CHAPTER-4

A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE THEMES AND STYLES OF KHOURY'S NOVEL "KA'ANNAHA NA'EMA"

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4.1. A Brief Story of the Novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if She Were Sleeping) is a famous novel in Arabic literature. It is written by Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury in Arabic. This novel is translated into various languages of the world like English, French, etc. Humphrey Devices was translated this novel into English as the title *As Though She Were Sleeping*. The chief character of this novel is *Milia.* She is a young and beautiful girl of a village *Nazareth* which is situated in Beirut. The another character of this novel is *Al-Mansour* who ruled here as the husband of *Milia.* The story begins and ends in December 1947, before the establishment of Milia's life has its hardships, certainly, but her traumas are mostly of an ordinary sort. Great changes take place during her lifetime, but Milia says that politics give her a headache. Nazareth was boiling over, but she did not really notice anything out of the ordinary.

Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if She Were Sleeping) is a tale of dreams and disaster in Palestine before the establishment of Israel in 1948. This is a story about a woman whose name is *Milia Shahin*, and this woman emerged from Khoury's imaginary world. It is a love story which lasted five years. It was a fascinating travel inside the world of this woman, and inside her dreams.

Milia is a Lebanese girl who comes from a Christian family of Beirut, and she got married to a Palestinian man from Jaffa, but lived in Nazareth. After her marriage she got pregnant, and the novel is a story about these nine months of her pregnancy.

This woman is a very special woman not only because she is beautiful. The main issue is how she figured out the world. For her, the world was a double world: The world of the night and the world of day. The world of the night is the world of her dreams, and the world of the day is the world of continuing her dreams while she is awake. So actually, all her life is a combination of this double life she lives, and this double life she reinvented herself every time.

She was born in the ’20s and she comes from this very religious Christian family. They were under the oppression of a very powerful Nun. The Nun are become a kind of a saint in the end. The Saints were dominating the whole family. *Milia* was a lonely girl with five brothers, and held the burden of oppression. They are faced not only religious oppression but also social oppression. On the other hand, when she gets married to this Palestinian man, she is taken to Nazareth. Nazareth, as we know, is a very special city; it is the city of Jesus. It is a city of miracles. It happened that she went to Nazareth in 1946. So, actually, it was in the eve of the Palestinian Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe. Now this woman is not a political woman, she is totally apolitical but in her deep feelings she felt the vibrations of the catastrophe that was coming.

For her, this catastrophe was incarnated in this long tradition, which is part of the three religions of the region: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, which have the idea of the sacrifice of the son. As we know the opening story of the Bible is where Abraham has the order of God for him to kill his son. So the sacrifice of the son comes first. Then in the story of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus was to be sacrificed, actually, by his father. He was left alone; he was the son to be sacrificed. So this woman, with all the religious background coming from this atmosphere of religious mythology and religious oppression, this woman was so frightened that

her son, because she was pregnant, her son will be sacrificed, will be killed, because she had this feeling that Palestine was on the edge of collapsing. The whole novel is about this experience: her pregnancy, her travel to Nazareth, and delivering her son.

In this context, this woman was a combination of reality and dreams. Also, she was married to this Palestinian man who could not match, or create, equilibrium between himself and his wife whom he loved very much except in finding shelter in another type of a dream, which is poetry. The man knew the classical Arabic poetry by heart. There are two types of dreams: the dreams of this girl, this woman, and the dreams of the Arab poets. These two dreams were mingling together in these nine months of life, which will lead, in order to save her son, *Milia* to decide that she must die.

4.2 A Critical Study on the Themes of the Novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if She Were Sleeping) revolves around Milia, a young, beautiful Lebanese woman in 1940s Beirut. Milia is able to enter and exit her dreams at will, complex dreams that transport her to the past and future, and enable her to communicate 'If you create a marvelous world, then the reader becomes the writer.'[210] with the dead. As the reader follows her in and out of consciousness, her history unravels and entwines with religious and social myths, and Lebanese folklore. Khoury explains that when anybody enters the book he will be in a world of mirrors and also says that every personality is doubled, and every story is doubled, and all the stories are mirrors of other stories.

The method draws from classical Arab storytelling, and in particular, One Thousand and One Nights, which Khoury considers the most beautiful

[210] Khoury, Elias. Interview by Sophia Efthimiatou, Granta, the magazine of new writing,February,1,2013

book ever written. The hypothesis Nights makes is that the ending of one story is the beginning of another. If you create a marvellous world, then the reader becomes the writer.

Khoury's fiction is known for its complex approach to political themes and the effects of war on human behaviour, which he has not only witnessed but also personally experienced. When Khoury was nineteen he traveled to Jordan to spend time in the Palestinian refugee camps. He went home to complete his BA in history and sociology, and then left for Paris where he continued his studies. When he returned to Lebanon, the civil war had begun and he fought in it. He insists that there was nothing heroic in his actions; he was simply following the spirit of his generation. Not that his bravado was a mere byproduct of youth. Khoury explain 'I can do it again now, if needed. But now I'm wiser and can figure out whether it's needed or not.'[211]

Besides, there are other ways to fight. White Masks, one of his earlier novels, unreservedly exposes the havoc civil war wreaked in Beirut and its inhabitants. Khoury explain that he was the only one in Lebanon and Palestine who wrote a novel critical of the civil war and he thinks he has a moral obligation to be critical in that way. He spent seven years researching and writing the highly acclaimed Gate of the Sun, a masterwork that narrows the immense scope of the Israeli-Palestinian saga down to names and faces.

As Though She Were Sleeping is set on the eve of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that forever changed the political, cultural and social landscape in Lebanon. Khoury explain that he wanted to show this society before catastrophe came to it. In 1946, nobody believed that Israel would occupy

[211] Khoury, Elias. Interview by Sophia Efthimiatou, Granta, the magazine of new writing,February,1,2013

Palestine; nobody realized what was going on except for this woman, Milia.

