

**“Changing Places”:
Travels Beyond the Anglo-American Campus Novel Genre**

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I, Sarah Hanaa Haji Ahmad Ghazali, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis examines cultural and geographical limitations of the campus novel genre, proposing the study of global texts as alternative perspectives. Through analysis of critical studies of the genre, I argue that the campus novel is limited to studies of Anglo-American traditions, relegating global texts as marginal foreign variants. My research advocates further exploration of culturally and geographically diverse literary examples, considering their vitality and contemporaneity against the stagnant Anglo-American tradition. Chapter 1 identifies these limitations, through surveying the critical tradition of the campus novel genre. Chapter 2 presents an extensive overview of critical studies of campus novels beyond Britain and North America, thus contrasting their expanse against conspicuous absence in the critical tradition. To ensure systematic analysis of texts from diverse traditions, Chapter 2 also proposes the notion of kinship as connective framework, focusing on images of academic mobility as units of comparison between texts. The remaining chapters consider selected novels from various literary traditions, close-reading images of academic mobility and aspects of mobility such as motives, experiences, and endings of movement. Chapter 3 investigates survival and escape as motives for academic mobility in Alaa Al-Aswany's *Chicago* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. Chapter 4 dissects social mobility and the tradition of academic mobility from Indonesia to Egypt, in the works of Habiburrahman El-Shirazy. The final chapter observes university return narratives – an image of mobility presently absent in studies of the genre. Examining Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and *Pengabdian (Submission)* by Norsiah Abd. Gapar, returns are assessed in the context of student missions, exploring how canon diversity presents unique images of mobility, and reframes the genre. In essence, this thesis evaluates the significance of socio-historical conditions in modifying meanings of comparable images of academic mobility, offering alternative cultural, geographical, and methodological perspectives of the campus novel genre.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Table of Contents	4
Acknowledgments	6
Impact Statement	7
General Introduction	8
Chapter 1 “narrowly periodized, [...] narrowly nationalized”: The Anglo-American Tradition of the Campus Novel Genre	17
1.1. Introduction	17
1.2. Stories of Origin and Development of the Genre	18
1.3. The Campus Novel as a Postwar Anglo-American Literary Genre	20
Precursors and Lineages	20
External Conditions	26
Postwar Boom	32
Campus Politics	35
“Anglo-American Phenomenon”	36
1.4. “narrowly periodized [...] narrowly nationalized”: Limitations and Problematics of the Genre	40
“narrowly periodized”	42
“narrowly nationalized”	46
1.5. Conclusion	51
Chapter 2 Studies of Non-Anglo-American Campus Novels: Theories and Methods	53
2.1. Introduction	53
2.2. “Degrees of Foreignness”: Existing Studies of The Non-Anglo-American in Campus Novels	54
2.3. The Non-Anglo-American Campus Novel	56
2.4. Theorising Kinship	68
2.5. Images and Politics of Mobility	75
Chapter 3 Perilous Journeys: Academic Mobility as Escape in Alaa Al-Aswany’s <i>Chicago</i> and Diana Abu Jaber’s <i>Crescent</i>	82
3.1. Introduction	82
3.2. The Itinerant Academic in David Lodge’s <i>Small World</i>	82
3.3. “You’ve left your poor, miserable country”: Exiles, Émigrés, Expatriates in Alaa Al-Aswany’s <i>Chicago</i>	88
Tragic Endings and Failed Escapes	94
3.4. “There is, of course, no going home”: Academic Exile in Diana Abu Jaber’s <i>Crescent</i>	100
Imagined Hospitalities	106
3.5. Perils or Pleasures: Contrasting Portrayals of Academic Mobility	108

Chapter 4 An Indonesian Man in Egypt: Social Mobility and the University in Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's <i>Ayat-Ayat Cinta</i> and <i>Ketika Cinta Bertasbih</i>	116
4.1. Introduction	116
4.2. Social Status Attainment and the University in Selected Studies of the Campus Novel	118
4.3. Social Advancement and the Azharite Identity in <i>Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)</i>	122
The Azharite Identity as Motive and Licence for Movement	124
Social Mobility and The Marriage Subplot	129
Mobility Limitations and Interruptions	133
4.4. The Tempeh-Selling Azharite: Rethinking Academic Mobility and Social Advancement in <i>Ketika Cinta Bertasbih (When Love Glorifies God)</i>	138
Academic Failures and Immobility	139
Incongruous Movements and Decadence	145
4.5. Academic Mobility and Social Advancement in the Indonesian Azharite Novel	149
Chapter 5 Degrees of Success: Representations of Return Narratives in Selected Post-University Novels	154
5.1. Introduction	154
5.2. Exits, Departures, Returns	155
University Return Narratives	159
5.3. "This nonsense you learn at school won't wash with us here": Futile Returns in Tayeb Salih's <i>Season of Migration to the North</i>	161
Futile Returns	163
5.4. "Returning with success": Moral Returns in Norsiah Abd. Gapar's <i>Pengabdian (Submission)</i>	172
Binaries of Success and Failure	173
"returning empty-handed"	180
5.5. Educational Missions and Returns	183
Conclusion	190
Works Cited	194

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Impact Statement

The main impact of my work will be on the studies of the campus novel genre, especially in expanding the predominantly Anglo-American canon. This is done through my examination of primary texts and novels previously unexplored in studies of the campus novel. From this, we are able to look at new issues, or how previous thematics have been portrayed in these texts. As this is done through examination of cultural and geographical variants of the genre, this thesis also enables the study of campus novels in different languages. Moving further, my research can contribute to studies of world literary networks, particularly debates into global genres. Evidence of the campus novel existing and flourishing in multiple cultures and locations can further studies of the genre as a possible global genre. Beyond comparative literary studies, my research proposes revised methods of looking at higher education today, by focusing on the human aspects beyond statistics that so often define studies of higher education. Additionally, my research also examines emerging sites of higher education, considering possible shifts in global powers. My research further enables exploration of the effect of mobility on the university, as portrayed in fiction. Mobility has long caused changes for the university, particularly in increasing intercultural contact, and accelerating global relationships. However, existing research projects are largely quantitative. By examining academic mobility as portrayed in fiction, my research presents humanistic aspects to these studies of people, movement, and the university. This thesis can also contribute to contemporary debates on decolonising education and the university. Additionally, we are also looking at major changes to the university, as present conditions compel changes to the campus structure. In recent times, there has been a shift in the traditional campus structure, evident through the rise of distance learning and satellite campuses. My research delves into the possibility of analysing university narratives where the campus is absent, particularly focusing on university narratives that go beyond the campus space, as well as post-university narratives. The post-COVID-19 world further calls for research into the changing face of the university. In 2020, the university has gone virtual, but is also virtually absent. The notion of universities being in enclosed campus spaces, comprising of interpersonal and face-to-face interaction, has changed. What are the new university narratives that can come from this period of uncertainty? I hope that my research can provide some methods, and future directions.

General Introduction

It's for us that the University exists, for the dispossessed of the world; not for the students, not for the selfless pursuit of knowledge, not for any of the reasons that you hear. We give out reasons, and we let a few of the ordinary ones in, those that would do in the world; but that's just protective coloration. Like the church in the Middle Ages, which didn't give a damn about the laity or even about God, we have our pretenses in order to survive. And we shall survive – because we have to. (Williams 32)

In John Williams's 1965 novel *Stoner*, the character David Masters presents a question to his two fellow university academics: "Have you gentlemen ever considered the question of the true nature of the University?", then presenting his own contemplations above (29). The repeated utilisation of the pronouns "us" and "we" directs "the University" inward to the three characters, and for the rest of the novel, this sense of insularity remains. *Stoner* rarely moves beyond the space of the university mapped out in the novel. It is as though it has been frozen in time and space, content with remaining static and repeatedly introspective of who and what is within, because after all, "it is for [them] that the University exists" (Williams 9).

Fifty years after it was first published, and this sense of insularity is the focus of contemporary studies of the novel. In 2013, *Stoner* experienced a renaissance, from having sold only 4,863 copies since the decade and up to the year 2012, to selling 164,000 copies in the year 2013 alone (Barnes). This revival is enabled by endorsements and verbal publicity, and subsequently led to increasing mainstream and academic attention on the novel. Academic studies are especially invested in examining changing conditions of the literary marketplace. Julian Barnes notes that *Stoner*'s revival positions it as "a quite unexpected bestseller [...] a bestseller publishers themselves could not quite understand. A bestseller of the purest kind – one caused entirely by word-of-mouth among readers" (Barnes). He points to the locations of the novel's popularity as possible reasons, where "it seems to be a purely European (and Israeli) phenomenon" (Barnes). Barnes further observes that the novel did not experience similar resurgence in the United States of America, with Williams's compatriots such as the author Sylvia Brownrigg commenting that "in spite of its American setting, the character feels more English, or European – opaque, fundamentally decent, and passive" (Brownrigg qtd. in Barnes).

Contemporary studies of *Stoner* have further extracted its university setting and character types as fulfilling conventions of the academic novel genre. Tim Kreider summarises two academic novel conventions found in *Stoner*:

Stoner's protagonist is an unglamorous, hardworking academic [who] drudges away in a dead-end career, dies, and is forgotten: a failure. The book is set not in the city of dreams but back in the dusty heartland. It's ostensibly an academic novel, a genre historically of interest exclusively to academics. (Kreider)

Yet these contemporary categorisations defy the primary intentions of the novel, as it was not originally marketed as an academic novel. Writing to his agent in 1963, Williams stated: "I have no illusions that it will be a 'bestseller' or anything like that; but if it is handled right [...] that is, if it is not treated as just another 'academic novel' by the publisher [...] it might have a respectable sale" (qtd. in Barnes). Williams is thus hesitant to be defined by the label, indicating refusal of taxonomies. But despite desiring distance from the genre, it is nevertheless significant that the novel's resurgence contrasts with the academic novel's observed decline – leading to renewed debates on the current state and future of the genre. The stasis of the university setting, introspection into the lives and minds of the university populace, as well as the author's own background in academia, persistently redirects contemporary studies of the novel back to the academic novel genre. Thus two levels of revival have occurred with *Stoner*'s resurgence: the return of a forgotten novel, and of an obsolete literary genre. It is arguably not a positive return, as Christopher Bigsby comments that this is a "bleak campus novel revival" (Bigsby). Benjamin Poore further remarks that the "straightforwardly lyrical rendering of academia as work" in *Stoner* is an exception, to otherwise uneventful offerings to be expected of the genre (Poore). Nevertheless, it is a hopeful return for the academic novel.

The title of my thesis refers to the 'campus novel' genre, but as evident from the critical studies explored above, the genre is also known by the term 'academic novel'. It is important to start studies of the campus novel by acknowledging these nomenclature variations, as various terms have been designated to the genre. The most prevalent distinction of these terms is according to the student/staff dichotomy. John Kramer, in his annotated bibliography *The American College Novel* (2004), divides the genre into "student-centred" and "staff-centred" novels. In *The Academic Novel* (2007), Merritt Moseley distinguishes between "novels of undergraduate life" against the academic novel, which "[focuses] on professors" ("Introductory" 7). However, other critics are less concerned by the above categories and opt to use these terms interchangeably. David Lodge considers the term campus novel as denoting

both staff and student characters, stating that the genre concerns itself “with the lives of university professors and junior teachers [...] and to a lesser extent with their students, both undergraduate and postgraduate” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Lisa Johnson, in her review of primary texts and secondary studies of the genre in America, collates “academic fiction” as “novels whose main characters are professors, college students, and those individuals associated with academia” (23). Elaine Showalter argues that the most significant academic novels “are about the faculty, the lifers”, whilst acknowledging that novels about student characters, whilst academic novels in themselves, are often more synonymous with “coming-of-age narratives and *Bildungsroman*” (2).

Recent studies have called for increased scrutiny of nomenclature, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between the many names of the genre. Eric Leuschner argues that whilst contemporary studies of the genre are less strict where naming is concerned, oscillating between the terms campus novel and academic novel, Leuschner contends that this leads to oversimplification that “misses the important historical shift of higher education from a liberal arts to a professional institution” (339). Jeffrey Williams further concurs the importance of these delineations, defining the academic novel as novels “that center on professors [...] they feature those who work as academics, although the action is rarely confined to a campus, and they portray adult predicaments in marriage and home as well as the workplace, most familiarly yielding mid-life crisis plots” (562). Conversely, the campus novel focuses on students, “[revolving] around campus life and present young adult comedies or dramas, most frequently coming-of-age narratives” (Williams 562).

Distinctions can also be observed according to variations of the word ‘university’. Siegfried Mews separates “the British ‘University Novel’” from “the American ‘Campus Novel’ or ‘College Novel’”, although noting that critical studies have been using these terms interchangeably (713). Both Ian Carter and Mortimer Proctor opt to use the term “university novel” yet differing as Carter examines “universities in British fiction” (10), and Proctor instead focuses his scope on “English university novels” (1). Further observations show that a different term is preferred by the American tradition, where studies often opt to use the term ‘college novel’. Indeed, extensive catalogues of the genre in America, such as those by Kramer and John O. Lyons, are presented as studies of the American college novel.

There are thus clear differences between various names of the genre, often determined by critical and geographical preferences of terms. Nevertheless, in settling for a term to denote the body of work studied in this thesis, several conditions must first be considered. As established above, the term campus novel is used to refer to student-centred novels. Yet only

one of the selected texts – Alaa Al-Aswany’s *Chicago* – has been previously studied and labelled as a campus novel. In addition to *Chicago*, the two texts examined in Chapter 4 – *Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih (When Love Glorifies God)* by Habiburrahman El-Shirazy – are also student-centred novels. However, they have never been studied as such. Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent*, studied in comparison with *Chicago* in Chapter 3, alternatively portrays the figure of a university professor and his academic environs. This thus presents difficulties in selecting a collective term to represent the genre in this thesis.

Chapter 5 poses a different conundrum. Both texts studied in this chapter – Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* and Norsiah Abd. Gapar’s *Pengabdian (Submission)* – evidently deviate from the genre, as the narratives begin following the end of academic time and departure from the university space. Whilst a significant aspect throughout the texts, the university and campus setting are absent, figuring only at the start of the narratives and later as flashbacks. The figure of the student also exists only in the past; the characters are now lapsed academics, medical doctors, and education officers.

Requirements of setting and significance of the word ‘campus’ are also important conventions of the genre. Lodge notes that whilst critics oscillate between the many names of the genre, with the academic novel term facilitating better inclusivity, the term campus novel upholds the significance of setting as a convention of the genre (Lodge, “Nabokov”). According to Lodge, the genre’s relative absence in mainland Europe is due to the design of European universities, which differ greatly from the traditional campus setting (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Mews similarly asserts that the dearth of the genre in German-speaking countries is due to “the absence until very recently [of] the German university system of a campus” (713). This issue will be explored further in Chapter 1 of this thesis. However, studies have also highlighted the need for concepts that consider novels that do not comply to these conventions of setting, particularly considering setting as a geographically limiting feature of the genre. For example, Carlin Romano’s analysis of Jeffrey Eugenides’s *The Marriage Plot* (2011) notes the absence of studies into “postcollegiate life”, arguing the merits of challenging existing spatio-temporal frames of the genre (Romano). Pertinently, the university settings in many of the novels studied in this thesis are not of the enclosed campus traditionally attributed to the genre.

Generic divergences are thus at the heart of this thesis. Having considered all the distinctions and implications above, this thesis opts to use the term ‘campus novel’ as a comprehensive name for the genre. This is largely driven by the central aims of the thesis, which seeks to challenge perceived limitations and propose revisions for the genre. As such, it is only fitting to begin with the genre’s most recognized label, as this thesis will be responding

to and querying the basic tenets proposed by the dominant critical tradition of the campus novel genre.

This thesis is therefore a study of the campus novel genre, of present limitations of its critical tradition, and of new perspectives enabled by looking elsewhere, to other locations and cultures. The genre has long disappeared from mainstream and academic attention, with intermittent interest spurred by anomalies such as *Stoner* above. This decline has been attributed to its lack of social function. Critics have long perceived genres as reflective of society, that lessons can be gleaned of observing genres. According to Tzvetan Todorov, “like any other institutions, genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong” (19). Wai Chee Dimock considers the endurance of the epic and the novel, their centrality to human lives: “both stretch from antiquity to modernity, both show up in every human habitat. Their longevity and ubiquity make them the durable threads that bind together the entire species” (“Genre as World System” 90). John Frow further asserts the cultural significance of genres, highlighting their resistance to rigidity – “genres have no essence” – as well as their adaptability and continued function – “[genres] have historically changing use values” (145).

Yet studying the campus novel does not reveal latent worth nor social functions. Rather, the genre portrays constant rejection of the very institution that it purports to signify. Whilst the campus novel has often been considered for its societal and cultural potentials, it constantly fails and is revealed to have numerous shortcomings. In the “Preface” to Lyons’s *The College Novel in America*, Harry T. Moore argues that “the academic novel can contribute important revelations about our national existence. Unfortunately, the form is too often the victim of triviality, as Mr. Lyons shows – for example, his criticism of James Dunton’s *Wild Asses* (1924) points out that it ‘has a creaking musical-comedy love story’” (Moore vii). However, Moseley cautions against positing the genre as reflective or “emblematic” of the sociocultural realities of the university (“Introductory” 17). Moseley further anticipates studies of the genre that “are, by and large, too humorless”, as at its core “*most academic novels are comic*” (“Introductory” 18). How then, should we study a genre that purportedly lacks social function, and is congenitally averse to serious critical studies?

In this thesis, I argue for an alternative reason for the genre’s death, beyond present criticism of its lack of social function and contemporary relevance. I contend that the rigid cultural boundaries set by the Anglo-American critical tradition of the genre has led to the marginalisation of texts and cultures beyond these boundaries. Through extensive research of critical studies, I discovered that the genre is limited to studies of the British and North

American tradition (termed in existing studies and throughout this thesis as ‘the Anglo-American tradition’ – Chapter 1 will further consider the intricacies of this concept). Global variants of the campus novel are largely absent or marginalised in existing studies of the genre. However, there is considerable evidence of the genre’s global ubiquity and emergence. Beyond the Anglo-American tradition, the non-Anglo-American campus novel is flourishing. These discrepancies are thus the central concerns of Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis. In these chapters, I aim to argue against the present rigidity of the Anglo-American critical tradition, highlighting the disadvantages and gaps caused by these rigidities. I ultimately propose travels beyond the Anglo-American canon and framework as future directions for the genre.

In providing a comparative framework for my studies, I consider the significance of mobility as recurring images that can be found in the texts studied in this thesis. There have been minimal studies of mobility in campus novels, with existing studies often focusing on the portrayal of air travel as pioneered by David Lodge in his ‘The Campus Trilogy’ of *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), and *Nice Work* (1988). Beyond these studies, mobility rarely features in critical explorations of the genre. Yet beyond the Anglo-American tradition, campus novels are consistently driven by the centrality of mobility, especially the corporeal mobilities of people.

‘Travels’ in this thesis thus also, and perhaps more pertinently, mean analysing representations of corporeal mobility as a connective thread between various cultures and works. Tim Cresswell asserts that studies of mobility often begin with a basic understanding of what mobility is: “getting from point A to point B”, of recognising that mobility “involves a displacement – the act of moving between locations” (*On the Move* 2). However, Cresswell also argues that there is need for further considerations of this straightforward understanding, “to explore the content of the line that links A to B, to unpack it, to make sure it is not taken for granted” (*On the Move* 2). This requires examination of mobility as a “socially produced motion” (*On the Move* 3), as according to Cresswell, movement on its own “is the general fact of displacement before the type, strategies, and social implications of that movement are considered” (*On the Move* 3). Movement, in fact, only becomes mobility when it participates “in the production of social time and space” (Cresswell, *On the Move* 6)

Following Cresswell’s proposal above, this thesis argues that it is important to examine the “content of the line” and meanings of various portrayals of mobility prevalent in campus novels. The expanse of mobility as a concept must first be acknowledged, as John Urry outlines that “a generic ‘mobilities’”

includes various kinds and temporalities of physical movement, ranging from standing, lounging, walking, climbing, dancing, to those enhanced by technologies, of bikes, buses, cars, trains, ships, planes, wheelchairs, crutches [...] [ranging] from the daily, weekly, yearly, and over people's lifetimes [...] [to] movement of images and information on multiple media, as well as virtual movement as communications are effected one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many through networked and embedded computers. (*Mobilities* 8)

Elsewhere, Urry further compartmentalises the intersection between mobility and social life into "five highly interdependent 'mobilities'": "corporeal travel of people", "physical movement of *objects*", "imaginative travel", "virtual travel", and "communicative travel" (Urry, "Connections" 28). In this thesis, my study of mobility examines the 'corporeal travel' of characters, especially travel as it intersects with academic motives and university education in the selected texts.

My project begins in Chapter 1 by examining the critical dominance of the Anglo-American tradition, as well as understanding rationale for the absence and marginalisation of global variants of the genre. The chapter will present an overview of the critical tradition of the genre, gradually conceptualising limitations as problems of spatio-temporal narrowness of perspectives. In Chapter 2, we begin our exploration of campus novels thus far excluded or under-researched in the critical tradition of the genre. This chapter provides a summary of existing studies of campus novels from various locations and cultures. Chapter 2 further considers theories of kinship and methods of comparison, in establishing a cohesive framework for bridging texts from various contextual backgrounds. This is achieved through exploring the possible kinship between Anglo-American and non-Anglo-American texts through tracing comparable images of corporeal mobility such as international air travel, quotidian movement, and narratives of university returns.

The discussion Chapters 3 to 5 are structured to begin with an observed image of corporeal mobility, grounded against previous studies of these images. These images will then be examined in selected texts from beyond the British and American tradition, previously absent or unexplored in studies of the genre. In Chapter 3, I begin by articulating known images of academic mobility in campus novels, particularly the portrayal of international air travel as experiences of ease and pleasure. This is done by exploring the model of academic mobility set in David Lodge's *Small World* (1984). I then turn to Alaa Al-Aswany's *Chicago* (2007) and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent* (2003) – two novels focusing on Arab academic communities

in America where academic mobility is extensively portrayed. My research finds that whilst international air travel continues to feature prominently, there is also reversal of direction and tonal changes of cultural contact. Additionally, motive for travel has also changed significantly. Where existing studies promote travel as necessary for professional development and in forging academic relationships, it then becomes necessary as a mode for survival and escape from situations of conflict. The experience of travel becomes further transformed, as perilous journeys rather than pleasurable experiences.

Chapter 4 focuses on the premise established in studies of the campus novel genre, that upward social mobility is a motive for international academic mobility and university entry. Entry into the university is desired, and the university is seen as a necessary space for class mobility. My analysis in Chapter 4 considers two novels written by the Indonesian author Habiburrahman El-Shirazy, on the phenomenon of Indonesian students travelling abroad, particularly to study at the renowned Al-Azhar University in Egypt. El-Shirazy's works sparked a phenomenon known as Islamic religious romance novels, and studies have been focused on the portrayal of Islam and romantic love in these texts, with the university only being perceived as mere backdrop. In my research, the university and corporeal travel are at the forefront, enabling alternative perspectives to longstanding university and class mobility debates.

Finally, my findings in Chapter 5 propose the study of university return narratives as a significant aberration for the campus novel genre that revises yet relates to established studies of the genre. Images of departures are recurrent in campus novels, as desired movements that traditionally resolve and signal the novelistic ending. However, my research finds that departures from the university space and subsequent returns home are significant images of corporeal mobility in numerous novels beyond the Anglo-American tradition. More pertinently, these acts of return are constructed as the novelistic beginning, framing and determining the narrative that follows. I perceive this alteration of friction, of what causes mobility to stop, as changing the meaning of departures from the university space, in turn changing the function of departures in campus novels.

A note on research scope and text pre-requisites: my selection of texts has been informed by either texts written in the English language, texts translated into English, or those which are accessible to me based on language proficiency (works written in Bahasa Melayu or Bahasa Indonesia). In addition, I have translated all primary texts and secondary materials from Bahasa Melayu or Bahasa Indonesia, into English, when cited in this thesis. My survey of non-Anglo-American traditions are thus limited by language. Interestingly, there is an abundance

of studies on non-Anglo-American campus novels written in the English language. Whilst this means that I am limited to studying translated versions of novels, it also highlights interesting points about the genre, particularly concerning its availability in the English language. Further research can be done into this, and I consider language as a starting point, in highlighting the limitations of my research – perhaps the untranslated would provide more opportunities for future studies. Furthermore, as I am only able to peruse materials in the English language, Bahasa Melayu, and Bahasa Indonesia, there is thus a skew in my research to works produced in Anglophone contexts, as well as the Malay world. This is therefore a possible caveat to my premise of exploring ‘beyond’ the Anglo-American campus novel tradition.

In establishing connections between texts across geographical and cultural divides, there are evidently a few causes for concerns. Primarily, the discrepancies of genre conventions raise the questions: do these texts produced outside of Britain and America fit the campus novel description, or are they merely academic narratives that do not resemble the genre as it is traditionally known? How can we then bridge the gap between academic fiction as written in Britain and America, against works produced elsewhere? Is there actually no lineage between these many traditions? If so, how did these autonomous genre developments come to be, and what are the reasons behind these genealogical fissures? Should we look to the role of higher education, a sector now purportedly global and ubiquitous? The original contribution of my thesis is therefore through proposing mobility as method of studying the genre, and through introducing new texts to be included in studies of the campus novel.

Chapter 1 | “narrowly periodized, [...] narrowly nationalized”: The Anglo-American Tradition of the Campus Novel Genre

1.1. Introduction

Existing studies of campus novels have been focused on the development of the genre, as traced back to the postwar era or earlier formal precursors. These studies perpetuate an unproblematised map of the genre, which purports its linear development as a literary sub-genre primarily inherent in Britain and North America. As such, there is little evidence of resistance to the dominant critical tradition of the genre – no alternative histories or maps of the genre that take it beyond its postwar Anglo-American origins. However, evidence of the genre’s global ubiquity calls for a review of the critical tradition, especially in questioning the enduring influence of the origin stories of the genre. The central focus of this chapter is in examining the dominance of the origin stories of the campus novel genre, particularly in dictating its present state, and in arguably causing the decline of the genre.

This chapter examines the campus novel genre as a literary sub-genre found in British and North American literary traditions. Through analyses of the critical tradition of the genre, I argue that the unproblematised dominance of the critical tradition and its stories of origin ground the genre in specific cultures and locations. This is in contention with evidence of its global existence in multiple and disparate literary locations. Whilst this then suggests travels of the genre, there have been minimal studies of these possibilities. I further perceive these cultural and national rigidities as among the many causes of the genre’s present state of stagnation.

The first section of this chapter focuses on articulating the stories of origin of the campus novel genre. This will be achieved through exploring the critical tradition of the genre, examining the presentation of stories of origin, and how these origin stories have maintained enduring influence on subsequent critical studies of the genre. As this chapter examines the critical tradition of the campus novel, it is important to note that variations of the genre’s names and issues of nomenclature are central to tracing the genre’s origins and history. This is particularly evident when fluctuations occur due to the disappearance of older forms and emergence of new variants of the genre. Additionally, shifts in names also inform us of the genre’s relationship with context and the influence of location in producing sub-variants of the genre.

In establishing these arguments, I have utilised several key texts that dominate much of the critical tradition of the genre. These works are largely in the form of monographs, such as Mortimer Proctor's early theorisations in *The English University Novel* (1957), and Ian Carter's *Ancient Cultures of Conceit: British University Fiction in The Post War Years* (1990) (henceforth *Conceit*), as well as *The University In Modern Fiction: When Power Is Academic* (1993) by Janice Rossen (henceforth *The University in Modern Fiction*) – key texts from the surge in critical attention at the turn of the century. I have also examined selected chapters and essays from edited collections, with particular focus on Merritt Moseley's *The Academic Novel* (2007). In addition, much of my analyses have also been informed by scholarly articles on campus novels, most notably the comprehensive study conducted by Jeffrey J. Williams in "The Rise of the Academic Novel" (2012). Of further significance in my research are the observations presented by David Lodge – both a prominent author and critic of campus novels – in his 2006 public lecture entitled "Nabokov and the Campus Novel". To frame my arguments, I have utilised selected theories of genre development from John Frow's *Genre* (2015), and *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for A Literary History* (2005) by Franco Moretti. The second section of this chapter will then present central findings and identified research problems, following my analysis of existing literatures on the genre. In the final section, I will present discussions of both the central finding and research problem, framed primarily by my reading of Wai Chee Dimock's "Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents" (2006). My discussions will further examine existing modifications which have been suggested by recent critical studies of the campus novel. This finally leads to my proposal of alternative approaches towards the study of campus novels, which will be the central focus of the remaining chapters of my thesis.

1.2. Stories of Origin and Development of the Genre

The term 'stories of origin' in my research refers to conditions and reasons which have led to the genre's rise, and the subsequent histories or traditions which have emerged out of these initial conditions. My usage of this term is inspired by John Frow's observations of the historical development of genres, particularly in his analysis of the evolution of the novel. Specifically, Frow is attentive to the problems of historicity where genres are concerned, stating that "genres have no essence: they have historically changing use values" (145). Of particular relevance to my thesis is Frow's summation of various critical projects on the novel,

specifically those which “posit a moment of origin that comes to define [the novel’s] core expressive capacity” (146). Presenting brief summaries of origins of the novel as theorised by Ian Watt, Michael McKeon, and Nancy Armstrong, Frow notes how these critics have presented ‘moments of origin’ as significant in enabling the development of the genre over time (147).

However, Frow’s observations also bring to attention the influence of ‘moment(s) of origin’ – subsequently denoted in his text as “stories of origin” – in *dictating* the development of particular genres over time. According to Frow,

the assumption is that the moment of constitution of the genre establishes its essential characteristics, which then continue to be operative in all of the later life of the form (and works that don’t display these characteristics are then deemed not to be truly novels). (147)

Frow’s statement above follows the seminal theorisations on novelistic origins found in Ian Watt’s works, especially Watt’s theories of “formal realism”. Watt defines “formal realism” as “the narrative method whereby the novel embodies [the] circumstantial view of life” (32). According to Frow, this concept is determined by “‘external’ conditions” such as “the individualistic bourgeois subject form, the growth of mass literacy”, as well as prior literary traditions, as the novel “[separates] from, and [absorbs] a range of non-literary genres such as the autobiographical memoir and the intimate letter” (147). Frow further considers other origin stories of the novel: McKeon asserts the significance of the novel in the early modern period; Armstrong perceives the influence of the novel form in “shaping class relations” (147). Accordingly, Frow observes these multiple origin stories as steeped in history, with possible ramifications and influences on future variations of the novel form. Yet Frow promotes continued revisions, that “stories of origins need not stop there. They can instead be stories about the intertextual work by which the genre shapes and re-shapes itself in an ongoing and open-ended process” (147).

This questioning of the influence of “stories of origin” links us back to the campus novel genre. The genre has a markedly thin critical tradition, and an even narrower corpus. Yet stories of origins are one of the most definitive features of the genre, constantly reiterated in its critical studies. Uniformly identifiable throughout the critical tradition is a strict adherence to the aforementioned story of origin: that the genre is a literary form originating from the postwar period in Britain and America.

My research thus begins by examining the stories of origin of the genre. In the following section I will be mapping out the origins, developments and present state of the genre. This will be done by presenting a thematic review of the existing studies of the genre, specifically focusing on works which constitute the critical tradition of the genre. This is necessary background knowledge, with the aim of introducing my research problem, and providing rationale for problematising what I ultimately perceive as the limited spatio-temporal frames of analysing the genre.

1.3. The Campus Novel as a Postwar Anglo-American Literary Genre

Precursors and Lineages

Critical studies of the genre assert that the genre gained prominence following the postwar boom of higher education. As articulated by Elaine Showalter in her book-length analysis *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (2005), the genre's genealogy shows that "[it] has arisen and flourished only since about 1950, when post-war universities were growing rapidly, first to absorb the returning veterans, and then to take in a larger and larger percentage of the baby-booming population" (1). This phenomenon was observed as occurring simultaneously in Britain and North America. In his numerous writings on the genre, David Lodge has similarly implied the campus novel's simultaneous trans-Atlantic conception. Of particular significance is his 2006 public lecture entitled "Nabokov and the Campus Novel" (henceforth "Nabokov"), which explores Vladimir Nabokov's contribution, as well as the literary influences on his work. The notion of simultaneity is encapsulated in the following query made by Lodge: "So why did novels about universities suddenly start to appear in both countries at about the same time, and quickly develop into a quite popular and still thriving genre of literary fiction?" (Lodge, "Nabokov"). He subsequently offers "an obvious sociological explanation", as an answer to the simultaneous rise of the genre in two nations:

In both Britain and America the period after the Second World War saw great expansion in university education. Many new universities were built, and old ones expanded. There were job opportunities in arts faculties which attracted inspiring or practising writers [...] in short, university teaching, with its generally agreeable conditions, flexible hours, and long vacations, became a favoured second occupation for writers, a

source of steady income while they wrote their books in their spare time. (Lodge, “Nabokov”)

As evident from the “sociological explanation” offered by Lodge, the genre is borne from contextual conditions affecting university education, specific to two nations in the postwar period. These contextual conditions will be explored further in this chapter. Suffice for us to consider that, despite existing in disparate nations and literary cultures, the differing national and socio-political conditions that cause the rise of the genre run parallel to one another. Thus, the story of origin of the genre is primarily associated with the spatio-temporal period of postwar Britain and America.

