the boy realizes he has been contemplating a dead thing all afternoon.

Discussion of this story should evoke the students' concept of time and activity. Is doing nothing a waste of time? What does it mean to waste time? What do Arab proverbs say about time? Are there any proverbs comparable to the English "Lost time is never found again"? In Arab culture is contemplation of a living thing any different from contemplation of a dead thing?

Two other aspects of Arab culture combined in the story are worth mentioning: the importance of language and story-telling and the importance of the past. One might well say that both are common to children in all cultures, that all children cling to the familiar and therefore to their past experiences. This is true; nevertheless, although short stories are usually microcosms of the real world, they often emphasize, exaggerate, or symbolize only one part of it. The children's attitude in this story seems to symbolize the attitude of Arab culture as a whole.

> I heard my sister asking my grandmother to tell us the story of The Singing Nightingale this evening and my grandmother saying,
>
> 'Didn't we finish it yesterday?'

The little girl cried out petulantly:

'Yesterday! Yesterday's over.'

'You won't hear the story of the singing nightingale anymore,' I whispered to myself and I was filled with sadness.

'I'll tell you a new one today,' said my grandmother.

'We don't want a new story,' exclaimed my sister.

'But the old one's finished.'

'It's not finished,' shouted my sister.

I tried to excuse my sister. . . , but I too felt annoyed; I too wanted the old story.

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"The Dream," by Abdel Salam al-Ujaili,[174] is an excellent and amusing example of the strength of superstitution in Arab culture, especially in the villages, and of the influence of the sheikh or holy man in the village. Mohamed Weess has had a dream, which Sheikh Mohamed Sa'id interprets as a sign of Mohamed Weess's approaching death.

'It pains me to face you with this,' replied the Sheikh. 'However, your consolation is that God's mercy will soon be yours and that death must come to us. No one who has this dream, Mohamed Weess, lives for more than forty days.'

Having delivered himself of this pronouncement, the Sheikh hurried off to make his ablutions for the midday prayer, leaving Mohamed Weess seated on the ground in a daze, his legs completely incapable of bearing the weight of his body.

Since in the village everyone knows everyone else's business--another aspect of the culture--by evening everyone knew of

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[174]Modern Arabic Short Stories, pp. 22-27.

Mohamed's approaching end, and, true to still another cultural pattern, began to visit him.

> The village was one whose people believed in the interpretation of dreams and so by the following evening everyone was firmly convinced that Mohamed Weess would be dead within forty days. Singly, then in groups, the men paid visits to Mohamed Weess; he was thus forced to keep his house to receive those who came, in anticipation of his death, to enquire into his health, and to condole with him, during his lifetime, on his death. The womenfolk of Mohamed Weess's household came in search of news, casting telling glances at him. They found him in perfect health but with his features set in an abstracted air; mourning and wailing they beseeched God to intervene with the Angel of Death who was seeking to snatch him away while still as fit as ever. Though Mohamed Weess felt no pain or discomfort, the many precautions taken on his behalf, and the many tender enquiries made of him, induced in him an expectancy of pain and discomfort. He stuck it out for the first ten days and continued going and coming between his home and the cattle market. Soon, however, he was unable to hold out any longer; his nerves gave way and people began paying their visits to him during the daytime. . . . Twenty days from the date of his dream Mohamed Weess's family found that it was easier not to take up and remake his bed each night for the simple reason that he now remained in it night and day.

Things go from bad to worse. Mohamed stops eating and spends his time in prayer. People speak of the "spiritual glow that emanated from his face and of the mystical and mysterious phrases which fell from his lips as he prostrated himself in prayer." Then on the thirty-ninth day the schoolmaster of the village returns from his vacation and goes into action. He, of course, represents the <u>break with tradition, the changing culture</u>.

> . . . when Mohamed Atallah, the elderly school porter, informed me about him I was at a loss to know whether to laugh or feel sorry for him. I therefore set off with

> Mohamed Atallah to comfort him--or to condole with him on his impending death. The courtyard . . . was now crowded with people who had come to witness the slow creeping of death into his soul. In one corner were the men, in another, the women, while in the third stood the sheep and goats which Mohamed Weess's friends had brought during his lifetime that they might be slaughtered on the morrow for the departure of his soul.
>
> . . . .
>
> I had visited Mohamed Weess in a mood of scepticism and curiosity, but the extreme change that had come over him brought me up with a start and persuaded me that he would in fact die on the morrow as fate had decreed. I was filled with anger as I listened to Sheikh Mohamed Sa'id loudly reciting the Koran and glancing sideways at me.

The next paragraph illustrates the conflict between the old and the new in Arab culture.

> Between myself and this Sheikh, whose nature was compounded of simplicity, stupidity, and cunning, there existed an age-long enmity. I fought against the charlatanism and trickery with which he gained control of the souls of the ignorant villagers, while he never missed an opportunity to set them against me, accusing me of teaching blasphemy to my students and filling their minds with disobedience against God and His Prophet.

Naji, the schoolteacher, is a descendant of the Prophet's son-in-law. Making use of this fact, he goes before dawn of the fortieth day to Mohamed Weess's house, taking with him a prickly pear which he had brought from Damascus.

> I knocked loudly several times, then pushed open the door shouting:
>
> 'Give praise to God, Mohamed Weess.'
>
> He started up from sleep in alarm. 'What is it?' he cried.
>
> . . . .

'I have come to you because I have just been awakened by my ancestor Zain al-Abidin, God bless him, who said to me: "Go to Mohamed Weess and tell him that God has tested him and found that he is a repentant servant of His. Give him this, one of the fruits of Paradise, and order him to pray with you and make two prostrations before the rising sun; in the first of the prostrations he should recite the Sura of al-Nasr and God will so extend his days that he shall live to see his children and his children's children"'

Mohamed Weess swallowed his spittle. It seemed to me that his brain had not taken in all I had said as he gazed at the prickly pear I held in my hand. (I was sure that no one in the village had ever seen a prickly pear before.) I peeled it and stuffed it in his mouth, inviting him to swallow it, seeds and all. I then dragged him to a corner of the room.

'Prepare for prayers, Mohamed Weess, before day breaks.'

'But I haven't performed my ablutions, Mr. Naji.'

I recollected that I too had not performed my ablutions, but fearing that the effect of my suggestion would be lost, I exclaimed:

'Make a symbolical washing, O Mohamed Weess, as the Koran allows. Strike your hands upon the ground.'

. . . .

Within an hour the whole village had heard the new story about Mohamed Weess. All those people who had filled the courtyard of Mohamed Weess's house yesterday were now crowding the schoolyard, all tumbling over themselves to learn how it was that my ancestor, Zain al-Abidin, had come to me bearing God's pardon for Mohamed Weess.

Mohamed Weess didn't die, and Naji felt he had scored a victory over the Sheikh. But, he adds:

. . . was it in fact a victory? In truth I am not sure. My doubts . . . are increased by the fact that I have been unable to reduce by one single person the number of those who take part in communal prayers behind Sheikh Mohamed Sa'id; on the contrary, I have increased his congregation by one: the village teacher, which is to say myself! To preserve the honour of my forefather, about whom I had

> fabricated my dream, I am obliged to attend in person behind Sheikh Mohamed Sa'id at all prayers--with ablutions performed, not symbolically but in full!