4.2.1 Themes of Dream and Reality

The dreams of Milia are a basic material of the novel. There are various dream and reality between Melia and her dreams. Elias Khoury points out that the protagonist of his novel Milia was in her world of dreams. That convinced us of two things. The first one is that, all of us live in a double life. But normally we don't have to remember our dreams even we remember very little of our dreams. So when you are trying to enter the life of this woman you began to experience something very strange. That is, to remember our dreams, not only the dreams from before awakening which everyone remember, but the deep dreams which we go through. If we try to remember our dreams, we will discover that we are living in two worlds and that you oppress this combination of two worlds in order to adjust ourselves to our lives. The second thing is that she convinced us her theory about death. This woman, according to her grandmother, thought that the difference between the living and the dead is very tiny. That is, the living, when they dream, can wake up from their dreams. Whereas the dead, if they dream, they continue dreaming forever. So death is a dream also, like life itself.

On the other hand, this double life she went through was also a life of two different personalities. In real life she was 24 or 20 or whatever. She was white with brown eyes. At night she was a girl of 7-years-old with brown skin and short hair and with green eyes. So she was a double personality in the sense that her dreams and her reality were a combination and separation in her life at the same time. And what really was interesting in her was that her dreams are like the old concept of dreams, which are in

one way or another prophecy. That is she dreams what will happen in the future. So when she was a little girl, when she woke up and went to tell her dreams to her family everyone was frightened because everything she says can happen.

Here I also discovered something. We, who are coming from this rational culture and afterwards the analysis of dreams and so on, we have the tendency to think that everything can be rational. Of course the Freudian theory is not wrong, but is not sufficient. It doesn't reflect everything. I think that dreams and our lives are a very complex combination, and all of this, to tell you the truth, I learned from this woman.

Let me turn to paratextual pointers that depict Khoury's "unofficial contract," alerting the readers to his hypotext. The title itself, As if She Were Sleeping, is an allusion to the biblical Jairus' daughter: "And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said Weep not; she is not dead but sleepeth."[212] Khoury quotes this biblical verse as an epigraph[213]to his book. Khoury's novel is divided into three parts or "Nights" as the chapter headings indicate (First Night; Second Night; Third Night), referring to the three Passion days. His preference for "nights" rather than "days" seems to be an advance mention,[214] drawing attention to the dream-like nature of the narration and, moreover, enticing the reader to enter the web-like design of the story-teller, where Khoury weaves his narrative designs like Sharazade in the silence of the night.

Bearing in mind that to outline a dream-work entwined with such superior subtlety as Khoury's I will be sacrificing numerous meaningful details, it suffices here to note that the novel's plot covers the duration of

[212] Luke, 8:52
[213] Genette, Gérard. *On epigraphs in literary works, Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation,* tr. Jane E. Lewin. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). 144-60.
[214] Prince, Gerald. *A Dictionary of Narratology.* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987). 3-4.

some twenty-five years spanning from 1923 to 1948, with flashbacks going back to the civil war of 1860 in Mount Lebanon[215] and with prolepsis reaching the last decade of the twentieth century. The narrator takes a heterodiegetic position; at times he is an omniscient narrator who knows everything about the characters, especially Milia the main protagonist, and at other instances he acts as a historian. But he subtly hints to his presence within the diegesis and reveals himself towards the end as being Iskandar, Milia's nephew who had become a journalist.[216]

Milia is the only daughter of a middle class Greek-Orthodox, Beiruti family, consisting of three brothers, Mousa being the youngest (by four years to her) and with whom she had a close brotherly relation. Born on July 2, 1923, Milia gets married at the age of twenty-three (on January 12, 1946) to a textile merchant, Mansour from Jaffa, Palestine, who is fourteen years older than her; she feels an affinity towards him because he resembles her younger brother.[217] Upon arriving in Nazareth where Mansour lives, the pregnant Milia possessed by her reverie, meets on one mysterious night Tanyous, the fool monk of Nazareth, who is of Lebanese origin.[218] Under his aura she becomes passionately preoccupied with the religious symbolism of the city and develops a fervent affinity towards Mary and her son Jesus. The troubled situation in Palestine and the terrorist attacks of the Zionist military organizations on the Arab population, as well as the death of Mansour's older brother, Ameen, in an accident while preparing weapons for the partisans in his workshop in Jaffa, insinuates an infatuated fear in her concerning the safety of the "boy" she is carrying. Since then, Mansour yields to his mother's

[215] For the 1860 events, Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*.
[216] *As Though She Were Sleeping,* 341-44.
[217] Ibid. 23, 41, 84-5.
[218] Ibid. 208-18, 247-52; Tanyous reminds of Jurjī the monk, another character of Khoury's from The Kingdom of Strangers (1993), a Lebanese monk who lived in Palestine and is said to have led a gang which fought against the Zionist military organizations in Galilee, The Kingdom of Strangers, 22, 50-61.

dominion and Milia gives way to her baffling dreams, the pains of pregnancy, and to the stories told to her by Tanyous during their wanderings through the sacred spaces of Nazareth. Milia dies while delivering her child, taken away by a vision-dream, while both the Beiruti Sister Milaneh and Tanyous stand at her bed side: Jesus crucified during the final fall of Jaffa that was to occur some months after her death in May 1948 the subsequent flight of Mansour, his brother's widow, and her new born boy while fleeing on a Greek ship from Jaffa.[219]

Milia is trapped in the realm of dreams. Most of Milia's dreams are of a lucid nature, which is a high degree of self-reflectiveness within the dream state. The subject is accordingly aware that she is dreaming and her active imagination is at work.[220] Her whole life is engulfed in a series of dreams that turns Khoury's novel into a long circular reverie the narrative is framed by two dreams: it opens with Milia pressing her eyes shut in order to continue her dreaming state and ends with her dreaming of the little white lamb crawling on her chest. Literary dreams are interior to the text; moreover, the functioning of the dream-work pertains also to the cultural context.

"I am not in a position to dwell on the subject of dreams and the unconscious from a scientific partake, neither does the premise of this study allow me to devote a thorough study on Khoury's novel: techniques, literary devices, narration, sequence, and themes. Advancing from a more culturalist perspective,"[221] I will somewhat focus on Khoury's exploration of literary dreams that have a semiotic function.