Numerous critics have argued that the genre did not begin in the oft cited postwar era - instead a successor of earlier literary forms. One such example of this argument can be found in Jeffrey J. Williams’s comprehensive study in 2012, which traces the development of the American academic novel. Williams utilises Franco Moretti’s methods of graphing the development of literary genres, broadly explored in his text *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (2005), to understand the conditions behind the periods of prominence and decline of the campus novel. Moretti points towards the necessity of collaboration, of “gathering of data [...] [relying] on other people’s work” (18), in order to satisfy the expansive scope of such endeavours. To an extent, Williams adheres to these methods, generating two graphs which chart the number of campus novels produced in America from pre-1900 up to the year 2001, based on data provided by John Kramer’s annotated bibliography *The American College Novel* (2004)(567n13). Williams discovered that the American academic novel, initially “non-existent before 1900”, had then experienced a surge between the years 1950 to 2000 (567). Herein we see significant divergences between two labels, as Williams’s analysis compares the development of the ‘campus novel’, to the trajectory of the ‘academic novel’. According to Williams, the campus novel, predominantly centralised on student experiences, “grafted with the bildungsroman and became a prime theatre of coming of age” (562). On the other hand, the academic novel’s focus on narratives of staff and faculty experiences lead to “[its grafting] with the mid-life crisis novel, the marriage novel, and the professional-work novel to become a prime theatre of middle-class experience” (Williams 562).

These divergences are significant, as according to Williams, “the academic novel has picked up momentum since the postwar era, surpassing the campus novel in number and prominence” (562). Williams asserts that the genre’s rise, or rather, the academic novel’s rise over the previously popular campus novel, is “because it fused with other, mainstream genres,

and in part because it cast a wider cultural net” (569). Moretti points towards the influence of readership, of discernible “generations”, as a plausible reason behind the disappearance of previous genres, stating that “books survive if they are read and disappear if they aren’t: and when an entire generic system vanishes at once, the likeliest explanation is that *its readers vanished at once*” (“Graphs” 20). This is evident in Williams’s observations above: the academic and campus novel spoke to different audiences, and as such its periodical rise and decline follow the shift in generations.

However, another key point is the fusion of genres, of relationships and lineage with pre-existing literary forms. In addition to the examples of the American tradition above, Williams refers to the visibility of the British campus novel, which had “merged with the comedy of manners as well as the murder mystery, and descended from the parsonage novel” (564). Unlike the disjointed peaks and troughs graphed by Moretti, Williams contends that the American campus and academic novel were better visualised as “threads, in long strands that intertwine and bundle with other strands” (Williams 568). Williams acknowledges how Moretti’s theories of imaging generic evolution, through models of biological trees, is similar to the “sense of continuity” that Williams seeks to evoke through his model of generic literary threads (568n14). Nevertheless, what is lacking in the imagery of trees is how “a key process of a genre is its intertwining with other genres, as the figure of a thread suggests” (Williams 568n14). Williams ultimately reinforces his observation that the American academic novel has numerous formal precursors, stating that “genres change not because they create a new form *ex nihilo*, but because they reconfigure extant forms” (569). Consequently, its contemporary rise is due to “the academic novel [taking] a more significant position because it has become a major vehicle for middle class, adult experience” (Williams 569).

Indeed, the formal story of origin of the campus novel genre suggests lineage to various formal precursors. Tzvetan Todorov, in examining the question of “origin of genres”, argues that genres are “systems in constant transformation”, and that “genres come [...] from other genres”, where “a new genre is always the transformation of one or several old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination” (15). Frow further expands this by asserting that “no genre comes from nowhere; for every genre there is one or more antecedent genres which are transformed as new occasions and purposes (new framing conditions) arise” (150).

Further examination of critical studies of the genre confirms that the campus novel is borne from prior literary genres, or at least, exhibits remnants of earlier forms. However, my main concern focuses on the discrepancies in identifying these formal precursors. According to Williams’s arguments in 2012, the British campus novel follows from the earlier tradition

of the parsonage novel (564). This confirms earlier claims by Showalter, who argued that the genre is traceable to forms prevalent during the Victorian period. Showalter notes that “the academic novel proper doesn’t start until the 1950s, but there are nineteenth century precursors” (6), citing Anthony Trollope’s *Barchester Towers* (1857) and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1872) as examples (7). Similarly, George Watson in 1978 traces the lineage of the genre to Victorian predecessors, observing that “university fiction did not literally begin with Snow and Amis a quarter of a century ago [...] the Victorians had their occasional farces on the subject [...] and it is common enough for the hero of a Victorian novel [...] to spend a chapter or two in an ancient seat of learning” (43).

In contrast, David Lodge traces the genre to the bildungsroman – “the novel of a young man’s emotional and psychological development from youth to maturity” – where “student life, and university education [is] often an important episode” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Like Williams, Lodge also observes that the genre has undergone fusion with other sub-genres, particularly with the genre of detective fiction, “in numerous academic whodunits like Amanda Cross’s *Death in a Tenured Position* (1981)” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). However, Lodge ultimately asserts that the genre originated from “the genre of pastoral”, citing Mary McCarthy’s *Groves of Academe* (1952) (henceforth *Groves*), and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Invitation to a Beheading* (1957) and *Pale Fire* (1962) as evidence for this claim: “Like that classical pastoral poetry, like Renaissance pastoral comedy and pastoral romance, the campus novel sets its stories in a self-contained world with its own customs and rituals, somewhat removed or insulated from the larger world” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). While perhaps not highlighting discrepancies, these contestations of formal precursors of the genre raise questions, of the inconsistencies of the genre’s lineage and formal stories of origin. The genre is adamantly proclaimed to have originated from other genres, and yet the identities of these predecessors remain subjective.

Another notable origin story of the genre can be derived through examining the classification of texts, which subsequently constitute the genre. Critical studies consistently declare specific texts as archetypal campus novels, which then serve as models for succeeding texts. Perhaps more significantly, these texts persist as indicators of what a campus novel should be. In considering how texts become classified according to genres, Frow recalls the concept of “prototypes” – a methodology borrowed from “cognitive psychology of classification”, which presupposes that “we understand categories [...] through a very concrete logic of typicality” (59). Frow furthers his explanation through samples of the epics: “The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Paradise Lost* are all texts that we class as epics, but the *Iliad* is the prototype we use to determine the category into which the others fall” (59). For

the campus novel, the oft-cited prototypes are Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), and David Lodge's 'The Campus Trilogy' of *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), and *Nice Work* (1988). Kenneth Womack asserts that "many scholars attribute the origins of postwar academic fiction to the landmark publication of Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* in 1954", labelling it "the quintessential campus novel of the twentieth century" ("Academic Satire" 330). Such is their influence as prototypes for the genre, that succeeding campus novels have often been examined through their degree of being 'Lodgean', or of their similarities or divergences from Amis's *Lucky Jim*. According to Sarah Boxer, "once upon a time, the world of academic satire seemed to be a British protectorate. Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* set the rules of the game and David Lodge's trio of academic farces, *Changing Places*, *Small World*, and *Nice Work* earned him an adjective: Lodgean" (Boxer).

However, similar to my observation of the formal precursors of the genre above, the issue of prototypes of the genre is equally rife with contestations. Lodge in "Nabokov" presents a comprehensive query of the origins and prototypes of the genre, based on discrepancies of etymology and generic traits. According to Lodge, the Latin word *campus*, denoting "'field' [...] physical space occupied by a college or university" was only used in British English in the late 1950s (Lodge, "Nabokov"). This is belated to the use of the word 'campus' in American English, which started in the early nineteenth century (Lodge, "Nabokov"). When the word ultimately gained usage in Britain, the earliest usage of the word as traced in the Oxford English Dictionary was in reference to the University of East Anglia (Lodge, "Nabokov"). According to Lodge, the University of East Anglia was "one of the new universities then being built on the American model – that is, a unified, self-contained site in a pastoral or park-like setting" (Lodge, "Nabokov"). Lodge's grievance with these etymological nuances lie in the fact that Kingsley Amis's 1954 novel *Lucky Jim*, so often regarded as the prototype of the campus novel, "cannot be properly so called since the word [campus] was not then current in British English" (Lodge, "Nabokov"). Lodge is also critical of inaccuracies, in declaring certain texts as prototypes of the genre. He argues that although C.P. Snow's *The Masters* (1951) is often considered as the "first British campus or academic novel", it does not fulfil the characteristics necessary to be considered as a model or useable prototype for the genre:

There is very little about the academic profession itself – teaching and scholarship – and virtually no mention of students. It is a good novel, but it did not provide a model for future English practitioners of the campus novel as *Lucky Jim* did [...] *The Groves of Academe* was, in my opinion, the first classic campus novel. (Lodge, "Nabokov")

On the other hand, Watson, in tracing the tradition, states that “[the university novel] has its 19th-century forebears: but it started what by now looks like its continuous life with C.P. Snow’s *The Masters* in 1951 and Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim* two years later” (42). These conflicting opinions show that, whilst the genre is purportedly borne from extant parent traditions, critics are divided in identifying what the parent traditions are. Gradually, we can see that the stories of origins – despite maintaining influence on contemporary studies of the genre – are rife with contestations and must be subjected to critical scrutiny.

Apart from descending from older literary traditions, stories of origin also suggest that the genre flourished as a result of inter-literary relationships between authors purportedly influencing one another’s work. Both Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury have suggested the relationship between authors as significant in the conception of certain campus novels. Citing Mary McCarthy’s *Groves* and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pnin* as examples, Lodge recalls that McCarthy’s text was recommended to Nabokov by her former husband, resulting from Nabokov’s arrival in the United States and their subsequent acquaintance (Lodge, “Nabokov”). He notes that “[Nabokov] was impressed by [McCarthy’s novel] [...] *Groves* may have planted in his mind, if only unconsciously, the thought of making similar fictional use of his own academic experience” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Bradbury furthers this belief, that “intertextuality” between books and narratives can act as starting points for the genre, through his examination of *Groves* and Randall Jarrell’s *Pictures from an Institution* (1954) (henceforth *Pictures*) (53). According to Bradbury, the latter is viewed as a comment on McCarthy’s text, with both texts said to exhibit similar social functions and critical tendencies (53).

Another example of inter-literary relationship is of how the genre is deemed a product of the intersection between the academic and literary community. In recounting the inspiration behind *Lucky Jim*, Kingsley Amis recounts his meeting with Philip Larkin at Leicester University in 1946. His experience of the staff common room left a lasting impact, such that he felt prompted to write a book about the academic world, purportedly looking around the common room and commenting that “[...] someone ought to do something about this lot” (McDermott qtd. in Womack 331). As we progress in this chapter, I will further examine the relationship between the genre and the real-world setting of the university. Suffice for us to note at this point that the genre lies at the nexus of literature, academia, and its populace.

It can also be argued that the genre proliferated due to mimicry of earlier texts taken as models, without evidence of contact or tangible relationships between authors. As an example, John O. Lyons observes that the “pattern of American college novels” up to 1962 was based on interaction between books and adoption of models (67). Lyons proffers F. Scott Fitzgerald’s

This Side of Paradise (1920) as the prototype of the American college novel, particularly as it signifies the advent of the “first American novel of education” (28). Correspondingly, Lyons traces *This Side of Paradise* as being heavily influenced by preceding college novels, specifically Compton Mackenzie’s *Sinister Street* (1914) and Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* (1912) (27). In turn, *This Side of Paradise* acted as the model for other college novels, such as Percy Marks’s *The Plastic Age* (1924) and *The Education of Peter* by John Wiley (1924) (Lyons 27).

Examining these examples of inter-literary connections, I observed how another possible story of origin of the genre is in its proliferation, as a result of constant contact and influences between texts within particular periods and cultures. As a result, the critical tradition thrives from these tangible connections, as it sets out to compare the given thematics and forms which can be abstracted from this context. However, it is difficult to infer concrete lineages based on inter-literary relationships of the campus novel genre. Lodge, in tracing the influences behind McCarthy’s *Groves*, Jarrell’s *Pictures* and Nabokov’s *Pnin*, concluded that “there is no evidence for influence in either direction between Nabokov and Jarrell” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). This is due to temporal contradictions, where neither author could possibly have read each other’s works, as they were being published at around the same time (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Importantly, Lodge asserts that perhaps indeterminate lineages are not significant problems in examining these stories of origins. Rather, focus should be made on their timely simultaneity, of “the resemblances between these three novels about academia, all conceived quite independently and written at overlapping periods of time” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Furthermore, despite their lack of relations with one another, Lodge notes that the three texts are significant as foundational prototypes for the genre, as “between them they provided the template for campus novels in the future” (Lodge, “Nabokov”).

External Conditions

Thus far, I have examined the origin stories of the genre, highlighting its contested narratives of formal precursors and lineages. A more robust explanation of the genre’s origin and subsequent rise is perhaps through examining various external conditions influencing the genre’s development. In its initial stages, British campus novels were regarded as having an integral socio-cultural function, and as such were preoccupied with the task of asserting prestige. This explains the genre’s close association with select institutions, where the

proliferation of Oxford and Cambridge novels in the British tradition was resultant of this need to assert prestige. Analysis of the Oxford novel forms the basis of one of the earliest extensive studies of the genre, in Mortimer Proctor's *The English University Novel* (1957). In this text, Proctor traces the origins of the genre to the nineteenth century, cataloguing the development of the genre up to the mid-twentieth century. Proctor argues that the genre began as the Oxford novel, stating that "as a literary genre, [the campus novel] has always reflected conditions within Oxford and Cambridge far more closely than it has followed any literary trends or movements" (185). This method of associating and modelling the genre after select institutions is based on the fashioning of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge as hallowed academic spaces. Kenneth Womack asserts that early Oxford or Cambridge novels were based on "the universal conceptions of Oxford and Cambridge as unique intellectual societies – in short, the fictive terrain of 'Oxbridge'" ("Academic Satire" 326). Womack believes that these conceptions of 'Oxbridge' as idealised intellectual spaces, have in turn "inspired centuries of fictions devoted to university life, from Chaucer's *Clerk of Oxford* through the romanticized academic novels of the early nineteenth century" ("Academic Satire" 326).

Proctor further analyses the emergence of university fiction exulting Oxford at the start of the twentieth century, dubbing this the "cult of Oxford":

[an attitude] dedicated to a belief in the efficacy of the university atmosphere itself as an educating force. Simply to submerge one's self in the traditions, the dignified culture, and the stimulating friendships of university life was to get the best out of an Oxford that had more important things to give its students than were to be found in books. (154)

The cult of Oxford thus prioritises 'atmosphere', and Proctor asserts that in the English university novel, this notion is more significant than the actual university education and actions limited within the space of the university. Observing again the cult of Oxford in Cuthbert Bede's *The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green* (1854-57), Proctor reiterates the opinion of a rector in the text: "it was not so much [...] the Latin and Greek [learned] that would be important, but the mixing with other young men and living under the tutor's able surveillance, for the atmosphere of the university was designed to create 'refined thoughts and noble feelings'" (197). On one hand, this notion of atmosphere as preceding the university might only be a feature of the Oxford novel, this belief that "one's college chums could in any way prove elevating" (Proctor 196). But Proctor further asserts that these perspectives were introduced to extend the university beyond campus walls, where people such as Thomas Hughes "introduced

that apparently magical formula of intellectual intercourse between students which resulted in their mutual profit” (197).

However, these close associations with Oxford and Cambridge consequently led to problems for the genre. Womack suggests that these idealisations of select institutions have led to texts in which “their plots generally involved sentimental, often melodramatic portrayals of Oxford and Cambridge” (“Academic Satire” 326). Ian Carter’s extensive study of British university fiction up to its year of publication in 1990, observed that “there is no tradition of writing about students in not-Oxbridge universities. Only two novels follow the nineteenth-century model, centred on undergraduate experience” (66). Carter further concurs that idealisation of Oxford and Cambridge novels signify underlying problematics of hierarchy, where these texts are promoted as models for subsequent university novels to aspire to. According to Carter, the division between Oxbridge and not-Oxbridge novels, and even the relegation of not-Oxbridge novels as lower-tier university novels, reveal further problems of hierarchy, commenting that

one might expect to find this deluge of vituperation [against not-Oxbridge novels] resisted, to find novels celebrating – let us say – provincial sturdiness against – let us say – Oxbridge foppishness. The absence of such counter-arguments is a striking feature of British university fiction. Instead, one finds an acceptance of hierarchy, even when that consigns author, character or institution to a degraded position. (73)

Carter further challenges the idealisation of Oxford and Cambridge novels by questioning the mechanisms which have allowed this hierarchy to persist, when “on measures of quantity and (less uncontroversially) on measures of quality, not-Oxbridge British university life had improved dramatically[...].” (75).

Indeed, both higher education and the university novel in Britain have grown in scope and range since the nineteenth century, despite primarily being known through reputed institutions such as the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. These variations have been explicated by Merritt Moseley, in his analyses of classification of British universities, from the “ancient universities”, to the “red-brick” institutions, and postwar phenomenon of “new universities” (“Preface” xi). According to Moseley, the ancient universities are “mostly but not exclusively Oxford and Cambridge”, whereas red-brick universities are “mostly nineteenth-century metropolitan foundations in cities like Liverpool, Birmingham, Leicester, Leeds, Manchester” (“Preface” xi). The postwar rise often recognised as starting point of the genre is perhaps in conjunction with the birth of the “‘new universities’ of the sixties and seventies”,

which comprised of institutions such as “Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex, and so on” (Moseley, “Preface” xi). These are in addition to the rise of technical education in the postwar era, which saw “a new intake from universities converted from the polytechnics” (Moseley, “Preface” xi).

Similar observations can be made of the American tradition, as the early American novel was also based on models of select institutions. Lyons identifies the Harvard novel as the precursor of the college novel in America. The advent of the Harvard novel is based on Harvard University’s transition to a reputed institution towards the end of the nineteenth century, when “the age, wealth, and sheer educational daring of Harvard became increasingly impressive” (Lyons 7). As such, Lyons observes that “Harvard grew aware of itself and seemed to feel a need to express this collective self to the rest of the nation” (7) - thus spurring the rise of the Harvard novel. However, where the British university novel resulted from the need to assert cultural and national prestige in the postwar period, Lyons believes that the American college novel was borne out of a sense of competition and mimicry of its British predecessors, particularly in the early years of the Harvard novel. Lyons traces the early Harvard novels as being modelled on certain nineteenth-century Oxford novels, such as Cuthbert Bede’s *Mr. Verdant Green* series, and Thomas Hughes’s *Tom Brown at Oxford* (8). According to Lyons, “these early novels suffer the nineteenth-century American disease of cultural inferiority, and attempt to outdo their English cousins in the matter of lighthearted pranks” (23). However, Lyons also notes the variation of tone, which distinguishes the American college novel from the British tradition, as “a peculiarly American tone to them makes these pranks discordant. Although the authors seem to view the undergraduate’s life as a golden one, there is recurrent suspicion of the values of the closeted educational process” (23). Following the Harvard novel, Lyons observes the rise of the Yale and Princeton novel, albeit being relatively less prominent variants. Owen Johnson’s *Stover at Yale* (1912) and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise* (1920) are cited as early examples, where “because of Johnson and Fitzgerald, [the universities of] Yale and Princeton were able to share some of the fame and infamy with Harvard as locales for novels” (Lyons 15).

Considering these correlations made between campus novels and real-world institutions, what then is the ultimate significance of these different locations? In other words, what does it mean when a campus novel is set in Harvard, as opposed to those set in Yale or Princeton? Existing studies claim that distinction in locations is significant, particularly in determining the tone and content of the text. According to Lyons, “if we are to judge from the fiction on the subject, Harvard indulged less in the excesses of the nineteen-twenties than either

Princeton or Yale” (37). Even as the genre progressed beyond the earlier prominence of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton novels, to include examples of “state-college novels” (Lyons 49) and “Vassar novels” (Lyons 62), correlations are consistently made between texts and real-world institutions. Lyons observes further patterns discernible from changes in setting, such as asserting that “state-college novels” exhibit “general tone of sweetness and light which prevails in the novels about the girls at Midwestern state universities” (54). In contrast, Lyons notes that Vassar novels, and “all of the novels about women’s colleges, and especially those about Vassar, are not only violently critical but bad. All of them tend to be a potpourri of anecdotes and bitter reminiscences” (62). It is interesting to note how ingrained the American college novel tradition is in the specificity of setting, that the text becomes representative of particular institutions and their cultures. Furthermore, having stories of origin rooted to specific locations is significant, as it relies on real-world institutions as markers, and these locations in turn signify the weight of reputation. As such, the cultural specificity of the genre traces it back to notions specific to these institutions; their status in society; and in observations which will be presented, of conflict of cultural and intellectual superiority.

To say that the campus novel is often representative of real-world institutions and places is a statement that must be made with caution, but one that must be explored nevertheless in the context of the genre. The inevitability of correlation between reputation of institution and the text are significant aspects to consider. In particular, it is important to note that the genre’s origin stories detail constant modelling and allusion to real-life universities, which in turn influences the reading and experience of the text. However, in considering these generic traits of modelling and referring, Lodge offers alternative perspectives. While it is notable that the early stages of the genre exhibited association with specific real-world institutions, the genre also grew wary of associating itself with specific universities, or even of tangible associations between world and text. Lodge suggests that this is due to the satirical mode oft employed in the writing of these texts. According to Lodge, the genre’s prominence in Britain and America is possibly due to the uninhibited freedom afforded of its novelist-academics: “the Anglo-American campus novel fascinates Europeans precisely because it seems so transgressive, in mocking and exposing the follies and misdemeanours of the academic profession, especially when the novelist is, as is usually the case, a member of that profession” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Lodge notes that while Anglo-American novelist-academics are often able to pursue the satirical mode unchecked, “there *is* something transgressive in writing a satirical novel about an institution to which you belong” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Thus, “most campus novels are prefaced by an author’s note to the effect that all the characters and their actions are imaginary,

and most invent a fictitious name and location for the college or university in which the story is set” (Lodge, “Nabokov”), therefore abandoning earlier practices of association.

As explored above, Carter observes that early critical studies of British campus novels were dominated by debates that divide British universities, “[reducing it] to a stark opposition: [between] Oxbridge against not-Oxbridge” (8). Carter identifies similar problematics of correlation, where “we also see that Oxbridge exists in literary space, with a contingent relationship to the physical world” (8). As such, whilst “a literary place can develop spurious facticity, can come to appear just as real as a ‘real’ place” (10), Carter also reminds us of the nuances of the place that cannot be wholly captured by fiction. He states that “[...] events can develop in ways that novels would not lead us to expect. [...] Real Oxford and Cambridge university teachers are a far more mixed bunch than novelists would have us believe, far more varied in their attitudes to social closure through education. Novels narrow them down in the interest not of truth, but of discourse” (Carter 10). Moseley further problematises the constant correlation between reality and text rampant across the genre. He prompts that “we have all been taught to acknowledge the problematic nature of this relationship, to disbelieve in a one-to-one correspondence, or ‘homology’, between the particulars of fiction and those of the world” (Moseley, “Introductory” 13). However, Moseley also notes that the campus novel genre occupies a particular position, where “fiction [...] [is not] independent of life outside the text; the academic novel would not, could not, exist were there no academic system, no colleges and universities, no professors and students” (“Introductory” 14). Instead, Moseley asserts that “academic novels assume the real world” (“Introductory” 14).

Despite these problems of the genre being closely associated to its narrative settings, analysis of setting provides another aspect to explore when considering the origin stories of the genre. I am referring to the intersection between the rise of the campus novel, and increase in in-house writers on university campuses, or alumnus writers documenting tales of their alma maters. Lodge examines the increasing numbers of in-house writers that come with the growth of the university, which I have labelled earlier as ‘novelist-academics’. Lodge notes that the postwar expansion of higher education intersected with the growth of creative writing courses in Britain, which by then was already a fixture of American colleges (Lodge, “Nabokov”). These courses were often taught by established writers, and Lodge believes that

university teaching, with its generally agreeable conditions, flexible hours, and long vacations, became a favoured second occupation for writers, a source of steady income while they wrote their books in their spare time. [...] And since novelists tend to get

their ideas from the milieu they inhabit, it is not surprising that this produced in both countries a steady stream of campus or academic novels. (Lodge, “Nabokov”)

In this section, I have examined how the campus novel genre rose following the need to document imagined narratives of reputed institutions. However, the postwar boom of universities in both Britain and America led to a shift in narrative settings – and a new face for the campus novel genre as a whole.

Postwar Boom

The nineteenth century saw the prevalence of ‘the cult of Oxford’ as the main force behind university novels, both as the defining feature of the British tradition, and in inspiring mimicry amongst its American counterparts. However, subsequent eras witnessed drastic changes affecting higher education in both nations, culminating in the postwar period. Conceptualised as the ‘postwar boom of higher education’, conditions of this period led to a discernible rise in campus novels that moved away from the models previously set by the Oxbridge and Harvard novel.

Following his analysis of the “cult of Oxford”, Proctor identifies the central problematic of “mediocrity” plaguing early English university novels (185). He notes that “the university novel, in the long course of its development, have been shaped more than anything else by the state of the English universities” (Proctor 185). As aforementioned, Proctor points towards the parallels between the genre and conditions pertaining to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (185). However, Proctor subsequently acknowledges the idealisation and aggrandization which gradually become characteristics of the genre, where

one finds that all agree the university novel has been guilty of excesses [...] Oxford’s Andrew Lang, in a reminiscent mood, once reflected that accounts in university novels were too often either idealized or uninformed, and their authors faced an insurmountable temptation to draw themselves and their friends ‘too large, too noisy, too bibulous, too learned, too extravagant, too pugnacious’. (186)

The genre therefore grew conscious of its inflated identity and lack of purpose - limitations that Proctor offers will be rectified as the genre develops in the twentieth century (192). Similar awareness and tonal shifts can be observed in the American college novel tradition, as it is deemed to have thrived and achieved purpose, following divergence from the model of the

Harvard novel. This is in accordance with Womack's statement, that "as with their English antecedents, American novels about academic life find their modern origins in the nineteenth century, an intense era of social change and industrial growth that destabilized the prodigious cultural influences of privileged institutions of higher learning such as Oxford and Cambridge, and in America, Harvard" ("Academic Satire" 327).

More perceptibly, the shift from the Oxford and Cambridge novel in Britain follows the introduction of educational reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, in which the genre gradually shifted from nostalgic exultation of traditional prestigious institutions, to a more inclusive future. Womack conceptualises this timeframe as the period of "satiric origins" for the genre, during which "Oxford and Cambridge witnessed a significant decline in the hegemony of their influence upon English society and culture" ("Academic Satire" 326). This decline is primarily caused by the successive reforms introduced between the 1850s to the 1880s, which identified the culture of exclusion that was bred in traditional institutions of higher education, that "operated on an outmoded classical curriculum and blatantly catered to the needs of the socially privileged" (Womack, "Academic Satire" 327). According to Proctor, these reforms aimed to rectify skewed curriculums - for example, by abolishing religious tests as prerequisites for entry into Oxford and Cambridge, as such "providing access to the universities for students outside of the Church of England" (qtd. in Womack 327). These reforms then culminated in the inclusion of women into universities, pioneered by the admission of female students to Somerville College at Oxford in 1879 (Womack, "Academic Satire" 327). The cumulative effect of these educational reforms is the discernible shift of the genre, from being merely nostalgic of the prestige signified by select cultural institutions, to mining universities as "a social landscape ripe for narrative consideration" (Womack, "Academic Satire" 327).

In the postwar period that followed, the British campus novel tradition was further presented with the task, as did other post-war literatures, in documenting the state of society and assisting in nation rebuilding. Studies that assert this function of the genre depict the broken state of Britain, which in turn adds gravity to the task apportioned to campus novels. Andrew Sanders recalls this sombre atmosphere of the post-war nation, by invoking the image of "[a] landscape in ruins" (586), stating that the significance of this atmosphere must not be discounted when considering the literatures that have been directly produced by events of this era (586). Steven Connor further asserts that the campus novel was an appropriate mode for reconciling national anxieties and conditions of England, in the period following the end of the Second World War. This is due to the genre's permeable nature, where "the academic novel can perform [a more] historically concrete function, in imagining the more general condition

of a nation” (Connor 70). According to Connor, “the university or academic setting has been useful for postwar novelists precisely because the membrane of self-satisfaction that surrounds it is never sufficiently worldtight but, on the contrary, is permeable by the alien and disruptive forces of politics, sexuality and crime” (70).

Thus the world of university fiction and periods prior cease to become exclusive, following the changing conditions of the nation in the postwar era. Bradbury further notes that the shift can be perceived through marked changes of terms. From “the university novel”, Bradbury proposes that “we might then need another term – say the campus novel – to serve to account for the kind of novel that appeared after the war [...] [which] was much less concerned with nostalgia or social recollection, more with intellectual and social change” (51). The revolutionary state of events in the postwar era therefore calls for a departure from the nostalgic tendencies of the earlier years.

The changing landscape and mood of the period also correlates with major developments concerning the configuration of higher education, both in Britain and America. As explored earlier, the postwar era saw rapid rise in number of institutions, primarily to accommodate modern reforms of criteria for university admission. Womack specifically points to the growth of ‘redbrick’ universities as the cause of the genre’s postwar rise, noting that “the proliferation of provincial ‘redbrick’ universities, [...] like the reform acts of the nineteenth century, undermined the formerly exalted influence of Oxford and Cambridge and expanded appreciably the public’s access to institutions of higher education in England” (“Academic Satire” 329). Indeed, the genre’s development after the nineteenth century shows that it grew to become a mirror of higher education in its time, as predicted by Proctor earlier. Williams’s analysis of the genre’s growth in America observes it as constantly evolving, according to the concerns and climate of higher education at any particular period. According to Williams, “in the US, the academic novel has loosely followed the fortunes of higher education through the past century [...] higher education expanded rapidly, bringing in ballooning numbers of students and employing large numbers of professors, and becoming central to American life” (576).

Thus in the post-war period, the campus novel evolved to become an encompassing genre that promotes inclusivity, reflecting the rapid growth of higher education. As such, the genre ceases to be a niche field that speaks to a small and elite readership, instead becoming a genre relevant to greater sections of the population.

Campus Politics

Thus far, I have examined two significant and prevalent stories of origins of the genre, from the exclusivity and assertion of prestige of the early Oxbridge and Harvard novel, to its development in accordance with evolution of higher education over time. The third factor which I have identified as influencing the origin of the genre is its relationship to the political conditions of each time period. While in-depth examinations of the historical and political events are beyond the scope of this thesis, I present below a brief overview of these conditions, as further evidence of the spatio-temporal determinants of the genre.

Moseley contends that reaction to political issues affects the genre's rise in Britain and the United States, particularly in examining the phenomenon of student protests beginning in the United States in the Sixties, as a response against the Vietnam War ("Preface" x). Moseley perceives the war as a significant factor affecting and "changing the ethos of students and the atmosphere of colleges and universities, especially (but not only) in the United States" ("Preface" xi). Citing George Watson, Moseley also traces the significance of the Vietnam War across universities in Britain, "with their denunciation of the 'collective hysteria that was once called the New Left,' and 'Violence-worship among intellectuals'" ("Preface" xi). Similarly, previous generations responded to various other political conditions, for example "the generation of the Forties-Fifties was moved by the Depression and the war in Spain, and [...] the Twenties by the first great prosperity and World War I" (Moseley 62).

In a critical chapter entitled "Campus Fictions", Bradbury grounds his observations of the genre "in the social rather than aesthetic history of fiction, British and American [...]" (50). This is further evidence of critical studies that first and foremost locates the genre not just within the two nations, but also implies symbiosis – to address one side of the tradition is to immediately acknowledge its counterpart. For Bradbury, the rise of the genre in America is due to the British tradition being caught in the wave of "new liberalism", or

in a period when the values of liberalism, humanism and intellectual criticism were being reasserted in the wake of a terrible war and a new era of intellectual self-doubt [...] hence the genre appropriately had its match in the United States, where the theme of the 'new liberalism' sounded through fiction (52).