This latter paragraph shows another facet of Arab culture: the importance of and respect for one's ancestors, as well as one's living elders. This, of course, together with the strength of religious superstition, makes it possible for the Sheikh to exercise such a strong influence over the people, even to compel the enlightened schoolmaster to perform a ritual in which he has no faith.

Lebanon

"A Space Ship of Tenderness to the Moon," by Laila Baalabaki,[175] is a microcosm of the modern generation in the urban centers like Beirut. In the first place, the author is a woman, unheard of a generation ago. Secondly, the language and description of love between a young married couple is very frank for Arab culture, in which bedroom scenes were not for public consumption unless, perhaps, stylized in poetry. Third, it is this generation, educated and influenced by the West, that shows in its thinking a remarkable similarity to Western youth. But there is still the conflict with tradition. "Why," he asks his wife, "do you refuse to have children?" Bearing children--the woman's role in the Arab world--is the raison d'etre of marriage.

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[175] Modern Arabic Short Stories, pp. 130-136.

> 'It's a year and several months since we married and you've been refusing and refusing, though you were crazy about children before we married; you were dying for them.'

Then he accuses her of not loving him because she refuses "to become pregnant from him." Hinting at the strength of public opinion on their lives and of the still strong control on young people before marriage, she says:

> Sarcastically I told him that he was afraid of them, those others, those buffons in the city. He used to beg for their assent, their blessing, their agreement, so that he might see me and I him, so that he might embrace me and I him, so that we might each drown the other in our love. They used to determine for us our place of meeting, the number of steps to be taken to get there, the time, the degree to which our voices could be raised, the number of breaths we took. And I would watch them as they secretly scoffed at us, shamelessly slept with the bodies they loved, ate three meals a day, smoked cigarettes with the cups of coffee and carafes of arak, and guffawed as they vulgarly chewed over stories about us and thought up patterns of behaviour for us to put into effect the following day.

In one paragraph all the old certainties of life in the Arab world (and some superstitions) are described:

> In olden times they knew where the child would be born, who it would be likely to resemble, whether it would be male or female; they would knit it woolen vests and socks, would embroider the hems, pockets and collars of its dresses with coloured birds and flowers. They would amass presents of gold crucifixes for it and medalions with 'Allah bless him' on them, opened palms studded with blue stones, and pendants with its name engraved on them. They would reserve a midwife for it, would fix the day of the delivery, and the child would launch out from the darkness and be flung into the light at the precise time estimated. They would register a piece of land in the child's name, would rent it a house, choose companions for it, decide which school it would be sent to, the profession it would study for, the person it could love and to whom

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[176] Modern Arabic Short Stories, pp. 176-184.

> it could bind its destiny. That was a long, long time ago, in the time of your father and my father. He asked, 'Do you believe that twenty years ago was such an age away? What has changed since? What has changed? Can't you and can't I provide everything that is required for a child?'

But the old certainties are disappearing, and although the young are rebelling against the old culture patterns, the world is a fearful place without the old, comforting supports.

> . . . I told him I didn't dare become pregnant, that I would not perpetrate such a mistake.
>
> 'Mistake?' he shrieked. 'Mistake?' . . . I told him how scared I was about the fate of any child we might cast into this world.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"The Election Bus," by Touma al-Khouri,[176] describes the joys and the terrors of bus travel in the Lebanese mountains. The bus has been hired to transport voters from the villages, and the driver is a typical one.

> Mahrousa, Abu Fahl's new bus, was making its way towards the northern province . . . the walls inside bore such spells against the evil eye as 'The envious prevails not' and 'This do I owe to my God'. . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> Mahrousa, occupied in making its way along the shoulder of the valley, bellowed and hooted, striking terror into the hyenas in their lairs. . . .

The occupants are also typical, illustrating again the Arab's attitude toward time and schedules.

> Along the route there were numerous halts: a passenger wishing to make a purchase, a mother with a child wanting

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[176] Modern Arabic Short Stories, pp. 176-184.

> to make water; some wishing to get down to quench their thirst from the waters of a nearby spring reputed to be efficacious for gall-stones; a woman seeking a lift for a short distance, a mere stone's throw (a throw of several kilometres). But it was no trouble, the bus was spacious enough, and the driver's heart even more so.

The villager's gaiety and love of song and dance, as well as their joy in crowds are evident throughout the story.

> Loud voices sang out in harmony accompanied by clapping, stamping, and slaps on the sides of the bus with hands and sticks; this was immediately followed by the ululations of women from high up on the balconies, on the roads and from the flat roofs of the houses.
>
> . . . .
>
> Every kind of song was tried out. . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> It then occurred to one of them, carried away by all the singing, to dance a dabkeh.
>
> 'Make room for him, everyone, make room for him.'
>
> Sufficient space was made in the gangway by those who had occupied it sitting three or four to each seat made for two; some of the passengers sat on each other's knees, others on the backs of seats or on the backs of those sitting down.
>
> . . . .
>
> The dancer was an accomplished performer and caused great delight. Without warning a bottle of arak was whipped out. Its owner took a gulp, after which it was grabbed by various hands.
>
> . . . .

This is their undoing, for there is no sense of responsibility of the driver for his passengers. Everyone relies on fate and on the formulas against ill luck.

> Someone objected when he saw the driver steering with one hand and emptying the remains of a flask down his throat with the other. Guffaws of laughter rang out on every side, the driver joining in with a hearty bellow.
>
> 'A whole barrel of arak couldn't make Abu Fahl drunk!' commented the driver's assistant.

A young man stands up and shouts:

> 'Step on it, driver, you're doing fine--Up to one hundred and ninety-nine!'

which is taken up by the whole bus amid handclaps to punctuate the song.

> The driver did 'step on it' and Mahrousa seemed to take flight. . . . Not a bus, not a car, not a lorry, not a living creature did it allow to stand in its path--all were overtaken as it thundered on in a cloud of dust. . . .
>
> The dancer, flushed and sweating, continued to dance to each new song, while under him the bus gambolled over the potholes and swayed drunkenly at the bends and corners.

When hunger overtakes the passengers, they bring out food from baskets and bundles, each person sharing with the others, providing a great variety of foods and fruits. Then the radio is turned on full volume while the passengers relax, but soon the singing begins again, punctuated occasionally by pistol shots in the air and the repetition of the refrain of 'step on it, driver. . . .'

> And the driver stepped on it.
>
> This time, though, he should have stepped on the brake and not the accelerator. He was in the process of overtaking a Fiat car and was negotiating the bend on the left-hand side of the road at a frenzied speed when he met head-on with a lorry taking the corner on its right-hand side.

> Despite the spell that was written up above Mahrousa's windscreen: 'Drive on, for God's eye watches over you,' God, it seemed, had on this occasion no wish to watch over it with His eye. This was to be explained no doubt by the simple fact that the wording read 'Drive on' and not 'Fly on.'

Egypt

"Mother of the Destitute," by Yahya Hakki,[177] is, in the words of the author, "the story of Ibrahim Abu Khalil as he made his way down the steps of life." Many aspects of urban life are sketched, but more sharply etched are the deep lines of poverty--a picture of its utter hopelessness. Alongside these dark lines are the colorful strokes of Cairo street scenes: the small shopkeepers and the street vendors of all sorts.