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[219] Khoury, *As Though She were Sleeping*. 335-44.
[220] Shafton, Anthony . *On lucid dreaming,*. Dream Reader: *Contemporary Approaches to the Understanding of Dreams. Albany*: State University of New York Press, 1995. 431-85
[221] Shafton, Dream Reader, *A school of dream interpretation that stresses personality as a product of culture*, 159-213.

Scott Noegel avows that in Mesopotamian cultures and in the Hebrew Bible, dreams were literary portrayals of dreams, whether "message dreams"[222] (in which a deity appears in a dream) or "symbolic dreams"[223] (in which the dreamer witnesses enigmatic visual images), as opposed to dreams preserved in omen, legal, or ritual texts. He argues that, "symbolic dreams are more widely attested in Mesopotamia than message dreams and appear more often in epic literature than in historical texts."[224] However, "unlike Mesopotamia, the Hebrew Bible preserves no omen or ritual texts; all of its dream accounts occur in literature."[225]

The links between dreams and literature are numerous. Bert States notices, "Dreaming and art-making appear to share a 'technique' of purification of waking experience." The two most obvious links between dreams and fictions, States adds, "are that both are processes for connecting previously unconnected aspects of experience in story form."[226] He further argues that "dreams, like fiction, are made out of universal concerns and situations, which is to say that they rely on scripts and subscripts for their structure."[227] The allure of dreams as a literary device occupied writers in different cultures and epochs, and drew the curiosity of European novelists of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries incited by the rising interest in the phenomena of sleep and dreaming by the French Encyclopedistes and physicians. This interest expressed itself in the nineteenth-century in experimental literary attempts, especially with the advent of the Romantic Movement which stressed the crucial role of feelings, the subjective and spontaneous, and

[222] *"Dreams and Dream Interpreters*," 54
[223] Ibid,p-54
[224] Ibid,p-55
[225] Ibid,p-54.
[226] States, Bert O. *Seeing in the Dark: Reflections on Dreams and Dreaming*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997). 6, 190.
[227] Ibid, 229.

which developed awareness to the origins of knowledge and language.[228] Another aspect that needs to be emphasized is the spread of the use of hashish and opium among artists in order to instigate the journey towards the inner self: Coleridge, for example, stressed the prophetic potential of dreams.[229]

In his study on dreams in nineteenth-century Russian literature, Michael Katz, enumerates among the possible sources for literary dreams, religious texts, as well as secular narratives that entered Russia by way of Byzantium during the middle Ages.[230]

Katz notices that von Schubert, whose book The Symbolism of Dreams (1814) might have been one of the sources for Russian writers, argues that, "man's conscious life may be nothing more than a dream, and that his unconscious dream may indeed constitute the 'true state of awakening,' when man is in contact with eternal nature."[231] This idea, attributed to Prophet Muhammad, has been also forwarded by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) in his al-Munqidh, "Men are asleep: then after they die they awake. So perhaps this present life is a sleep compared to the afterlife."[232] A Russian saying quoted by Michael Katz compares Maiden's dreams to old women tales.[233] And it is worth mentioning here in relation with the title of Khoury's novel. In such a manner, the line separating dreams from reality, Milia, becomes blurred.

Besides his thorough knowledge and appreciation of world novelists and their techniques, Khoury scoops from a very rich tradition of literary

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[228] Praz, Mario. *The Romantic Agony, tr. Angus Davidson.* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian), 1-16; Hayter, Alethea. *Opium and the Romantic Imagination.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969). 67-83.
[229] Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, 151-164; Ford, Jennifer. *Coleridge on Dreaming: Romanticism, Dreams and the Medical Imagination.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.) 12-3, 85-8, 112-14, 135-36.
[230] Dreams and the Unconscious, 16-19.
[231] Ibid., 7, 37.
[232] Deliverance from Error, 57; for this tradition, al-'Ajlūnī, Kashf, 2/312.
[233] Dreams and the Unconscious, 54.

dreams both in the Greek-Orthodox and the Arab-Islamic legacies. At the same time, it is also relevant to note Khoury's technique, in using inter-connected links consisting of individual moments in the past and present; moments that is defined respectively by the imagination or reality and are wrapped in a dream-like distorted structure created by ontological provisions. This style is very much in line with the narrative structure used by Mahmoud Darwish in Memory for Forgetfulness.[234] One could mention here the reciprocal influence between Darwish and Khoury that appears in their artistic creation. Khoury often quotes Darwish and highly esteems his work. For instance, in Yalo (2001), Khoury includes a fragment of Darwish poem Mural/ Jidārīya (2000).[235] In *As Though She Were Sleeping,* Milia prophecies the advent of a great Palestinian poet in some fifty years.[236]

However, Khoury's technique in building the entire structure of his novel on a continuous state of reverie remains distinctive; at times he also employs the suggestive free indirect speech, which was used fully consciously by Flaubert in Madame Bovary,[237] in order to evoke the inner-struggle and the unremitting state of reverie. One should keep in mind that the very nature of his intertextual parodic allusion to the narration of the New Testament, where dreams play a major part in the narrative, required a spatial transformation (in the historical-geographical setting).[238] Accordingly, the state of reverie and day-dreaming bridge the biblical past with the contemporary moment, especially, that the dream-state itself is a liminal space, an ambivalent threshold within rites of

[234] Reigeluth, Stuart. *On memory and dreams in Memory for Forgetfulness, Memory and Resistance: A Literary Perspective of Palestinian Existence.* MA Thesis, (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 2005). 45-55, 162-70.
[235] Darwish, Mahmoud. *Jidāriyyat al-mawt.* (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes, 2000). 92
[236] *As Though She Were Sleeping*, 248
[237] Pascal, Roy. *The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and Its Functioning in the Nineteenth- century European Novel.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977).
[238] Jeffers, Ann. *On biblical dreams, Magic and Divination in Anciant Palestine and Syria*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996.)