In invoking parallels between Britain and America, Bradbury provides reasoning for the genre's simultaneous rise in both nations. It can be argued that the gripping crises of ideas

affecting two nations during a particular time, consequently found its way into the literature of the period.

Indeed, the wave of liberalism continued to be an area of concern in American college novels. Moseley examined this preoccupation with the tides of liberalism, or specifically, of liberal education, in both Jarrell's *Pictures* and McCarthy's *Groves*, of how "liberals are defenceless in the face of the illiberal [...] the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity" ("Randall Jarrell" 204). These concerns, of "liberalism under attack", is observed as a specifically "American concern", resultant from preceding socio-political conditions in the 1950s, such as "the aftermath of McCarthyism, the investigations of the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities, and the broad assault on universities" (Moseley, "Randall Jarrell" 204).

However, whilst these concerns are specific to the American identity, similar occurrences can be identified in its British counterparts. Thus we are seeing here evidence of specifically Anglo-American political and ideological concerns. Moseley notes that similar concerns regarding liberalism can also be traced in Malcolm Bradbury's *Eating People is Wrong* (1959), produced around the same time as Jarrell's *Pictures* and McCarthy's *Groves* ("Randall Jarrell" 205). The text concerns itself with the tribulations of an academic character grappling with a sense of "baffled liberalism [...] a troubled liberalism; not under threat, as with his American counterparts facing real or imagined reigns of terror, but belated" (Moseley, "Randall Jarrell" 205). Whilst liberalism features differently in the British as opposed to the American tradition, whereby British universities were not concerned with issues of liberal arts institutions, Moseley believes that such political concerns were prominent in academic novels of the era due to its ability "to [offer] to outsiders an insiders' view [...] of 1950s liberalism as it flourished – if flourished is the correct term for a growth still querulous and self-doubting – on college and university campuses" ("Randall Jarrell" 207).

"Anglo-American Phenomenon"

Thus far in this chapter, I have examined pioneering studies which have dominated the critical tradition of the genre. In these studies, the growing visibility and prominence of the tradition in the United States is evident. There are varying opinions throughout, of whether the American tradition followed its British predecessors, or that both traditions had simultaneously emerged based on similar contextual conditions. Examining the various external conditions above, it can

be argued that the genre was borne out of contextual conditions occurring in two locations: Britain and North America. Indeed, the symbiotic relationship of university fiction between the two nations have dominated the stories of origin of the genre.

This notion of simultaneity and inter-nation influences can possibly explain the predominant characterisation of the genre as being collectively ‘Anglo-American’. This is certainly the idea which forms basis for Lodge’s observation, on the “striking” fact “that the campus novel [had] emerged independently at about the same time in both England and America” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). Lodge conceptualises this starting point based on geographical locations, employing the term ‘Anglo-American’. According to Lodge, “the campus novel is almost exclusively an Anglo-American genre” (Lodge, “Nabokov”) deducing this characteristic from the genre’s absence in continental Europe (Lodge, “Nabokov”). These reasoning for absences has been explored earlier: where freedom in writing academic satires were afforded to British and American academics, but not to their continental European counterparts. Another significant reasoning of absence will be explored in the following section, progressing to problematics of the stories of origins examined.

It is also important to note that Lodge is not the first critic of the genre to have devised this term, or conceptualised the genre as such. George Watson writes in 1978 that “the [university novel] phenomenon is Anglo-American, and hardly shared by our continental allies” (42), thus tracing origins of this nation-based perimeter as far back as three decades prior. Watson does not articulate his reasons for conceptualising these geographical limits, but much can be inferred from the arguments presented succeeding this statement. Following declaration of location of the literary phenomenon, Watson cites the consistent production of texts as evidence. “Americans have had it for about as long [as the British], as Mary McCarthy’s *Groves of Academe* (1952) and Randall Jarrell’s *Pictures from an Institution* (1954) demonstrate” (42), states Watson, before further utilising subsequent renewed versions of the genre as evidence, of the genre’s vitality in the 1970s. Watson cites further contextual conditions deemed to have influenced the rise of the genre, particularly in the post-war era. Of particular relevance in Watson’s work is a singular sample of comparative analysis of conditions occurring in Britain and America – the rise of novelist-academics, and the start of the creative writing era. Watson observes that “[the university don] was also a creative artist. Perhaps this was the most surprising new possibility of all in that post-War age: that the academic need remain no mere pedant, but could dazzle the world as a Poet, Dramatist, or Novelist too. The university novel is after all largely a novel written by dons” (44). Similarly in America, Watson observes that “in that same expansive era, many American universities

appointed ‘Writers on Campus’. [...] by the 1940s arts faculties in our English universities had moved out of one assumption about the creative act into another and far more arresting one. It was no longer disgraceful, or even odd, for an academic to be known to have written a poem or a novel or a play” (44).

However, there are also arguments that this relationship is not only based on similarities and symbiosis, but also resultant of constant tension between the British and American tradition. Carter observes the shift in influences, as emerging campus novels begin modelling themselves according to the American, rather than British tradition. In particular, Carter notes the shift embodied by Don Aitkin’s *The Second Chair* (1977), which sees an Australian novel revert from replicating British university fiction, to looking towards its American counterpart (195). Carter asserts that “Aitkin’s novel breaks the British discourse because it looks to a competing discourse that lacks the pervasive pessimism of British novels. Aitkin looks to America” (196).

Conflict between the British and American tradition is argued more extensively in Janice Rossen’s *The University in Modern Fiction* (1993). Rossen’s arguments centre on the covert power dynamics in university fiction, where facets of her arguments perceive academic competitiveness as an identifiable trait of British-American relationships in campus novels. Rossen asserts that this issue is based on “the impact of Americans who express an eagerness to partake of British academic culture, and the corresponding internationalisation of scholarship and the advent of the ‘global campus’, in David Lodge’s term” (8). The growing influence of university education outside of the United Kingdom gradually becomes perceived as threats to the traditional English centre, as Rossen notes that academic scholarship begins to face crises and competition based on national identities. According to Rossen, “another arena of competition among scholars in a particular discipline is that of their individual or collective nationality, which can also be felt as an intensely personal issue – particularly between American and British scholars” (154). Indeed, “nationalism has implications for territorialism within a discipline” (Rossen 154). Certain aspects such as the hierarchy of academic work and their values, the shifting location of centres of higher education, and possibility of decentralisation of academic dominance, became deeply contested along national lines.

My earlier analysis of the advent of the Harvard novel, as presented by Lyons, contends that the Harvard novel rose out of a sense of competition against the popularity of the Oxford novel. However, I have also observed that the development of women’s college novels in America presents us with significant alternative perspectives. This is particularly relevant where queries of Anglo-American symbiosis or competition as origin stories are concerned.

Lyons observes that the college novel in America is indebted in its rise to the English tradition, noting that “the American novels of academic life which deal with the experiences of male undergraduates are tied in their conventions and their prose style to English antecedents” (47). In contrast, these English precursors are limited in their depiction of male characters and experiences. As such, American women’s college novels had no precedent to look to as models or guidelines and was thus subject to much experimentation (Lyons 47). The rise of the women’s college novel is thus independent of British influences or sense of competition. It instead correlates with the increasing experimentation of women’s college education in America (Lyons 49). The opening of women’s colleges such as Oberlin College in 1837, Vassar College (1861), and Wellesley College (1870) led to “an atmosphere of bold experiment” (Lyons 49), and women’s college novels were purportedly borne out of these conditions.

Thus far, I have examined how the critical tradition reinforces consistent stories of origins – of the influence of external conditions in propelling the rise of the genre. As above, it is also notable that the stories of origins provide evidence of how the Anglo-American tradition is reinforced, through constant symbiosis and conflict between the British and American tradition. A more critical lesson can be learned from the emergence of women’s college novels in America. It is interesting to note that the belated rise of American women’s college novels is based on the absence of precursors, or to borrow Lyons’s term, “antecedents” in the British tradition. On one hand, this presents the Anglo-American relationship as a given, but also inherently self-limiting in its assessment of only two national variants of the genre. That is, if there are no evidence in the British tradition, then it is presumed redundant to further examine other literary traditions. But the American women’s college novel also presents possibilities, of emergence of genre variants without replicating earlier prototypes. In the absence of formal precursors, or incompatibility of models, how then do new variants of the campus novel genre emerge? I essentially argue that the overarching problematic of existing studies of the genre is in its continuous omission of non-Anglo-American variants, of alternative stories of origin of the genre.

1.4. “narrowly periodized [...] narrowly nationalized”: Limitations and Problematics of the Genre

In the previous sections, I have observed that the campus novel genre is borne from external conditions specific to two nations. I contend that the genre’s stories of origin reinforce the notion that the genre is an Anglo-American literary form, based on the symbiotic relationship and constant conflict between the British and North American tradition. However, my research further argues that there are underlying problematics of this fundamental labelling of the genre as an Anglo-American phenomenon, and of consistent linkage of its beginnings, to texts and contextual conditions specific to these two locations.

The significance of these narratives of Anglo-American beginnings and identities, as reinforced by the critical tradition, is in its creation of a rigid genre system. Frow argues that the notion of systems of genres are increasingly debatable, as “the system of genres’ is neither closed nor stable, and indeed we should perhaps not speak of a single system” (134). Instead, the approach to thinking of particular genres as systems must consider its characterisation “in relational terms which distinguish these features according to their place and function [...] we can identify a genre because we are at some level aware of other genres that it is not, and it is this relationship that is systemic” (Frow 135). Frow subsequently utilises the analogy of genres of shops, in examining the formation of such genre systems. He concludes by asserting the following aspects that constitute the system of a genre:

Genres [...] are cultural forms, dynamic and historically fluid, and guiding people’s behaviour; they are learned, and they are culturally specific; they are rooted in institutional infrastructures; they classify objects in ways that are sometimes precise, sometimes fuzzy, but always sharper at the core than at the edges; and they belong to a system of kinds, and are meaningful only in terms of the shifting differences between them. (Frow 139)

In many ways, the conceptualisation of the campus novel as an Anglo-American phenomenon can be perceived as the formation of a genre system. The central focus of its critical tradition has been in asserting the relationship of British and American variants of the genre based on places and functions – the Oxford novel functioned as narratives of nostalgia, whereas the Harvard novel was propelled and inspired by the popularity of the Oxford novel. The postwar campus novel found its purpose in responding against the perceived elitism of the earlier Oxford novel, and in documenting contemporary conditions of higher education. Thinking

back to the numerous external conditions recounted by origin stories of the genre, the conceptualisation of the campus novel as being a culturally specific genre is thus justifiable.

However, there are also significant differences and departures from framework that must be considered. According to Frow, although modes of classification according to genre systems oscillate between being “precise” and “fuzzy”, at its core the definitive traits of a genre are clearly discernible (139). As such, in considering the campus novel genre as a system comprising of its British and American variants, the central definition of the genre has therefore been established, aided by the inflexibility of its critical tradition and purported stories of origins. Accordingly, there are glimpses of fuzzy grey areas of this genre system – for example, where would we situate the Scottish variant of the genre, within the perimeter established by the Anglo-American system? Frow asserts that discrepancies affecting classification can be rectified as meanings established “in terms of the shifting differences between [kinds]” (139). However, the Anglo-American system of the genre proves limited, in that analysis of differences are only of the internal discrepancies between the British (even arguably English) and American variants.

Furthermore, arguments for the fluidity of this genre system also reveal problematic limitations. In previous sections, my analysis of the genre’s development traces the evolution of the genre over time and place, and according to changes in functions. However, I further contend that these samples of cultural and historical fluidity are essentially static, in that it is firmly situated within specific cultures and locations. That is, although the campus novel has evolved from its early days as the Oxbridge and Harvard novels, to more contemporary forms, these changes are only as observed within the cultural and national context of Britain and America. As the genre is depicted as forms deeply rooted in the local, the critical tradition provides little indication that the genre travels, nor translates, well.

I therefore conceptualise the assertion of cultural, historical – and I would add, national – specificities of the genre as problematic limitations, caused by a narrow sense of periodisation and national identities of the genre. These restricted perspectives consequently lead to the omission of alternative stories of origins of the genre. The central aim of my research is to revise these limitations, through consideration of alternative origin stories, approaches, and global variants of the genre.

In utilising theoretical frameworks to further explicate these limitations, I have borrowed two significant phrases - “narrowly periodized” and “narrowly nationalized” - from the world theories of literary genre presented by Wai Chee Dimock, in her 2006 article “Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents”. Dimock proposes alternative

approaches to examining temporal evolutions and maps of literary genres. Existing studies of generic developments are, as Dimock points out, often looking “forwards” – in search of “emerging forms” (“Genre as World System” 91). But Dimock offers a method of looking “backwards”, “to material that, for one reason or another, has been left out of standard literary histories” (“Genre as World System” 91). To illustrate, Dimock traces the evolution of the novel form, noting that the standard trajectory of the development of the novel follows the “English case” – as a literary genre that culminated out of conditions such as “realism”, “print culture”, and “the rise of the middle class” (“Genre as World System” 91).

However, Dimock proffers that examination of “a broader frame” for examining the evolution of the novel, one which is “less narrowly periodized and less narrowly nationalized”, presents us with a different trajectory (“Genre as World System” 91). Dimock provides examples of studies which have utilized these ‘broader frames’, such as efforts by classicists Arthur Heisermann and J. J. Winkler “[who] have long called attention to the existence of the novel in ancient Greece” (“Genre as World System” 91). Additionally, Dimock considers Margaret Doody’s suggestion that the origins of the novel need to go further back than its eighteenth-century precursors, “to include pre-modern and non-Western material” (qtd. in Dimock 91). According to Dimock, Doody’s text *The True Story of the Novel* (1996) achieves this by “[taking] the genre much further back and much further east” (“Genre as World System” 91).

Prior to proposing “a broader frame” for studies of the campus novel genre, I will first explicate the problematic limitations of the genre. To achieve this, I will subsequently discuss the ways in which the critical tradition has imposed limitations on the genre, through “narrowly periodized” and “narrowly nationalized” frames. Finally, I will correlate the significance of my findings to the present state of the genre, ultimately proposing approaches to rectify the identified decline of the genre.

“narrowly periodized”

In recent years, the critical tradition has identified the gradual decline of the campus novel genre. This demise is due to the genre’s obsolescence and disconnection with contemporary realities. I contend that this decline by obsolescence is caused by the genre’s self-imposed temporal limitations, by its being “narrowly periodized”.

Pronouncement of the genre's death has consistently been the central deduction of contemporary analysis of campus novels. Whilst critics cite varying reasons for the genre's death, there are recurring concerns of the genre's inability to reflect the socio-cultural realities of its time. This sense of detachment is caused by the genre's adherence to obsolete conventions, particularly formulaic plots ascribed to the genre. Over time, such acts of thematic and formal compliance have culminated in an overall decline, due to the diminishing quality of texts, and general inability to attract readership. According to John Dugdale, "the standard of the campus club's productions [...] increasingly makes you wonder why they bother" (Dugdale). Several scathing remarks of the poor quality of texts later, he offers that "a moratorium [of the genre] has long been overdue" (Dugdale).

Samples of these repetitive and formulaic plot often dominate critical studies of the genre, leading to a consensus that the genre is saturated to the point of stagnancy. Like Dugdale, critics are united in their lamentation of the stagnancy of the genre's form and content. The oft-used formula of the genre, according to Jonathan Wolff, is as follows: "Unsatisfactory sex between lecturer and student was stuff of comedy, rather than disciplinary action, and if you had been in post for five years and hadn't slept with all your colleagues then there was either something wrong with you, or more likely, with them" (Wolff). Beyond infamous adultery plots, Proctor has also detected a "composite plot" in Oxford and Cambridge novels (1). The formula traces an innocent undergraduate's arrival to the university, whose innocence becomes reversed by a period of mischiefs – ultimately ending with success against odds, and denouement in the form of a marriage plot (Proctor 2). Additionally, Carter's observation of the genre, from its postwar inception to the nineties, concurs that the British university novel is inherently formulaic and repetitive (15). He claims, after "ploughing through every British novel I could exhume [...] after a couple of pages I would discover the awful truth. *I had read it before*" (Carter 15). Carter notes that British university novels up to the publication of his monograph are discernible only through

modest variations on one of three linked stories: how an undergraduate at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge came to wisdom; how a don at Oxford (usually) or Cambridge was stabbed in the back physically or professionally, sometimes surviving to rule his college; and how rotten life was as a student or teacher outside Oxford and Cambridge. (15)

Regardless of the adverse effects of formulaic plot on literary standards, it is also implied that adherence to obsolete thematic and formal structure is necessary for the genre. The

genre thus faces a dilemma, where defiance of set structures in the name of progress, will result in deviance from the fundamental functions and definitions of the genre. Writing in 2013, Wolff questions the possibility of writing a campus novel in the present era. He acknowledges that the genre was primarily borne out of conditions and atmospheres relevant to universities in bygone eras, recounting that “many [campus novels] relied on the idea that universities were unregulated bubbles of excess, privilege and poison, populated by opportunists who abused their power in order to protect themselves from their own academic and sexual insecurities” (Wolff). Significantly, these conditions characterise “a forgotten world” (Wolff). I perceive Wolff’s arguments as cementing the struggles of the campus novel: should it choose to adhere to the fundamentals of the genre, it will continue to be plagued by queries of temporal relevance.

Ultimately, the genre is perceived as facing decline due to its constant detachment from contemporary realities and conditions. I conceptualise this death by obsolescence as being caused by the genre’s narrow periodisation. These problematics of temporal relevance have been identified in my earlier examination of the historical origins of the genre. Indeed, campus novels have shown limited progression throughout history. Kenneth Womack’s analysis of the use of satire in campus novels explains why satire provided the genre with a brief reprieve from their outdated nostalgic tendencies. He states that the problem with early campus novels lie in “their nostalgia for the ivory towers of their pre-nineteenth-century cultural and social supremacy”, which “prevents academic fictions from positing solutions in a pragmatic world” (Womack, “Academic Satire” 328). Due to this constant looking back at defunct periods of greatness, the genre is often detached and unable to relate with present problematics. Amidst the tempestuous early twentieth century, “when the world demanded answers to even more complicated social and political predicaments – from the calamities of the First and Second World Wars to the Great Depression and beyond”, both the genre and the very institution it represents “lacked practical answers to the human community’s most vexing problems” (Womack, “Academic Satire” 328).

However, the critical tradition has readily postulated solutions against these problems of narrow periodisation. Womack argues that the tonal shift from nostalgic exultations to critical satires of the university enables the genre to finally achieve social function. According to Womack, “for the first time, academic novels – through their explicit use of satire – seemed to offer solutions for the problems that confront modern readers far beyond the hallowed walls of the university” (“Academic Satire” 329). Similarly, Proctor expressed optimism following observation of changes from the Victorian era, to the state of the genre in the fifties. Examining

decades of change, he states that “[there has been] a remarkable transformation. For changes did occur which freed the university novelist from his earlier handicaps and permitted the development of the university novel toward its final achievement, a profound exploration of the function and purpose of the university itself” (Proctor 10).

But perhaps pronouncement of death of the genre, due to its inability to be anything but comic satire, is an extreme that could prevent the genre from ever being relevant in today’s world. Zachary Martin and Benjamin Poore have echoed Wolff and Dugdale’s beliefs, in the limitations of the genre’s adherence to established but ultimately overused formulae. However, Martin and Poore supplement their arguments by suggesting changes of perspective as possible alternatives to ensure the genre’s longevity, instead of pronouncing a possibly premature death for the genre. By assuming responsibility and a more serious function, perhaps the poor quality and exhausted formulae of the genre will be problematics of the past for campus novels (Martin).

Although Martin and Poore differ in their beliefs of the function of the genre, both agree that the genre’s survival is dependent on its departure from overused formulae, as well as being written and read from new vantage points. Supplementing further Dugdale and Wolff’s reasoning, Martin, in his article “Failure of the Campus Novel” (2010), defines ‘failure’ as the poor quality of the genre, caused by the formulaic repetition of the genre’s function as satire, as well as its limited target audience (Martin). He further laments the failure of the genre to produce serious fiction, or at the very least, texts that reflect the realities and anxieties of higher education today (Martin). As a solution, Martin identifies the need to view universities not as an insular world, but to delve into the question of education as the essence of the university (Martin).

Poore offers a different problematic of the genre, stating that “the current challenge [faced by writers of campus novels] is that the university now is almost beyond parody” (Poore). Poore believes that by functioning as satire, the genre can remove academia from notorious self-importance and intellectual superiority – traits evident when compared to other professional fields (Poore). However, he concurs that this would do realities of higher education injustice, as “it would be simply absurd – stretching fictional credibility to breaking point – or ingenious parody, to suggest that one could write a campus novel in the old form” (Poore). Yet this lament is interwoven with Poore’s belief that tragic realities would render the genre less enjoyable (Poore). Therefore, the ultimate problem faced by the genre today is a tension, against remaining true to its original function in satirising the university (Poore). Poore

believes that academic satires would render the genre dismissive of the contemporary tragedies of unemployment and financial instability plaguing higher education (Poore).

To reiterate, I argue that the death of the campus novel as explicated by the critical tradition is caused by the narrow periodisation of the genre. That is, the campus novel is rendered obsolete when it adheres to generic conventions. The solution which has been proffered to these problematics is by re-examining function and expression, and by constantly revising its stance, in accordance with changes affecting higher education over time.

“narrowly nationalized”

Thus far, the problematics and rectifications offered by the critical tradition have been concerned with issues of *production*. The critical tradition has identified that the genre is oversaturated, with publication of texts that regurgitate overused formulae and explore repeated issues. Consequently, the critical tradition is compelled to examine these trite replications that eventually make up the corpus of the genre. I propose that critical attention must further pursue changes of *perspectives*, of reading from novel vantage points. Specifically, I argue that the death of the genre is caused by the narrow cultural and national scope expounded by the critical tradition – of being “narrowly nationalized”. In this chapter, I have consistently observed that the central story of origin of the genre asserts its gestation in Britain and America, to the extent that the genre is rigidly defined as an Anglo-American phenomenon. Its birth is attributed to various external conditions, specifically pertaining to the inter-nation relationships (and conflicts) between the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

However, I have observed that these reiterated narratives of origin are conceived through presumptive absences. I contend that this is an underlying problem of the genre. As examined earlier, Lodge in “Nabokov” argues that the genre is absent in Continental Europe. According to Lodge, despite generating academic interest in Continental European countries, “there have been very few campus novels produced by native writers in these countries, and those few, I am told, have not made much literary impact” (Lodge, “Nabokov”). In addition to cultural differences and restrictions of expression, Lodge also perceives this absence as structural, caused by differences in physical materiality of the university space. Lodge observes,

until relatively recently, European universities were not designed as campuses, territorially defined and self-contained; they were made up of faculties randomly

distributed through the cities to which they belonged. [...] The enclosed, often isolated, residential university or college on the Anglo-American model is a very different environment, and more readily productive of the kind of behaviour that is the raw material of fiction. (Lodge, “Nabokov”)

Also analysed above are Watson’s early claims, that the phenomenon of the university novel is “Anglo-American” and purportedly absent in mainland Europe (Watson 42). To illustrate these claims, Watson notes that Britain and America are the most prominent locations of published campus novels. Specifically, Watson traces the numerous conditions which have supported the production of campus novels in these two nations, such as the growth of creative writing departments and increase in university academics venturing into the writing profession (42). Watson’s statements above – particularly his prescription of the Anglo-American label for the genre – is later picked up by Carter in his aforementioned text *Conceit*. In examining the campus novel as an extension of Britain’s post-war nostalgia of its past cultural superiority, Carter begins his theories by establishing the location of the genre: “George Watson (1978) usefully notes that university fiction is an Anglo-American phenomenon, largely unknown in Europe” (19). From Watson’s claims made in 1978, to Lodge’s analyses in 2006 - it is evident that the use of the Anglo-American label as a method of situating the genre has remained persistent in the critical tradition of campus novels.

In setting a tangible area according to the purported locations of the genre, geographical perimeters such as the Anglo-American prefix are not necessarily problematic. In fact, it denotes the cultural specificity of the genre, situating the location of its origins and subsequent local prominence. However, I perceive the mechanisms of prescribing this label to be problematic, as the prescription is based on presumptive absences. The presentation of location is uncontested, and as we see from reiteration by Lodge, Watson, and Carter, it consequently becomes reinforced as the definitive cultural and national identity of the genre. Watson’s lack of articulation as to why the genre is a “phenomenon [that is] Anglo-American” (42) signals towards presumptive claims of absences beyond the Anglo-American perimeter. Through establishing the genre’s specific existence in Britain and America, the critical tradition of the genre putatively declares that the campus novel genre is an Anglo-American phenomenon, without much exploration of the genre’s existence beyond these two nations. It can be argued that critical studies that merely remark on absences of the genre beyond the Anglo-American sphere, such as Lodge’s comments above, at least attempts to verify the characterisation of the genre as an Anglo-American phenomenon. But uniformly in all other critical studies of the

genre, the Anglo-American label is presented as a given. Over time, this label becomes reinforced as a definitive feature of the genre.

As such, I argue that where the campus novel genre is observed to be stagnant and in decline, such observations are only caused by the “narrowly nationalized” Anglo-American frames in which it is being reviewed in. These alternative approaches have been hinted at in existing studies of the genre – although relatively less explored than criticisms of the death of the genre. Of particular significance is Robert Scott’s analysis in his article “It’s A Small World after All: Assessing the Contemporary Campus Novel” (2004). Scott’s studies align more closely with the methods which I have employed in this chapter, through his analysis of the critical tradition and their discursive influence on the genre. He examines the pronouncement of death of the genre in existing criticisms, specifically looking at statements made by J. Bottum in “The End of the Academic Novel” (1997) and Adam Begley in “The Decline of the Academic Novel” (1997). Bottum asserts the gradual decline of the genre, stating that “the most significant thing about these books is something their authors could not possibly have intended: They reveal how utterly worn-out the academic novel has become in less than 50 years’ time” (Bottum). Begley offers similar observations of exhaustion of the genre, noting that “although they’re suffering some neglect, the campus satires of Amis, Jarrell, and McCarthy are still in print more than four decades later. I doubt whether the newer, more comfortable models will wear so well” (“Decline” 153).

Scott presents a different perspective, focusing his argument on criticism of the genre’s inability to evolve, or the failure of emerging texts to become remarkable. Scott believes that in contrast to the gloomy proclamations of Bottum and Begley, however, I would argue that the academic novel is a vital and aesthetically rich literary genre that has continually evolved in order to meet the demands of its large and ever-expanding readership. (82)

Scott’s arguments are based on emerging perspectives that until recently have not been considered for the genre: the notion that the genre is diverse, as he lauds “the extraordinary diversity exhibited by recent campus novels” (86). This approach challenges the narrow periodisation and nationalities of the existing critical tradition, as “these novels traverse the globe”, and “though most works have contemporary settings, others travel as far back in time as the Middle Ages” (Scott 86).

Criticism of disparities and omission along national lines of the critical tradition can even be traced in existing studies of the genre. Williams observes that “critical accounts of the

academic novel have gravitated to [the postwar] period, reasonably enough because of their number and prominence of the authors. The criticism also tends to put more weight on the British side, even though it is much less populous than the American.” (564). Indeed, Williams further notes that “there is a tendency [...] to overemphasize the British tradition”, citing evidence that “[Elaine] Showalter’s book [*Faculty Towers*] attends more to the British side and is unaware of many of the American novels, especially those since the 1980s” (585n7). I take this to be one of the few existing, and perhaps indirect, criticism of the period and nationality problem of the critical tradition. Such problems raise queries of disparities, as to which period is being favoured, and which nationality or variant of the genre is predominantly represented in the critical tradition.

Problematics of cultural and national identities have been identified by studies of the genre. Carter devotes the eighth chapter of his text *Conceit* to examining “the treatment of foreigners in British university fiction” (177). He explores the characterisation of “the foreign” in university fiction up to 1990, analysing depiction of habits, behaviours, interaction, and socialisation, particularly into the elite systems that constitute Oxford and Cambridge novels (Carter 178). Ultimately, Carter contends that depictions of foreigners in these texts are problematic, due to nostalgic tendencies and desire to preserve universities as strongholds of British culture. According to Carter, “foreigners bring dangers for English universities, generating a cruel paradox. [...] English leaders are manufactured in Oxbridge. Colonial leaders can be rendered safe only by incorporation in Oxbridge culture. Yet the process of incorporating foreigners threatens the sanctity of English culture’s citadel” (185). Similar maltreatments along national lines have also been identified by Rossen. I have noted above that the genre has been sustained by Anglo-American conflict as much as parallels and correlations. Rossen furthers her analysis by noting that the Anglo-American conflict and competition have resulted in problematic depictions of the foreign. Examining works by Bradbury and Lodge, Rossen contends that although they do not fully “[uphold] the establishment”, “they do satirize foreigners with a vengeance which suggests that they feel threatened by possible encroachment on their territory, scholarly or otherwise” (157).

In fact, variations of cultural and national relationships have rarely been described as attributes of the campus novel. In recent years, critical studies of the genre have started problematising hostile cultural and national divides and critiquing the absence of diversity. Bryan Washington comments that “if the genre is defined by its buoyancy, its flip side is a lack of diversity” (Washington). Washington claims,

there are no HBCU [historically black colleges and universities] novels. Our first-generation Mexican American freshman opuses are far and few between. Don Lee's *The Collective* takes a stab at shaking the framework, and *The Brief Life of Oscar Wao* rattles the genre's predilections as well, but the campus novel could just as soon be called *The Adventures of Eccentric White Kids*. For a genre built on the notion of change, it's lacking an awful lot of it. (Washington)

A notable example is Lavelle Porter's recent research on African American campus novels, addressing the under-representation of black intellectuals in university fiction. Porter refers to theories voiced by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who "identified an intricate relationship between literary criticism and black literary production", remarking that "'few literary traditions have begun or been sustained by such a complex ironic relation to their criticism: allegations of an absence led directly to a presence, a literature often inextricably bound in dialogue with its potentially harshest critics'" (qtd. in Porter). This notion, of criticism extrapolated from absences, echoes the observations which I have consistently presented in my analysis thus far. It is evident that contemporary academic narratives are now shifting towards the unexplored in existing critical traditions, further challenging established preconceptions of the genre.

Queries into depictions of race have been attributed to American college novels more than the British tradition, as Carter observes that "British literature [does not have] anything to compare with American university novels [in] denouncing racial intolerance" (205). However, Ann McClellan has begun introducing such interrogations for the British campus novel, particularly in her work "Black Women in Ivory Towers: Race, Gender, and Class in British Campus Fiction", published in 2012. She observes "how twentieth century British women authors represent women academics in their fiction has been recently studied," noting that "one key element has been missing: race" (McClellan, "Black Women in Ivory Towers" 1). McClellan's articulations on minimal analyses on race concurs that "similar to the way social class is unmarked in such fictions (readers are forced to assume, based on the characters' professional status, that they are all middle to upper class), race itself is rarely, if ever, identified. Instead, readers are asked to accept all characters as white" ("Black Women in Ivory Towers" 1). This again concurs with my arguments, in problematising the Anglo-American identity as the unchallenged core of campus novels.

As such, it is evident that the narrow cultural and national frames that limit the campus novel genre are manifold. On one hand, the primary texts embody cultural and national anxieties pertaining to the university space, in its gradual acceptance and assimilation of the

foreign. Additionally, the critical tradition itself proves to be limited and “narrowly nationalized”. In the contemporary context, this trait ceases to be relevant, as it is in contention with evidence of the genre’s global existence and renaissance beyond Britain and America. Evidence of varied recent approaches to the genre from both the British and American tradition, with their calls for diversity from within, show that the future of critical studies of the genre is in looking outwards. This can be achieved by disrupting the rigid barriers of the Anglo-American label, but also, through exploring alternative critical perspectives. In the subsequent chapters of my thesis, these alternatives proposed will be accomplished through challenging the narrowly nationalized frames of the genre.

1.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified that the genre’s problems are in its narrow periodisation and national identities, as caused by the enduring influence of its origin stories and critical tradition. I subsequently problematised the temporal, cultural, and national limitations imposed on the genre, both by the critical tradition, and as internalised by the texts.

The importance of exploring alternative perspectives of the genre lies in the needs of the genre today. Since its inception, the Anglo-American tradition has persisted, despite identifiable problems of exclusivity and detachment from social and institutional realities. However, this has led to the oversaturation of both the thematic contents of texts and critical tradition, consequently causing the genre’s overall decline.

In this thesis, I argue that the campus novel will benefit from the exploration of texts beyond the Anglo-American tradition. The restrictive corpus of British and American campus novels has long neglected evidence of global existence of the genre. Additionally, persisting examination of the university as depicted in British and American fiction is in contention with the global realities of higher education today, with its significant capacities and tendencies towards mobility.