> His life of misery started with being a servant, and then a vendor of lupine on a hand-cart hung round with earthenware water-coolers from Kena, their necks decorated with flowers and sweet basil. I heard that later he had opened a small herbalist's, after which he had gone back again to being a street-vendor, jumping from tram to tram with his pins, needles for primus stoves, and clothes-pegs. . . . I am inclined to think that during his roving existence he must at times have known the sting of asphalt in the Kora Maidan penitentiary.

Abu Khalil has the Muslim's resignation to fate.

> Just before I got to know him he used to occupy the triangular corner of pavement in the Square facing the shop of the Turk who sold halva. There he would sit with a basket containing radishes, watercress, and leeks. His cry was simply, 'Tender radishes, fine watercress!' His face told of none of the various upheavals he'd been through or the buffetings he had had in his innumerable occupations. Such people take life as it comes; each day

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[177] Modern Arabic Short Stories, pp. 97-105.

> has its individual destiny, each day passes away and dies--like them--without legacy. They enter life's arena with their sensitivity already dead--has it died from ignorance, from stupidity, or from contentment and acceptance?

One day Abu Khalil arrives at his usual place in the Square and finds an interloper.

> . . . the far corner was occupied by a woman surrounded by three young children, with a fourth at her breast . . . . The catastrophic thing about it was that she was sitting in front of a basket filled with radishes, watercress, and leeks, and when she began calling out, 'Sun-kissed radishes, a millieme the bundle!' her piercing voice rang out through the whole Square. O Provider, O Omniscient!

Calling on God rather than on his own initiative, Abu Khalil neglects his own basket.

> A secret hope lay in his heart. Perhaps Badr [the woman] would prove to be his share of good fortune, rained down unexpectedly upon him by the heavens. Nothing would he love better than to hand over the leading-rein of his life to this resolute woman. . . .

Badr has a husband who is in the habit of disappearing rather often; whether "running away from her or from the fear of an old blood-feud, or whether he himself has a blood-feud which honor forced him to pursue," she doesn't know. Just as she is about to take Abu Khalil under her wing, with the invitation:

> Your galabia is dirty. Come with me tonight and I'll wash it for you--

her husband returns, and

> Poor Ibrahim rose, shaking the dust from his backside, and disappeared from their sight, swallowed up by the crowds in the Square.

Ibrahim then gets a new occupation, illustrating three facets of Arab culture: the Arab's love of people, his relative lack

of achievement motivation, and his individualism. His job is

> . . . providing incense--a job requiring no more than a pair of old scales, a thick chain, sawdust, and a few bits of frankincense and wormwood . . . it suited his temperament admirably, being an easy job that provides its practitioners with the pleasures of loafing about and coming across all kinds and descriptions of people. Besides . . . he was his own master.

But poor Abu Khalil "understood neither life nor the nature of human beings," for the Arab can also be clever and cunning.

> One clear, radiant day . . . a man with hawklike eyes approached from Marasina Street, wearing a garment made up of seventy patches, a green turban on his head, and with a brisk, determined, indefatigable gait; his body erect, his tongue unceasingly chanting prayers and supplications, holding a brazier from which rose beautifully fragrant smoke, the brazier's chain sparkling yellow. O Provider, O Omniscient!
>
> . . . .
>
> Poor Ibrahim left his brazier and began to content himself with passing by the shopkeepers empty-handed, in the hope that they would remember him and dispense their usual charity. . . . After awhile Abu Khalil worked up a clientele of a few faithful customers who would search him out to give him what they could.

Giving alms to the poor is an important part of a Muslim's religion. But again Abu Khalil did not understand the cunning nor the superstition and gullibility of his fellow human beings.

> One clear, radiant day as poor Ibrahim sat in his accustomed place, a loud shout rang out close by him which echoed through the whole Square: 'The Everlasting! The Eternal!' People gathered round a man who had fallen down in a trance, seized by religious ecstasy. A woman, dressed in a black gown, yellow mules, and a necklace of large amber beads, stood at his head and broke out into trilling cries. The stricken man came to, but his mouth was closed and he uttered not a word; his squinting eyes, darkened with kohl, stared round at the faces of those gathered about him and filled with tears. Then he raised his hands,

loaded with blue, green, and red rings, wiped his face, and prepared to gather up the money.

When Abu Khalil heard that very same scream the very same hour on the second and third day, he left his place and turned toward the Mosque, mumbling:

'O Mother of the Destitute! Give me succour!'

He had tired of life; illness and weakness held him in their grip. The film on his eyes had grown worse, and his back was bowed. With heavy steps he moved towards the shrine of the Mother of the Destitute. . . . He was in a world from which there was no exit; it had but one entrance and above it was written--'The Gate of Farewell'.

* * * * * * * * *

"God is Love," by Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus,[178] is a modern Romeo and Juliet theme, Egyptian style, illustrating the strong cultural taboo against marriage outside one's own religion and the strong influence of Islam on daily life.

He is a Coptic Christian, she is a Muslim. She decides to become a Christian, but when they go to the priest they're told she cannot change her religion since she is not yet of age.

So he became a Muslim. All he had to do was comply with a few formalities imposed on him by society, a simple paper to sign for the government. What passed between him and God, deep inside himself, was no concern of society or government, the learned men of Islam or the priests.

. . . .

The next step was to go to her brother for permission to become formally engaged.

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[178] "I Am Free" and Other Stories, tr. and ed. by Trevor Le Gassick (unpublished), pp. 21-35.

The male head of the family must give permission for a girl to marry.

> Quietly, her brother commented: "I can scarcely object, since you do have all the qualities of an excellent husband, but. . . . Have you become Muslim because you truly believe in Islam or merely because you want to marry my sister?"

The young man replies that he was never very religiously inclined, that he has always believed in God and has respected the higher principles of life without considering them a matter of religion.

> "So in fact you don't believe in Islam. Nor in Christianity either."
>
> "I believe in God and all religions belonging to God."
>
> "But faith needs principles on which to rest and well-defined lines so that it is not insecure and unstable, subject to personal whims and desires. When God decreed that we believe in Him, he also decreed in detail the form this faith must have. This was to leave no loopholes through which argumentative people and evil spirits could infiltrate to confuse God's worshippers through His own name."

The above is illustrative of Islam's submergence of the self, and what follows, of the extended family's submergence of the individual. The suitor replies to the brother:

> "But . . . I don't want to marry your sister in the life to come, but here, on earth. And here on earth all that's required of me is that I be able to make her happy. Please think of that in making your decision. Leave it to God to bring me to judgement for all the rest."
>
> "But faith is a prerequisite for good life on earth just as it is for the hereafter. God will bring you to judgement here on earth as well as there. It is for me to judge you now in God's name, and by the Holy Books of the Muslims and of the Copts."

"But I love her. And God is with love!"

"Love is faith. And faith begins with God and religion."

"It was God who brought us together but you want to separate us. You are challenging the will of God!"

"God forbid! If marriage merely meant joining you together I would willingly leave it to God to issue His decree. But marriage means children and society. I can't close my eyes and ignore a crime you would be committing against the rights of children yet unborn and of society itself. Imagine the confusion of your children, not knowing whether they are Muslim or Copt. . . .

Thus the brother goes on until finally the young man interrupts:

"It seems we'll never agree. I've almost given up hope."