passage temporally located between and outside ordinary time;[239] Milia's stay in Nazareth, the city heavy with Biblical allusions, represents such threshold between reality and reverie and between place and sacred space. Liminality is a form of transition and potentiality. Victor Turner emphasizes the ambiguous and indeterminate attributes of liminal figures which are expressed by a rich variety of symbols.[240] In her state of dreams in a symbolic area such as Nazareth, Milia become such a liminal figure, oscillating between the symbolic and the real. Giuseppe Mazzotta regards both Dante and St. Francis as liminal figures. St. Francis "moves to the fringes of society, to a symbolic area where the forms of the world lose whatever fixed and stable sense convention has imposed on them." The liminal position, "affords the detached vantage point from which he can speak to the world and impose his sense of order on it."[241]

In order to construct his parodic spatial transformation, Khoury weaves the main features of Jesus' story within the narrative structure and makes reference to a network of Christian themes. He also borrows copious symbols from the New Testament and from the hagiographic material on saints. It suffices to mention only two examples: The replicated mention of the fig tree whose shade enveloped Milia more than once;[242] alluding here to the famous story of Jesus' curse to the fig tree whose shade represents bareness and death.[243] And secondly, the reworking of the legends concerning the prophet Elijah and the central role he plays in Milia's life and dreams (bearing in mind also his fundamental presence in Christianity as a forerunner of the messianic age and the coming of the

[239] Turner, Victor. *Blazing the Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols.* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press 1992).
[240] Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* (Chicago, ILL: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969). 94; id., Blazing the Trail, 148-63.
[241] Mazzotta, Giuseppe. *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). 109-12.
[242] *As Though She were Sleeping,* 30, 42, 59, 68, 207, 286.
[243] Mathew, 21/18-19; Marcus, 21/12-13

Day of the Lord).[244] Hence, the summoning of Elijah as a revolutionary and liminal figure turns out to be a call for justice.

With the self-expression born of her precarious condition on the threshold of two worlds, the wobbly world of dreams and the holy spaces of Nazareth, haunted with violence, visions, and biblical dreams, Milia's acts of reverie and clairvoyance lead to a narrative structure that leaves the reader shaky and out of grip. Moreover, the liminal spaces of dream serve to generate an overall effect of imaginative freedom, blending reality and fantasy in a style of Magical Realism with the engulfing presence of water, the act of flying, as well as other symbols and tropes.[245]

Caught in her vortex of dreams, Milia summons to mind her classical literary forerunner with its "perpetual fusion of illusion and reality,"[246] Milia had a kind of fear towards sex and the sexual; her inspirations were of another type of the quixotic paradigm: She is overly sentimental and is deeply influenced by her religious upbringing social middle class milieu. Moreover, she is 'inflicted' with the fantasy of literature[247] and consumed by a romantic imagination and are prey to her own fancies.[248] This state leads her to live a life of deception, seeking thus the faraway and imaginary existence that seemed so real to her. Milia's psychological status lies in the mottled shade of her eyes that alternates color.[249]

Symbolically, Milia become a "representative" of the pains and hopes as well as of her own aborted dreams and hopes. Depicted by the stigmata element of the women in blue that appears to her often as well as the

[244] *As Though She Were Sleeping*, 145, 232, 235, 256, 274, 288-292, 322-323, 386-387
[245] Jarrar, *On Magical Realism in the contemporary Arabic novel,* see: "The Arabian Nights," 305-307.
[246] Levin, Harry. *The Gates of Horn.* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). 246-69;
[247] *As Though She Were Sleeping*, 117-121.
[248] Quoted in Levin, *The Gate of Horn,* 50; see on Quixotic novelistic characters of this sort: Levin, The Gate of Horn, 49-52; Levin, "Madame Bovary," 409
[249] For Emma' eyes, *Madame Bovary*, 11, 23, 226

'holy olive oil' running from her eyes,[250] Additionally, Milia's sensibility and liminality could be read as a symbol for the tension created by the reality in 1948 Palestine as a land under imperialist British mandate, subjected to the enormous and atrocious violence exercised on it by Zionist colonization.[251]

As Though She Were Sleeping is a journey of an entirely different order. Milia has just been married to Mansour when the story opens. She and her new husband are traveling by car from her Lebanese home town toward their honeymoon hotel in the mountains. The place was surrounded by fog and cold snow. Milia huddle in the backseat as Mansour walks ahead with a candle trying to light the way for the driver. Already Milia is sleeping and dreaming. She cries out to the Mother of God and the fog lifts.

It is 1946 when Milia settle with Mansour in Nazareth where she conceives her first child. She spends much of her time sleeping and dreaming while Mansour recites poetry to her. He makes love to her while she sleeps. The story of this couple's first year of marriage is the real time of the novel, but the dream time encompasses the history of Syria, the history of both families, and a biblical history of Arabic Christianity. Dream stories and poetry swirl like the fog in the opening scenes, creating an effect both cinematic and phantasmagoric.

Milia dream her past, her present, and her future, diffusing and recombining the political and economic tensions of the outside world. It takes half the book for the labor of delivering her baby to pass and truly, for a woman labor seems endless and outside of time. Milia labors just as

[250] *As Though She Were Sleeping*, 56, 65, 78, 127, 204, 266
[251] Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 56-114

diligently in her dreams to bring her past into focus and to divine the future of her child.[252]

We move between Milia's dreams and reminiscences, of her wedding night driving to a hotel in Chtaura, her peculiar marriage to Mansour, who spouts Arabic poetry but refuses to write any himself, of the couple's history in Beirut, Nazareth and Jaffa, the formation of Israel and many family legends. Milia is a dedicated sleeper, more attached to her dream self, a lithe brown girl with green eyes, than to her own physical person. She insists on sleeping, or pretending to, while Mansour makes love to her (ambiguous rape is something of a signature of Khoury's fiction, as are mystic midwives and the byways of the Syriac church). Her dreams may or may not have prophetic powers - how could we know, when it is never clear whether or not we have left them behind? - but at any rate it is suggested that she meets certain other characters in her sleep before she encounters them in her waking life.