I ultimately propose consideration of alternative perspectives of the genre, particularly, in looking beyond the Anglo-American centre established by the critical tradition. In examining extant studies of “broader frames” for studying genre evolution, Dimock notes that Margaret Doody’s methods of “backward extension” – of “[taking] the genre much further back and much further east” – is necessary, in attempting to include omitted variants as part of the genre’s evolution (91). Taking my cue from these approaches, my research aims to remap the

campus novel genre, revising and pushing its present narrow perimeter outwards. In the next chapter, I will be presenting global variants of the genre, as data which I will be analysing throughout my thesis. I propose the examination of images of mobility as units of analysis, in establishing kinship between various non-Anglo-American campus novels, whilst constantly considering the Anglo-American tradition.

Chapter 2 | Studies of Non-Anglo-American Campus Novels: Theories and Methods

2.1. Introduction

Studies of the campus novel have ventured beyond the Anglo-American literary traditions, exploring texts and traditions which have not been classified as such. However, these studies often posit these texts as ‘foreign’ variants, always marginal to the Anglo-American centre. Furthermore, there have been minimal studies into the relationship and possible lineages of these texts and traditions, often taking the global ubiquity of the campus novel as resulting from the genre’s natural global diffusion.

This chapter commences with an examination of the dominant critical tradition of the genre, particularly surveying studies of ‘foreign’ campus novels. As the chapter progresses, the concept of the campus novel becomes further contested – an inevitable consequence as we venture into literary traditions and cultures that do not subscribe to the campus novel term at all. Rather, we begin to see examples of texts and traditions that deviate completely from conventional conceptions of the genre. These examples range from literary traditions that have been presented as foreign variants of the genre, such as the Egyptian and Indian campus novels, to local forms such as the IIT novel and ‘overseas student literatures’ in Taiwan.

The central aim of this chapter is to present an overview of the campus novel beyond Britain and America, termed throughout my thesis as ‘non-Anglo-American’ campus novels. Using the framework of ‘fractal kinship’ through semblances as proposed by Wai Chee Dimock, I will then propose the study of images of corporeal mobility in selected primary texts, as units of comparison between campus novels across different cultures and locations. Initial sections of the chapter will examine existing studies of non-Anglo-American campus novels, further considering portrayals of ‘the foreign’ aforementioned in Chapter 1. This will then be followed by considerations of critical studies on campus novels thus far unexplored in the critical tradition of the genre. The chapter will also explore theories of kinship based on aberrations and differences, in selecting a framework for bridging global variants of the campus novel. Finally, the chapter will close with an overview of methodological approaches, focusing on the politics of geographical and corporeal mobility in selected non-Anglo-American campus novels.

2.2. “Degrees of Foreignness”: Existing Studies of The Non-Anglo-American in Campus Novels

As examined in the previous chapter, narrow periodisation and preoccupation with national identities are identified problems of the genre. This does not disregard existing studies that have attempted to branch out beyond the period and cultural confines of the genre. In fact, portrayal of ‘the foreign’ and examination of cross-cultural encounters are important facets of the critical tradition of campus novels.

As aforementioned, representations of the foreign are primarily limited to conflicts between British or American characters. Central to Ian Carter’s examination of the British campus novel tradition is the portrayal of the foreign as a form of threat to British cultural dominance. According to Carter, travel is an observed occurrence in the British tradition. However, encounters with the foreign occur mainly outside of Britain, but not within (Carter 178). Carter explains this disparity as a “characteristic national xenophobia”, where “the English do not like foreigners. The main drawback of ‘abroad’ is that the place is full of them” (177). As an antidote to this “pervasive pessimism of British novels”, Carter notes the significant rise of “a competing discourse”, specifically, the growing influence of the American campus novel tradition (196).

Janice Rossen furthers this notion of competition in her analysis of power dynamics in campus novels. Rossen highlights the significance of transatlantic encounters in amplifying the portrayal of competition, and resulting relationships or conflicts arising from these encounters. Academic travels, particularly as written in British and American campus novels, enable idyllic movements and idealisation of foreign cultures and locations (Rossen 144). This is evident from the pattern of romantic and academic entanglements observed by Rossen, in the transatlantic travels of academics in A.S. Byatt’s *Possession*, Alison Lurie’s *Foreign Affairs* and David Lodge’s *Small World* (153). However, Rossen states that romantic and academic encounters in these texts are symptomatic of underlying national anxieties, on the part of the British tradition (155). According to Rossen, the notion of competition reveals “heightened consciousness of this increasing transatlantic competition in the realm of literary scholarship” (156), as such heralding the rising influence of their American counterparts.

As inquiries into preoccupations with national identities of campus novels, the genre is thus limited by its transatlantic outlook. However, included in both Carter and Rossen’s observations are further variants of ‘the foreign’, which Carter remarks is divided by “degrees

of foreignness” (180). While the discussion of travel focuses on the mobility of British or American characters – shuttling between both nations – in the margins of Carter and Rossen’s analyses are samples of academic travel experienced by other foreign characters. The marginal existence of these characters reveal an interesting fact: that the foreign in campus novels are calibrated by “degrees of foreignness”, as phrased by Carter (180). “Degrees of foreignness” refer to the perceived level of threat that can be caused by the arrival of the foreign into the British or American university space (Carter 180). For example, Carter observes that “British university novelists’ typical attitude to the white dominions Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa – is uncomplicated [...] they are worth no more than open contempt” (180). Such depictions are based on how the campus narrative, when explored from the perspective of these foreign identities, reveals that “[they] have no culture of their own” (Carter 187). Unlike the threat and competitiveness brought about by the American discourse, other foreign identities are disparaged as they are deemed to have merely appropriated the genre (Carter 188).

Beyond the levels of foreignness outlined above, threat of the newly arrived foreign is undermined by “[rendering] foreigners at best comic, at worst dangerous” (Carter 177). Examining numerous samples from British university novels, Carter observes how:

use of two hapless foreigners [in a university novel] as markers of not-Englishness is entirely characteristic of British university fiction. Many books have one or two such, their freedom of action strictly limited. Some foreigners are innocents [...] Some foreigners are comic. [...] Foreigners can be dangerous [...] Foreigners can think themselves dangerous, but be merely comic [...]. (Carter 178)

As above, these depictions are in line with perceived threat of the foreign, to the dominance of either British, American, or Anglo-American influences over the cultural institution that is the university, and its resultant literatures. Additionally, Connery notes that the use of national stereotypes and stock characterisations can be attributed to the traditional function of the genre, as a literary form that satirises the university and its dwellers (124).

However, my research posits these representations of the foreign as a limitation for the campus novel genre, where examination of Anglo-American texts inadvertently narrows the scope of depictions and perspectives of transnational mobilities. In the critical works above, it is evident that mobilities of the foreign are consistently viewed through the lenses of British or American locals of the text. This thus renders narratives of travel of the foreign as

supplementary only to the central Anglo-American narrative, relegated to the margins of the text.

Beyond studies of the figure of the foreign in campus novels, existing studies have also examined foreign campus novels. Critics have observed that the emergence of foreign campus novels is often due to global reproductions of the university, as modelled on renowned British and American institutions. The campus novel in New Zealand provides evidence of such rise. Historical studies of foreign campus novels use the internationalisation of universities as starting point, examining how the growth of universities globally has been, and continues to be, dependent on the transmission of ideas and replication of models. Significantly, the growth of the genre in New Zealand followed the model of the Scottish university system, rather than the more renowned Oxbridge model. Ian Carter notes that the Oxbridge model is “an artefact of time and place, not an eternal verity” (267), therefore preventing replication in other international contexts. Instead, Carter observes the Scottish university system as an alternative to the Oxbridge model (267).

The foreign campus novel has thus been perceived as an offshoot of the Anglo-American tradition. However, my studies have found the vast existence of global variants of the campus novel, beyond the presently limited portrayal in the critical tradition. Is there value in exploring this gap in the literature, and can any attempts to study the established Anglo-American tradition, alongside its long-marginalised foreign variants, lead to productive comparisons? My research maintains that at the very least, the problematic stagnation of the campus novel genre can be revised with the inclusion of new perspectives and texts, revitalising both the corpus and critical tradition of the genre. Furthermore, the contemporary rise of campus novels outside of the Anglo-American tradition requires critical attention attuned to cultural and national specificities. The culturally homogenous nature of the genre at present makes this a challenge, but comparison of tangible concepts such as international mobilities can be viewed as a starting point in tackling this problem.

2.3. The Non-Anglo-American Campus Novel

In this section I will present an overview of existing studies on campus novels beyond Britain and North America. My research observed variants of the genre ranging from the oft-cited Indian campus novel, to Egyptian, Norwegian, Austrian, German, Spanish Peninsular literature, to seemingly disparate occurrences in Indonesian and Taiwanese literature. As

evident from the vast scope, I cannot claim expertise of all the variants mentioned, particularly where issues such as language barriers prevent me from accessing the texts or perusing necessary secondary materials. My analysis instead presents surface knowledge of the cause of emergence of the genre in each literary tradition and geographical location, focusing on existing approaches to these genres. I aim to present this overview to verify my claim of insufficient research into the global ubiquity and scope of the genre.

Perhaps the most visible evidence of the genre's existence beyond Britain and America is the campus novel phenomenon in India. This is particularly attributed to the commercial success of Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* in 2004, which changed the publishing and reading world in India. *Five Point Someone* became the first English book to reach a million sales in India (Kapoor), spurring the writer to literary stardom with his later books similarly selling copies in the millions (Anjaria 6). Since Bhagat, the campus novel has become an emerging literary sub-genre in India, with Eswara Rao identifying the publication of at least fifteen Indian campus novels in the six years succeeding *Five Point Someone* (12).

The proliferation of the Indian campus novel has also generated significant academic interest, both in India and beyond. Christian Gutleben's analysis of Anita Desai's *In Custody* (1984) initially considers the Indian campus novel as an organic offshoot of the British and American tradition. For Gutleben, the publication of *In Custody* follows the genre's international diffusion in the 1980s, asserting that "[the genre] was in vogue when Desai released her Indian version of an essentially Anglo-Saxon genre" (124). However, Gutleben further critiques the genre's emergence in India through acknowledging conflicting perspectives. Gutleben notes that "a western perspective" would perceive Desai as merely contributing to a rapidly globalising literary genre (124). In contrast, "an Indian perspective" would be critical of writing according to a literary form "external [...] to the national tradition" (Gutleben 124). Despite these contested notions of the genre's origins in Indian literary tradition, Gutleben asserts that Desai's "appropriation of [an] overseas genre" positively adds to the campus novel genre, further "hybrid[ising], renew[ing] and enrich[ing] a western narrative practice" (124).

It is important to note that the genre has a longstanding tradition in India that precedes both Desai and Bhagat, and to an extent is even independent of the Anglo-American tradition. Prabhat Singh traces the contemporary Indian campus novel to earlier works such as R.K. Narayan's 1937 novel *The Bachelor of Arts*, and the 1988 novel *English August: An Indian Story* by Upamanyu Chatterjee (11). P.G. Shridevi offers an earlier starting point, tracing the 1960 novel *The Long Long Days* by P.M. Nityanandan as "the first Indian campus novel",

observing that the second campus novel, M.V. Rama Sarma's *The Farewell Party*, followed eleven years later (4). Singh's overview of the genre in India does not refer to the Anglo-American tradition, instead providing an expansive list of campus novels which have succeeded Bhagat (12). On the other hand, Shridevi's study is notable in its methodological choice. It provides an extensive review of the Anglo-American tradition, before examining the development of the genre in India, without examining the influence or link to the Anglo-American tradition. The clear gap between the foreign framework and local tradition presents the notion that the local tradition emerged and flourished without much influence from the foreign form. Padhi in 2017 provides an alternate explanation of the difficulty of bridging the genre's rise and tenuous relationship to the Anglo-American campus novel. In particular, Padhi notes that the early campus novels mentioned above, such as Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts*, certainly utilised the campus setting (3). However, these early Indian campus novels were more akin to the *Bildungsroman*, rather than campus novels (Padhi 3). Padhi further contends that Indian novels did not fully fulfil the campus novel qualification, until the publication of Prema Nandakumar's *Atom and the Serpent* in 1982 (4).

Recent studies of the genre in India have turned to local conditions as explanation for the genre's rise, instead of framing it in relation to the Anglo-American tradition. Averi Mukhopadhyay's 2019 study traces the genre's emergence as resultant of the flourishing academic system jumpstarted by colonial education in post-independence India (1). The rapid boom of the education system led to increased interest in writing about the university, particularly driven by the microcosmic nature of the university in India (Mukhopadhyay 1). For Mukhopadhyay, the university in India is interesting in that the "Indian college and university campuses are one of the world's most socially heterogenous societies where people from different class, caste, creed, religion, and gender assemble to forge multidimensional relations" (1). Thus the Indian campus novel is not only resultant of the power conflicts of inheriting colonial education, but is also imperative in examining social hierarchies specific to India.

Another condition of the genre's rise in India is that it is born from the nexus of the academic and author. Early Indian campus novels were written by university academics, or "teacher-novelists", as termed by Padhi (2). Padhi perceptively notes that being an academic is not a condition of writing campus novels (2). However, the Indian campus novel bears similarity to the Anglo-American tradition, in that many of its practitioners – "Anuradha Marwah Roy, Prema Nandakumar, Meena Alexander, Rani Dharker, Shakuntala Bharvani, Panjagam and Raj Gauthaman" – were university academics (Padhi 2). Rao asserts this by

presenting an overview of early Indian campus novels which were predominantly written by university academics (51). Although there is no evidence of these authors being directly influenced by preceding traditions or texts, Padhi considers their position as academics and proximity to the university as suggesting conscious knowledge of the Anglo-American campus novel genre (3).

The turning point for the campus novel in India is the aforementioned publication of Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*, an Anglophone novel focused on the experiences of students at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. Gautam Padmanabhan, a prominent figure in the Indian publishing industry, has even divided publishing in India by two eras – “Before Chetan (BC)”, and after (qtd. in Kapoor). However, Kapoor observes that the commercial success does not translate to critical success, in that Bhagat's works is often regarded as lowbrow literature (Kapoor). Priya Joshi remarks that Bhagat's invitation to the Jaipur Literature Festival revealed such biases – “when Bhagat [...] eventually made it to Jaipur, it was as much for [his] novels' adaptations into successful films as for [his] literary ambitions. [...] while these are novels, to be sure, they are quite clearly not literary, *nor do they intend to be*” (“Chetan Bhagat” 315). Nevertheless, the scale of Bhagat's success warrants examination of his work. It is important to examine how Bhagat changed both the face of the publishing industry in India, as well as his contributions to a new angle to the campus novel genre, perhaps unconsciously.

The simple explanation for the rise of the Indian campus novel after Bhagat is that the success of *Five Point Someone* propelled the genre's popularity, and became an enticing literary form for both established and upcoming writers. Shridevi observed that earlier campus novels became a trend not because one author was specialising in it, but because numerous writers experimented with the genre (7). Joshi in 2019 further sees this pattern continuing, in that the popularity of the campus novel post-Bhagat is symptomatic of the rise of genre fiction in India (“Genre Fiction” 202). According to Joshi, the rise of genre fiction in India follows the popularity of a singular work and the writer, in contrast with Anglo-American versions of one writer being the renowned practitioner of a particular genre (“Genre Fiction” 206). Thus this explains the vast scope of the campus novel in India, as resultant of attracting numerous authors.

Five Point Someone also signalled manifold shifts for the campus novel genre, particularly in its heralding of a specific type of campus novel known as the IIT novel. Joshi contends that the emergence of the IIT novel is a literary phenomenon that is “indigenous” to India (“Genre Fiction” 202). In essence, IIT novels are fictional works set at the Indian

Institutes of Technology (IIT) and its many variations. Several examples of IIT novels include *Anything for You, Ma'am* (2006) by Tushar Raheja, *Above Average* (2007) by Amitabha Bagchi, *Everything You Desire: A Journey through IIM* (2007) by Harshdeep Jolly, and *Joker in the Pack* (2007) by Ritesh Sharma and Neeraj Pahlajani (Singh 12). Predominantly, these works are written by alumni of said institutions, as is the case for Chetan Bhagat's writing of *Five Point Someone*. As a result of Bhagat's booming success, numerous alumni of IIT institutions began writing their own campus novels, thus resulting in the genre's overall growth in the post-Bhagat era. This is a marked departure for the Indian campus novel, in that the emerging writers are not university academics and do not follow the author-academic framework of earlier campus novels (Rao 53). Instead, the post-Bhagat campus novel is borne from the author-alumni nexus, as the practitioners of the genre are now university alumni working as bankers or engineers (Greenlees).

That the campus novel in India is attached to a specific institution also explains both its popularity and indigeneity. Aysha Iqbal Viswamohan argues that the success of the IIT novel is in its defying portrayal of the IIT as an institution of prestige, "[breaking] many myths about an institute of formidable repute" (20). However, further evidence points to the IIT being taken as a paradigm of success, with fictional works on it being marketed as motivational narratives. This is a continuation of earlier campus novels, which were also written as motivational narratives advocating educational success (Patel 415). Joshi observes that the emergence of the IIT novel is based on awareness of the need for narratives that inspire success amongst the striving young audience in contemporary India ("Chetan Bhagat" 317). Viswamohan similarly perceives the marketing strategies of Bhagat's works, which promote the author's success stories through "media blitzkrieg about Bhagat's impressive credentials, including graduation from IIT Delhi, his stint at IIM Ahmedabad and his successful banking career in Hong Kong" (22). The IIT novels therefore function as a form of motivational narrative, espousing hard work and academic excellence for a burgeoning young audience in India. In essence, the campus novel in India therefore transitioned from being tenuously related to the Anglo-American tradition, to an independent juggernaut.

The Egyptian campus novel is another variant of the genre beyond Britain and America, which presents varying perspectives to both the Anglo-American and Indian tradition. The Egyptian campus novel is less visible than the Indian tradition, with absence of survey studies, much less tracing its origins and position within the wider Egyptian literary tradition. However, recent years have shown a rise in both publication of Egyptian campus novels and critical attention towards it. Rather than accruing significance through surveys of scope and

development, as observed in studies of the Indian campus novel, the Egyptian variant is signified by studies on singular acclaimed works. Specific examples are Radwa Ashour's *Spectres* (1999, translated 2011), Reem Bassiouney's *Professor Hanaa* (2008, translated 2011), and *Chicago* by Alaa Al-Aswany (2007, translated 2008) – a novel which will be studied in the next chapter of my thesis.

Radwa Ashour is a prominent figure in Egyptian literature, known as a raconteur of the university experience. An early work in her oeuvre is *The Journey: Memoirs of an Egyptian Woman Student in America*, which is a memoir of her graduate school years in America. According to Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan, Ashour is also “a revolutionary writer”, “known for her satirical attitudes towards political and social issues” (56). These contexts are deemed significant, as Ashour's works have been examined as inseparable from the author. To an extent, the author's reputation even further distinguishes it. Additionally, Ashour expresses desire for the novel *Spectres* to be read in relation to her position as an academic in Egypt, stating “I would like to add a few words about my last novel *Atiaf* (*Spectres*). It's a semi-autobiographical narrative, a partial record of my life intertwined with that of another character of my age and profession, a kind of double if you want” (qtd. in Zidan 58). The pervading presence of the author follows the methodology in India, of examining the text with regards to the background and experience of the author, particularly in the post-Bhagat era. Studies of Ashour's novels are further aligned with the teacher-novelist nexus of earlier Indian campus novels, as much of the focus is on Ashour's position as a prominent Egyptian academic.

There are also works that are yet to be extensively studied as campus novels, but have been acknowledged for their central portrayal of the university theme. In her studies on the absence of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women in campus novels, Ann McClellan considers Ahdaf Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992) as an important example. According to McClellan, the novel is significant in “[arguing] that the legacy of the British colonization – not gender, race, or class – is what is keeping BME women from UK college campuses” (“Black Women in Ivory Towers” 12). Similarly, I would argue for the inclusion of Leila Aboulela's works in the studies of campus novels. This follows consideration of her works *Minaret* (2005), *The Translator* (1999), and the short story “The Museum” – known for prioritising the university setting and themes. Aboulela evidently does not fall under the Egyptian categorisation, being a Sudanese and writing mainly about Sudanese characters. However, Aboulela's works are seen as part of the emergence of Anglophone Arab fiction (Hassan, “Leila Aboulela” 298).

An interesting aspect of the Arabic campus novel is the significance of movement. This is a clear distinction from the Indian tradition, where the novelistic settings rarely travel beyond

India. However, the works of Alaa Al-Aswany, Ahdaf Soueif, and Leila Aboulela above are notable for their fluctuation of setting and negotiation of contrasting identities. Wail Hassan in particular perceives Aboulela's works as contributing to the growing trend of "Muslim immigrant fiction" ("Leila Aboulela" 298). Indeed, the acknowledged predecessor of these Arab university narratives, Taha Hussein's *Adib* (1935) is based in France (Attar 25). In *Adib*, Taha Hussein "describes the destruction of an Egyptian intellectual in France" (Attar 25). There is a longstanding tradition of Arabic narratives about travelling abroad, particularly for education in Europe. Of significance is Rifā'ah Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's 1834 text *Takhlis al-Ibriz ila Talkhis Bariz*, or in English, *The Extraction of Gold from a Distillation of Paris*. Roger Allen traces this text as one of the earliest examples of these types of narratives, and setting precedent for a flourishing literary tradition later continued by writers such as Tawfik Hakim, Yahya Haqqi, and Tayeb Salih (23).

Beyond the evident existence of the genre in India and Egypt, the campus novel genre can also be traced in other national literary traditions and geographical locations, albeit disparate and in lesser volumes. Tina Varga Oswald's 2014 study into the academic novel in Croatia uses the British tradition, and specifically David Lodge's works, as "paradigms" for the genre in Croatia (128). The method is primarily through examination of differences, between Lodge, as "the British paradigm", and two Croatian campus novels, namely *Wonderland* (2003) by Marinko Košćec, and *Posljednji korak* (2013) by Dražen Ilinčić. Varga Oswald asserts that the emergence of the genre in Croatia is delayed when compared to the British tradition – a lag attributed to socio-political factors (125). Varga Oswald further asserts that the heightened socio-political consciousness evident in these texts are characteristic of other literary outputs from Croatia of that era (134). In particular, the two novels examined were borne from literary surges in Croatia, following post-conflict events such as the 1971 Croatian Spring (Varga Oswald 134).

Other studies examine local campus novel phenomenon that are minimally related to the Anglo-American tradition. Instead, these texts emerge from the nexus of locally based author-academic-alumni networks. Walter Perera in 2017 traces the Anglophone campus novel tradition in Sri Lanka to the translation of Ediriweera Sarachchandra's 1978 novel *Heta Eccera Kaluwara Nae* (*Curfew and a Full Moon*). Since then, campus novels in English have continued to be published in Sri Lanka, the most recent being the 2011 novel *The Iron Fence* by Neluka Silva (Perera 220). Perera initially frames this local phenomenon in relation with the Anglo-American tradition, but asserts their differences, in that the campus novel in Sri Lanka is "peculiarly Sri Lankan" (219). By way of definitions of campus novels posited by the

Anglo-American tradition, Perera argues that Sri Lankan university fiction would not qualify for the label, particularly as it does not share the comic and satiric tone characteristic of Anglo-American campus novels (218). Instead, these novels are predominantly focused on portraying the University of Peradineya in fiction (Perera 229). Significantly, Perera notes a major shift for the genre in Sri Lanka, where the decline of the University of Peradineya correlates with shifts in the literatures produced (229). This follows both the Anglo-American and Indian tradition, where campus novels are modelled on real-life institutions. Perera's studies therefore provide evidence of a longstanding local literary tradition that considers the genre in relation to the dominant foreign framework, whilst at the same time establishing its differences.

The above studies have largely perceived the genre's global existence as a result of productive international diffusion. However, there is also growing criticism of this accepted lineage. An emerging issue in studies of global campus novels is the problematic use of claims of lineage as part of marketing strategies. This is evident in Sofija Christensen's examination of Helene Uri's novel *De beste blant oss* (*The Best Among Us*), which was marketed as the first Norwegian university novel at its publication in 2006. Initially, this seems like an innocuous marketing strategy, and following the publication of *The Best Among Us*, Christensen acknowledges the discernible rise of university novels in Norway (56).

However, this purported emergence disregards the longstanding and existing tradition of university novels in Norway that precede *The Best Among Us* (Christensen 56). Christensen traces earlier examples to Arne Garborg's 1883 novel *Bondestudentar* (*The Making of Daniel Braut*), a prominent text even taught in Norwegian schools (57). Further problems arise when these ruptures in lineage are revealed to be conscious departures from earlier traditions. Christensen observes that the decision to market Uri's novel as pioneering an emerging tradition reveals underlying disregard for the quality of the Norwegian university novel tradition, instead choosing to associate itself with the presumed more respected Anglo-American tradition (62). Significantly, Christensen observes this as a trend in critical studies of the genre from "other literary traditions", where the genre "becomes evaluated in reaction to the 'prototype', regardless of the previous literary interpretations of academia within its national tradition" (62).

Discrepancies between marketing strategies and lineages are also evident in studies of the Austrian campus novel. Dieter Fuchs's examination of Wilfried Steiner's 2003 novel *Der Weg nach Xanadu* (*The Way to Xanadu*) is critical of claims that purport the novel to be "an Austrian campus novel and much more" (Domsch qtd. in Fuchs 120). Fuchs argues that such claims are refuted by examination of the novel's setting, where, despite its focus on academic

characters, reveals absence of “the University campus and does not present or reflect campus-life at all” (123). As such, the novel cannot be considered as a campus novel following in the tradition of prototypes of German academic fiction, especially not continuing the tradition set by Heinrich Mann’s grammar school novel *Professor Unrat (Small Town Tyrant)* (Fuchs 123). Unlike Christensen’s analysis of the influence of marketing strategies on the Norwegian campus novel, Fuchs is instead critical of flawed claims of lineage within local literary traditions. The studies made by Christensen and Fuchs therefore show samples of the campus novel elsewhere that have longstanding local literary traditions descending from local prototypes and examined within local frameworks, independent of the Anglo-American model. These studies differ from analyses of the Sri Lankan and Croatian campus novel, which referred to the Anglo-American tradition as a starting point, whilst being equally critical of discrepancies in claims of lineage.

Beyond campus novels set locally and considered against local literary traditions, there is also evidence of trends attributed to a specific national identity whilst entirely set in foreign locations. These are often university narratives emerging from increased academic mobility interlinked with improving socioeconomic conditions. A recurring aspect observed of these trends is that they are only minimally related to the Anglo-American tradition. Existing studies are instead focused on specific sociohistorical conditions and shifts, rather than queries of lineage. Matthew J. Marr’s 2008 article on ‘the transatlantic academic travel novel’ provides evidence of such literary emergences. This literary trend is a specific subset of Peninsular Spanish literature emerging at the turn of the century, which portrays the figure of the travelling Spanish academic documenting their adventures in various North American university settings. On the surface, these novels resemble the Anglo-American campus novel, as Marr examines similarities between selected texts and canonical Anglo-American texts, as well as generic conventions (119).

However, Marr further contends that these emergences are indicative of ideological shifts affecting the nation. Marr argues that earlier literary traditions have presented “Spain and Spanishness as objects of scrutiny for international travellers” (110). He cites examples such as “[George] Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, [Ernest] Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, *Death in the Afternoon*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* [as] works of literature, both fictional and semi-historical, whose quintessentially Romantic conceptions of Spanishness have traditionally been admired by for their ‘poignancy,’” whilst acknowledging their problematic “reductive cultural essentialism” (Marr 109). However, changing economic and political landscapes, such as the end of Francisco Franco’s regime in Spain, as well Spain’s entry into the European Union, have

subsequently influenced changes in their cultural output (Marr 110). Marr ultimately argues that the emergence of the transatlantic academic travel novel is a reaction against preceding Anglo-American travel literatures about the Spanish Peninsular (111). Thus, we are seeing the centrality of the campus novel genre in certain cultures and nations, whilst existing in foreign chronotopes.

These studies are not, evidently, representative of the whole genre in each particular location or literary tradition. Considering the spectrum of variations considered, the genre has appeared in numerous locations, and not always in the English language, nor are the critical studies readily available in English. However, a key thing to note is that these studies have either consciously utilised the campus novel label, alluded to the British and American tradition, or have been written in the English language. Apart from studies that use the campus novel as a critical framework, I have also observed literary trends that follow the conventions of the genre, but do not explicitly subscribe nor are identified as campus novels. These trends range from the Indonesian Azharite novel, to the ‘overseas student literature’ sub-genre in Taiwanese literature. These examples have thus far been examined only as local literary phenomenon and are absent from critical studies of global variants of the campus novel genre.

The 2004 publication of Habiburrahman El-Shirazy’s novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)* ushered a phenomenal shift for literatures in the Southeast Asian region¹. The novel documents the romantic and academic experiences of an Indonesian scholar studying at the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Initially successful in its home country of Indonesia, the novel gradually gained readership amongst the Malay-speaking communities in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. This then led to widespread publication throughout the region, of novels depicting similar predicaments and settings. Due to the centrality of Islamic teachings intertwined with romantic plots, these novels then become marketed as ‘religious romance novels’. The significant recurrence of setting further narrows these novels to a literary subset, which I shall term as the ‘Indonesian Azharite novel’. Despite being written in the Indonesian language and depicting Indonesian characters, these novels consistently promote mobility of the characters, as religious scholars travelling for their university education abroad. It is further notable that the favoured setting is the Al-Azhar University in Egypt.

It should be noted that there is a modest campus novel tradition in Indonesian literature, which can be traced to Ashadi Siregar’s 1974 novel *Cintaku di Kampus Biru (My Love on the Blue Campus)* (Sumardjo 9), to more recent variants of religious school novels such as Andrea

¹ Extensive analysis of this novel will be conducted in Chapter 4 of my thesis.

Hirata's 2005 novel *Laskar Pelangi* (*Rainbow Troops*). However, these examples are singular and do not show significant development for the genre in Indonesia. In contrast, the Indonesian religious romance novels have not been studied in the context of the campus novel. This is evidently due to their primary conceptualisation as religious or romance narratives. However, I contend that the consistent centrality of the university, both as setting and in influencing literary thematics, warrant further examination of these texts using the campus novel framework.

The Indonesian Azharite novel is therefore another literary trend which does not subscribe to the campus novel framework, but which follows significant generic conventions such as the centrality of academic mobility. This trait is also shared by the literary sub-genre of *liuxuesheng wenxue*, also known as the Taiwanese 'overseas student literature'. The sub-genre is notable for its portrayal of the figure of the Taiwanese student in foreign university settings, predominantly in North America. It concerns itself with experiences of the foreign land and university setting, whilst consistently negotiating contentious memories of China and the private space of home. This genre flourished in the 1960s to 1970s, following the mass movement of Chinese students to the United States for university education (Wang, "Writing Across the Pacific" 139). The study abroad movement in Taiwan has a history that can be traced back to the 1850s, and thus long precedes the overseas student literature genre (Wang, "Thinking and Feeling Asian America" 141). In fact, Chih-Ming Wang traces the genre to nineteenth century precursors, through texts such as *When I Was a Boy in China* (1887) by Yan Phou Lee, and *My Life in China and America* (1909) by Yung Wing ("Writing Across the Pacific" 139). Wang remarks that the resurgence in the 1960s and 1970s is due to prevalent sentiments and internal conflict, between desire for America and nostalgia for Taiwan ("Thinking and Feeling Asian America" 143). Sheng-Mei Ma further argues that these conflicts reveal underlying allegiance for mainland Chinese ideologies, such that nostalgia for home, for Taiwan, becomes complicated (451). Despite significance of the university setting and characters, Taiwanese overseas student literatures are rarely, if ever, examined using the framework of the campus novel genre. It is instead often studied in relation to narratives of Chinese labour migration to America (Wang, "Thinking and Feeling Asian America" 150). According to Sheng-Mei Ma, class discrepancies are central in giving weight to the genre, particularly against existing narratives of labour migration (437). Various critical studies also explore the genre in relation to extensive cultural and literary outputs, such as considering Taiwanese literature against the framework of Asian American traditions (Wang, "Thinking and Feeling Asian America" 152).

As evident from the literary trends surveyed above, there is an abundance of literary traditions where the university setting and academic mobility are central characteristics, yet are not studied as part of critical studies of campus novels. These are literary traditions that share the conventions of the campus novel, and yet have emerged independent of, and continue to exist and be studied, without linkage to the Anglo-American tradition. This perhaps poses some questions as to the legitimacy of reading these texts as campus novels. However, I contend that these under-researched traditions highlight the limitations of the campus novel label. Discrepancies in naming are already a contentious part of studies of the British and American campus novel. Extended to these unexplored works, the discrepancies of names and labels instead highlight how nomenclature and generic taxonomy should be secondary to actual semblance and existence of many variations of campus novels.