"It's best for you to do so."

"So we can't agree on the marriage?"

"I'll do all I possibly can to prevent it."

"And you'll make our lives a misery."

"I will be saving my sister from even greater pain."

That night after the young man leaves, the brother takes his sister away to their country villa.

There she remained, every day seeming to languish a little more; people thought she must be losing her mind.

Soon she was as thin as a bone, her body now dry of tears and devoid of laughter. . . . She neither spoke nor seemed to hear when her brother spoke to her. . . . Dazed and distracted, she wandered like a ghost within the house.

One day the girl sat down and wrote a letter, just a short note:

"My darling,
I can't bear it any longer. I can feel insanity creeping over me. I must go to God, my Lord and yours. Perhaps we could meet there!"

She gave the note to the maid to drop in the post box without her brother knowing. Then a couple of days later she made her stand near the door to wait for the postman in case he brought a reply. The answer came. A few feverish words:

> "My darling,
>
> Don't go alone! Wait for me; I'll go with you. Tell me, how and when you are going, the precise day and hour, so that we can go up together and neither lose the way to the other world. God agrees to our marriage and the angels are preparing our wedding feast!"

One day, at a certain time, two cries of pain rose together into the air, one in the Shukry villa in the village of Kafr Saqar and the second in Shikolany Street in Shubra, Cairo.

A car sped from the Shukry house, over the rough road to the village center to summon a doctor. The road was long and the doctor slow and when the car brought him back to the villa her cries had stilled forever.

In Shubra too, a doctor was called but he came quickly. He was able to fend death from the boy and remove the poison from his stomach before it destroyed him.

They had agreed on everything--the day, time and type of poison and all they thought they had before them was their wedding in the heavens.

But God wanted her only and left him on earth, alone with his torment of longing to be with her. He has been living for two years now trying to summon again the courage to try to join her. The way is difficult and he has tried . . . once and felt the pain. He has not been able to make another attempt.

He lives in a delapidated shell of memories of his love, a shell enclosing the scattered ruins of his spirit within the ghastly void of a living death.

. . . .

And whatever became of her illustrious elder brother?

He prays . . . .

CHAPTER VI

MODEL READING MATERIALS FOR TEACHING AMERICAN CULTURE

> We judge others by our standards, not theirs; we see what we are looking for instead of what is there.
>
> ---John M. Allison

After students have become familiar with the concepts of their own culture through their own contemporary literature, they will be prepared to approach American culture through modern American stories. They will be motivated; in place of hostility, their appetites will be whetted to find out what other people are like, how they live and work and play. For this purpose four American short stories will be discussed in some detail for their depiction of certain elements in American culture. These, of course, represent only a small sampling of the possibilities. Six other stories will be annotated, and a more complete list will appear in the bibliography.

"The Three-Day Blow," by Ernest Hemingway,[179] depicts an afternoon spent by two young men, friends of long standing,

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[179] The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1953), pp. 113-125.

in a lake-shore cottage during an autumn storm. Independence from family is evident, as well as an easy, intimate father-son relationship.

> As Nick crossed the open field above the orchard the door of the cottage opened and Bill came out. He stood on the porch looking out.
>
> "Well, Wemedge," he said.
>
> "Hey, Bill," Nick said, coming up the steps.
>
> They stood together looking out across the country. . . . The wind was blowing straight down the lake. . . .
>
> "She's blowing," Nick said.
>
> "She'll blow like that for three days," Bill said.
>
> "Is your dad in?" Nick said.
>
> "No. He's out with the gun. Come on in."
>
> Nick went inside the cottage. There was a big fire in the fireplace. The wind made it roar. Bill shut the door.
>
> "Have a drink?" he said.
>
> . . .
>
> They sat in front of the fire and drank the Irish whiskey and water.

Apparently, father and son go hunting and fishing together rather frequently, and there is obviously an informal yet close relationship between the two.

> He [Bill] went upstairs into the loft and Nick heard him walking about overhead. Upstairs was open under the roof and was where Bill and his father and he, Nick, sometimes slept.
>
> . . .
>
> "How is your dad?" he asked respectfully.
>
> "He's all right," Bill said. "He gets a little wild sometimes."

"He's a swell guy," Nick said.

"You bet your life he is," Bill said.

They have the American's interest in baseball and what the big league teams are doing.

"What did the Cards do?"

"Dropped a double header to the Giants."

"That ought to cinch it for them."

. . .

"I wonder if the Cards will ever win a pennant?"

"Not in our lifetime," Bill said.

Together with their interest in sports is an interest in literature, albeit a rather unintellectual interest. They reveal a typical American informality in their attitude toward the authors.

"I'd like to meet Chesterton," Bill said.

"I wish he were here now," Nick said. "We'd take him fishing to the 'Voix tomorrow."

"I wonder if he'd like to go fishing," Bill said.

"Sure," said Nick. "He must be about the best guy there is. . . ."

"That's right," said Nick. "I guess he's a better guy than Walpole."

"Oh, he's a better guy, all right," Bill said.

"But Walpole's a better writer."

"I don't know," Nick said. "Chesterton's a classic."

"Walpole's a classic, too," Bill insisted.

"I wish we had them both here," Nick said. "We'd take them both fishing to the 'Voix tomorrow."

Then the conversation turns to Nick's former girl, and a few attitudes of the young American male toward marriage and dating emerge.

"You were very wise, Wemedge," Bill said.

"What do you mean?" asked Nick.

"To bust off that Marge business," Bill said.

"I guess so," said Nick.

"It was the only thing to do. If you hadn't, by now you'd be back home working trying to get enough money to get married."

. . .

"Once a man's married he's absolutely bitched," Bill went on. "He hasn't got anything more. Nothing. Not a damn thing. He's done for. You've seen the guys that get married."

. . .

"You can tell them," Bill said. "They get this sort of fat married look. They're done for.

"Sure," said Nick.

"It was probably bad busting it off," Bill said. "But you always fall for somebody else and then it's all right. Fall for them but don't let them ruin you."

Bill's next comment reveals the American attitude toward involvement with in-laws. The American pattern is the nuclear family, and having to put up with in-laws is generally looked upon as a situation devoutly to be avoided. The situation is completely different from the Arab pattern, in which the young married couple are surrounded by in-laws, who try to and do

run their lives. Of course, there it is the bride who has to put up with her husband's in-laws.

> "If you'd have married her you would have had to marry the whole family. Remember her mother and that guy she married."
>
> Nick nodded.
>
> "Imagine having them around the house all the time and going to Sunday dinners at their house, and having them over to dinner and her telling Marge all the time what to do and how to act."

The attitude, too, toward marriage outside of one's own social class is alluded to. The feeling parallels that in Arab culture although in the latter it is much stronger and much more active.

> "You came out of it damned well," Bill said. "Now she can marry somebody of her own sort and settle down and be happy. You can't mix oil and water and you can't mix that sort of thing any more than if I'd marry Ida that works for Strattons."

A further attitude toward dating appears near the end of the story. In Arab culture, if a man and woman are seen together in public even a few times, it means they are engaged. This is far from true in American culture.