4.2.2 Theme of Imagination in the novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

In the novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema* Imagination are proverbially very dull and Khoury gives us a lot of them. "The child looks at her and takes her into his eyes, and water encircles her on all sides. She tries to get out of the water of the eyes and reaches out and feels that she is drowning,"[253] and so on. Then again, the novel sketches an argument for the idea that such reports ought to be infinitely interesting. Milia tells Mansour "The only way I can picture a poet is as someone who had a dream and wrote it down."[254] And as Mansour says later: "I get bored when I hear the same story. See the difference from poetry: you can repeat a line of verse till

[252]http://www.goodreads.com/review/list/3333943judy?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search%5Bquery%5D=ELIAS+KHOURY
[253] Khoury,Elias:*As though she were sleeping*,p-242
[254] Ibid,p-245

kingdom come and feel the same ecstasy each time, but you can only listen to a story two or three times and then you get bored."[255]

Whether Meeyla's written-down dreams rise to the level deathless poetry is a question of taste, of course, and smooth as Humphrey Davies's idiomatic translation is, it would be hard to judge from the English version. Besides, the important thing is the interplay between dreams, poems, rumours and, eventually, religious and national myths.

Indeed, as the novel progresses it almost comes to seem like an experimental comparison of two kinds of novelistic tedium: recounted dreams versus recurring mythic archetypes. Characters constantly mirror one another: Milia agrees to marry Mansour because of his resemblance to her brother Moussa, for instance, and at their honeymoon hotel they are waited on by a pair of eerily similar maids whom they call Wadeea 1 and Wadeea 2, who in turn seem to appear in new guises at the hospital where Milia gives birth. Such uncanny duplications are everywhere.

Meanwhile, the motif of a father killing his son grows increasingly insistent, established via the abducted child of a family maid and reiterated in Milia's grandfather Saleem, rumoured to have thrown a stone at his own son when surprised during an assignation with a prostitute. The pattern echoes through a number of variations on the story of Abraham and Isaac, and several exuberantly heretical rewrites of Jesus's crucifixion. At length it is hinted that Milia's own story may be yet another version of the latter, though perhaps only in the way that any story can be found in another if one is motivated enough to look for it.

In the end, though, such stories can get in the way of living. As Mansour complains when the couple moves to Nazareth: "I've had enough. No one

[255] Ibid,p-245

can live in God's own city ..."[256] Milia have by this point become convinced that she knows where Jesus's house is. They also threaten to overshadow what is most diverting about Khoury's novel, though perhaps least consistent with its philosophical commitments. Khoury is a great collector of and contributor to Lebanese urban folklore, and As Though She Were Sleeping is never more enjoyable than when recounting, for instance, Milia's strange experiences with a pair of notorious bone setters or when it claims that Beirut opposed the introduction of church bells because this Frankish habit would encourage young men to use the bell ropes to stage jumping competitions.

Novels are great repositories for unauthenticable rumour, and specious-sounding historical titbits like the bell-ringing story, or a digression on the introduction of trousers into the Arab world, are a standard tactic of the fretful postmodernist resistance. But notice how delightful these ones are, how full of fun. It's a common experience when reading in, say, Saramago, to see a few bright narrative fragments rising from the churn of symbol and innuendo and wish that the author could let his guard down, follow them for a while and let them take on the colours of a fully imagined reality. The same goes here. Perhaps that's an indulgence when dreadful forces are forever eliminating minority voices from the chorus of the present. Nevertheless, readers like to dream a little, too.[257]

4.2.3 Theme of Violence in the novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

In the novel Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if she were sleeping) Khoury has explored the paradoxes and complexities of the notion of violence. Here the protagonist of the novel Milia anticipates through her dreams, the 1948 nakba (catastrophe) and the violence which takes place in a number

[256] Ibid,p-23
[257] http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/books/as-though-she-were-sleeping-a-dull-work-of-imagination#ixzz3JNtp4Ob9

of Palestinian cities leading to the 1948 war between the Arabs and the Zionists. Elias Khoury tells the years of war and conflict, which experienced the Palestinians during the recent years of the forties, where forced millions of them to leave their home, and forced from time to struggle a day in order to survive.

The violence culminated in Israel's ruthless 1947-49 "War of Independence," in which at least 750,000 Palestinian men, women, and children were expelled from their homes by numerically superior Israeli forces half before any Arab armies joined the war. This massive humanitarian disaster is known as 'The Catastrophe,' al Nakba in Arabic.[258]

Zionist forces committed 33 massacres and destroyed 531 Palestinian towns. Author Norman Finkelstein states: "According to the former director of the Israeli army archives, 'in almost every village occupied by us during the War... acts were committed which are defined as war crimes, such as murders, massacres, and rapes'...Uri Milstein, the authoritative Israeli military historian of the 1948 war, goes one step further, maintaining that 'every skirmish ended in a massacre of Arabs.'"[259]

Count Folke Bernadotte, a former official of the Swedish Red Cross who saved thousands of Jews during World War II and was appointed U.N. mediator in Palestine, said of the refugees: "It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes."[260] Bernadotte was

[258] This has been documented in great deal by numerous historians, among them Hadawi; Neff; Christison; Qumsiyeh; and Abu Sitta.
[259] Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*;
[260] Neff, pp. 66-67, 131, 86-89. (p. 67)

assassinated by a Zionist organization led by future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.[261]

These kinds of violence are happened at the time of Nakba. But in these crucial moments the protagonist of this novel Milia could not afraid of the violence. During three days Milia spend with her husband Mansour who met him in Beirut She lived with him in Nazareth the largest city in the North District of Israel. This story is the combination of fantasy and realism. Dreams tell her the facts of daily experienced by, and in turn, you list the facts as we formed the details of her whole life.