There is thus a vast scope of campus novels beyond the known British and American tradition. Existing studies have alluded to their existence, but often only as tangential presences or offshoots from the Anglo-American tradition. However, a closer look at each tradition shows that certain global campus novel traditions have emerged independent of the Anglo-American tradition. Additionally, they also have longstanding histories that merit in-depth studies. These variants are borne from unique contexts – whether triggered by socio-political, national, or cultural conditions. Thus the vast scope and independent emergences reveal evidence gaps in existing studies. More significantly, these global variants are flourishing, with evidence of emerging literatures. This is in contention with the present state of the genre, of its growing irrelevance and impending demise. This furthers the evidence gap of existing studies, as declaration of the genre's death no longer stands. The thriving state of these variants further highlight the necessity of further studies. Additionally, as most of these identified variants are independent from the Anglo-American tradition, the present methods of examining campus novels possibly do not apply to them.

Thinking back to the previous chapter, there is a gap between the Anglo-American tradition of the campus novel, and global variants of the genre. Critical studies focalised through the Anglo-American perspective exhibits surface knowledge of the global campus novel, and often as peripheral to it, in the rare cases when they are considered. In contrast, several global campus novel traditions hold on to links to the Anglo-American framework, despite tenuous lineages. Other global variants are studied as autonomous to the Anglo-American tradition, either standing as local phenomenon, or considered through bilateral relations with other foreign literary trends.

How then should we bridge the gap between the established Anglo-American tradition, and the dispersed and under-researched non-Anglo-American campus novel variants?

2.4. Theorising Kinship

Distilled to its most basic form, my research aims to expand the campus novel genre, by including studies of its numerous global variants. Whilst expanding horizons to include, and read, more is a possible method, it also begs the question of limits – what constitutes non-Anglo-American campus novels? If we were to establish a system of global campus novels, what would be the analytical focus of these studies? Invoking Damrosch’s questions of the limits of world literary systems, “if the scope of world literature now extends from Akkadian epics to Aztec incantations, the question of what is world literature could almost be put in opposite terms. What *isn’t* world literature? A category from which nothing can be excluded is essentially useless” (*What is World Literature?* 110). The same concerns can be raised with endeavours to expand the campus novel canon by including the study of non-Anglo-American texts.

Critics have long argued for canon expansion in literature. In 1899, Georg Brandes considered Goethe’s notion of ‘world literature’, and notes the divide between texts that are reputable locally, but not gaining recognition internationally (24). According to Brandes, “Shakespeare belongs to world literature, his great contemporary and forerunner Marlowe only that of the English. Likewise Klopstock is only German, Coleridge only English, Slowacki only Polish. For the world they do not exist” (24). Brandes attributes this partly to how language determines degree of circulation of literature, and writing in the nineteenth century, he asserts the dominance of literatures written in the French language (25). Brandes therefore notes the need for canon expansion, to consider factors affecting successful literary circulation.

How would such efforts at canon inclusion then be carried out? Pertinently, canon expansion must resist oversimplification, and acknowledge possible problems. My argument presently divides the genre into the Anglo-American campus novel as the dominant canon, with those beyond as excluded from the canon. This follows Damrosch’s assertions of the traditional “major” and “minor” binaries of world literature, referring to dominance of certain authors and literatures, leaving “others [to] scrape by or see outright declines in their fortunes” (“World Literature” 45). Damrosch then proposes shifts, observing that the canon of world literature is now divided into “a *hypercanon*, a *countercanon*, and a *shadow canon*” (“World

Literature” 45). The hypercanon and countercanon respectively correlate with earlier major-minor divisions, whilst the shadow canon refers to minor literatures or authors gradually suffering from diminished critical attention (Damrosch, “World Literature” 46).

On the surface, my work proposes further studies of the countercanon of campus novels, pushing forward lesser known texts and literary traditions. However, Damrosch further notes the “severe pressures of time and numbers involved” in studies of world literature, and cautions against further reductive hypercanons (“World Literature” 48). According to Damrosch,

in world literature, as in some literary Miss Universe competition, an entire nation may be represented by a single author: Indonesia, the world’s fifth-largest country and the home of ancient and ongoing cultural traditions, is usually seen, if at all, in the person of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar divide the honors for Mr. Argentina. (“World Literature” 48)

Similar risks run in my research, in selecting specific novels to constitute the genre in individual nations. By examining, for example, studies of Radwa Ashour’s *Spectres* as representative of the Egyptian campus novel, or Helene Uri’s *De beste blant oss* as signifying the Norwegian literary tradition, these studies might be reductive views of the global variants of the genre. However, in considering approaches towards teaching world literature, Vilashini Cooppan perceives this as “representative reading”, “[introducing] particular works as embodiments of national sensibility, examples to be assimilated into the compass of worldly knowledge” (“World Literature and Global Theory” 26). A possible method, of course, and I shall return to Cooppan’s theories later in this section.

As I am dividing my analysis of variants of the genre according to Anglo-American/non-Anglo-American divides, there is also a familiar structure at work. Specifically, I am referring to the known core-periphery model explored by Franco Moretti in his seminal essay “Conjectures on World Literature” (2000). Borrowing from Immanuel Wallerstein’s theories of economic world-systems, Moretti abstracts the notion that a system “is simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality” (“Conjectures” 56). Adopted as a model for examining world literatures, Moretti asserts that “one and unequal” divides reveal inherent problematic hierarchies, where “the destiny of [an often peripheral] culture [...] is intersected and altered by another culture (from the core) that ‘completely ignores it’” (“Conjectures” 56). So far, so familiar, when examined in relation to my studies of the campus novel thus far. It

seems that the Anglo-American tradition acts as the core of the campus novel genre, in its relegation of non-Anglo-American traditions as peripheral variants.

Where the structures diverge is in Moretti's proposal of a workable law for examining the world system of literary forms. Moretti examines the relationships between foreign (specifically Western) form and local realities in Fredric Jameson's analysis of the Japanese and Indian novel, noting similarities in Roberto Schwarz's study of the novel in Brazil ("Conjectures" 58). Based on these observations, Moretti proposes a "*law of literary evolution*", where "in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials" ("Conjectures" 58). This theory thus abstracts global emergences of literary genre as a form of diffusion from a centre and is always a compromise between the foreign form and local materials.

Criticisms abound, and pertinently Moretti himself reconsiders such structures in his later works, such as his 2003 essay *More Conjectures*. Of specific relevance to my research are criticisms that problematise the purported universality of these conjectures. Shu-Mei Shih is wary of taking these structural hierarchies as a given, of the problems of Eurocentrism and unchecked knowledge gaps that underpin projects of literary worlding. Despite Moretti's assertion of his knowledge gap of non-Western European literatures, there must be explicit queries of "Eurocentric roots [...] as constitutive failures" (Shih 19). Otherwise, Shih warns that Moretti's conceptualisations will become complicit in promoting "sweeping generalizations" (19). In his response to "Conjectures", Efrain Kristal questions the use of Moretti's theories in examining Spanish American literature, arguing that in such spheres, poetry shows greater evolution and propagation over the novel (62).

Shih is also wary of Moretti's foreign-local divide, noting that if these conjectures were to be taken as definitive theories, "it is an astoundingly neat theory" (19). Indeed, dividing the campus novel between Anglo-American – non-Anglo-American compartments would also reinforce the hierarchy of the Anglo-American traditions as dominant centres, and continue to relegate non-Anglo-American variants to the peripheries. While this revises the critical limitations explored in Chapter 1, if we were to take relational visibility as an improvement over unexplored absences, it also does not resolve the problematic marginalisation of global variants as foreign 'others'.

For Wai Chee Dimock, Moretti's notion of 'comparative morphology' ("the systematic study of how forms vary in space and time") (Moretti, "Conjectures" 64) also has its

limitations, particularly in considering the “loss of detail” that occurs, when a text becomes a mere blip in the process of tracking and charting wide-spanning literary developments (Dimock, “Genre as World System” 90). This causes texts to conform to “global postulates” that erase the particularities behind the conception of each text (Dimock, “Genre as World System” 90). In addition, Dimock notes greater limitations, where “the literary field is incomplete, its kinship network only partly actualized, with many new members still to be added” (“Genre as World System” 90). Not only are significant details lost in this strict systematization of literary history of forms, it also filters out those that do not conform or are not in accordance with the laws created. As such, Dimock proposes the use of comparative morphology not as a filtering project, but as an approach that enables continuous revision and expansion of the field (“Genre as World System” 91).

Considering the campus novel genre, theories of genre diffusion are also not workable as there is limited evidence of Moretti’s notion of ‘formal compromise’. As evident from my overview of the global variants above, only a few examples purport the local emergence of the campus novel as a form of importation from Anglo-American traditions. In Christian Gutleben’s analysis of Anita Desai’s 1984 novel *In Custody*, Gutleben contends that the genre’s emergence in India is an example of organic emergence - as the genre has reached numerous locations during its travels, it was only a matter of time that it found its way to India (124). In contrast, the Peninsular Spanish campus novel presents an interesting case, as significant travel has taken place, but not of the genre. Instead, the tradition is the result of the travels of writers and academics beyond Peninsular Spain, to academic institutions abroad.

Where Moretti’s theories of diffusion are applicable in researching global campus novels is in considering the corpus paucity of global examples. Specifically, despite the global reach of the genre, it is important to note that there is not enough data or depth to explain the reach. There is evidence of individual texts becoming local phenomenon, but beyond the rich Indian campus novel tradition, other literary traditions have not explored enough primary texts to warrant tangible local traditions. This might then favour Moretti’s models of “distant reading” – moving away from the text, to “units that are much smaller or much larger [...] devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems” (“Conjectures” 57), instead of conducting in-depth studies of sparse global variants.

Thus far, we have ascertained that the causes of the genre’s global emergences are multitudinous and resistant to totalisation. As such, working out the global diffusion or influences of the genre is an unproductive method of studying the campus novel beyond the Anglo-American tradition. The framework of this study is therefore not an etiological

examination of the emergence or lineage of the genre. Instead, this study considers the possibility of a global network of texts and the genre, based on its *differences*.

In 2001, Vilashini Cooppan explored the possibility of canon expansion of world literature syllabi, not through revision, nor opposition of the “canonical” against “non-canonical” (“World Literature and Global Theory” 32). Instead, Cooppan proposes reading of literary texts as level pairs, considering their “location in history and dispersal across time and space” (“World Literature and Global Theory” 33). In 2013, Cooppan then proposes the use of network theory for the study and comparison of world literature, adding the caveat that approaches should not be finite – instead “spheres (and lines) in motion” (“Codes” 119). Cooppan highlights the constant motion of networks, where “flows of energy, signification and meaning are regularly captured and released”, thus enabling “a dynamic process and invite a layered analysis” (“Codes” 104). Of particular significance for my research is Cooppan’s perspective of literary genres “as a networkable unit”, as “nonlinear processes of interaction, selection and combination, revealing an essentially recombinant structure” (“Codes” 115). Thinking then to the question of campus novels, it is evident that studies of the genre presently consider a limited network of geographical and cultural interaction. It is also further limited by its linear historical trajectory. As such, a possible way of considering the many variants of the genre – varied in time and location – is through disrupting its present stagnation and examining it as part of a dynamic network.

Further studies into network and system theories of literature can be found in the work of Wai Chee Dimock (also oft-cited by Cooppan in her research). In Chapter 1, I have explored Dimock’s theories of temporal and nation-bound limitations, as way of articulating the problem presently faced by the campus novel genre. Here I turn again to Dimock, to further pin down details of workable networks of geographically and culturally diverse campus novels, as a way of bridging the scattered global variants of the genre.

I begin with Dimock’s 2001 article “Deep Time: American Literature and World History”, where Dimock examines the “territorial borders” and “periodization” (“Deep Time” 758) of American Literature – “what does it mean to refer to a body of writing as *American*?” (“Deep Time” 755). These are evidently preliminary queries to the problems of narrow periodisation and national borders in literature we will see throughout Dimock’s works. As a resolution, Dimock proposes the framework of “deep time” in studying American literature, where deep time “produces a map that, thanks to its receding horizons, its backward extension into far-flung temporal and spatial coordinates, must depart significantly from a map predicated on the short life of the US” (“Deep Time” 759). Through the frames of deep time, we can

extend the frames of studying American literature, beyond the nation, to “a world that predates the adjective *American*” (Dimock “Deep Time” 759). More importantly, these frames would enable new connections, “kinships”, to be drawn, “kinships [that] would not have been recognized in a nation-centred paradigm” (Dimock “Deep Time” 760).

Of particular relevance to this thesis is Dimock’s proposal of studying genres as a network of differences. I first focus on Dimock’s 2006 article “Genre as World System: Epic and Novel on Four Continents”. Specifically, Dimock proposes the use of “fractal geometry”, a model or “new mathematics” pioneered by Benoit Mandelbrot (“Genre as World System” 87). Fractal geometry, as perceived by Dimock, is “a set of points that cannot be plotted as one, two or three dimensions. It is a geometry of non-integers, a geometry of what loops around, what breaks off, what is jagged, what comes only in percentages” (“Genre as World System” 88). Whilst evidently not created for the study of literature, this mathematical model works because the literary ecosystem flourishes through constant interaction, through “feedback loops between the very large and the very small” (“Genre as World System” 89).

Dimock begins with notions of a rhizomatic network of studying literatures through introducing maps of networks drawn together by recursive, looping structures (Dimock, “Genre as World System” 96). Her theories borrow from numerous models, beginning with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s model of the “rhizome” (Dimock “Epic, Novel, Henry James” 74). In their terms, the rhizome “connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature [...] the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 21). Simplified by Ed Folsom, the rhizome is “the subterranean stem that grows every which way and represents the nomadic multiplicity of identity – no central root but an intertwined web of roots” (1573). Dimock further refers to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblance”, arguing that genres can be challenged on its “conceptual elasticity”, of having “family resemblance” based on intertwining webs rather than linear relationships (“Epic, Novel, Henry James” 74). Additionally, Dimock again borrows loosely a concept proposed by Levi-Strauss known as “kinship”, with earlier echoes to the notion of “kinds” proposed by Alastair Fowler (“Epic, Novel, Henry James” 75).

Dimock then focuses on literary genres as an example of how fractal geometry works, specifically looking at the novel and the epic. Through applying this framework, Dimock argues that we are able to expand the frames of the novel not just to preceding histories of the novel, but also looking at how it bears semblance and has relations with the earlier genre of the

epic (“Genre as World System” 91). For Dimock, this model works in establishing networks for literary history, especially one that thrives on differences. Dimock conceptualises this system as a “tangle of relations”, based on “aberrations” (“Genre as World System” 89). My research is thus interested in Dimock’s framework and articulation of the significance of “irregularities”, of “deviances”, and how consideration of minuscule units can consolidate arguments on a larger scale. In particular, I am focusing on Dimock’s overarching argument, of the significance of “[putting] far-flung kinship at the center of any discussion of genre” (“Epic, Novel, Henry James” 80). According to Dimock, “far-flung kinship [...] reminds us that irregularities need to be traced as far back as possible in order for each new instance to be seen anew” (“Epic, Novel, Henry James” 80).

These multiple methods can be read as mere theoretical imaging of literary relationships, akin to Sarah Lawall’s observation of Damrosch’s elliptical reading as “metaphors for the geometry of reading” (249). Indeed, Dimock’s methods are not without its criticisms, and should not be adopted wholly without queries. Nirvana Tanoukhi points out that whilst Dimock – as highlighted earlier – is critical of Moretti’s “world-systems analysis”, other critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak are equally sceptical of Dimock’s approaches, particularly her “mapping of ‘literature’ as an analytic object” (616n16). Spivak especially voices reservations on Dimock’s methodology of the fractal geometry (107). Spivak reveals

[suspicions] of humanists metaphorizing the latest developments in science through their pseudo-popularizing descriptions as I am of nonspecialists offering Mesopotamia as evidence. It leads to pretentiousness in our students. Do we really need fractal geometry to tell us "the loss of detail is almost always unwarranted?" I keep insisting on learning languages, the old access to literary detail, rather than analogizing from descriptions of fractal geometry or chaos theory. What warms the cockles of my old-fashioned heart is that Professor Dimock will not give up close reading, however far she fetches to justify it within the current rage for filing systems. (Spivak 107)

Instead, Spivak promotes further use of the ‘rhizome’ in Dimock’s works, rather than modelling systems according to the fractal geometry (106). Responding further to Dimock’s work, Spivak urges Dimock to “rethink family as creolity” (106). Spivak is especially concerned with the problematics of genre, where concepts such as lineage are implicated in latent gendered issues (106). Despite the identified gaps in Dimock’s approaches, I contend that it remains a useful framework for preliminary attempts at remapping the campus novel genre.

But what would be this be a network of aberrations of – what would be our units of differential comparison? Ferdinand Brunetière, in as early as 1900, raises the problem of comparing literatures, referring to the distance between “faraway and mysterious civilizations” and Europe (157). Brunetière argues that the challenge lies in the absence of “points of contact” between these separate spheres, “consequently [offering] very few possibilities of comparison” (158). Dimock interestingly presents as example Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, examining its relationship to selected novels but also travels to “other continents” (“Genre as World System” 97). For Dimock, such relationship or ‘far-flung kinship’ is only possible through words – “only words can spin out such long-distance threads” (“Genre as World System” 98).

I now turn to the study of mobility in university narratives. In the following chapters of my thesis, I propose kinship between campus novels, through comparing images of mobility and mobility politics as units of comparison.

2.5. Images and Politics of Mobility

Thus far, I have attributed the dominance of the Anglo-American tradition as the result of the rise of the campus novel in both nations, as well as the consistent cross-Atlantic relationship between both the British and American traditions. One important way in which the Anglo-American relationship has been enabled and reinforced is through constant mobility between both nations. Mobility is abundant in campus novels, and often in the form of corporeal mobility such as international air travel and crossing of national borders, especially between the UK and the USA. Alternatively, movement can also occur intra-nationally, taking place within the confines of a particular nation. Through these examples, movement then is taken to portray the insularity of the university space, of its confining qualities, but also how it is often an idealised space that promises upward social mobility. I have also presented the increasing visibility and importance of the genre beyond the Anglo-American tradition. As these variants are under-researched, minimal research has been done in looking at mobility in global campus novels. However, the university historically has been a social institution and space constantly revised by academic mobility. Peter Scott proposes that debates on academic mobility must acknowledge “[it] in the context of [...] successive waves, all with different origins but producing perhaps similar effects (at any rate, in increasing the proportion of ‘international’ staff)” (S61). This signifies that contemporary debates and portrayals of academic mobility closely mirror historical progressions.

My research is particularly interested in how movement for education has historically been implicated in conditions of conflict and power disparities. The *nahda* period in Arab literary history bears witness to the intersection between education and mobility, as enabled by contexts of conflict. The *nahda* is conceptualised as a period of literary and cultural renaissance in the Arab world, beginning roughly in the nineteenth century (Shalan 212). Although not the product of singular events, Al-Nowaihi identifies “Napoleon Bonaparte’s invasion of Egypt in 1798” (285) as a concrete starting point for the *nahda*, where

the story goes that although this French campaign lasted only three years, it shocked the Egyptians so, showing them the amazing technological and military advantage the Europeans had over them, and stimulating the impulse towards modernization initiated by Muhammad Ali, who ruled Egypt 1805-48. (285)

Under this “impulse towards modernization”, oft known as modernising missions, Muhammad Ali sought to send as many Egyptian students to France, with the supposed aim of learning and returning to Egypt with Western, or specifically French, education, in hopes of disseminating such knowledge back home. However, Silvera notes the underlying motives of these educational missions, in that “[Muhammad Ali’s] motives [...] were prompted quite plainly by the desire to bring to Egypt the practical wisdom of the French, not so much in order to regenerate his country in their image, but rather to consolidate his power by mastering their superiority in the art of war” (1). As such, the primary motive of Egyptian student mobility to the West following the events of 1798 were not so much due to the acquisition of knowledge, but rather to fulfil state-endorsed “military ambition” (Silvera 1).

In more recent periods, the interwar years present a different kind of academic mobility caused by conflict. Terri Kim pinpoints the mass expulsion of Jewish academics from Germany during the Nazi German period as “peculiar conditions of ‘brain drain’” (393). In contrast to the state-sponsored mobility of Muhammad Ali’s educational missions, these movements were “a forced choice for Jewish scholars as ‘refugees’ during the period of the Nazi regime” (Kim 393). As a result, the forced movement of numerous talented scholars under conditions of conflict led to a shift in global academic power, as Kim notes that “the Nazi influence in Europe directly and indirectly contributed to the relocation of a concentration of advanced research centres from Germany to the USA and the UK [...] to the redefinition of what were international centres of excellence” (393).

The Anglo-American tradition of the campus novel does not contend itself with historical conditions shaped by conflict. Rather, the tradition focuses largely on the

internationalisation of universities, examining how the growth of universities globally has been, and still is, dependent on the transmission of ideas and replication of models. Carter remarks that the Oxbridge novel, which had dominated variations of the genre in the Anglo-American tradition, was not globally useable, as it is “an artefact of time and place, not an eternal verity” (267), therefore preventing application beyond the UK and the USA. As aforementioned, the growth of the genre in New Zealand has closely followed the replication of the Scottish university system in the country, and Carter perceives this as an alternative to the immobility of the Oxbridge model, where “Scottish universities challenged other features of the Oxbridge model” (267). Indeed, Kim states that “transnational academic mobility followed the expansion of empires”, stemming from the influence of Oxford, Cambridge, and Scottish university models on the growth of universities in English America (389). In recent years, these forms of internationalisation have grown more prominent, moving beyond simple movement and replication of models. In particular, Scott highlights the rise of “transnational education”, “a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon”, as influencing academic mobility today (S62).

Still, further studies of academic mobility are required. In his text *Cultural Mobility*, Stephen Greenblatt puts forward “a manifesto for mobility studies”, including a list of possible items to consider for research. Amongst them, Greenblatt places as the second item on the agenda how “*mobility studies should shed light on hidden as well as conspicuous movements of peoples, objects, images, texts, and ideas*” (250; emphasis in original). This begins with analysis of hidden mobilities in “the literal sense”, to “metaphorical notions of hiddenness”, such as “unconscious, unrecognized, or deliberately distorted mobility” (Greenblatt 251). Following this, Greenblatt further calls for the studies of “cultural mechanisms through which certain forms of movement – migration, labor-market border-crossing, smuggling, and the like – are marked as ‘serious,’ while others, such as tourism, theatre festivals, and (until recently) study abroad, are rendered virtually invisible” (251).

Absence of studies into ‘study abroad’ as understood in Greenblatt’s manifesto, so long regarded as a form of mobility of lesser significance when compared to more ‘serious’ variations, shows that academic attention towards it has increased only recently. We can infer that ‘study abroad’ in Greenblatt’s arguments refer to the practice of “translocal travels[...] prevalent among youngsters who are ‘coming of age’ and for whom such practices have substituted older rites of passage as a socially sanctioned strategy toward adulthood” (Salazar “Introduction” 7). Noel Salazar identifies this form of mobility as “‘traveling to gain experience’[...] found in student exchange and study abroad programs, the gap year after

finishing studies, volunteering, and those forms of tourism that stress learning about other places and people” (“Introduction” 7). Salazar regards study abroad as a form of tourism, and thereby suggests that these “temporary and mostly circular movements” (“Introduction” 16) lack permanence, and are subject to being “fetishized, by policymakers, corporate culture, and the academic world alike” (“Introduction” 16). In other words, the lack of analytical regard for the concept of studying abroad – which leads to its “virtually invisible” status as identified by Greenblatt – depends on the fact that it is perceived as less serious in some cultures, as a variation of leisure travel or tourism, in accordance with Salazar’s analysis.

Greenblatt and Salazar’s analyses note the absence of studies into travels of students, focusing specifically on the ‘study abroad’ phenomenon. In a recent article published by Louise Morley et.al., a corresponding gap is identified in existing studies of the movements of academics, stating that “while research studies and statistical data are freely available about the flows of international students, there is far less critical attention paid to the mobility of academics” (538). Morley’s study aims to rectify this lack of attention to ‘hidden narratives of mobility’ and emphasises the absence of statistical data on the movement of academics, as well as lack of studies into the spectrum of personal experiences that result from these movements (Morley et al. 539). Prevalence of these absences are attributed to the positive benefits of academic mobility, where “social, professional and material benefits including enhanced employability, inter-cultural competencies and global citizenship” often outweigh “encounters and engagements that are often disqualified from or silenced in official policy discourses and texts” (Morley et al. 550). Of particular relevance is “the experience of ‘otherness’”, identified in the article as one of the many lesser-known narratives of academic mobility (Morley et al. 550). As noted by Greenblatt above, “cultural mechanisms” are influential in determining the significance of study abroad as a form of mobility, to an extent responsible for rendering the phenomenon absent. Similarly, in Morley, cultural encounters and experiences of ‘otherness’ are equally important as an identified “hidden narrative”, necessitating further studies into “the existence of good practices for assisting migrant academics [...] to cope with the feeling of ‘otherness’ and de-territorialisation” (550).

What I now propose for the study of campus novels is exploration of mobility as a constant force that revises the university space and the genre as a whole. Movement in campus novels are more than just travels from A to B, and have varied meanings and functions. However, there are still limitations in how movement in campus novels have been analysed and represented in existing studies thus far. There are limited permutations of how we can analyse the samples of movement and its meanings, primarily because of the geographical and

cultural limitations delineated in the previous chapter, where analyses are limited to movement between the UK and the USA, or within these two nations. As such, whilst movement often highlights the differences and relationship between these two traditions of the genre, the meanings which can be derived of these movements are exhaustible.

These limitations of studies are also due to movement in campus novels being taken as a given or occurrence. Whilst studies of the campus novel have been consistently devoted to analysing the cultural specificities of a text and its identity alignments, oftentimes these differences and interactions focus on changes in space, without much scrutiny on the process of movement, nor its meanings and functions. This means that analysis of the relationship between both nations and traditions of the genre revert from one location to another, without examining mobility as a process that enables these changes in location.

Analysing mobility in the context of non-Anglo-American academic narratives opens up these limitations in numerous ways. On one hand, it enables more stringent analysis of the embodiment of movement in these texts, focusing on why mobility occurs in campus novels, and how. It also enables us to further the significance of mobility, thus far insufficiently explored. The growing emergence of non-Anglo-American academic narratives does not permit mobility to exist only in the margins of studies of the genre, as for the genre to have undergone significant geographical and cultural changes, movement must be central in enabling these changes.

In particular, studies into mobility politics in campus novels must be conducted. This encompasses, but is not limited to: analyses of whose narratives of mobility have been excluded, of the different meanings that mobility have for different groups of people, of the “images of mobility” in non-Anglo-American texts, and how they differ, revise, or possibly even adhere to traditional images of mobility in campus novels – ultimately considering the contribution of these analyses to existing studies and debates on academic mobilities, both in literature and in the world today.

The notion of ‘mobility’ used in this thesis has been loosely informed by concepts in studies of cultural geography. Tim Cresswell purports the significance of examining meanings of movement, as “movement is rarely just movement; it carries with it the burden of meaning and it is meaning that remains absent from accounts of mobility in general, and because it remains absent, important connections are not made” (*On the Move* 7). For Cresswell, mobility is “socially produced motion” (*On the Move* 7), “a thoroughly social facet of life imbued with meaning and power, [and] is composed of elements of social time and social space” (*On the Move* 4). This correlates with the aims of my research, in pushing at the borders of existing

conceptualisations of the university in literature as a spatially stagnant social institution, to a space implicated by the chaos of continuous movement. This method of breaking down is particularly relevant for my research, as it creates tangible and measurable components for ease of standardised comparison between texts. Firstly, mobility is based on “movement”, or the “simple geographical displacement from one point to another” (Cresswell, “Mobility”). This is the most rudimentary aspect of mobility, where movement is most tangible and quantifiable, and often the favoured method of statistical and geographical research on mobility (Cresswell, “Mobility”). But more relevant to my research are the two other aspects of which mobility is comprised of. While movement is the starting point in examining mobility, articulating “meaning” of movement further adds dimension to understanding the act of displacement (Cresswell, “Mobility”). These meanings are not limited to what specific movements mean to those experiencing them, but also to the meaning given to movement as perceived by others (Cresswell, “Mobility”). As such, the meaning of movement plays an important part in determining the “experience” of movement, which is the third aspect that needs to be considered when analysing mobility. Cresswell notes that “how we experience movement” is often influenced, or as informed, by established meanings of movement (Cresswell, “Mobility”). This means that the experience of movement is rarely in a vacuum, greatly influenced but also at times in conflict with prior meanings of movement.

In arguing that academic mobilities are shaped by conditions of privilege as well as conflict, I have further utilised Cresswell’s concepts in “Towards a Politics of Mobility” (2010), as a framework and mode of reading academic mobilities in selected primary texts. Cresswell’s arguments are in response to ‘the new mobilities paradigm’ heralded by theorists in the field of cultural geographies, particularly since the year 2006 (“Towards” 17). Of particular relevance to my research is Cresswell’s articulation of ‘the politics of mobility’. According to Cresswell, “mobility is a resource that is differentially accessed”, where “speeds, slowness, and immobilities are all related in ways that are thoroughly infused with power and its distribution” (“Towards” 21). Taking the example of the mobile practice of walking, Cresswell establishes three principal aspects observed in “all forms of mobility”: “they have a physical reality, they are encoded culturally and socially, and they are experienced through practice” (“Towards” 20). Cresswell then notes that “these forms of mobility (walking, driving, etc) and these aspects of mobilities (movement, representation, and practice) are political – they are implicated in the production of power and relations of domination” (“Towards” 20). The compartmentalisation of various aspects of mobilities enables a systematic approach for mobility studies, particularly relevant for studies in cultural geographies. However, Cresswell

contends that the aim of his studies is “the development of a geographical understanding of mobility that can in turn inform theorisations of gender, ethnicity, or any other form of social relation” (“Towards” 21). As evident in the samples of academic mobility presented so far, movement is necessary as a mode of understanding intercultural encounters and cross-border relationships. Thus, Cresswell’s theorisations can act as a guiding framework for analysis of academic mobilities in this thesis, through its systematic division of various aspects that constitute movements. Furthermore, Cresswell’s identification of the power relations affecting mobilities concur with my observations, that at the heart of academic mobilities is an inherent problematic of power relations and enforcement of hierarchies.

In analysing these politics of mobility, Cresswell proposes a method of dividing them into “six of its constituent parts”: “motive force, velocity, rhythm, route, experience, and friction” (“Towards”17). Of these six aspects, three are particularly relevant, and will be used as methods in the upcoming discussion chapters of this thesis. Firstly, the component “motive force” refers to reasons for movement. According to Cresswell, it is important to begin with considerations of motive for mobility, as “an object has to have a force applied to it before it can move. With humans, this force is complicated by the fact that it can be internal as well as external” (“Towards” 22). Following analysis of reasons for mobility in campus novels, we can then consider the varied “experiences”, examining the emotions and feelings evoked by the practice of movement. Cresswell asserts that “human mobility, like place, surely has the notion of experience at its centre” (“Towards” 25). Indeed, examination of the narrative that follows movement and arrival to (or from) the university provides ample data for comparison and discussion. Finally, much can be gleaned of final movements, or the possible reasons and ways in which mobility eventually ends. Cresswell proposes examination of “friction” as the final significant aspect of mobility politics. An important question that must end considerations of mobility politics is this: “is stopping a choice, or is it forced?” (Cresswell, “Towards” 26).

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of the global variants of the campus novel, arguing that there is vast scope beyond the Anglo-American tradition that remains unexplored. I have also examined Dimock’s notion of examining distinct variants of a particular body of work through ‘semblances’, as framework for comparing and considering kinship between the established Anglo-American tradition and those beyond it. Finally, I have proposed the study of mobility as units of comparison that act as connective threads, between the numerous variants of the genre. In the following chapters, I will begin my analysis of selected non-Anglo-American primary texts, examining portrayals and politics of mobility in these texts, in addition to considering their relationship to the Anglo-American tradition.