> "So long as it's over that's all that matters," Bill said. "I tell you, Wemedge, I was worried while it was going on. You played it right. I understand her mother is sore as hell. She told a lot of people you were engaged."
>
> "We weren't engaged," Nick said.
>
> "It was all around that you were."
>
> "I can't help it," Nick said. "We weren't."
>
> "Weren't you going to get married?" Bill asked.
>
> "Yes. But we weren't engaged," Nick said.

. . .

"All of a sudden it was over," Nick said.

And finally, the American sportsman, the outdoor man, comes to the fore.

"There's no use getting drunk."

"No. We ought to get outdoors."

They stepped out the door. The wind was blowing a gale.

. . .

Outside now the Marge business was no longer so tragic. It was not even very important. The wind blew everything like that away.

* * * * * *

E. B. White's "The Door"[180] is beautifully symbolic of the American "rat race." Man's frustration and madness is likened to that induced in rats "by forcing them to deal with problems beyond the scope of rats, the insoluble problems." The implication is clear: modern man is also faced with problems beyond his scope--the insoluble problems. The American's "frantic racing around," his preoccupation with things, with scientific gadgetry, with synthetics, is alluded to.

> Everything . . . is something it isn't . . . but everything was glass (but not quite glass) and the thing that you touched (the surface, washable, crease-resistant) was rubber, only it wasn't quite rubber. . . . He was in a washable house. . . . He didn't know which door (or wall) or opening in the house to jump at, to get through, because one was an opening that wasn't a door . . . and the

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[180] 50 Great Short Stories, ed. Milton Crane (New York, 1955), pp. 292-296.

> other was a wall that wasn't an opening, it was a sanitary cupboard of the same color. . . . He heard, in the house where he was, . . . a noise--not a loud noise but more of a low prefabricated humming. It came from a place in the base of the wall (or stat) where the flue carrying the filterable air was, and not far from the Minipiano, which was made from the same material nail-brushes are made of, and which was under the stairs. "This, too, has been tested," she said, pointing, but not at it, "and found viable."

The American pattern of training for self-reliance and of the pursuit of success are subtly and skillfully sketched, together with the frustrations and bewilderment that all too often come in their wake. Here, too, is America as a secular society with the wide gulf between religion and the market place.

> All his life he had been confronted by situations which were incapable of being solved. . . . There have been so many doors changed on me, he said, in the last twenty years. . . . First they would teach you the prayers and the Psalms, and that would be the right door . . . and the long sweet words with the holy sound, and that would be the one to jump at to get where the food was. Then one day you jumped and it didn't give way, so that all you got was the bump on the nose, and the first bewilderment, the first young bewilderment.
>
> But it is inevitable that they keep changing the doors on you, he said, . . . and the thing is to get used to it. . . . Nobody can not jump . . . . Everybody has to keep jumping at a door. . . .

So he tries the door of love, which "seemed like the way and for a while it was the way. . . . The time they changed that door on me, my nose bled for a hundred hours. . . ." American culture allows for but success or failure, whether it be in love and marriage or in one's career; if it's failure, there is despair, not "profounder wisdom."

He thinks about the

> . . . man out in Jersey, the one who started to chop his trees down, one by one . . . who began talking about how he would take his house to pieces brick by brick. . . .
>
> I keep thinking about his terrible necessity and the passion and trouble he had gone to all those years in the indescribable abundance of a householder's detail, building the estate and the planting of the trees and in the spring the lawndressing and in fall the bulbs for the spring burgeoning, and the watering of the grass on the long light evenings in summer and the gravel for the driveway (all had to be thought out, planned) and the decorative borders, probably, the perennials and the bug spray, and the building of the house from plans of the architect, first the sills, then the studs. . . the floors laid on the floor timbers, smoothed, and then the carpets upon the smooth floors and the curtains and the rods therefor. And then, almost without warning, he would be jumping at the same old door and it wouldn't give: they had changed it on him, making life no longer supportable under the elms in the elm shade. . . .

Could it be that he was so busy making things "livable" he had no time to live?

* * * * * *

In John O'Hara's "Graven Image"[181] two elements of American culture are very clearly drawn: 1) social-class and social mobility; 2) the importance of clubs in the culture. The Under Secretary and Charles Browning had been at Harvard at the same time, but the former had been of a lower social class, had not been accepted in the clubs of the wealthy, upper-class students, and had never lost his bitterness. Having worked himself up to a high position in the government, he is now in a position to do a favor--if he will--for his former classmate. Browning is not of the same political party

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[181] 50 Great Short Stories, pp. 93-97.

as, nor does he approve of, the President (whom the Under Secretary calls The Boss), which makes the Under Secretary wonder why Browning has come to him.

> "Well, you know how I feel about him. . . ." [says Browning].
>
> "Well, you've got plenty of company in this goddam town. But why'd you come to me, then? Why didn't you go to one of your Union League or Junior League or what-ever-the-hell-it-is pals? There, that big jerk over there with the blue suit and the striped tie, for instance?"
>
> Browning looked over at the big jerk with the blue suit and striped tie, and at that moment their eyes met and the two men nodded.
>
> "You <u>know</u> him?" said the Under Secretary.
>
> "Sure, I know him, but that doesn't say I <u>approve</u> of him."
>
> "Well, at least that's something. And I notice he knows you."
>
> "I've been to his house. I think he's been to our house when my father was alive, and naturally I've seen him around New York all my life."
>
> "Naturally. Naturally. Then why didn't you go to <u>him</u>?"
>
> "I don't approve of the man, at least as a politician, so I couldn't go to him and ask him a favor."

Browning goes on to say that he'd always been against the Under Secretary's party.

> ". . . I wasn't even for you in 1932, and that's a hell of an admission, but it's the truth. But that's water under the bridge--or isn't it?"
>
> ". . . Why should it be?"
>
> "The obvious reason," said Browning,

implying that for patriotic reasons the Under Secretary should have forgotten personal rancor, asking

> ". . . Isn't that enough?"
>
> "It isn't for your Racquet Club pal over there." [says the Under Secretary]
>
> "You keep track of things like that?"
>
> "Certainly," said the Under Secretary. "I know every goddam club in this country, beginning back about twenty-three years ago. I had ample time to study them all then, you recall, objectively, from the outside. By the way, I notice you wear a wristwatch. What happens to the little animal?"
>
> Browning put his hand in his pocket and brought out a small bunch of keys. He held the chain so that the Under Secretary could see, suspended from it, a small golden pig. "I still carry it," he said.

Here we see the significance of the title. The "graven image," instead of being a "golden calf," is the little golden pig, emblem of the Porcellian Club, itself a status symbol: symbol of affluence and social position, of the <u>worship of material things</u>, of the snobbery of the elite.

The Under Secretary continues to "needle" Browning about the Club:

> "They tell me a lot of you fellows put them [the golden pig] back in your pockets about five years ago, when one of the illustrious brethren closed his downtown office and moved up to Ossining."
>
> "Oh, probably," Browning said, "but quite a few fellows, I believe, that hadn't been wearing them took to wearing them again out of simple loyalty. Listen, Joe, are we talking like grown men? Are you sore at the Pork? Do you think you'd have enjoyed being a member of it? If being sore at it was even partly responsible for getting you where you are, then I think you ought to be a little

> grateful to it. You'd show the bastards. O.K. You showed them. Us. If you hadn't been so sore at the Porcellian so-and-so's, you might have turned into just another lawyer."

They then discuss the job Browning wants, and the Under Secretary all but promises a favorable outcome.