Thus the story begins and ends in the fraught Nazareth of 1947. But without emphasizing the city's tensions and gentle Milia can see that a tragedy is coming. Yet her focus is on giving birth. She slips in and out of dream-memories as she lies in a hospital bed and pushes out her son. Milia's life has its hardships, certainly, but her traumas are mostly of an ordinary sort. Great changes take place during her lifetime, but Milia says that politics give her a headache. Nazareth was boiling over, but she Milia did not really notice anything out of the ordinary.

4.3 A Study on the Styles of Elias Khoury

Khoury first sought a way to effectively narrate the immediate present, in particular the immediacy of wartime. When the civil war in Lebanon began, Khoury searched for literary accounts about previous wartime in Lebanon and found that literature left out or hid this reality. Nothing conveyed the immediate experience of war. Seeing this void, Khoury aimed to create an accurate portrayal of wartime. He wrote his first book Little Mountain while fighting in the civil war. This desire to accurately convey the immediate experience of living inside a civil war, he believes,

[261] http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/folke.html

contributed to what Edward Said identified as postmodern in his written introduction to the work. Before he read the introduction, Khoury claimed he hadn't heard the literary term.

Then Khoury challenged the concept of an all-knowing narrator. Naguib Mahfouz mastered the natural or realistic novel in which the narrator knows everything. Khoury wanted to explore a narrative conveyed by a narrator who "knows nothing." This effort led to his creating multiple narratives within the same novel.

After that Khoury wanted to explore through his work how Arabic language might be liberated. Ever respectful of writing in a modern language that emerged from an ancient language, one with a sacred root, Khoury believed the language's long history and evolution had become both its beauty and burden. He knew the language needed a change and sought to create a link between spoken dialects and written forms of Arabic. This innovation stemmed organically from his desire to express the immediate present and allowed him to incorporate multiple narratives within the same work.[262]

Khoury was feminizing language and, subsequently, feminizing imagination. Khoury believes literature differs from religion in that literature has the potential to be feminine. He wanted to explore a way to liberate and feminize Arabic language through narrative. Doing this also enabled him to move beyond the scripted tropes of "orientalization" expected in Arabic literature. Falling prey to expectations and giving readers something they've already had results in orientalism. To avoid

[262] Mlynxqualey. *Elias-khoury a writers journey* , April,14, 2012.

this, Khoury believes, writers must write what uniquely exists for him or her to write.[263]

4.4 A Critical Study on the Styles of Elias Khoury's novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

The writing of Elias Khoury was absolutely beautiful in the novel Ka'annaha Na'ema. During some of the more linear sections Khoury uses his classic word in such a way that he able to take us into the world of Beirut and Nazareth in the 40s. The descriptions were so rich and vivid. After that Khoury turns his writing with the description of the family history of the protagonist of this novel. It was nice to give a depth to these characters, but also lent itself to this theme of slippage in consciousness, where the main character are not always completely sure about when we are, who we are with, and whether these stories really happened. As the book goes on, a theme of confusing people for other people becomes very prominant and this deep delving into the family history at times plays right into that theme. Overall, it was certainly a beautifully written story, it was simply a little too complex and complicated.

Khoury explains that he is a very rational man. And he wants continue to be rational. So he is a very engaged writer in the sense that he thought always that writing is a way of expressing our commitment to justice, our commitment to the marginal people in society that do not have ways to express themselves. That writing is a way of discovering the deep human experience, which is a very complex experience, and that writing must be in the service of justice. Khoury continue to be like that. The only thing here that the Palestine issue, which he has written about in a long novel before this novel Bab al-Shams (The Gate of the Sun) the Palestinian

[263] Mlynxqualey. *Elias-khoury a writers journey* , April,14, 2012.

issue now takes, in this novel, another dimension. It is the moments before the Palestinian Nakba; it reflects a transition of societies of Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine.

Khoury's style based upon multiple narrations and upon this idea that literature is a field of mirrors. Characters mirror characters and stories mirror stories. This is why Khoury's novels are a series of short stories. He never wrote in a linear way. He hates this linear way because he thinks it has nothing to do with our reality in the sense that, with the reality of memory and imagination and literature is a combination of memory and imagination this structure continues, but it develops so that we are dealing with a world where dreams and realities are mingled together. So when you read this book, take it easy in the beginning. You will adapt, and you will discover the ways it will lead you are the ways toward this combination of reality and dreams.

It is a way to see ourselves as mirrors. We are mirrors for the other, and we are actually, in our daily life, structuring our stories and our concept of ourselves, our image, through the mirrors of others. We are all mirrors and in this world of mirrors, and the marvelous will emerge. Literature will not be a copy of reality, because it will take us to another reality, to the reality of our inner life and of our inner souls.

Elias Khoury observed that normally, writers are very bad in presenting their works: the work is much more complex. Khoury thought the real writer of a book is the reader himself, because when we read a book we reinvent it in our imagination and we recreate it. So the real writer is the reader and the writer must behave as a reader because actually while writing we are trying to read our lives and our realities.

Practically, the writer is a very sad creature. You know if you succeed in writing a book, if the book is good, then people will forget you and remember the characters of the book. And if the book is bad, readers will forget you and the characters. So, Khoury point out that writers are only agents of writing, and writers do not know how to write. This is the thing that you must keep in mind. Because when a writer begins a new work, the new work has to change his style, otherwise it's not new. It has to change his vision; otherwise, it's a repetition. It has to change his ways of seeing things.

4.4.1 Use of poetic verses in the novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

Though Elias Khoury was not a poet although he loves poetry, but he was not interested to compose poetry. *Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if She Were Sleeping)* is embroidered with erotic verse from classical Arab poets such as al-Mutanabbi and Abu Nuwas.

Before I am going to explain the verses of Mutanabbi uses in the novel Ka'annaha Na'ema, I would like to give a brief life sketch of the poet Al-Mutanabbi. His real name was Abu at-Tayyib Ahmad ibn Hussain Al Mutanabbi. He was born in 915 A.D. at the town of Al Kufah in Iraq. Al Mutanabbi was the son of a water carrier who was supposedly of noble and ancient southern Arabian descent. In his youth, Al Mutanabbi was well educated in Syria in Damascus, which he partly earned because of his lyrical abilities. Having lived closely among the Bedouin of the Banu Qalb tribe, he learnt their doctrines and Arabic.