Chapter 3 | Perilous Journeys: Academic Mobility as Escape in Alaa Al-Aswany's *Chicago* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

3.1. Introduction

This chapter compares dominant critical studies on geographical and corporeal mobility in campus novels, with portrayals and interpretations of mobility in other cultures and locations. I begin by presenting existing studies of international travel in campus novels, which are predominantly based on the study of David Lodge's *Small World* (1984). I argue that existing studies posit academic mobility as an experience of pleasure, to an extent a form of tourism. However, missing from these studies are portrayals of geographical and corporeal mobility in academic narratives beyond the dominant Anglo-American canon. I propose the study of movement in two selected texts, examining *Chicago* (2007) by Alaa Al-Aswany, and *Crescent* (2003) by Diana Abu Jaber. Both texts extensively portray university settings and are focused on academic characters. However, only *Chicago* has been previously studied as a campus novel, and despite the prominence of the university in *Crescent*, the novel has yet to be considered in studies of the genre. In these two texts, I observe the portrayal of academic travels as consistently denoting experiences of academic exile and escape. I compare these contrasting motives and experiences of academic travel through considerations of sociocultural conditions. I ultimately contend that the study of alternative perspectives of academic mobility in *Chicago* and *Crescent* enables revisions to existing studies, particularly changes to methods and canon of campus novels.

3.2. The Itinerant Academic in David Lodge's *Small World*

“When I started thinking about [*Small World*], I wanted to deal with the phenomenon of global academic travel”, remarks David Lodge when interviewed about said novel in 1999 (Lodge, “Interview”). Indeed, whilst numerous texts have portrayed academic travel to varying degrees, nowhere is travel more prominent than in *Small World*, published in 1984. Existing studies of mobility in campus novels consistently use the novel as a starting point and template for analysing academic travel. Academic travel is a significant trope explored in Lodge's work, evident in earlier works such as *Changing Places* (1975), which centred on the physical

movement enabled by academic exchanges, and comic exchanges resultant of the intertwined lives of its characters. *Small World* furthers the portrayal of academic travel, by focusing on the global movement of characters, primarily for attending academic conferences, alongside sub-plots of variants of academic journeys.

I posit the study of *Small World* as an important starting point for studying academic mobility in campus novels. This is because travel as exemplified in the novel has been used as the template, in the few critical studies which have been conducted on mobility and the campus novel. My focus on the novel is on the portrayal of motives and experiences of travel, as well as meanings that can be derived from the various sub-narratives of academic travel in the text.

Small World is structured by an established mobility framework, as Lodge asserts that his exploration of academic travel is framed by the Arthurian quest narrative. Lodge explains his narrative choice by correlating the “extraordinarily mobile” trait of the Grail quest to “the modern world with its Round Table of professors: the elite group who get invited to conferences, who go around the world in pursuit of glory” (Lodge, “Interview”). In addition, Lodge also uses the structure of Arthurian romances as a narrative framework, in pushing the boundaries of the mobility narrative. By being conceived as an academic romance, *Small World* is able to pursue “coincidences and twists” in its narrative, to give a sense of the constantly mobile world of academic conferences and scholarship, but also to rationalise otherwise inconceivable journeys and encounters in the novel (Lodge, “Interview”).

Considerable amount of research has been done on the portrayal of academic travel through conferences in the novel. For Shailesh Singh, academic conferences in *Small World* divides the quest narrative two-fold: firstly, through the pursuit of academic glory as highlighted by Thompson, as well as an underlying “individual quest” (118). Singh observes that “the conferees are all pilgrims or questers [...] all are in quest of something” (118). This line of questioning is echoed by John Fawell, as he posits the central question of the novel: “what is it that the scholar is looking for at the conference?” (184). Both Singh and Fawell concur that despite its designations as quest narratives, academic conferences in the novel do not end through attainment of academic glory or resolutions. Instead, academic conferences are markedly *unacademic*, as Singh remarks that “international conference hoppers are shown as generally intent on everything but scholarly concerns” (121). “In his narration,” Fawell equally asserts, “Lodge suggests that the purpose of conferences is not the program of papers and lectures [...] but the informal contact that surrounds these lectures” (192). Fawell further reasons this portrayal of academic travel as unresolved quest narratives as revealing Lodge’s intentions of documenting for comic pleasure and nothing more, “[sitting] back and [watching]

the jet streams criss-cross in the sky, to see the lines of each ridiculous school of literary theory crossing each other across the globe” (194).

A notable achievement of the novel, where academic mobility is concerned, is in its signalling of a mobility turn for the academic world. Through the character Morris Zapp, the university is depicted as undergoing a significant change from being an immobile sphere, to an age of hyper-connectedness enabled by mobility, where “the day of the individual campus has passed” (*Small World* 271)². Lodge conceptualises this mobility turn as the advent of ‘the global campus’. The term first appears in the text as the character Morris Zapp ruminates on the intersection of academia and air travel: “I kept getting invitations to Jane Austen centenary conferences in the most improbable places – Poznan, Delhi, Lagos, Honolulu – and half the speakers turned out to be guys I knew in graduate school. The world is a global campus” (293). Zapp’s remarks highlights the scale of academic travel, but also shows contemporary awareness of academia becoming hyper-connected through air travel. In a later scene, the age of the global campus is further elucidated through advent of modern technology, in addition to increased air travel:

[...] information is much more portable in the modern world than it used to be. So are people. *Ergo*, it’s no longer necessary to hoard your information in one building, or keep your top scholars corralled in one campus. There are three things which have revolutionized academic life in the last twenty years, though very few people have woken up to the fact: jet travel, direct-dialling telephones and the Xerox machine. Scholars don’t have to work in the same institution to interact, nowadays: they call each other up, or they meet at international conferences. (271)

The advent of the global campus age signals further changes affecting the campus novel genre. The growing magnitude of academic travel in *Small World* therefore departs from the geographic rootedness delineated in previous chapters of my thesis. Brândușa Prepelîță-Răileanu reads the concept of the global campus as moving beyond perceptions of the university as an insulated space. In the study, the global campus is posited in contrast to “the image [of the university as] a narrow and confined world” (Prepelîță-Răileanu 210). This is further perceived as a progressive shift, as “the most interesting aspects of the self/other dialogue in the campus novels may be found where the academic community and the world outside connect, on the border where attitudes converge or clash” (Prepelîță-Răileanu 210).

² In this section, citations refer to David Lodge’s *Small World* (in *A David Lodge Trilogy: Changing Places, Small World, Nice Work*, 1993) unless otherwise noted.

It is evident that the global campus concept signifies a mobility turn on multiple levels – firstly within the text, of increasing mobile practices of academic characters unconstrained by location and means. Additionally, it also shows the gradual end of insularity which has thus far been characteristic of the campus novel genre, of a novelistic setting that is detached from the world beyond it. However, to what extent is this purported global mobility a universal shift? That is, is access to unconstrained mobility a universal experience, both within academic strata, and further across sociocultural contexts? My analysis of images of academic travel in *Small World* examines limitations to the notion of accessible mobility advocated by studies of the novel.

Several critics have pointed out the limitations of this proposal of genre globality through mobility and move beyond insularity. Jeffrey Williams observes *Small World* as marking the shift from the isolated campus novel to a more porous and purportedly accessible world (565). However, Williams highlights that accessibility is a façade, as it continues to be limited to the academic populace. Designations of “an international range” are merely superficial, as it is still “an intra-academic world, that only makes contact with the larger world in airports” (Williams 566). Further limiting aspects of accessibility is the very notion of academic hierarchies. As mentioned previously, Lodge asserts that the framing of academic travel as quest narratives is designed to explore “the modern world with its Round Table of professors: the elite group who get invited to conferences, who go around the world in pursuit of glory” (Lodge, “Interview”). Fawell further asserts this, observing that *Small World* portrays “the social hierarchy of conferences” (192), existing as a space where academic hierarchies can be levelled and “scholars try to break into the conversation of their superiors” (193).

However, the link between academic mobility and hierarchy also reveals hidden immobility, where academic travel is an inaccessible privilege. Critics have observed disparities in motives and experiences of travel, highlighting degree of mobility as both exposing, and enforcing academic hierarchies. Terry Caesar observes that the ability to travel is a privilege intricately linked to academic status. In a 1999 article “Flying High and Flying Low: Travel, Sabbaticals and Privilege in Academic Life”, Caesar argues that travel is an action contingent on the hierarchies of academic characters. At the top of the hierarchy are “the high-flyers”, a group denoting esteemed academics whose lives are in a permanently mobile state, constantly travelling for research and academic engagements (Caesar, “Flying High” 446). Collated against this select group are all other academics – primarily immobile but with the option of becoming mobile when finally given the opportunity to travel, especially through sabbatical leaves (Caesar, “Flying High” 453). For Caesar, academic travels are infused with a

sense of prestige, where “it is important that [academic] travel be situated as something rare [...] otherwise, travel would have no prestige, or rather, would lack the basis upon which prestige can be constructed” (Caesar, “Flying High” 458). It is this sense of prestige attached to travel that further enforces the hierarchies of academic status, where Caesar summarises the underlying disparities of academic travel as such: “each figure is free to travel, albeit unequally so” (Caesar, “Flying High” 452).

Wojciech Klepuszewski in 2016 uses Caesar’s framework of travel as privilege, in examining how academic travel exposes hierarchies in Lodge’s ‘The Campus Trilogy’. Klepuszewski’s conceptualisation of academic travel as “pseudo-academic tourism” (90) is significant. It signals luxury and privilege as characteristics of these movements, “with some academics ‘for ever swanning around the globe’” (*Nice Work*, 63), particularly if it involves exotic venues and lavish conference programmes” (Klepuszewski 90). Klepuszewski argues that the envious responses of comparatively static characters reveal discrepancies of unequal access to travel (90). This thus highlights the divide between those with access to luxuries and opportunity to travel, with those who do not (Klepuszewski 90).

I further these identified limitations by expanding on images of hidden immobilities in the novel. As above, I contend that a necessary gap to address is the varying politics and access to mobility, and how academic mobility reveals hierarchies in campus novels. If degree of mobility denotes the ranking of a particular academic character, then portrayals of immobile characters are further significant markers to explore. This is particularly evident through analysing sub-narratives of immobility in the text. Several sub-narratives are characterised by constant longing for mobility. The character Akbil Borak is a Turkish academic, who is depicted as static and nostalgic for his previous life of mobility, having studied in the northern English city of Hull. Navigating his present life in Turkey, the narrative describes the following scene: “this past winter – it had been a harsh one, made all the worse by the shortages of oil, food and electricity – [Akbil] and Oya had huddled together round a small wood-burning stove and warmed themselves with the shared memories of Hull” (*Small World* 330). Consistently throughout the text, Akbil longs for mobility.

Elsewhere, mobility is attainable only through language, evident in the sub-narrative of the character Akira Sakazaki. Sakazaki is a Japanese university professor, devoted to translating the works of the obsolete British novelist Ronald Frobisher. Despite his academic conscientiousness and constant communication with the indifferent novelist, Sakazaki remains immobile, rooted in his location of Tokyo throughout the text. His sole global encounter is of a chance meeting with the character Persse McGarrigle (531), and their interaction and shared

knowledge of Frobisher enables Sakazaki to conjure an image of the writer. Thus globality is only possible for Sakazaki through language - yet this is a limited form of globality, due to his unchanging state of immobility. Finally, for some characters and sub-narratives, travel is a form of regression. The character Song-Mi, a South Korean graduate student based in the United States, is an example of a mobile foreign body in the text. Song-Mi's experience of mobility is singular, portrayed in the text through her return home. However, this journey is presented as an involuntary movement, as she notes that the act of returning is often to a life of limitations and social constraints (534). In a text defined by movement, the immobility and stasis of the above sub-narratives are conspicuous. It is also further jarring that these are all narratives of the foreign in the novel. There is, of course, a danger of essentializing to say that immobility is a trait only confined to the foreign in the text. However, the treatment of the foreign can be argued through the satiric function of the genre, where experiences of travel are too subjected to satire. Thus the portrayal of the foreign, and their experiences or approaches to mobility, are further examples of this narrative choice.

Yet critics attest to the national and cultural disparities evident in campus novels. Despite the novel's attestations to globality – through travel and as furthered by its representation of academic characters from various cultures and locations – there is a constant sense of prioritising Anglo-American narratives. This results in an imbalance, where academic travel as experienced by other nationalities are either lesser portrayed or even absent, thus relegated to the margins of the text. I perceive this as a gap that is in line with the central problem of the genre, in its marginalisation of narratives of the foreign, as influenced by cross-cultural competitiveness.

Jelena Borojević observes the cross-cultural encounters enabled by travel in the novel, where academic conferences symbolise ease of movement and communication. Borojević notes that the movement necessary for attending such conferences correspond to Bakhtin's "chronotope of the road", which in this particular text "has conferences as a destination point" (46). In the same way that "the chronotope of the road is also associated with the motif of encounters", Borojević asserts that "literary conferences in *Small World* are the ultimate crossroads for such events" (47). Travel therefore enables encounters within the space of conferences in this text, with focus placed on cross-cultural encounters. However, Borojević further observes the tension surrounding these encounters. For Borojević, "all cultures naturally attempt to assert their supremacy over others, and each one considers itself better than the rest. David Lodge's entire campus trilogy focuses on the effect of cultures on one another, and what happens when scholars from all over the world are present in the same space" (51). Echoing

the critique of limitations above, Borojević thus points out that tension in *Small World* results from struggles for academic dominance amplified by contact, and as enabled by movement. This means that *Small World* reveals underlying mobility politics, where travels constitute the mechanism influencing power relations and shifts in hierarchies, particularly across cultures.

It is therefore evident that there are dispersed hidden narratives in the margins of both Lodge's novel and the existing critical tradition. These unexplored narratives contradict purported depictions of academic travel as enabling a mobility and global turn for the genre. *Small World* has provided us with glimpses into these alternative portrayals. However, further investigation of these hidden narratives can be done through examining academic mobility through the lens of the previously 'foreign', through primary texts beyond the existing Anglo-American corpus. In achieving this, I will be examining the multiple narratives of mobility in Alaa Al-Aswany's 2007 campus novel *Chicago*, and *Crescent* (2003) by Diana Abu Jaber.

3.3. “You’ve left your poor, miserable country”: Exiles, Émigrés, Expatriates in Alaa Al-Aswany’s *Chicago*³

Alaa Al-Aswany's acclaimed novel *The Yacoubian Building* (2002) is often studied for its microcosmic portrayal of Egypt, through characters living in a building in Cairo known as 'The Yacoubian Building' (Larsson 94). In 2007, Al-Aswany wrote *Chicago*, a similarly microcosmic novel focusing on the lives of university characters. The novel explores the lives of Egyptian academic characters concentrated professionally within the Department of Histology at the University of Illinois Medical School. It signals surface departure from *The Yacoubian Building*, as it is set in the American city of Chicago instead of Egypt. However, it follows similar functions as *The Yacoubian Building*, particularly in its utilisation of enclosed settings as miniature representatives of greater environs, such as the nation. According to Ed King, both novels are parallel in their intersections of political and personal plots, as "*Chicago* has the same operatic structure and broad canvas as *The Yacoubian Building*" (King). Alaa Al-Aswany recounts the novel as a product of his three-year residence in Chicago, studying for a graduate degree at the University of Illinois (Mishra 46). The novel is therefore consciously marketed as a campus novel, inspired by the author's encounters with academic figures abroad (Mishra 46).

³ In this section, citations refer to Alaa Al-Aswany's *Chicago* (translated into English by Farouk Abdel Wahab, 2009) unless otherwise noted.

Ashraf Ibrahim Zidan's analysis of *Spectres* earlier uses the label "Egyptian campus novel", based on its primary setting in Egypt, focalisation through Egyptian characters, and preoccupations with Egyptian socio-political issues (70). Whilst *Chicago* is acknowledged as a 'campus novel', its cultural and national identity are much more complex. Al-Aswany contends that the novel both portrays and addresses various cultural settings. According to Mishra, Al-Aswany is "curious to see how an Arab novelist writing about America is received by Americans" (47). Mishra asserts that Al-Aswany's writing of America "promise[s] the bracing perspective of an outsider" (47). Yet Ligaya Mishan perceives this as an unfulfilled endeavour, noting the strained writing of American speech, both in the Arabic and translated English version (Mishan). In fact, the novel grows to become a narrative on Egyptian socio-political and national issues, with America only as foreign setting, "an exotic backdrop" according to Mishan, "alien and menacing to the Egyptian characters who have journeyed there" (Mishan).

I propose further examination of *Chicago*, considering the campus novel framework and its contribution to the evidence gap of narratives focalised through voices previously marked as foreign. My analysis focuses on the multiple narratives of mobility in *Chicago*, specifically examining motives and experiences of mobility. I consider the significance of the campus novel framework in shaping images of mobility in the novel, where the immigrant narratives become further narrowed as forms of academic mobility or travel. My findings further consider the depiction of academic travel as necessitated by forced departures and escape, leading to further investigations into the rationale of these portrayals. My examination of the novel begins with the following guiding questions: how is mobility portrayed in the novel, and what were the motives behind these narratives of travel? Uniformly, the novel portrays narratives of movement of characters, from various locations in Egypt, to the city of Chicago. These movements are undergone by Egyptian characters travelling for university education. The novel thus narrates the experiences of a specific cultural and professional group, of a particular form of movement that can be further conceptualised as 'academic mobility'.

The novel begins with considerations into the meanings and motives of academic mobility. The opening conflict of the novel queries the arrival of an Egyptian student to America; more specifically, the Histology department of the University of Illinois in Chicago. In a particular scene, senior members of the department convene to discuss his admission, as they consider his motives for travel. In this meeting of American and immigrant Egyptian academics, the student Nagi is perceived as "the student [who] was denied a job at Cairo University for political reasons", escaping persecution in Egypt due to his political activism

(16). Nagi's motive for travel is seen as professionally beneficial, as "obtaining an MS [in America] would strengthen his position in his lawsuit against Cairo University" (16). Travel is therefore necessary for Nagi, as both his personal and professional lives are under duress in Egypt. Christine Brooke-Rose asserts that acts of "involuntary exile" are "usually political or punitive [...] and these can be further divided into those exiled for their books or their behaviour [...] and those who as private persons fled from political conditions or war" (11). It can therefore be argued that Nagi's travels to study in Chicago is a further subset of mobility known as 'academic exile', evident from his flight from persecution in Egypt.

Nagi's motives are immediately discredited, significantly by an Egyptian member of the panel, Ra'fat Thabit. For Ra'fat, Nagi's motives are suspect, and he accuses Nagi of manipulating his qualifications in the future. Ra'fat argues that this is a customary practice for Egyptian academics, and "having [himself] been an Egyptian at one time, [he knows] very well how Egyptians think. They don't learn for the sake of learning [...]" (16). These doubts are evidently problematic essentialization, particularly as voiced by a character who has consciously rejected his connections to the Egyptian identity. Interestingly, Nagi eventually presents contradicting motives to his purported narrative of academic exile. Nagi plans his journey as follows: "to get a masters from Illinois to work for a few years in an Arab Gulf country and save some money, then go back to Egypt and devote [himself] to literature" (97). This projected itinerary is significant, as it contradicts the narrative of exile conjectured by the panel, of his professional survival and political retaliation.

Nagi's narrative of academic exile is particularly challenged by the possibility of return. Edward Said in "Reflections on Exile" elucidates the various categories of mobile bodies which can be mistakenly collated under the term 'figure of the exile'. According to Said, "although it is true that anyone prevented from returning home is an exile, some distinctions can be made between exiles, refugees, expatriates and émigrés" ("Reflections" 144). A definitive aspect that qualifies one as an exile is the notion of "banishment", where "once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider" (Said, "Reflections" 144). Nagi's banishment and inability to sustain his life in Egypt might begin as a narrative of exile – yet it gradually develops to merge with the narrative of an émigré. These two mobile bodies are separated by the notion of choice, as Said notes that "émigrés enjoy an ambiguous status. Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new country. Choice in the matter is certainly a possibility" ("Reflections" 144). Nagi's mobility narrative thus reveals contradictory motives and meanings, as evident from his multiple choices of travels and locations, as well as the possibility of returning home.

Analysis of the character Karam Doss and his narrative of mobility reveals similarly conflicting accounts of academic travel as exile. Nagi is introduced to Karam by the character John Graham, who infers both characters as having similar cultural identities, predicaments, and trajectories – as academics in exile (117). This is ostensibly true, as Karam is a graduate of the Ayn Shams Medical School in Egypt, who has “fled to America to escape persecution” (118). Karam asserts that his motive for travel is in escaping religious prejudice in Egyptian universities, where his identity as Coptic Egyptian had prevented him from obtaining a medical degree (118).

However, it becomes evident that the notion of exile continues to become contentious, as Nagi and Karam refute one another’s claims. Nagi rejects any parallels between their motives for moving to America from Egypt. For Nagi, Karam’s permanent move to America is a form of abandonment of the nation, rather than escaping persecution. He argues

[...] you’ve left your poor, miserable country for your comfortable life in America [...] Egypt gave you this education so that one day you’d be useful to it. But you turned your back on the Egyptian patients who needed you. You left them to die over there and come here to work for the Americans, who don’t need you. (121)

Nagi’s opinion is informed by observing Karam’s life in America, as he highlights Karam’s acclaimed reputation and lavish lifestyle (117). Nagi perceives Karam as a traitor, taking into account his settled life in America and refusal to return to Egypt. In contrast, Nagi posits his travels as the journey of a persecuted hero figure. Nagi’s perspectives are perhaps influenced by his inherent prejudice of their differing identities, where Nagi catalogues Karam through stereotypes of Coptic Egyptians (117). As mentioned earlier, the meeting of the two characters was arranged by John Graham, who represents the local person in this setting. In drawing superficial parallels between these two characters, John Graham’s local gaze neglects their differences, causing eventual conflict. This thus highlights the significance of varying focalisers, in determining motives and meanings of movement.

Karam is equally critical of Nagi’s self-acclaimed narrative of persecution and exile. He points out Nagi’s disregard of his experiences of persecution as internalised nationalist tendencies, “following the well-known Egyptian practice of denying the truth” (120). From Karam’s perspective, Nagi’s proclaimed narrative of academic exile is flawed, as Nagi continues to espouse national ideologies. Nagi’s internalisation of nationalist ideologies perhaps reveals a common trait of experiences of exile, as Said conceptualises nationalistic attachment as “the defensive nationalism of exiles” (“Reflections” 146). Such sensibilities are

attributed to the “isolation and detachment” caused by exile, which in turn leads to “the pressure on the exile to join – parties, national movements, the state” (Said, “Reflections” 146). However, it further separates Nagi’s mobility narrative from Karam’s own experiences. Whilst Karam does not reject Egypt as his space of home, he is able to identify problematic residual allegiances to the homeland.

Contrasting perspectives of academic mobility as exile can be further explained through differences in socioeconomic status whilst abroad. Detached from Egypt, Karam has acculturated and is settling comfortably in America. This diminishes his claim of exile, as Nagi perceives Karam as lacking the struggles and desolation of exile. In contrast, Nagi’s recent escape from Egypt leaves him devoid of acquaintances and academic achievements – factors which have enabled Karam’s comfortable life in America. Nagi is thus dependent on ideas of home left behind, as remnants of the last familiar space for him. Through observing these extensive contradictory narratives of academic exile, I contend that the novel posits contested motives and experiences of mobility.

Against Karam and Nagi’s claims of heroic exile, other characters assert their mobility as narratives of voluntary migration. Ra’fat Thabit is a senior academic characterised through his rejection of the Egyptian identity, and total appropriation of American mannerisms and lifestyle. Ra’fat’s conscious divergences, both from narratives of academic exile and the Egyptian identity, are based on his motives of travel, where “[his] negative view of the Egyptians is in line with Ra’fat’s own history. He emigrated from Egypt to the States in the early 1960s after Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the glass factories owned by his father” (28). Initially, Ra’fat’s escape from government oppression resembles the forced departures of Nagi and Karam, thus putting his narrative alongside other narratives of exile. However, his refusal to be associated with Egypt and voluntary departure from home alters his mobility as narratives of the expatriate. Said outlines the expatriate as those who “voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal or social reasons [...] expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions” (“Reflections”144). As Ra’fat’s travels from Egypt are devoid from “rigid proscriptions”, where he relishes his present life as an academic in America, his experiences therefore set him as an expatriate rather than an exile.

In contrast with Karam and Nagi’s consistently troubled movements, the tensions of Ra’fat’s travels are belated, emerging long after his initial travels to America. Ra’fat continuously rejects any associations to Egypt, glorying in “the image that he loved of himself: to be a complete genuine American, pure and without blemish” (29). However, the novel

gradually reveals that Ra'fat harbours within him desires for the conventions and rules of home. As observed by another character in the text, "Ra'fat despises his culture and yet carries it within him at the same time, which complicates matters" (55). This manifests in his violent reaction towards his daughter's transgressive behaviours, perceived as symptomatic of her upbringing in America (166). Ra'fat's reactions hinge on the supposed distinction in cultural values, between himself and both his American wife and daughter, as he accuses them of having "done everything to prove to [him] that [he] was just a backward Egyptian whereas you were created from a superior race" (100). The belated emergence of these accusatory claims shows how meanings of mobility remain contentious, even for characters who have proclaimed fluid motives and experiences of travel. Brooke-Rose highlights that the distinction of choice can also be perceived as samples of narratives of exile, signalling to the notion of "voluntary exile, usually called expatriation, itself for many more personal reasons: social, economic, sexual [...] or simple preference" (11). Ra'fat's mobility begins as a narrative of expatriation, as exemplified by his constant rejection of home. Yet the belated sense of alienation signals underlying parallels to the persistent liminality of the exile.

Thus far, contradictory perceptions of movements affirm that these multiple sub-plots do not conform to set meanings of mobility. Against these studies of motives and contradictions, the novel further presents mobility as narrated by a female voice. This is salient in a text that predominantly focuses on the viewpoint of male characters. Shaymaa Muhammadi is a female student from Egypt based in the same academic setting, whose motive for travel is the pursuit of education enabled by academic capabilities. Shaymaa is consistently defined by her academic merits and mobility, as "one of the most accomplished and highest ranked graduates in the Tanta College of Medicine [in Egypt] [...] the education and upbringing that Shaymaa received played a role in her accepting the challenge and scholarship in America" (7). Indeed, in all the examples of academic travel explored thus far, academic rigour is posited as a necessary condition for mobility.

Further resembling the samples above, Shaymaa's journey from Egypt to America contains underlying motives beyond academic pursuits. The narrative observes that "the third and most important reason [for her travels is that] Shaymaa is over thirty, still unmarried because her position as instructor in the College of Medicine has greatly reduced her chances, since Eastern man usually prefer their wives be less educated than they" (7). Shaymaa's consistent depiction as an academically successful woman evidently opposes this putative image of the ideal woman. It is therefore implied that the space of home, of Egypt, is unaccommodating towards women who do not conform to such ideals. Her choice of travelling

to America is therefore detrimental as it further dissociates her from the norms of home. At her departure, her mother imparts a final warning: “remember that by traveling you lose any chance of getting married” (8) – a clear threat that mobility will sever her from the ideals of home. However, Shaymaa also perceives academic travel as a form of liberation, where “as soon as the plane took off she thought to herself that only at that moment was she turning over a new leaf and leaving behind the thirty-three years she’d lived in Tanta” (8). Shaymaa’s mobility narrative therefore encompasses manifold contradictions, where initially it appears as unproblematic academic travel based on the pursuit of university education. However, it is also a narrative of forced departures; a form of escape from limiting sociocultural regulations that she could not adhere to.

Despite conflicting perspectives of academic travel, it can be argued that the examples above uniformly portray academic travel as a necessary form of escape. However, I further argue that there are limitations to this premise. If the study of motives explores the beginning of itineraries, then the study of experiences and friction enable us to examine gradual progress and end. Through analysis of friction, of how mobility ends, I have observed that each of the above narratives of academic travel are determined by tragic endings. I interpret these endings as the collapse of premise of academic travel established in this novel, ultimately showing the failure of their narratives of escape.

Tragic Endings and Failed Escapes

As explored thus far, the central premise of mobility in the novel is that academic identities have enabled the mobility of characters, as well as their subsequent survival in foreign spaces. Travel is motivated by escape from home, and the academic identity of these characters is significant in sustaining their lives abroad. The academic setting and characterisation are thus significant in distinguishing these characters from other types of mobile bodies, particularly through the purported stability of their lives abroad. For example, Salah uses his qualifications as a doctor to rationalise his decision in leaving Egypt, presuming there are ample work opportunities for him in America (85). Karam Doss lives a life of luxury in America, “extremely well-dressed” in designer clothing (117) and driving a red Jaguar (153) – “[making] good money” as a heart surgeon in Chicago (153). Ra’fat is also described as having a financially stable family life in America (30). These images of sustainability indicate the financial stability ensured by their professions, thus enabling them to settle in America

comfortably. Unlike other mobile bodies, academic exiles and migrants differ in the sustainability assured by their professions, and relative ease of traversing national borders.

However, does this premise really hold? I further argue that the motives of escape and survival, which permeate the multiple narratives of academic mobility, gradually collapses over the course of the novel. This finding is derived from examining subsequent components of their mobility, particularly their experiences of mobility, and finally friction which causes the end of their movement.

From the outset, the city of Chicago is structured as a space that facilitates escape. Shaymaa perceives the city as welcomed change, revelling in her departure, “turning over a new leaf and leaving behind the thirty-three years she’d lived in Tanta” (8). Alternatively, Nagi is initially hesitant, seeing Chicago as an extension of America and its geopolitical conflicts with the Muslim world (36). However, Nagi gradually embraces the freedom afforded by this new space. On his first night in Chicago, he begins an affair with an escort, revealing amazement that such acts are permitted and relishing departure from constraints of home (41). Through these multiple examples, Chicago is posited as a space that accommodates the arrival of these characters.

However, experiences of travel present contrasting images of a hostile space. Hostility begins upon arrival, evident through analysis of airport scenes in the novel. Airports act as a threshold space where gatekeeping occurs. Narrating her arrival in Chicago, Shaymaa recalls a feeling of rejection that never left her after she landed at O’Hare Airport. The security officer was suspicious of her and made her wait out of the line, then fingerprinted and began to interrogate her, fixing her with an untrusting gaze [...] But the scholarship papers she carried, her extremely pale face [...] all dispelled her suspicions, and he dismissed her with a wave of his hand. [...] The hostile reception made her somewhat dejected. (9)

In another example, Nagi experiences similar hostility upon arrival, as he recounts: “I arrived this morning in Chicago. I got off the plane and stood in a long line until I got to the passport officer, who examined my papers twice and asked me several questions with a suspicious and hate-filled look on his face before he stamped my passport and let me in” (37). The airport is thus posited as a hostile space, where their experiences are marked by apprehension and of being scrutinised upon entry. Shaymaa recognises the significance of “the scholarship papers she carried” (9), as signifiers of her academic identity and thus enabling her entry into America. Through these encounters, academic identities are evidently significant as a form of permit,

which characters utilise to assert their right to international travel. It does not, however, prevent their travel experiences from animosity.

Shaymaa's experiences of the foreign space are further characterised by alienation and incompatibility. One such example is Shaymaa's practice of cooking familiar dishes from home whilst within her private domestic space in Chicago, "enacting a purely Egyptian scene" (26). However, this action results in a minor fire incident, as a fireman reprimands her: "'Listen, my friend, I don't know what kind of food you eat in your country but I advise you to change your favourite dish because it almost burned down the building'" (26). The above scene illustrates Shaymaa's attempts at diminishing her alienation, by replicating home in America through domestic actions. However, the negative consequences that follow highlights the failure of these attempts, as her actions are incompatible with the foreign space and received with hostility. The "food [she eats] in [her] country" nearly destroys her domestic space in America, and whilst perhaps an innocuous remark, this comment is also tinged with hostility. Home, as understood by Shaymaa, is in contrast with designations of home in this foreign location.

Despite epitomising authority within private spaces, the physical appearance of the character Ahmad Danana jars conspicuously when set against the backdrop of public spaces around the city. In one such scene, Danana is described as follows: "In the midst of [a] purely American scene, Dr. Ahmad Danana looked totally out of place, as if he were a genie that had just come out of an enchanted bottle" (44). The omniscient narration visualises Danana through the perspective of the local, and it is evident that Danana is perceived as a non-normative figure, conjuring stereotypical images of the fantastical Middle East. This suggests incompatibility between these mobile bodies and new foreign spaces, where glimpses of public appearances reveal hostile reactions towards these characters. Thus the notion that both the academic setting and foreign space are able to provide refuge collapses.

A final evidence of the limitations of academic mobility is the tragic endings given to narratives of escape and departure. This is achieved by designating each subplot with the overarching conflict, of negotiating between their escape and life in America, with the regulations internalised and as set at home in Egypt. As these characters refuse to conform to the conventions of home, their journeys gradually end with punishments in the form of tragic endings, as a way of stabilising the conventions ruptured by their mobility and relocation to America. I interpret these endings as signifying the failure of escape through academic mobility. Essentially, the tragic endings of each sub-narrative disprove the notion that academic mobility enables escape from the purported oppression of home.