> At this Browning grinned. "By God, Joe, we've got to have a drink on this. . . . Joe, you're the best. I drink to you."

But the drink loosens his tongue a little too much, and his arrogance escapes:

> "You know, I was a little afraid. That other stuff, the club stuff."
>
> "Yes," said the Under Secretary.
>
> "I don't know why fellows like you--you never would have made it in a thousand years, but"--then, without looking up, he knew everything had collapsed--"but I've said exactly the wrong thing, haven't I?"
>
> "That's right, Browning," said the Under Secretary. "You've said exactly the wrong thing. I've got to be going." He stood up and turned and went out, all dignity.

* * * * * *

"The Sojourner," by Carson McCullers,[182] pictures a man without roots, without family, as a result of divorce. One morning while breakfasting in New York, John Ferris, a foreign correspondent, sees his ex-wife and, on an impulse, telephones her. This points up the sometimes informal, friendly relationship between divorced couples.

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[182] The Modern Tradition: An Anthology of Short Stories, ed. Daniel F. Howard (Boston, 1968), pp. 472-480.

> Elizabeth answered. . . . Twice he had to repeat his name, but when he was identified, she sounded glad. He explained he was only in town for that day. They had a theater engagement, she said--but she wondered if he would come by for an early dinner. Ferris said he would be delighted.

The description of this encounter--Ferris's going to dinner at the home of his ex-wife--depicts the warmth and intimacy, as well as the exclusiveness of the nuclear family.

> Braced for Elizabeth or even the unimagined husband, Ferris was astonished by the freckled red-haired child; he had known of the children, but his mind had failed somehow to acknowledge them. Surprise made him step back awkwardly.
>
> 'This is our apartment,' the child said politely. 'Aren't you Mr. Ferris? I'm Billy. Come in.'
>
> In the living room beyond the hall, the husband provided another surprise; he too had not been acknowledged emotionally. Bailey was a lumbering red-haired man with a deliberate manner. He rose and extended a welcoming hand.
>
> 'I'm Bill Bailey. Glad to see you. Elizabeth will be in, in a minute. She's finishing dressing.'

Elizabeth eventually comes in carrying a baby girl in her arms.

> 'Oh, John!' she said. She settled the baby in the father's lap. 'It's grand to see you. I'm awfully glad you could come.'
>
> The little girl sat demurely on Bailey's knees. . . . Her skin was summer tanned and her brown eyes flecked with gold and laughing. When she reached up and fingered her father's horn-rimmed glasses, he took them off and let her look through them a moment. 'How's my Candy?'
>
> Elizabeth was very beautiful, more beautiful perhaps than he had ever realized. Her straight clean hair was shining. Her face was softer, glowing and serene. It was a madonna loveliness, dependent on the family ambiance.

'You've hardly changed at all,' Elizabeth said, 'but it has been a long time.'

. . . .

Ferris felt himself suddenly a spectator--an interloper among these Baileys. Why had he come? He suffered. His own life seemed so solitary, a fragile column supporting nothing amidst the wreckage of the years. He felt he could not bear much longer to stay in the family room.

He glanced at his watch. 'You're going to the theater?'

'It's a shame,' Elizabeth said, 'but we've had this engagement for more than a month. But surely, John, you'll be staying home one of these days before long. You're not going to be an expatriate, are you?'

'Expatriate,' Ferris repeated. 'I don't much like the word.'

'What's a better word?' she asked.

He thought for a moment. 'Sojourner might do.'

The father takes the children in to supper--another facet of American culture quite different from Arab culture--leaving Elizabeth and John alone together. This whole situation of the ex-husband being entertained in the home of his ex-wife is probably peculiar to American culture and certainly foreign to Arab culture.

Ferris and Elizabeth were alone. The weight of the situation descended on those first moments of silence. Ferris asked permission to pour himself another drink and Elizabeth set the cocktail shaker on the table at his side. He looked at the grand piano and noticed the music on the rack.

'Do you still play as beautifully as you used to?'

'I still enjoy it.'

'Please play, Elizabeth.'

. . . .

She began with a Bach prelude and fugue.

. . .

> The piano began again--what was this music? Unplaced, familiar, the limpid melody had lain a long while dormant in his heart. Now it spoke to him of another time, another place--it was the music Elizabeth used to play. The delicate air summoned a wilderness of memory. Ferris was lost in the riot of past longings, conflicts, ambivalent desires.

The next day as he is flying back to France,

> He thought of Elizabeth among her family with longing, gentle envy and inexplicable regret.

Arriving in Paris he taxies to the home of his latest love, Jeannine, a singer (separated from her husband), and her six-year-old son. Speeding across Paris he considers the "disorder of his life: the succession of cities, of transitory loves; and time, the sinister glissando of the years, time always." Here is the American's frenetic pace of living, with never enough time to do the things he wants to do. Ferris tells about once taking Jeannine's child to the Tuileries gardens.

> The child had wanted to go in to the puppet show. But there was not time, for Ferris had an engagement at the Scribe Hotel. He had promised they would go to the guignol another afternoon.

But he had never got around to it. Thinking back now, he calls in terror to the taxi driver to hurry; he wants to make up for lost time. Arriving at the house, he is greeted by the child, Valentin. Jeannine is singing in a night club and the child, awaiting her return, has been amusing himself by drawing.

Ferris tells the child:

> 'We will go again to the Tuileries.'
>
> The child looked up and Ferris drew him closer to his knees. The melody, the unfinished music that Elizabeth had played, came to him suddenly. Unsought, the load of memory jettisoned--this time bringing only recognition and sudden joy.
>
> . . . .
>
> Ferris spoke with rapid urgency: 'We will go often to the Tuileries. Ride the pony and we will go into the guignol. We will see the puppet show and never be in a hurry any more.'
>
> 'Monsieur Jean,' Valentin said. "The guignol is now closed.'
>
> Again, the terror, the acknowledgement of wasted years and death. Valentin, responsive and confident, still nestled in his arms. His cheek touched the soft cheek and felt the brush of the delicate eyelashes. With inner desperation he pressed the child close--as though an emotion as protean as his love could dominate the pulse of time.

* * * * * *

Warren Beck's "The Crocus"[183] is a good example of the color-caste society at work in the midst of a social-class society; in other words, the conflict between blacks and whites in a northern city. Clearly drawn is the effect of the economic condition on the whole of life. The frustration of poverty generates fear; fear generates hatred. A parallel can be drawn with Arab culture in the wife's need for even a small patch of ground in her slum yard where she can grow

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[183] Modern Short Stories from Story Magazine (New York, 1960), pp. 78-90.

flowers; the Arabs, too, will grow a pot of flowers or herbs in the midst of the darkest slum.

"A & P," a story by John Updike,[184] is set in an American supermarket. It emphasizes the generation gap in American culture, the disrespect often shown the older generation--so different from the attitude toward age in Arab culture--and the lack of understanding of youth often manifested on the part of the older generation. Social-class differences, too, are neatly drawn. The idealism and the vulnerability of youth are especially true of American culture, where early training and the ideal are so widely separated from adult practice in the marketplace.

Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait"[185] pictures a side of the father-son relationship in American culture that is very different from Arab culture, namely, the father's caring for his sick child.