It was in his youth that he won his nickname "Al Mutanabbi", which means "the one who wants to become a Prophet". Why he was named so is only partly clear. According to some interpretations, he likened himself to the Prophet Salih in some of his verses. Others claim it is his political

activities that won the young poet the unusual name. He was the leader of a revolutionary movement and, claiming to be a Prophet, led a revolt in his home town in 932.[264]

The revolt was suppressed and the young man was imprisoned. It is during this period that he began to write his first poems.

Al-Mutanabbi's involvement in politics did not end with the unsuccessful revolt. Throughout his whole life he would aspire towards political influence, although his aspirations were never rewarded. He travelled from Iraq to Syria, Egypt and Iran in search of an influential patron that would eventually appoint him as governor of a province. However, while his poetic talent was widely acclaimed everywhere he went, his skills in handling the matters of state were never recognized as such.[265]

His political ambitions first lead him to Aleppo in Northern Syria, where he joined the court of Prince Saif al Dawla. From his arrival in 948, Al Mutanabbi enjoyed the protection of the prince for some nine years, before his political aspirations caused him to loose his patron's favours and made leaving the country the only option on hand. In 957 he was forced to flee to Egypt, which was at that time ruled by the Ikhshidis. In Egypt the poet won the protection of the regent, Abu al Misk Kafur, but his favours were not bestowed on Al Mutanabbi for a long time. He had to flee this country in 960, after he wrote several satirical poems that presented the court in a bad light.[266]

The poet's tumultuous paths then lead to Shiraz, Iran, where he gained the protection of the Adud ad-Dawlah and worked as court poet until 965. It was in this same year when he found his death. Having returned to Iraq,

[264] Nick,M. *Al-Mutanabbi, The greatest Arabic poet* al-shindagah, issue 54, September-October,2003
[265] Nick,M.op.cit
[266] Nick,M.op.cit

he was attacked and killed by bandits in a trip in the vicinity of Baghdad.[267]

Khoury uses the verses of Mutanabbi with the mouth of Al-Mansour one of the chief character of this novel. Mansour was the fiancé of Milia the protagonist of the novel. Mansour is a lover and reciter of poetry. The novel luxuriates in the verse of al Mutanabbi, whom Mansour says walked on words. Milia responds to a couplet by reversing its last words to encapsulate her character. While men are said to be empty, Milia overflows with dreams so deep that death is described as one. A dream of this kind is where the novel takes place.

This novel is a particularly complex beast: Khoury's novels have long been interested in what language can't (and can) do, but كأنها نائمة is his most language-obsessed work.

It's full of linguistic challenges. For one, the protagonist's husband Mansour is fascinated by the power of poetry. As Mansour says to his beloved that he should memorize poetry, but he doesn't want to be a poet. For a native speaker of this language whose vehicle is verse that blends ecstasy with wisdom and dances with the interplay of vowelled and vowelless consonants, it's enough to recite the poetry, play with it as you wish, and become drunk on its rhythms to your heart's content. The poets, poor chaps, labour under the burden of those who went before them and have no idea how to extricate themselves from beneath the sandbags of poems already written, so they fall to their knees, or imitate, or kill themselves.[268]

He told her the story of how al Mutanabbi had visited Tiberias and stayed there for a while, and how he'd described the lion as no-one had done

[267] Nick,M.op.cit

[268] Mlynxqualey. *Al-Mutanabbi and Elias Khoury's 'As though she were Sleeping'* june 2, 2011

before him. Mansour says to Milia listen him and fell silent. He had wanted to say that words were al Mutanabbi's water and music his waves that he mixed wisdom with rhythm so that his poetry became a door to awareness, and that the door had closed behind him when he died and no-one had been able to open it again for the last thousand years.[269]

Mansour said:

من لم يعشق الدنيا قديما..... و لكن لا سبيل الي الوصول

نصيبك في حياتك من حبيب ..... نصيبك في منامك من خيال[270]

Who has not loved this world be times

Yet still we find no road to love and consummation.

Your lot, in this life, of love

Is as that, in your dreams, of a phantom

After that Al-Mansour also recites another poem of Al-Mutabbi. Here he wanted to say about the barrier in the way to meet his patron Saif al-dawlah (Sword of the Dynasty), who was the founder of the Emirate of Aleppo, encompassing most of northern Syria and parts of western Jazira, and the brother of al-Hasan ibn Abdallah ibn Hamdan.

"و جبال لبنان و كيف بقطعها.....و هو الشتاء و صيفهن شتاء

لبس الثلوج بها علي مسالكي.....فكأنها ببياضها سوداء"[271]

And how can I cross the mountains of Lebanon,

And the winter and summer of these are cold.

Ice are covered upon this very tightly

[269] Mlynxqualey. Op.cit
[270] Khoury, Elias: *Ka'annaha Na'ema*,2007 ,p-148
[271] Ibid,p-71

As if its whiteness becomes blackish.

Mansour loves Milia very much. As a reciter of poetry, he praise her girlfriend through the verses of Al-Mutanabbi's poetry. Here he praises Milia's beautiful eyes. He says that everybody may fall in love with this girl for her beautiful eyes.

"لعينيك ما يلقي الفواد و ما لقي.....و للحب ما لم يبق مني و ما بقي

و ما كنت ممن يدخل العشق قلبه.....و لكن من يبصر جفونك يعشق"[272]

For your eyes' ransom, all the heart has found and yet will find I give.
For love's, all of me that lives and does not live.
Never before was I of those in whose heart love lies
But all must fall in love who sees your eyes.

4.4.2 Narrative style in the novel *Ka'annaha Na'ema*

Elias Khoury's is a magician with words. He take the erotic awakening of a young woman, the Christian faith in all it Eastern Orthodox alchemy of history and myth, as well as the complex trauma of extended families and weave it into such a fine and exotic tapestry. Khoury expresses erotic scene with the magic of his words. He expresses so intimately the heart and body of a young pregnant woman.