This finding is most palpable in Nagi's mobility narrative and ending. Nagi perceives his travels as enabling departure from home, to the purported freedom and sanctuary of Chicago. As such, Nagi participates in acts that are discordant to the mores of home, such as his aforementioned affair with an escort. However, Nagi's transgressions result in multiple retributions. His relationship becomes material for blackmail, as Nagi is pursued by law enforcers from home (271). It thus becomes evident that in this foreign space, characters continue to be policed according to the rules of home.

Such is the reach of rules of home, that Nagi's ultimate act of transgression – plotting a public display of political resistance against the Egyptian government whilst in Chicago – results in his arrest and torture. Nagi conceives an elaborate plan of defiance against the Egyptian regime, through delivering a public manifesto during the Egyptian president's visit to Chicago. However, this plan backfires. His narrative closes with his imprisonment, where he is charged with “planning a terrorist attack in the United States” (328). Nagi's inability to escape the rules of home is ultimately indicated through the discourse surrounding his punishment, as the perpetrators claim to mete actions “[as] they do in your country” (329). Despite his journey and relocation to a foreign space, Nagi's narrative of escape via academic mobility collapses, as his punishment binds him to the retributions of home.

Retribution towards transgressive acts further recurs in Shaymaa's subplot. Shaymaa becomes involved in a romantic and sexual relationship with a fellow Egyptian course mate, Tariq. As evident in Nagi's narrative, pre-marital sexual relations are perceived as taboo acts according to the conventions of home. Their relationship is constantly fraught with anxieties of rule-breaking, as Shaymaa worries that “everything [they] do here in America will reach people in Egypt [...] I don't want to bring shame on my family” (131). Whilst initially structured as a romantic subplot, this narrative trajectory is also the result of Shaymaa's desire to defy the cultural and religious constraints of home. However, this relationship then results in Shaymaa's pregnancy and subsequent trauma of abortion (340). Tariq's academic credentials also become compromised (299). The freedom desired of mobility therefore collapses, as Shaymaa retreats in fear “of God's punishment” (340), perceiving her fate as a form of punishment caused by her transgression from the codes of home. Her final reconciliation with Tariq perhaps completes the romantic subplot, but the tragedy of possible academic failure and trauma of abortion shows that the limitations of seeking escape through academic mobility. Ultimately, Shaymaa remains governed by the codes of home.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, the novel presents us with Salah's narrative, which ends with the act of suicide. Salah is given a central role in Nagi's plan of defiance, where he

is tasked to deliver the manifesto in the presence of the Egyptian president. Salah accepts this role as atonement, to negate the perceived cowardice of his escape to America decades prior. He hopes to prove that “[he is] not a coward [...] I’ve never been a coward. I left Egypt because it closed her doors in my face. I didn’t run away” (325). However, his last-minute refusal to comply with the task results in the collapse of Nagi’s plan. It further leads to Salah’s incessant regrets, eventually ending with his suicide. This tragic ending shows the limitations of Salah’s narrative of academic immigration for survival, where his actions become belatedly revised as cowardly escapes. I further argue that by delivering the manifesto, Nagi and Salah would have completely severed their ties to home and forgone any possibilities of return – thus completing their narrative of escape. Instead, the plan tragically fails, and the journey too becomes incomplete.

Ra’fat’s ending mirrors Salah’s, in its belated regrets of mobility. On the surface, Ra’fat’s narrative of emigration seems stable, as he assimilates into life in America and divorces himself completely from the space of home. As examined above, this image of stability is proven volatile, evident from the underlying conflict between Ra’fat’s Egyptian and American identity. Ra’fat’s narrative gradually traces the breakdown of his family, ultimately ending with his daughter’s descent into social ills such as drug abuse, and eventual death. Thus it can be argued that Ra’fat transition to his new life and location was never fulfilled, and that his travels were never fully complete. I contend that this tragic ending signifies the volatility of his narrative of purportedly fulfilled emigration.

I began my analysis of *Chicago* by proposing the study of mobility in this text as forms of academic mobility. My exploration focused on escape and refuge as motives for travel. I further examined the hostile experiences that follow these narratives of mobility, finally arguing that the multiple tragic endings of these journeys highlight the limitations of the premise, that academic mobility is a necessary mode of escape in this novel.

The manifold pessimistic resolutions might seem like a reinforcement of the codes of home, thus pandering to the very problems the novel is critiquing. However, I contend that the multiple narrative trajectories in this novel highlight the pervading influence of home, critiquing the inescapable grip that home has on the figure of the mobile academic. This is evident from how the foreign setting is consistently portrayed as resembling spaces of home. It can be argued that this is caused by the novel’s focalisation through Egyptian characters, and what we are seeing is a comparison resultant of the cultural contact. What this does is create a divide, between the American university setting and perceptions of the foreign, where this time, the foreign takes control over the narrative. The local setting of America, Chicago, and the

university setting become foreign through these perspectives, and are readjusted based on the characters' carried understandings from home.

Control over narrative further materialises through actual resemblance of home, when characters desire control over the narrative. Following altercation with Danana, Nagi receives warning from his fellow students, that “everything here [in Chicago] is in [Danana’s] hands [...] if he turns against you he can ruin you” (94). Thus although ‘here’ in both examples signify Chicago, the characters continue to operate on internalised regulations established ‘there’, in Egypt. Danana is constructed as a figure of authority in the novel, in his capacity as “president of the Egyptian Student Union in America” (46). Significantly, Danana is also positioned as a corrupt figure, being granted privileges in exchange for policing the behaviours of Egyptian students in America (46). In evoking his authority, Danana operates within the enclosed space of the Egyptian Student Union Office, an apartment which replicates Egyptian spaces of bureaucracy:

the whole room and the furniture had that old wooden smell of university lecture halls and classrooms in Egyptian schools. Actually, even though the apartment was in Chicago, it had mysteriously acquired an Egyptian bureaucratic character that reminded one of the Mugamma building in Tahrir Square or the old court building in Bab al-Khalq. (46)

The transformation of a private space to having “an Egyptian bureaucratic character” reinforces Danana’s authority within these spaces. Thus despite undergoing significant movements from Egypt to America, the conditions and regulations of home prevail, evident through the material replication of home.

I ultimately argue that academic mobility in *Chicago* has been written as such to assert that the premise of academic mobility as enabling escape is never fully attainable. Despite the assurance of academic identity and credibility, it remains that motive for travels in this text is flight from conflict and perceived oppression of the space of home. The resolution of each subplot shows that these journeys are futile, as each movement is deemed a form of transgressive resistance, regardless of their defence or rationalisation of each movement. The endings of each subplot and narrative of academic travel can be read as restoration of balance achieved through implied punishments and return to order. In the next section, we will be looking at another example of academic travel for escape, examining the stability of that very premise and motive for travel.

3.4. “There is, of course, no going home”: Academic Exile in Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent*⁴

Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent* (2003) explores the inner workings of an Arab community in the American city of Los Angeles, spatially adjacent to “the big university up the street” (7). The proximity between university and community enables extensive portrayal of the relationship between both worlds, often interconnected by a café specialising in Arab cuisine known as Nadia’s Café. This proximity further enables the central plot of the novel, which is the growing romantic relationship between Hanif Al Eyad (Han), a newly arrived Iraqi lecturer at the university, and Sirine, an Arab American chef working at Nadia’s Café. Atef Laouyene describes *Crescent* as following the success of Abu Jaber’s 1993 novel *Arabian Jazz*, which was lauded as a pioneering text portraying Arab American experience in literature (587). *Crescent* is seen as improving the shortcomings of *Arabian Jazz*, particularly in revising problematic cultural stereotypes, and promoting the author’s reputation amongst Arab critics (Laouyene 587).

Despite surface cultural similarities with Al-Aswany’s *Chicago*, *Crescent* departs from the labels established earlier in this chapter. To begin with, *Chicago*’s label as an “Egyptian campus novel” is reinforced by its primary focalisation through Arab characters in the text, as Mishan notes the inadequate attempts at diversity in its polyphonic narration (Mishan). In contrast, *Crescent* oscillates between the viewpoints of Sirine and Han, as well as the framing narrative of a fantastical story told by Sirine’s unnamed uncle. Much can evidently be said about Abu Jaber’s choice of alternate and omniscient narrations. However, my focus is instead on the constant mobility and thematic oscillations evident in the novel, traversing between various issues and places.

The relationship between the university and its adjacent community is a primary example of oscillating movements in this text. The university remains unnamed throughout the text, but is mapped out using various notable real-life locations for Middle Eastern diasporic communities in Los Angeles, such as ‘Westwood Avenue’ and ‘Teherangeles’ (Innes). These identifiable locations align the campus setting with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), thus suggesting that the novel has modelled its university setting on the UCLA campus (White 375n1). It is further important to note that the university portrayed in this novel

⁴ In this section, citations refer to Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent* (2003) unless otherwise noted.

is a culturally specific subset of the community, focusing on the Arab university populace. This is concisely illustrated in the following depiction of the student patrons of Nadia's Café:

There are Jenooob, Gharb, and Schmaal – engineering students from Egypt; Shark, a math student from Kuwait; Lon Hayden, the chair of Near Eastern Studies; [...] Jay, Ron, and Troy from the Kappa Something Something fraternity house [...] There are students who come religiously, appearing at the counter with their newspapers almost every day for years, until the day they graduate and disappear, never to be seen again. And then there are the students who never graduate. (Abu Jaber 10)

Such a method of cataloguing characters is a recurrent trait of campus narratives, and acts as a survey of various university characters. However, the inversion of focalisation now changes the hierarchies of characterisation, particularly in terms of their assigned cultural or national identities. Where the foreign students are described according to their nationalities, the local American students are collated as belonging to a fraternity. By referring to the identity of the fraternity as “Kappa Something Something”, the narrative both reveals cultural gap in grasping college fraternity culture, as well as trivialising the individual identities of these students. Critics have also identified the underlying allusion of the above naming methods. Laouyene observes that the “Arab immigrant students [...] [come] from diverse cultural backgrounds and geographical provenance [...] indicated by proper names corresponding literally to the four corners of the globe: *Shark* [East], *Gharb* [West], *Jenooob* [South], and *Shmaal* [North]” (591). Nouri Gana further argues that this method of naming symbolises the encompassing nature of Nadia Café, acting as a centre that eschews “geopolitical origins in favour of transnational ties” (244). As such, the foreign is given hierarchy of representation and textual materiality, and the local is instead made foreign in this text. Beyond the student population, the narrative offers extensive scenes of academic and social engagements populated by members of the Near Eastern Studies Department, with background interactions limited to the mention of the Turkish Studies Department (15). Despite the prominent portrayal of the university in this text, the novel has not been studied as a campus novel, nor is there evidence of studies into the significance of the university in the novel. This signals further departures from the earlier labels of *Chicago*.

Instead, *Crescent* is often studied as a narrative of exile and immigration, set against the backdrop of the romantic plot between Han and Sirine. In an interview conducted by Robin E. Field, Diana Abu Jaber considers the various aims of the novel. She remarks, “I think that [the novel] does have a cultural project: it's about Iraq, it's about politics, it's about exile”,

further noting that “it is [also] a simple, human story about love and fear and jealousy that can transcend culture” (216).

However, it is also important to consider that the central figure of the exile in this novel, Han, is also a specific character – an exile inseparable from his present-day identity as a university academic. Abu Jaber explicates her reasons in creating Han:

Han is meant to be representative of a specific kind of very literate, sophisticated Arab man. He is someone who has studied and traveled. He is a man that I have known among my family, among friends, but that I never see represented in our media. I very deliberately set myself that task, to see this profile come forth – we needed to see this other man. (Field 219)

We have thus taken into consideration the specificity of Han’s identity as an *academic* exile. It can even be argued that his academic identity precipitates his exile and helps to sustain his travels and re-settling in foreign locations. Building upon the established readings of exile in *Crescent*, my research proposes reading the novel as narrating the forced exile of an Iraqi scholar from the space of home to his present life as an academic in the USA. As such, this novel enables in-depth examination of academic mobility through exile, particularly as focalised through a singular viewpoint. Where the expanse of characters and varied sub-narratives in *Chicago* enabled exploration of various mobilities within one university novel, *Crescent* provides further examination of complexities associated with forced and perilous movements. My analysis finds that the premise that academic travel enables refuge for exiled characters is unsustainable, as their travels and identity are volatile, and slight transgressive acts will cause the collapse of this premise.

As with *Chicago*, my analysis of *Crescent* begins by focusing on the multiple images of academic mobility evident in the novel, focusing on motives and experiences of mobility. On the surface, the novel is populated by characters who have travelled for university education abroad. This is evident from the above depiction of students intermingling within the public space of Nadia’s Café. Within this space, the students – “Jenoob, Gharb, and Schmaal – engineering students from Egypt; Shark, a math student from Kuwait” (10) - are characterised by their foreign names and homelands. They are also defined by their transience, as the narrative describes their regular presence “until the day they graduate and disappear, never to be seen again” (10). Abu Jaber further writes: “there’s a new batch of Arab students coming to eat at Nadia’s Café again this year – new and regulars” (27). The constant mobility of the characters situates Nadia’s Café as a hub and surrogate space for home in this foreign space,

but it also posits the space as having an ever-changing demographic, according to the cycle of academic time.

Similar characteristics of mobility and transience can be observed in the portrayal of academic staff in the novel. As above, the academic characters are specific in their affiliation with the Near Eastern Studies Department at the university. The narrative further denotes that these characters are not local to the United States and have undergone various forms of mobility prior to their arrival to this space. The character Aziz is depicted as a renowned Syrian poet – “the Walt Whitman of Syria” (21) - whose travels and subsequent entry into the university is enabled by his accomplishments. Prior to arriving in Los Angeles, Aziz hailed from Damascus, “for a while [...] teaching somewhere on Cape Cod [...] then [he lived] in someplace like Mobile, Alabama [...] then the big school here called and said come” (21). Interestingly, his motive for movement is further revealed to be superficial, with limited evidence of academic rigour. In contrast, Sirine’s unnamed uncle reveals escape and refuge as motives for his mobility, stating that “the Iraq [he] came from doesn’t exist anymore. It’s a new, scary place” (116). Thus there are varying underlying motives for all these samples of academic mobility and entry into the university in the novel.

It is important to note that the images of academic mobility explored thus far are distinctively masculine. This is a distinction acknowledged in the text, where the absence of female academic characters is explained as such: “The Arab families usually keep their daughters safe at home. The few women who do manage to come to America are good students – they study at the library and cook for themselves, and only the men spend their time arguing and being lonely, drinking tea and trying to talk to Um-Nadia, Mireille, and Sirine” (7). Female academic mobility is therefore absent from the public space that the novel is based upon. This problematic division is immediately refuted by the character Rana, a character designed by Abu Jaber to show the “nuances”, of “many different kinds of Muslim women” (Field 220). Rana is initially perceived as a threat to Sirine and Han’s relationship, as Han’s veiled Muslim student with similarities outweighing Sirine. However, Rana reveals herself to be a divorcée apathetic to Islamic values, instead relishing her life of sexual freedom in America. Rana therefore represents not only the absent mobile female in the text, but also complicates the conventions imposed on such characters.

Above all the samples of academic mobility, nowhere is the notion of underlying conflicts and complexities more evident than in the portrayal of academic travel in Han’s story. It is explicated that the starting point of his travels is Iraq, as “Iraq is [his] home” (11). Han’s arrival as “the new hire in the Near Eastern Studies Department at the university” (6) initially

reads like a familiar narrative of academic travel. Han is described as an accomplished academic, whose entry into the university is warranted by his background of appointments and accomplishments: “He went to Cambridge, did a postdoc at Yale. He’s a linguist. He’s been everywhere. He had his pick of schools and didn’t have to come here at all [...] And he’s published extensively on American transcendentalism and has translated Whitman, Poe, Dickinson, and now Hemingway into Arabic!” (20). Han’s journey thus meanders around various renowned institutions, before arriving in the present space. However, it is important to note that the journey above does not recount his departure from Iraq, leading to questionable gaps in his trajectory. Unknown itinerary gaps are further evident in the vague expanse of his travels of “having been everywhere” (10), which is instead approximated to academic success.

The central conflict of the novel then focuses on the underlying ambiguity of Han’s itinerary, as it intertwines with the romantic plot of Han and Sirine’s developing relationship. From the outset, Han is marked by both his affections and absence of home, as he declares ““Of course, I love Iraq, Iraq is my home – and there is, of course, no going home”” (11). The narrative gradually conceptualises his travels and position in the present space as “an exile”, “because he can’t go back” (37). It is then revealed that Han is fleeing persecution in Iraq, where he is pursued for disseminating political discourse against Saddam Hussein’s regime. His departure led him to numerous academic spaces abroad, from a school in England, to the present university space of the text. However, Han’s escape is at the expense of his family’s safety in Iraq, where they are in turn punished in his absence (283). Indeed, throughout the novel, Han is consistently characterised by his ‘longing’ for home, such as his wistful advocacy for the Arabic language in a public lecture, as Sirine observes “she has never heard anyone speak so eloquently and longingly of Arabic before” (16). The rising conflict culminates in news of his mother’s illness, and Han, the exile who longs to return, is now faced with a mobility conundrum (285).

This straightforward narrative of academic exile is further complicated by preceding histories of academic mobility intertwined with geopolitical conflict and exploitation. This is foreshadowed in the opening of the novel, which begins with proclaimed desire for mobility and refuge. The novel opens not in the present setting and time of Los Angeles in the year 1999, but with a night of bombing in Iraq focalised through “a young boy” (4). He narrates that the sky above Iraq “is white [...] because white is the color of an exploding rocket. The ones that come from over the river [...] from another ancient country called Iran” (3). To escape the night – and perhaps lifetime – of conflict, the young boy recounts the assistance of “a white-skinned woman [who] waits for him in the phosphorescent water [...] she can send him to a

new place, away from the new president, as far away as the other side of the world” (4). The novel is therefore framed by an opening scene of geopolitical conflict, and it is later revealed that the “young boy” is Han himself, harbouring desire for escape from an early age.

Rather than mobility motivated by exile and facilitated by academic credentials, Han’s early motives for travel is in fact based on sexual exploitation that results from cultural contact. The image of the “white-skinned” woman above is tinged with problematic sexual connotations, evident through the bodily depiction of her ‘waiting’ whilst engulfed in water for the young Han. The woman is introduced as Janet, the wife of an American residing in Iraq for brief periods over several summers. Han’s relationship with the woman is retrospectively revealed to be a story of exploitative sexual and cultural contact, as Janet offers to redeem her manipulation of Han by sending him to a private school in Cairo, Egypt, promising an eventual move to universities abroad for further education. However, Saddam Hussein’s ascension to power in 1979 led to escalating political turmoil in Iraq, thus ending Janet’s financial support and Han’s studies in Cairo (281).

The significance of this story of exploitation is in its ramifications, whereby Han’s subsequent actions are influenced by this early experience of potency of education as mode of escape. Hanif’s acquaintance with Janet introduces him to an expansive worldview and drive for education, culminating in his desire to move to America. For Han, America becomes an imagined space of intellectual possibilities, enabling his dreams “to be a writer and a visionary – like Hemingway – [he] was excited by the possibilities of languages and world travel” (282). However, his early travels for education also planted the fruits of dissent, as he becomes critical of his position and desire for foreign places. Han posits his travels to “the West” as a product of “brainwashing”, where “[his] time at the private school has been a kind of brainwashing, with so much exposure to Western thoughts and values, a glorification of the West” (283). Ultimately, Han is placed in a contradictory position, as he acknowledges that “America had also sent me to my new life and I couldn’t imagine turning back from that” (282). The West, in terms of Han’s education in England and America, is therefore constructed as a collated foreign space to aspire towards, first by choice for intellectual advancement, and then by force as he seeks refuge from persecution in Iraq.

The trajectory of Han’s academic mobility is therefore the journey of a young boy unknowingly exploited in war-torn Baghdad, to a professor in a university in Los Angeles. If his motives as a young boy were based on overarching fear for safety in Iraq, then his motives as an adult is the reality of persecution. As above, the gaps in Han’s itinerary highlight complex cross-cultural encounters, as well as internalised contradictions towards movement, and

ultimate absence of return. Thus, the depiction of academic mobility in this text is set up to be problematic from the very beginning, and contrary to examples in *Chicago*, prompted by exploitation and survival, rather than contradictory self-assessments of the notion of exile.

Imagined Hospitalities

On the surface, it appears that the premise that academic travel enables refuge stands. This is supported by the various portrayals of academic characters in the novel, who have settled into an accommodating foreign space. As the novel is focalised through the perspectives of these mobile characters, narrating their experiences of travel and dislocation, it also assures the capacity of academic pursuits as motive for mobility. However, further examination of these samples of mobility reveals the experiential perils and limitations of academic mobility, as well as volatility of mobility for the figure of academic exile.

A latent example of limitations is focalisation of the novel through the figure of the Arab students and staff. By centring the novel around these characters, there is a sense of ease in their movements around both the university and city. However, it is also notable that the spaces occupied by these characters are culturally-specific subsets of both the university and Los Angeles. Despite the expansive portrayal of the university and community setting, there are limited glimpses of the world beyond it, thus leading to possible arguments for the insularity of the novelistic settings. An important scene that demonstrates this insularity is a party hosted by the head of the Near Eastern Studies Department at the university, who has links with the Los Angeles film industry and was himself once an actor. The party is portrayed as a social event that purportedly shows the camaraderie between the “movie people and university people and Nadia’s Café people” (30). Yet the event highlights underlying divide between the local and the foreign, as Sirine overhears a group of actors commenting on the sound of “Middle Eastern violins and flutes” as “headache music” (31). The extensive claim of “university people” is also limited to “most of Foreign Languages and Near Eastern Studies” (31), and a lone Taiwanese student misinterprets the invitation and commits a sartorial faux pas (33). Beyond the comfort of cultural enclaves, the hospitality and ease of movement ends.

Despite being an encompassing haven for characters from all cardinal points, Nadia’s Café also plays host to the alienation felt by characters in a foreign space. As Laouyene indicates, “Nadia’s Café is also a place where ‘the loneliness of the Arab,’ as Um-Nadia puts it, is painfully experienced” (592). This sense of alienation further proves the limitations of

academic travel in this novel, amplified by the hostility of local perceptions of the mobile foreign. These perceptions are minimally portrayed in the text, and yet are pervasive in their hostility. One such example is the longstanding history of tension surrounding Nadia's Café and its patronage of "Middle Eastern" academic characters:

the Americans begin firing on Iraq in 1991 when Iraqi president Saddam Hussein advanced into Kuwait. And suddenly – amid all the students in their jeans [...] and a smattering of skinny Middle Eastern exchange students [...] there were two grown men in business suits sitting at the counter every day writing things in pads. All they did was glance at the Middle Eastern students and take notes. [...] One day, after a month of sitting at the counter, the two men took the cook aside and asked if he knew of any terrorist schemes developing in the Arab-American community. (8)

This is a recurring experience in the narrative, persisting from geopolitical panic at the start of the decade, to the present time of the novel in 1999. In the present day, Sirine remarks that "sometimes she used to scan the [café] and imagine the word *terrorist*. But her gaze ran over the faces and all that came back to her were words like *lonely*, and *young*" (9). Sirine functions as a central viewpoint that rationalises between local and foreign perceptions, thus revealing the hostile conflation of images of 'the student' and 'the terrorist'. The purportedly assimilated experience of the mobile academic with the local therefore becomes a contentious premise.

The premise that academic travel enables sustainable refuge is ultimately dismantled by Han's final movement in the novel. Although the reason for this movement is ambiguous in the novel, Hanif's trajectory ends with his return home. The narrative consistently posits return as an impossible and perilous action, as Han's father instructs him to remain in the United States and "to stay alive" (285). Reacting to Han's return to Iraq, Sirine's uncle comments that "that's not a place to go back to. Not now. Not in this world" (296). Han's actions not only refute perceptions of exile in the text; it also signals the final collapse of his narrative of academic travel as enabling refuge, as his tenancy in foreign lands proves unsustainable. Finally, Han's return highlights the volatility of academic mobility in guaranteeing survival and refuge. Han's sudden resignation from the university and departure becomes subjected to contradictory perceptions, as it is reported "they're saying that Han quit the university and went back to Iraq. They're arguing about why he left, or if he had to escape, or Saddam Hussein was involved or the C.I.A" (290). Han therefore loses his primary identity as a respected academic, and instead becomes conflated with the hostile image of the suspect foreigner.

Thus far I have explored the representation of academic travel in *Crescent*, arguing that motives of academic travel are intertwined with histories of conflict and exploitation, where mobility is desired as means of escaping the space of home. I also contend that escape and refuge through academic travel is ultimately unsustainable in this text, as the mobility narrative ends with perilous returns home. As above, the novel portrays the experiences of exile, as focalised through the uncommon image of the Arab man. The complexities of movement show the volatility of exile, where minor acts of transgression can lead to the end of movement and loss of identity. In the final section, I will explore the significance of portraying academic travel through perilous images of mobility.

3.5. Perils or Pleasures: Contrasting Portrayals of Academic Mobility

As examined above, the academic identity is significant in differentiating the motives and experiences of travel between mobile foreign characters. Both *Crescent* and *Chicago* have highlighted how the academic identity is important in giving license to travel, and that travel is necessary for characters as a mode of escape. However, both texts have also highlighted the limitations of using academic travel as a form of escape, as loss of academic identity renders the mobile body subject to hostility and threats of forced returns. These representations of academic mobility are therefore in great contrast to the depiction of academic travel in existing studies of campus novels, which posit academic travel as an activity experienced with ease and pleasure.

A possible method of conceptualising gaps in portrayals of mobility observed so far is through reading them as variations of key figures of mobility. Noel Salazar outlines recent studies that have distilled mobility according to conceptualised key figures, settling on “six key figures that have inspired theorisation in mobility research (and beyond)” (“Key Figures” 9). The six figures are as follows: the nomad, the exile, the pilgrim, the tourist, the pedestrian, and the flaneur (Salazar, “Key Figures” 9). In more contemporary updates to conceptualisations of the tourist, Zygmunt Bauman examines the identity of mobile bodies in the modern era, as categorised through five types of travellers – the pilgrim, the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player (“From Pilgrim” 26). Interestingly, three tenets of academic travel extracted from my earlier analysis loosely correspond with Bauman’s theorisations of the figure of the tourist. These three aspects are as follows: that the travels of the tourist are dependent on factors

of choice, luxury, and characterised as temporary movement, with the possibility of returns home (“From Pilgrim” 29-30).

Bauman states that the notion of choice differentiates between the figure of the pilgrim and the tourist, in that “the tourist moves on *purpose* (or so he thinks). [...] The purpose is new experience; the tourist is a conscious and systematic seeker of experience, of a new and different experience, of the experience of difference and novelty” (“From Pilgrim” 29). Significantly, academic travel in *Small World* is consistently described as dependent on choice. The novel begins with an academic conference: the “University Teachers of English Language and Literature (UTE)” conference, held at the fictional University of Rummidge in “the English midlands” (Lodge, *Small World* 229). The central concern of the conference is the inadequate quality and quantity of attendees, rationalised by their motivations to travel. The character Rupert Sutcliffe, who is a veteran conference attendee, observes that “fifty-seven [...] was a very disappointing turnout”, and even then, the conference at present is missing many of its expected fifty-seven attendees (Lodge, *Small World* 231). Sutcliffe contends that the choice of travelling is dependent on the setting of the conference, where “at Oxford or Cambridge you would expect at least a hundred and fifty [...] nobody would come to Rummidge [...]” (Lodge, *Small World* 231). Furthermore, the relative lack of repute of both the setting and congregation affects travel motivations, as “the [attendees] established that none of the stars of the profession was in residence – no one, indeed, whom it would be worth travelling ten miles to meet, let alone the hundreds that many had covered” (Lodge, *Small World* 230). In a later example, Persse encounters the more senior academic Morris Zapp, who is attending a conference in Amsterdam. As Zapp invites Persse on an outing, Persse asks, “Have we time? What about the conference?” (Lodge, *Small World* 427). Morris dismisses Persse’s concerns, indifferent to “[missing] a few papers” (Lodge, *Small World* 427). These examples illustrate how academic travel for conferences is contingent on choice, where characters are free to decide their commitments and experiences of travel.

This leads to another significant trait that corresponds with Bauman’s figurations of the tourist. According to Bauman, the tourist is motivated by conditions of safety and luxuries. The world that the tourist travels to is marked by its innocuity, “by the profusion of safety cushions and well marked escape routes [...] the tourist is fully and exclusively structured by *aesthetic* criteria” (Bauman, “From Pilgrim” 29). Bauman posits pleasure as a significant motivation for travel for the tourist, particularly as the tourist is constructed as a consumer, where “late-modern or postmodern consumers are sensation-seekers and collectors of experiences; their

relationship to the world is primarily *aesthetic*: they perceive the world as a food for sensibility” (Bauman, “Tourists” 94).

Thus whilst choice to travel is dependent on the geographical location and reputation of setting, it is further contingent on the aesthetic materiality of the setting. In contrasting portrayals of conferences in *Small World*, we can compare samples of academic travel illustrated as acts of consumption, influenced by conditions of luxury and Bauman’s aforementioned ‘aesthetic criteria’. Much of the disregard towards the opening conference is based on its corrosion of aesthetics and physical inadequacies of the space. Indeed, the novel is set into motion by displeasure towards absence of pleasure of conference travel, as conference attendees observe their setting:

[they had] acquainted themselves with the accommodation provided in one of the University’s halls of residence, a building hastily erected in 1969, at the height of the boom in higher education, and now, only ten years later, looking much the worse for wear [...] They had appraised the stained and broken furniture [...] each room had a washbasin, though not every washbasin had a plug, or every plug a chain. Some taps could not be turned on, and some could not be turned off. (Lodge, *Small World* 229)

While these are “familiar discomforts” that characters have learnt to “stoically [accept]” (Lodge, *Small World* 230), these conditions are nonetheless inconducive for these travellers, especially as they do not guarantee the comfort expected by the figure of the academic as a tourist.

The desired conditions of academic conference travel are illustrated in Lodge’s extensive description of a later conference, which offsets the opening example. Whilst reflecting on the poor conditions of the Rummidge conference, Zapp offers the organiser Philip Swallow an invitation to his own conference in Jerusalem. It is immediately evident that the introduction of Zapp’s conference acts as a foil to the first space, based on its assurance of luxury, as Swallow notes that Zapp’s conference venue - “the Jerusalem Hilton” - is “a bit different from Lucas Hall and Martineau Hall” (Lodge, *Small World* 293). The latter locations are the very dormitories accommodating attendees of Swallow’s conference, and he points towards the significant differences in accessing luxury, reasoning that “people here can’t afford that sort of luxury. Or their universities won’t pay for it” (Lodge, *Small World* 293). However, Zapp postulates the conference-goer as a tourist and consumer, indicating knowledge of the pleasures and luxuries expected by such mobile academic characters, specifically when travelling to conferences. Zapp observes that “food and accommodation are the most important

things about any conference. If the people are happy with *those*, they'll generate intellectual excitement. If they're not, they'll sulk, and sneer, and cut lectures" (Lodge, *Small World* 293). Indeed, when Zapp's conference eventually appears in the narrative, it is described as a success, adhering to requirements of aesthetics and luxurious consumption:

almost everybody involved agrees that it is the best conference they have ever attended. Morris is smug. The secret of his success is very simple: the formal proceedings of the conference are kept to a bare minimum. [...] the remainder of the day is allocated to 'unstructured discussion' of the issues raised in these documents, or, in other words, to swimming and sunbathing at the Hilton pool, sightseeing in the Old City, shopping in the bazaar, eating out in ethnic restaurants, and making expeditions to Jericho, the Jordan valley, and Galilee. (Lodge, *Small World* 536)

In contrast, academic travel in *Chicago* and *Crescent* is not of the temporary mobility of academic conferences, nor is it characterised by choice or pleasure. Instead, images of academic mobility in both novels are often denoted as images of exile. Travel is often fraught with hostilities, and are permanent dislocations and escape from dangers at home. According to Andreas Hackl, 'exile' refers to "an ancient concept expressing a form of political banishment and the enduring consequences of forced displacement for those affected by it" (55). Hackl highlights the limitations of the figure of the exile as a direct signifier of wider conditions of exile. Specifically, Hackl notes that "despite its personal colouring, the Saidian figure of exile travelled into theories about the wider condition, creating a problematic tension between person and experience" (57). Said's theorisations of exile are imbued by his personal experiences, further enabling the figure to establish prominence in contemporary academic research. However, there exists the possibility of misguidedly collating all experiences of exile in accordance with Said's conceptualisations. Hackl subsequently calls for a careful distinction between the 'figure' and the 'condition', where "the gap between figure and condition creates tension between universal tropes and particular contexts, between literary metaphors and social anthropology" (57).