"The Apostate," by George Milburn,[186] is a supreme example, ironically told, of the American penchant for joining clubs and fraternities.

"The Chrysanthemums," by John Steinbeck,[187] depicts the American attitude toward work, especially the work of women in

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[184] The Modern Tradition, pp. 520-526.

[185] Short Stories of Hemingway, pp. 436-439.

[186] 50 Great Short Stories, pp. 344-348.

[187] Ibid., pp. 282-291.

the home and in the garden. It shows, too, the common husband-wife relationship in American culture: a sharing of both work and play.

Finally, William Faulkner's "That Evening Sun"[188] pictures a side of southern life and the color-caste society which is, fortunately, changing but which, in some degree, still exists. The superstition of the uneducated Negro is clearly evident, as well as the great social gap between black and white society which still exists in some parts of the South.

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[188] Ibid., pp. 352-366.

CONCLUSION

The stories analyzed in Chapters V and VI illustrate various aspects of two of the categories on the check-list, namely, social patterns and value concepts and attitudes.

Social Patterns

Al-Quddus's story, "God is Love," demonstrates the submergence of the individual in the family, which is ruled by the eldest male. By contrast, Hemingway's "The Three-Day Blow" illustrates youth's independence from the family. Marriage customs, too, can be compared and contrasted in these two stories. While Nick, in the Hemingway story, can decide for himself whom he wishes to marry, the boy and girl in the Egyptian story must bow to the will of the eldest male. But patterns are changing in the Arab world. Both the traditional patterns and the changing patterns of marriage and family life are superbly sketched in Laila Baalabaki's "A Space Ship of Tenderness to the Moon."

In contrast to the Arab pattern of the extended family is "The Sojourner" with its portrayal of the closely knit, exclusive nuclear family. The father-son relationship in the American family is alluded to in "The Three-Day Blow" and clearly pictured in "A Day's Wait"--an easy, informal,

affectionate relationship that rarely exists in the Arab family, where the father's position is a much more formal one requiring, although not always deserving, respect.

The position of elders in general is different in the two cultures. While the attitude toward elders in Arab culture is one of respect and appreciation of their experience and wisdom, in American culture it is often one of disdain and protest, of emphasis upon the gap in the generations, as in John Updike's "A & P." The Arab attitude can be seen to some extent in "The Dream" and "A Dead Afternoon."

The Arab's interest in people reveals itself in "Mother of the Destitute." The same interest, with its corollary of interest in everybody's business, develops in "The Dream." Another corollary, a love of crowds and gaiety, is found in "The Election Bus," which is also full of the Arab's love of song and dance, a part of his leisure-time activities. In American culture, on the other hand, leisure-time activities are usually either of the organized, spectator variety like baseball, or of the individual or small group variety like fishing and hunting. "A Three-Day Blow" reveals the latter.

The difference is obvious between the secular society alluded to in "The Door" and the society greatly influenced by religion in "The Dream." The strong influence of Islam on daily life shows itself also in "The Dead Afternoon" and "God is Love," the latter emphasing the submergence of the individual in Islam.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between the poverty in lower-class urban society in the Middle East and in America through the Egyptian story, "Mother of the Destitute," and the American story, "The Crocus." In both stories there are characters who lack achievement motivation as well as those who possess initiative. In both stories there is evidence of the yearning for the beautiful, whether it be a few crocuses in a slum yard in an American city or the bedecked carts of the street vendors in Cairo. The pronounced difference in the two stories is that between the Arab's belief in and acceptance of fate and the American's resentment against and fear of what he believes to be the source of his trouble.

Value Concepts and Attitudes

The Arab's attitude toward time, activity, and schedules is revealed in "The Dead Afternoon" and "The Election Bus." Time for the Arab does not have to be spent in doing something; it can be spent in contemplation, and his schedules are very flexible. In America, on the contrary, time must be spent wisely, in some "worthwhile" activity. We must be forever "jumping at doors," says E. B. White in "The Door," and in the frenetic pace of making a living we have no time to live, Carson McCullers implies in "The Sojourner."

In contrast to the secular society in American culture and to the pursuit of success and the preoccupation with material things, subtly drawn in both "The Door" and "The Graven

Image," are the strong religious traditions, the superstition, the reliance upon fate, and the contentment with one's lot found in "The Dream" and "Mother of the Destitute."

* * * * *

In his book, The Meaning of the Twentieth Century, Kenneth E. Boulding asserts that an "increase in the knowledge of man which would enable more people to live closer to their capacity seems like a reasonable end product of the present scientific development. The pity and the tragedy of mankind is that he falls so short of his capacity."[189] But the answer, he concludes, does not lie in mechanization. Perhaps part of the answer lies in what Edward T. Hall suggests: "We don't need more missiles and H-bombs nearly so much as we need more specific knowledge of ourselves as participants in culture."[190]

It can be our privilege as teachers to further the knowledge of mankind within his various cultures, thereby increasing communication and understanding across cultures. The purpose of this dissertation, then, has been to consider one major problem in the teaching of literature and American culture to speakers of other languages, specifically speakers of Arabic in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt.

It is generally agreed that no language can be thoroughly understood without knowledge of the culture of that language. Especially is this true of the literature of a particular

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[189](New York, 1964), pp. 154-55.

[190]The Silent Language, p. 168.

language and culture; no one can fully comprehend what he reads unless he has at least an acquaintance with the culture that has produced the literature. The problem in the Middle East at the present time is one which has been called the resistance reaction. The attempt to acquaint students with American culture often engenders resistance, resentment, even hostility. The reason, perhaps, stems from the rather common pattern of Americans trying to force their way of life on the Middle Eastern culture. Whatever the reason, the problem remains one of motivation.

It is the thesis of this dissertation that the motivation can be accomplished through the medium of the students' native literature in English translation. Beginning thus with familiar material satisfies the pedagogical principle that learning should build upon what the student already knows. Furthermore, examining one's own culture is a prerequisite to investigating another pattern of life. Through the excitement of exploring one's own culture will come the motivation to examine a different culture.

The first step in the preparation of materials has been the compilation of a check-list by which to analyze both Arab and American cultures. Conceivably, this check list and the subsequent analysis of the two cultures might serve as a model for teachers of any language group.

In the following step, the selection of appropriate

works in the literature of the two cultures, the writer has found the short story the genre best suited to the purpose. In both structure and function it is a microcosm of the real world, permitting it to be studied under the cultural microscope. Furthermore, its brevity precludes loss of interest on the part of the student. Of course, literature of any kind often exaggerates--even distorts--for the sake of interest. Despite this tendency, a wealth of cultural material exists in the tales of any country.

This model has included an analysis of six Arabic short stories. Readers are reminded that no model can be perfect for every class or for every situation. It is believed, however, that once students have been able to grasp the concepts of and analyze their own culture, they will be prepared to explore another culture.

In the final stage, that of comparison of the native and the target cultures, judgment or evaluation of either culture should be avoided. Of course, the language level and intellectual sophistication of the students is a factor to be considered. If wisdom and discretion are used, very desirable discussions can develop from the comparison of the values and attitudes of two cultures.