According to Genette's arrangement, Khoury's Ka'annaha Na'ema (As Though She Were Sleeping) one could describe it as a parodic hypertext.[273] Khoury offers an intertextual parodic allusion to the narration of the New Testament and to popular apocryphal material as

[272] Ibid,p-113
[273] Genette, Gérard. Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree, tr. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). 317.

well as to socio-religious habits and popular devotion of the Greek Orthodox community of Beirut.

Khoury narrates about the culture of Levantine people. The book is relies on the strength of its carefully crafted, circling sentences. One of the book's delights is how it details changes in Levantine cuisine, health care and dress. When trousers arrived: In essence, Beirut experienced its phase of European fashion as though it were a carnival of laughs: men walking with their feet unnaturally far apart, as if every male in the city had suddenly gone lame; endless jokes; and a devastating sense of professional impotence among the traditional tailors who could not accustom themselves to the new style of apparel.

Elias Khoury takes readers deep into the dream world of a woman in Palestine in the 1940s. *Ka'annaha Na'ema (As if She Were Sleeping)* is a gentler take on the stories and landscapes that have marked Elias Khoury's powerful and often disturbing work. Khoury, mentioned in recent years as a contender for literature's Nobel Prize, has set most of his stories in Lebanon and Palestine. His best-known novel, "Gate of the Sun," is a sprawling look at post-1948 Palestine. Khoury is particularly interested in the links between storytelling and trauma: His 2002 novel, "Yalo," foregrounds a rapist's confessions; several of his novels are set during the Lebanese civil war. Part of the softer tone of "As Though She Were Sleeping" comes from its earlier setting. It begins and ends in December 1947, before the establishment of Israel. It also centers on an apolitical Christian woman from Beirut.

Like a lot of authors of his generation and political tendency, Elias Khoury treats stories, histories especially with suspicion. There's no

paradox there: most arts are practised at least as often in a spirit of sceptical destruction as of classicist affirmation.

Nevertheless, when one thinks of the literary novelists in whom the spirit of 1968 is strongest. The common theme is an adversarial attitude to narrative quite different from the basically aesthetic disruptions of high modernist fiction or the nouvelle roman. These mostly post-mid-Sixties, mostly pre-mid-Eighties authors, treat stories not as material to be manipulated, but as a treacherous element in human affairs, to be inoculated against via a range of deconstructive strategies.

There's aversion therapy: like a child forced to smoke an entire packet of cigarettes so that he will never be tempted to light up again, the reader is subjected to an overwhelming swarm of competing tales. There are instructive games involving narrators who are not so much unreliable as opaque, forever getting in the way, arguing with themselves or among themselves, holding up the action to deliver tendentious aphorisms.

There's parody, of course the opportunist tactics of official history, the self-protective rituals of scholarship, all tilted at the supposedly fanciful idea that one can ever get to the bottom of things. Magical realism, with its folksy doubtfulness, fantastical happenings and cyclical narratives, is rarely far away, though the point is less to luxuriate in strangeness than to frustrate the impulses of rationalist common sense.

This is a sensibility with a marked hostility to reductionism. Nevertheless, if one were to boil it all down to a single moral it might be one given in Pynchon's mock-18th-century novel Mason & Dixon: "Who claims Truth, Truth abandons. History is hir'd, or coerc'd, only in Interests that must ever prove base." Story is an instrument of power. The best mode of

resistance is rambling novels filled with vague and shadowy goings on parades.

That describes a good deal of Elias Khoury's fiction. Still, as a Beiruti of Christian background, a former member of Fatah and a witness of civil war, occupation and massacre, his unease at the power of univocal narrative to trap people (or peoples) in a certain interpretation of events hardly seems frivolous. In his best books, Gate of the Sun and Yalo, the procedures of postmodernism come to mimic the fog of war. Unsettling scenes emerge from the obscurity of elision and superimposition, but their meaning quickly slips out of reach. The same goes for 2007's Ka'anaha Nae'ma. Though here the murk is thicker and the lucid passages are less memorable. In Yalo, the immediate action which the novel revolved around was the interrogation of an accused rapist and robber. Here, it is a woman slipping in and out of consciousness in a hospital bed. The results are correspondingly less gripping.

4.4.3 Feminizing the Language in his writing

Khoury believes that it was important to write this novel from a woman's perspective. This profound sensibility Milia had is one that societies lack because they are dominated by male discourse. Only a female sensibility could link this historical movement with all the mythology she was bringing with her.' The problem was that sensibility was inaccessible to language. 'Language is a structure of power and any structure of power is historically male. What I tried to do was discover the other side of language, the feminine side, which is full of nuances, kind of like a woman's body.'[274]

[274] Khoury, Elias. Interview by Sophia Efthimiatou, Granta, the magazine of new writing,February,1,2013

Khoury explains that he is speaking of all types of power, not only of political power but more profound types of power: social, religious, and so on. Religious power is masculine because God is masculine; with monotheism God became only masculine. Khoury argues that when he was very young he reads the One Thousand and One Nights, and he discovered Shahrazād was a very interesting phenomenon in culture and literature, not only in Arabic but in the world literature, because Shahrazād represented many things. The first one of them is that she is a woman facing the power of a man, and the second one is that she represents culture facing the madness of power. So from Shahrazād he always had this idea that we must feminize the language, we must feminize literature, and we must go deep in this feminine aspect of life which can lead us to represent the profound, the most human, and the most oppressed.

For Milia, words are insufficient. Hers is a language of dreams, and the only way her husband can communicate with her is through poetry. 'Poetry is another way to dream,' Khoury says. 'That is the role of poets to put into words what we cannot put into words.'[275]

The process of totally identifying with a woman and working through her was challenging, but it also had a lasting effect on him. Khoury explain that he took five years to write this novel. During this time he was fall in love with this woman. He puts his finger on the spinning Eiffel tower and it comes to a stop.

[275] Khoury, Elias. Interview by Sophia Efthimiatou, op.cit