Although a test of the foregoing model is beyond the objective of this dissertation, mention might be made of one experience in its use with students at the English Language

Institute of The University of Michigan. The class of fourteen consisted of Japanese, Latin American, and Thai students. After an introductory lesson on the concept of culture and a presentation of the check-list, the students were given stories out of their own literature which had been translated into English. Without exception they were able to discover elements of their own cultures in these stories. Seven out of the fourteen students requested permission to read more than the assigned stories, and several expressed their thanks for being allowed to read these stories. If one may be permitted the assumption, as a result of such motivation on the part of the students, their comprehension of elements of American culture discovered through the American stories subsequently assigned was excellent.

The most important result of this cultural approach to the teaching of reading is a small step toward better cross-cultural understanding--a desirable ingredient in the society of men at any time, a vital ingredient at the present time.

APPENDIX

In the following pages, one of several methods of dealing with the stories in a reader is outlined. The text of the story (only sample pages are presented here) appears on the left, the culture patterns on the right.

As the students progress in the program, in place of statements about the culture there will be questions leading the student inductively to discover the elements of his culture. In the final step in the study of his own culture, the student will be required to discover the culture patterns for himself.

Part II of such a reader would contain American stories, dealt with in much the same way at the beginning. The second and final phases, however, would emphasize the comparison of the two cultures.

The illustrative pages are taken from I Am Free by Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus.

They would tie a belt around her waist and help her remove her shoes and stockings, for she only danced barefoot. Then they would leave her to the drums and she would sway slowly in time with their beating, her hands extending languorously before her as though stretching out in her bed on the first (A) morning of her honeymoon. She would writhe and quiver as she danced, like the stem of a rose buffeted by a breeze that had fallen in love with her and vainly tried to uproot and carry her off.

Nearly all the girls in the district knew how to play the piano or sing and dance. Indeed, all of these were es- (B) sentials in the education of girls and their preparation for marriage into the important families of Abbasiya. But she could play, sing and dance better than any of the other girls and a party without her was definitely considered a failure and its pleasures incomplete. No hostess could boast of the success of her Oriental dancing party unless the young girl danced at it. All her family were invited for her sake to these gatherings, even though they were below the other families in importance and riches.

Her relatives were delighted to receive these invitations, which they considered a great honor and of social advantage. She, however, hated the "at homes" which all the (A) wealthy women gave. They each set aside one day a week or a month, when all their friends gathered and spent the evening amidst piles of chocolates and sweets and glasses of soft drinks. They would gossip. . . .

EGYPT

Social Patterns

Leisure-time activities

(A) Women in the upper middle and upper classes spend their free time in "at homes," consisting of coffee parties and Oriental dancing parties held in one another's homes. At the dancing parties the women are entertained by a hired group and by neighborhood girls. During these parties the women gossip and consume quantities of chocolates, nuts, and other sweets.

Child rearing and education

(B) The education of upper and middle class girls includes learning to play the piano and to sing and dance. This is part of their training for marriage.

Her uncle wanted her married simply to be relieved of a burdensome responsibility.

What suitors there had been had vanished, as word passed around the quarter that she planned to study for her certificate. Eligible men feared, too, that if they married her they would have to put up with her fierce determination and independence, about which they had heard. Many desired her, others actually loved her, but none really wanted to marry her. Even if one did love her, he would not have married her. Love in Abbasiya was not a sufficient reason. As a matter of fact there was only one known case of true love that had resulted in marriage. This happened only after the daughter of a prominent Abbasiya family was forced to elope with the young man. Her mother soon died from grief and shame.

The aunt was aware of the rumors about Amina and knew what the women of the quarter thought of her. She knew none of them would approve of Amina as a daughter-in-law; however, she was determined to find a bridegroom for the girl. She gave photos of Amina to the professional matchmakers and promised them a good commission. She also visited families outside Abbasiya whom she had not seen in years. She revived the party era of the past with receptions to which she invited guests from all over Cairo. She knew little about most of them except their names or that of a relative. She persuaded Amina to receive with her and to play the piano for the guests.

Marriage customs 

1. What quality does the Egyptian man require of the woman he marries?
2. What is their attitude toward love in marriage?
3. How are marriages arranged?



Value Concepts and Attitudes

1. What attitudes in your culture are revealed on the following pages?
2. Your culture, just as many others throughout the world, is changing. What changing attitude is reflected in these pages?

Now her aunt shook her fist in the girl's face and shouted:

"Who on earth do you think you are? The daughter of a lord or somebody? As it is your father is working himself to death to pay the few pennies you need. You think you're beautiful--beauty isn't everything. There are many girls prettier than you who aren't married and any of them would be happy to have that nice fellow who wants to marry you. I don't know what's wrong with you, really I don't."

Trying to remain calm, Amina sighed:

"There's no need to say things like that, Mother. It's finished. As I've said, I'm going to the University and I am not getting married until I finish."

"Oh, what stupidity," shouted her aunt. "What is the University, I ask you? Who would be so silly as to refuse a husband for a university! Be sensible, please. Try and be reasonable. I'm just about finished. It's all driving me mad!"

Amina made no reply. She went to her room and locked herself in as usual, leaving her aunt sobbing hysterically as though mourning the death of a loved one.

Ahmad was informed of Amina's determination to go to the University. The aunt tried to ease the shock by saying it was just a silly notion and Amina would soon change her mind.

He remained silent and frowning for a long time. Then he asked to see Amina alone. (I Am Free, p. 184)

They sat together in the living room, Ahmad leaning forward, his head between his hands. Trying his best to control his voice, he asked:

"May I know why you want to go to the University?"

"To learn!"

"But learning isn't in universities. It's in books; you don't have to go to a university to read a book."

"No one will believe I've learned anything unless I have a diploma and a degree."

"And what will you do with this degree? Are you going to cook with it? Are you going to bring up children with it?"

"It will always be a weapon I can use against people."

"Against your husband, too, I suppose!"

"My husband too, if he wants to subdue me and impose his will on me. I've suffered a lot because I was dependent on my aunt and uncle and I just can't bear to spend the rest of my life suffering because I'm dependent upon my husband."

"But marriage isn't just a livelihood, Amina. Marriage means two people love and trust one another and want to live together. A man doesn't spend his money on his wife to subjugate her. He does it because he needs her, just as she needs him and perhaps even more. They help one another throughout life. He works outside and she works in the home."

"Yes, she works like a servant in the house. He can kick her out whenever he wants and ill-treat her as he pleases. Suppose that love you talk about comes to an end, what can the

woman do? Should she just put up with everything because she has to live with her husband and stay in his house to provide for herself and her children? That's why I must get a degree, so I won't be forced to stay anywhere against my will. I want to be free. I want my husband to understand that I am just like him, able to do without him just as he can do without me. If he understands that then he might respect me and stay with me."

"But men never respect their wives just because they have degrees. And no man will stay with his wife just because he knows she can do without him. A man respects his wife if she is worthy of respect. He'll stay with her because he needs her, is happy with her and because she is a part of his life."

"I don't understand what's wrong with you. Wouldn't it be better for me to get a degree and go to work? Then we can have two salaries and we can live much better."

"Oh, so you want to go to work as well!"

"Why not?"

"Housework is enough for a wife. It's a job that takes all her time."

"You mean I should spend all my time cooking and cleaning?"

"You should be at home, contented to wait for your husband. Waiting means longing and longing means love. Love is happiness. A husband looks forward to coming home, knowing that his wife is eagerly waiting for him. (I Am Free, pp. 184-86)

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