To an extent, the portrayals of academic mobility explored above are divided between images of pleasures of the tourist, and perils experienced by the exile. Compartmentalising images of mobility according to known figures and concepts are useful methods of understanding variations of mobility in campus novels. However, these divisions of figures can also lead to problems of essentialization. Although my research in this chapter hinges on distinctions between images and figures of mobility, such dichotomies must be approached

with caveats. It is too simplistic to infer that these portrayals of travel are due to their cultural and geographical differences to the images of academic travel prototyped by Lodge's *Small World*. *Small World* cannot be signposted as embodying all academic travel in campus novels, just as the novels examined above – *Chicago* and *Crescent* – do not embody all academic travel beyond the Anglo-American campus novel tradition.

There are thus possible limitations in analysing figures of mobility, which can lead to essentialisations of conditions of mobility. Indeed, narratives of academic exile and forced displacements are equally central in canonical campus novels. Kenneth Womack asserts that the figure of academic exile is notable in Vladimir Nabokov's contributions to the genre, in works such as *Pnin* and *Pale Fire* ("Scholar Adventurers" 45). Further studies into Nabokov's work shows that the figure of academic exiles in literature resists cultural compartmentalisation. They also do not corroborate straightforward divisions between dominant Anglo-American texts against peripheral others. Alternatively, not all existing narratives of academic travel look to *Small World* as a model, nor are they unanimous in presenting mobility as experiences of pleasure. Just as Anglo-American campus novels can contain samples of narratives of perilous mobility, so too can global variations contain examples of travels for leisure.

My findings therefore do not assert that narratives of mobility can be demarcated to essentialised experiences. Instead, I take the contrasting portrayals of mobility in *Chicago* and *Crescent* as increasing figurations in literature, of the permeating hostility and dangers that punctuate the academic travel experience. My research further considers the contextual reasons for these emerging issues, and identifies a gap in which narratives of academic exile and campus prejudice in the post-9/11 context is absent. I contend that the study of academic mobility in *Chicago* and *Crescent* enables consideration of perilous academic travel in the post-9/11 world. The post-9/11 world sees a shift in experiences of academic mobility for certain groups of people, and these two texts show the changing landscape of the university and academic travel in the post-9/11 world.

Written following the events of September 11, *Chicago* displays awareness of its contextual conditions, putting at the forefront the disconcerting experiences of foreign characters seeking entry into the United States. The significance of *Chicago* in studies of the campus novel is therefore in showing how the events of September 11 can impact the professional identities of characters, with focus on the higher education sector. Shaymaa constantly expresses her feelings of alienation in America, and in response Tariq rationalises these feelings to her identity as a Muslim in America. For Tariq, Shaymaa's experiences are

part of the blame extrapolated on Muslims in the post-9/11 world, where “the image of Muslims here suffered a lot after 9/11” (Al-Aswany 57). To this, Shaymaa queries: “What have *I* done wrong?”, thus questioning her untenable position (Al-Aswany 57).

In contrast, Shaymaa shows awareness that the hostility is not caused by one strand of identity only, instead impacting layers and multiple facets of her identity. Shaymaa sees her position in America as follows: “I feel I am an outcast in this country. Americans shy away from me because I am an Arab and because I am veiled. At the airport they interrogated me as if I were a criminal. At school the students make fun of me when they see me” (Al-Aswany 57). I contend that the passage above shows underlying awareness of the manifold facets of her identity, where each facet is subjected to variations of perceived judgment. The notion of “me” or “I” above is constructed based on the perception of a collective ‘they’, which in this passage is an essentialised and collated America. The primary cause of her feelings of alienation is her identity as an “Arab”. Shaymaa then considers the gendered prejudice, as she highlights the hostility towards her “veiled” appearance. Finally, she situates her alienation “at school” as affecting her professional position as an academic, highlighting that hostility impacts even her experience within the university space. Thus while prejudice and hostility are evident, these behaviours have their roots beyond essentialised discrimination against Muslims in post-9/11 America. This further enables us to see how mobility has led to a heightened awareness of one’s multi-faceted identity. Furthermore, it shows how mobility highlights the hostilities and perils that can affect professional identities on the move.

Similarly, *Crescent* portrays hostilities faced by the mobile foreign academic, such as being susceptible to problematic connotations with the figure of the terrorist. *Chicago* specifically pinpoints hostile experiences as a post-9/11 condition. In contrast, *Crescent* presents a more complex contextual background as its reasoning. As explored earlier, *Crescent* considers the experiences and aftermath of the 1991 Iraq-Iran conflict, and persisting until the present period of the novel. The novel thus presents this condition of mobility as sustained experiences of hostility. Such complexities can be explained through the meandering timeline of Abu Jaber’s conception of the novel. Considering the novel’s relationship to 9/11, Abu Jaber remarks that “many people have assumed that the book was written after 9/11” (Field 222). This is inaccurate, as the manuscript was completed prior to the tragedy, before being published in 2003 (Field 207). According to Abu Jaber, “it’s based entirely on history [...] to me, it’s all right there. This is what we’ve been doing with the Middle East; these tensions have been in place for so long” (Field 222).

The two novels therefore portray previously absent experiences of hostility and travel, exacerbated by the shift in perceptions in the post-9/11 world. Additionally, both texts are specific in their portrayal of experiences, by situating these experiences in the changing landscape of the university and through images of post-9/11 academic travel. Terry Caesar, in an article entitled “Universities, Terrorists, Narrative, Porcupines” (2012), explores the intersection between “terrorism and higher education” as a hidden narrative of 9/11 (Caesar, “Universities, Terrorists”). Caesar notes that such intersections are not entirely novel for university narratives, citing that in “American fictional narratives of the previous generation”, “political violence of various kinds on the part of extremists, radicals, Weathermen and Black Panthers was typically set on college campuses” (Caesar, “Universities, Terrorists”). However, Caesar notes that these intersections have been perceived as problematic, leading to the reinstatement of the campus space as “a repository of values that can be protected once idealized” (Caesar, “Universities, Terrorists”). This signals regression to earlier notions of the university as an insulated world.

These studies thus contribute to the main research aim, in considering the impact of significant twenty-first century events on the university, as focussed through the lens of academic mobility. As evident in my explorations of the critical tradition of the campus novel, the Anglo-American tradition largely presents mobility of the foreign other as marginal narratives. Such perceptions are no longer possible in texts such as *Chicago* and *Crescent*. Contemporary conditions of conflict have necessitated both flight and narrative agency, causing these experiences to no longer remain hidden. Susan Rubin Suleiman asserts that “émigrés, exiles, expatriates, refugees, nomads, cosmopolitans” are all conditions “of being ‘not home’” (1), subsequently raising questions: “Is this distance a falling away from some original wholeness and source of creativity, or is it on the contrary a spur to creativity? Is exile a cause for optimism (celebration, even) or its opposite?” (1). In *Chicago* and *Crescent*, depiction of narratives of academic mobility are to an extent the product of intersection between exile and creativity. However, a stronger impetus is perhaps the increased necessity of narrating anxieties of mobilities, based on how contemporary conditions of conflict and mass displacements of people affect the professional identity of mobile academic characters. The anxieties faced by these characters are due to being subjected, and collated, with Other types of mobile bodies, ranging from the figure of the terrorist on one extreme end of the spectrum, to lesser versions such as economic migrants and refugees. Returning to the concept of key figures of mobility, the narratives of academic mobility beyond the Anglo-American tradition, for so long absent or marginal, reveal depth that require figurations of their own. In the next

chapter, I will further investigate varying motives, experiences, and limitations of academic mobility, focusing on the significance of university entry on socioeconomic mobility.

Chapter 4 | An Indonesian Man in Egypt: Social Mobility and the University in Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*⁵

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have begun interrogating images and meanings of international academic mobility, exploring examples of travel necessitated by escape and survival rather than for pleasure. In this chapter, I aim to further my analysis of international academic mobility, by examining university entry and travel as motivated by attainment of social status. This chapter also examines the intersection between class mobility and the university as portrayed in different geographical settings, and as experienced by different cultural groups. Specifically, I will be examining the significance of university entry in enabling social status attainment, as portrayed in the Indonesian literary tradition. Through examining underlying politics of movement in selected primary texts I consider limitations of the premise that university entry enables unproblematic upward social mobility.

Class mobility is a critical issue in university novels, particularly in studies of the social function of the university. This is evident in texts such as the oft-explored *Jude the Obscure* (1895) by Thomas Hardy, to more recent examples such as Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* (1992) or *The Rules of Attraction* (1987) by Don DeLillo, as explored in Christopher Findeisen's 2015 article on class in the American college novel. In my research, the Indonesian literary tradition reveals similar preoccupations with the university as site of social status attainment. This is most notable in Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's 2004 novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (English: *Verses of Love*), which became a literary and cinematic phenomenon in Indonesia and Muslim Southeast Asia. To expound my findings, I further examine El-Shirazy's *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (English: *When Love Glorifies God*) (2007); his lesser-explored novel that follows the same template.

It is important to note that these novels do not subscribe to the campus novel genre, nor have they been studied as such. Instead, existing critical studies classify these texts as "Islamic romance novels" (Koh and Umami 107), setting precedence for the rise of the sub-genre amongst Muslim audiences in the Southeast Asian region. The novels consistently depict cosmopolitan young characters throughout their travels abroad, particularly for tertiary

⁵ In this chapter, all translations of materials from the Indonesian to English Language are my own.

religious education. Significantly, the travel trope often intersects with romantic plots, underpinned by consolidation of religious values. Koh and Umami summarises the template of the novel according to its materiality: “the novel’s cover illustrates an Islamic message with romance elements such as the beautiful eyes of a young woman and a young man in a skullcap. Such images help to explain the personality of the main characters: a beautiful young woman who is devout and a young handsome man who is pious” (Koh and Umami 107).

Geographical mobility and setting in these texts are notably consistent and specific, in that they are travels to the Middle East, which is perceived as the centre for Islamic university education. It is also often a specific form of university education, namely religious education attained at the renowned Al-Azhar University in Egypt. As such, this leads to particular narrative characterisations, often focusing on academic characters based at these overseas institutions. However, these recurrent thematics and settings continue to be under-researched aspects of the novel, often overlooked when compared to the breadth of research on the religious and romantic aspects of the novels. I conceptualise these texts as the ‘Indonesian Azharite novel’, and propose further examination of the university setting and themes in these works, through using the study of mobility as method. Analysis of mobility in this chapter occurs across multiple levels. Firstly, it refers to the international travel of characters arriving in Egypt from Indonesia for the purpose of university education. It also refers to corporeal and everyday mobility, of the experiences of characters whilst moving across the city and the university in these texts. Finally, this chapter looks at how international academic mobility is interlinked with the upward social mobility of characters.

My findings explore the extensive portrayal of the function of academic travel as necessary for socioeconomic improvement in these texts. This improves on existing studies on this thematic premise in the critical tradition of campus novels. Additionally, the change in context enables alternative perspectives of an established preconception, of the emancipatory function of the university in fiction. The following section of this chapter will explore prototypes of motives for university entries in novels, as well as modifications proposed by recent studies of the genre. In particular, I will be focusing on the premise that university entry is often desired as means for upward social mobility. I then consider gaps in the critical tradition, further proposing the study of these selected primary texts as contributing and rectifying these gaps. In examining the primary texts, I will be analysing two aspects of mobility, in relation to the premise of upward social mobility. My focus will be on the motives and experiences of academic travel in these texts, focusing on its intersection with desires for class mobility. I will then observe moments of friction of these images of corporeal mobility,

examining possible limitations of the premise for travel. In the final section, I will be examining contextual conditions which have led to the significance of academic mobility for social status attainment in Indonesian society. The chapter will close with considerations of alternative perspectives to established themes in campus novels, as well as examining the ubiquity of certain thematics across various foreign settings.

4.2. Social Status Attainment and the University in Selected Studies of the Campus Novel

It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. [...] This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. (Woolf 6)

[...] here I was actually at the door which leads into the library itself. [...] a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, [...] regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction. (Woolf 8)

The organ complained magnificently as I passed the chapel door. [...] I had no wish to enter had I the right [...]. (Woolf 9)

The “grass”, the “library”, the “chapel” – these are the spaces made inaccessible to Virginia Woolf in her seminal work *A Room of One's Own*. The essay began as a series of lectures given by Woolf in 1928, to pioneering women's colleges at Cambridge. Examining the above examples, Laura Marcus notes that these are not mere physical limitations, that “not only is [Woolf's] way physically barred”, but that these restrictions also signify “barriers [that] interrupt the free flow of her thoughts, prohibiting her from ‘trespassing’ on the grounds of intellect and imagination held to the proper preserve of the male sex” (218). Ann McClellan, however, informs us that Woolf's purportedly progressive views were not as universally well-received during its conception. Although Woolf's observations of restricted spatial access highlight problems with women's access to education, McClellan notes that the female audience at the lectures perceived her opinions as superior and detached (“Adeline's (Bankrupt) Education Fund” 7). According to McClellan, “the fact that Woolf thinks women's

education leads to further subjection of women – they are destined to become ‘schoolmistresses in shoals’ – illustrates her realization of the circular and adulterated nature of patriarchal culture (as well as her own class snobbery)” (“Adeline’s (Bankrupt) Education Fund” 7). Much has been said and written on this essay, but of particular relevance to this thesis is the description of limited movement and access around a set university space.

The above examples were selected to portray the sense of exclusion that permeates the university in writing, and indeed most critical studies of the campus novel. Entry into the university is often examined through barred entries and moments of exclusion. Rossen notes that the growth of campus novels has traditionally followed the gradual inclusion of previously marginalised groups, tracing the moments in which they have been granted entry into the university. Rossen examines Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895) as a precursor to the campus novel, particularly in looking at examples of exclusion. According to Rossen, “Hardy creates a complex problem of the individual’s relationship to the University as an institution; Jude finds himself unable to either enter the magic city [of the university] or to walk away from it. In the end, fittingly, [Jude] can only die there” (21).

In exploring more recent studies of upward mobility as a motive for university entry, I turn to Christopher Findeisen’s 2015 article “Injuries of Class: Mass Education and the American Campus Novel”. This article refutes straightforward correlation between entry into the North American college system with upward social mobility. According to Findeisen, the American college novel tradition provides evidence that entry into the university contradicts promises of upward social mobility. Rather, analysis reveals that this premise has translated belief that education, specifically “mass education”, enables upward socioeconomic mobility, and that this belief later translates itself into fiction, reflecting the prevalence of “ideology of equal opportunities” (Findeisen 295).

Comparing the intersection between class consciousness and the university in Bret Easton Ellis’s *The Rules of Attraction* (1987) and *The Secret History* (1992) by Donna Tartt, Findeisen argues that both texts portray contrasting approaches towards class consciousness in fiction. Findeisen further reasons that these differences are reflective of development of the social function of the university in America since the postwar era. Examining *The Rules of Attraction*, Findeisen observes that “the college campus is nothing more than a playground, albeit a very expensive one”, reflecting on a wealthy college student’s dismissal of the academic aspects of his university admission (285). According to Findeisen, wealth influences the character’s behaviours within the university in the text, and “the connection between the educational process and its outcomes is made meaningless by [the student’s] wealth” (286).

Findeisen further argues that *The Rules of Attraction* portrays the fictional consolidation of the college in pre-war America, where “before the 1940s many elite private universities had well-earned reputations as ‘country clubs’ merely posing as academic institutions” (286). This means that entry into the university was prioritised for members of the elite, as a way of legitimising their social status, thus framed by Findeisen as methods of “class reproduction” (287).

However, Findeisen argues that there are contemporary discrepancies with this portrayal of the American university system in *The Rules of Attraction*. The belief that the university prioritises entry for the elite is no longer justifiable following the development of higher education and state-sponsored funding in the immediate postwar era, much less in 1987 when *The Rules of Attraction* was published (Findeisen 286). These developments led to prioritisation of educational merit, and consequently a shift in class divisions in the university, where “the meritocratic procedures that determine a successful college career [...] mean that class status in American society can no longer simply be inherited; it must now be earned” (Findeisen 287). Additionally, the postwar shifts in policies altered the socioeconomic makeup of the college population, to include those previously exempted, such as the lower-classes. As summed up by Findeisen, “opening the gates empowered universities to recruit students from outside the narrow confines of the elite, producing a student body eager to earn the economic advantages that postwar higher education historically provided” (286). Framing this through analyses of movement, it means that in order to remain within the throngs of the elite in postwar America, entry into the university no longer sufficed – it had to be supplemented with academic endeavours rather than worldly pursuits, culminating in exit with necessary college qualifications.

An alternative perspective on class and the American college novel can instead be found in Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History*, which offers portrayal of how “universities are now synonymous less with the legitimization of class reproduction than with *class mobility*” (emphasis added; Findeisen 287). In the text, Tartt centres preoccupations of class on the character Richard Pape. Pape’s narrative charts his progressive move across academic spaces, “from a community college in California to an elite school in New England” – conceptualised by Findeisen as a form of “social migration” (288). Through Pape’s narrative of academic mobility, Tartt is able to explore issues of class mobility in university entries, examining “how a poor but talented student might use education for economic and social progress” (Findeisen 287). This signals departure from the portrayal of the college as enabling ‘class reproduction’ in *The Rules of Attraction*. Findeisen concurs that this narrative of ‘class

mobility' is actually more prevalent in campus novels, traceable in the works of writers from Mary McCarthy's *The Groves of Academe* in 1952, to *The Marriage Plot* by Jeffrey Eugenides in 2011. According to Findeisen, "notable writers [...] have used postwar higher education to explore how race, gender, and class can limit upward social mobility and how the university has aided, impeded, or ignored students' social ambitions" (288).

In this way, the American college novel joins the British tradition in its analysis of the centrality of class in university narratives. In particular, both critics assert that entry into the university is desired by marginalised communities for upward social mobility. In addition, Findeisen and Rossen observe that this narrative is only realised and enabled by changes in state policies and institutional development in the postwar era in both nations. However, Findeisen also makes a similar analysis to Rossen above, in noting that despite the social function of the postwar university as a mode of levelling class differences, the relationship between class mobility and entry into university remains complex. Such is the complexity that the premise of university admission enabling class mobility are at times unfulfilled premises, and ideals rather than realities.

Throughout his arguments, Findeisen's focus on class and the American college novel reflects preoccupations with the nation. This is due to the fact that the campus novel presents unsolved contradictions on the issue of class and the university, as it pertains to the nation. Education continues to be integral in the national psyche, and "remains entrenched in the contemporary imagination as the nation's best path out of poverty" (Findeisen 295). However, Findeisen further notes that education can only alleviate such problems for a select few. Ultimately, Findeisen contends that "the concept of 'mass education' as an egalitarian system is misleading", as despite widening access to university education for all socioeconomic groups, the fact remains that the lowest brackets still struggle to capitalise on the purported financial benefits of university education (294). The primary problem where class is concerned in the American college novel is that resolutions through upward social mobility are still only possible for a select few.

These national preoccupations reveal what we have thus far learned of the critical tradition of the campus novel: that it is comprised of the dominant critical relationship between the British and American tradition. Such national outlook reveals inward-looking perspectives, of problems unsolved within the nation. Therefore movement into the university for purposes of social mobility are often through intranational movements, because the solution to such problems can only be found within the nation. This can be due to the breadth and range of academic institutions within Britain and America respectively, that a particular text can afford

to select and emulate from the many universities, according to the social status that they signify. But it is also further reflective of the degree of class and wealth inequality, where international movements are beyond the reach of the lower socioeconomic groups, despite the promises of social mobility attached to such movements.

4.3. Social Advancement and the Azharite Identity in *Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)*⁶

The publication of Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's 2004 novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (henceforth *Verses*) saw unprecedented financial success and mainstream popularity in its country of publication Indonesia. Within the first two years of its publication, the novel amassed estimated sales figures of 150,000 copies, averaging 7142 copies per month (Prie GS 12). Prie GS asserts that "such figures are unheard of for the Indonesian publishing landscape, regardless of genre"⁷ (12). A further indicator of the novel's popularity is the commercial success of its 2008 film adaptation, directed by renowned Indonesian filmmaker Hanung Bramantyo. In its first two months of release, the film recorded three million viewers – again unprecedented figures in this context (Muzakki).

On the surface, *Verses* can be regarded as an "Islamic romance" novel that has accumulated considerable mainstream recognition (Widodo). Indeed, this is how *Verses* has been consciously marketed, as Hadi Susanto's foreword to the 2008 edition of the novel endorses that "this is a novel that has successfully combined religious teachings with romantic and cultural explorations"⁸ (xviii). Such extensive thematic aspirations are evident from a straightforward recounting of its plot, which documents the life and tribulations faced by Fahri, a young Indonesian student completing his graduate studies at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Central to the text is the portrayal of Fahri as a pious Muslim scholar, equally conscientious in his religious observations as he is with his academic ambitions. At the same time, Fahri also harbours marital aspirations; conceptualised as a goal parallel with his religious and academic ambitions. The plot revolves around Fahri's romantic entanglements with four female characters, each distinctly characterised through their cultural and religious identities. Fahri eventually marries Aisha, a Turkish-German woman residing in Egypt. This leads to the central conflict of the novel, as a spurned admirer Noura wrongly frames Fahri for sexual

⁶ In this section, citations refer to Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* (2008) unless otherwise noted.

⁷ "Betul-betul angka yang susah disebut biasa untuk dunia perbukuan Indonesia. Apapun jenis bukunya." (12)

⁸ "inilah novel sastera yang berhasil memadukan dakwah, tema cinta dan latar belakang budaya suatu bangsa" (xviii)

assault. As a result, Fahri faces imprisonment and hostility as a foreigner in Egypt, consequently jeopardising his status as a student at the Al-Azhar University. Fahri is ultimately salvaged by the testimonies of Maria and Nurul – two of the aforementioned four female characters – as well as Noura’s eventual repentance.

More pertinent to the financial and mainstream success of the novel is its influence in altering literary movements, initially in Indonesia, and later in the Southeast Asian region. Following *Verses*, Mohd. Zariat Abdul Rani writes that “popular literary tastes [in Indonesia] have now shifted to Islamic novels” (“Islam, Romance” 60). In the first two years since *Verses*, Mohd. Zariat catalogues the publication of no less than ten novels that follow the novel’s template and popular success, the most evident being Taufiqurrahman Al-Azizy’s *Syahadat Cinta (Divine Pledge of Love, 2006)* (“Islam, Romance” 60). Mashuri further reiterates the novel’s influence, in leading the emergence of Islamic fiction in the wider Southeast Asian region. The novel’s pioneering portrayal of Islamic themes has led to its popularity amongst neighbouring Muslim-majority countries in the region, such as Malaysia and Brunei (Mashuri 25), as well as minority Muslim communities in Singapore and the Philippines (Anif, “Fenomena” 141). Hadi Susanto attributes this emerging tradition to the paradigmatic influence of *Verses*, as “an essential model, especially for other writers dabbling with the genre of Islamic literature”⁹ (xviii).

Existing studies have explored the novel through three primary facets, encapsulated by the title of Hadi Susanto’s foreword: “*Verses of Love: A Cultural Novel, Religious Novel, or Romance Novel?*”¹⁰ (xiii). In my research, I argue that there is a fourth aspect that merits further exploration, in that the novel should also be examined as a university novel. This is based on the prominence of the university as a setting, mode of characterisation, and significantly, motive for travel and upward social mobility in the text. My analysis of *Verses* focuses on images of movement, particularly looking at motives of entry into the university, and subsequent meanings of physical movement around and beyond the university space. I further posit that *Verses* portrays complications where academic mobility is concerned, revealing cultural and class limitations of movement. Finally, I contend that *Verses* depicts latent dangers of academic mobility, where moments of conflict can lead to the loss of academic identity and even immobility.

⁹ “Novel ini perlu menjadi acuan terutama bagi penulis yang mula berjinak-jinak untuk menulis *sastera islami*” (xviii)

¹⁰ “*Ayat-Ayat Cinta: Novel Budaya, Novel Keagamaan, atau Novel Cinta?*” (xiii)

The Azharite Identity as Motive and Licence for Movement

Despite being written in Bahasa Indonesia (the Indonesian language) and uniformly narrated through the viewpoint of Indonesian characters, *Verses* is set in the city of Cairo, Egypt. Specifically, the novel focuses on the life of an Indonesian student named Fahri, presently completing his graduate studies at the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo. Surrounding Fahri is an extensive cast of both university and non-university characters, ranging from fellow Indonesian students, to local Egyptian neighbours and the wider Cairene community. From the outset, the foreign identity of the setting and its jarring contrast to the characters is delineated. The novel begins by portraying the city through its climate extremities: “This afternoon, it is as if the city of Cairo is on fire. The sun glows in the middle of the sky, like flames licking the earth”¹¹ (1). Fahri notes the extremity and foreignness of the setting, such that “Southeast Asian students unaccustomed to the weather would be afflicted with nosebleeds”¹² (2). The Al-Azhar University also features prominently in the text, denoted through diction of prestige. The first glimpse of the university in the text is through mere allusion, as the narrator recounts his present setting “at the oldest university in the world, located on the Nile delta”¹³ (4). Fundamentally, this is a novel that situates itself in the city of Cairo, populated by and perceived through the lenses of an extensive Indonesian academic community.

In *Verses*, travelling from Indonesia to Egypt for university studies is conceptualised as a necessity in enabling a character’s socioeconomic advancement. This is particularly evident through Fahri’s narrative, where Fahri is consistently described as a hardworking scholar, respected both for his academic rigour as well as his Islamic piety. A significant rationale for his rigour is that his movement to Egypt is seen as a familial obligation, at the expense of financial sacrifices made by his impoverished family. Whilst struggling to complete demanding academic tasks, Fahri perseveres by reminding himself that “[he] was sent to study [in Egypt] at the cost of their only heirloom - a piece of land left behind by [his] grandfather”¹⁴ (8). This origin story recurs throughout the novel as a way of reinforcing Fahri’s social status (248). As such, Fahri’s travels to Egypt is portrayed as a familial obligation necessitated by desire for socioeconomic improvement.

¹¹ “Tengah hari ini, kota Cairo seakan membara. Matahari berpijar di tengah petala langit. Seumpama lidah api yang menjulur dan menjilat-jilat bumi” (1)

¹² “Mahasiswa Asia Tenggara yang tidak tahan panas, biasanya sudah *mimisan*, hidungnya mengeluarkan darah” (2)

¹³ “universiti tertua di dunia, di delta Nil ini” (4)

¹⁴ “[ia] belajar di sini dengan menjual satu-satunya sawah warisan dari datuk[nya]” (8)

Fahri's entry into the university does not immediately reap financial benefits. Instead, his university experience is consistently denoted through financial hardship. Fahri's initial period in Egypt is fraught with financial difficulties, where he is compelled to sustain himself "through selling tempeh to Indonesian and Malaysian undergraduates with Aziz"¹⁵ (248). In another example, Fahri's part-time job as a translator despite his academic workload is deemed necessary, due to it being his main source of income (229). Such is the extent of Fahri's financial hardship, that a period of intense academic and secondary labour led to an episode of ill health. This then leads to further concerns, of his inability to manage the medical expenses (222). The unrelenting financial difficulties thus show that mere admission and entry into the university is insufficient, in enabling a character's socioeconomic advancement.

Instead, analysis of a character's movements shows the gradual and nuanced ways in which upward social mobility is achieved. Despite his financial precarity, Fahri's travels and entry into the university have enabled him to transcend his social status. By becoming a student of the Al-Azhar, Fahri has earned the title of an 'Azharite' - an academic identity which negates his previous status as a poor student from rural Indonesia. According to Mona Abaza, the Azharite identity remains esteemed in the eyes of Muslim Southeast Asia, where "in the popular imagination of many contemporary Moslems hailing from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand, Al-Azhar still remains the wellspring of religious learning" (47).

The prominence and respect accorded to the Azharite scholar therefore enables a degree of social advancement. In the novel, this status transcendence is primarily evident through the ease of movement and access enabled by the Azharite identity. Consistently, the Azharite identity is utilised in the text as a licence for mobility. A key moment is a scene of conflict whilst on public transport, where Fahri becomes entangled in religious debate with local Egyptians. Initially, Fahri is discredited due to his nationality, for being an intrusive "Indonesian" (39). He is challenged by an antagonistic Egyptian character: "You Indonesian [man]! What gives you the right to teach us about Islam huh! You've probably only just learned the Arabic language. [...] Keep your mouth shut and stick to studying whilst here, and don't pry into our business!"¹⁶ (39). The hostility of this scene reveals underlying conflict between Fahri's identity as a foreigner, and the Egyptian characters as locals of the space. It is implied

¹⁵ "Kerja membantu Abang Aziz menjual tempe ke rumah-rumah mahasiswa dari Indonesia dan Malaysia" (248)

¹⁶ "Orang Indonesia, kautahu apa hingga mengajari kami tentang Islam, heh! Belajar bahasa Arab pun baru kemarin. [...] Sudah kau diam saja, belajar baik-baik selama di sini dan jangan ikut campur urusan kami!" (39)

that the locals, as native speakers of Arabic, are more well-versed in Islam than foreigners, and Fahri is thus deemed unworthy of intervening the debate. This scene of conflict is only resolved by Fahri's revelation of his identity as an Azharite scholar, even then necessitating the display of his student identity card. Fahri's Azharite identity earns him the respect of the locals, ending the argument and allowing Fahri to continue his journey with ease (41). This scene illustrates how attainment of the Azharite academic identity enables characters to transcend their cultural and social identity, elevating them to respected positions even in hostile foreign spaces.

Indeed, the Azharite identity transforms spaces navigated by these characters into hospitable spaces, consistently granting them ease of movement. In the following passage, Fahri navigates his way through the campus space of the University of Al-Azhar, in between performing daily errands across marked locations in Cairo:

From Nasr City I went to the Al-Azhar campus at Maydan Hussein, heading straight to the department of graduate studies. They congratulated me on my results, and I was asked to complete my thesis proposal immediately. I then proceeded to look at new books at the Dar-El-Salam bookshop on the west side of the campus, adjacent to the renowned Khan El-Khalili [Market] [...] I left through Ataba. I remembered to get groceries, so I stopped by the Ataba market.¹⁷ (91)

As evident above, Fahri's experience of the university and public space is characterised by ease of movement. This is partly due to his familiarity with the space as an Al-Azhar student, "heading straight" to known campus buildings, before moving on to surrounding places. The ease of movement is also possibly caused by jubilation, as he is being congratulated on his stellar achievements. Thus Fahri's movements are characterised by positive interactions, between himself and members of the university, as well as the university space. For Fahri, the campus setting in *Verses* is a hospitable space that welcomes and facilitates his movement.

Fahri's subsequent movements to a nearby bookshop and marketplace further illustrates the proximity of the university to public spaces. His movements in this passage is punctuated by specific locations, such as 'Nasr City', 'Khan El-Khalili', and 'Ataba market'. El-Shirazy utilises positional descriptions to map out the specificities of the setting and Fahri's movement around them, such as describing the bookshop "on the west side of the campus", "adjacent to"

¹⁷ "Dari Nasr City aku terus ke kampus Al-Azhar di Maydan Husein. Terus ke *syu'un thullah dirasat ulya*. Mereka mengucapkan tahniah atas kelulusanku. Aku diminta segera menyiapkan proposal tesis. Setelah itu aku ke kedai buku Dar El-Salam yang berada di sebelah barat kampus, tepat di samping [pasar] Khan El-Khalili yang sangat terkenal itu [...] Aku pulang melalui Attaba. Aku teringat jadual untuk berbelanja. Kusempatkan singgah di pasar rakyat Attaba" (91)

Khan El-Khalili, later departing the area “through Ataba”. Additionally, el-Shirazy achieves visual depiction of the campus-community proximity by encapsulating swift pace of movement within this passage. Such proximity might denote an insular and small space that caters exclusively to the university. However, this proximity to public spaces also situates the university space in an urban site, and depiction of ease of movement from campus to city beyond it denotes permeability, of the university setting in *Verses* being an accessible space for both its inhabitants and the public.

Significantly, it is only through the movements above that the reader is afforded visualisation of the university space in this novel. Despite being a looming influence and setting in this text, it is interesting to note that the physical structure of the Al-Azhar University materialises only once in the span of the text, in this passage. The physical presence of the campus thus only manifests when mapped by the movement of characters. This is significant as the university is then only structurally visible following the movement of characters within and around it. Through being crafted by movement, the university is made accessible for the reader through the spatial navigation of characters – in this case according to Fahri’s movements. The minimal presence of a university space in this text does not deter its reading as a university narrative. Rather, it shows how the university narrative today is not confined within an enclosed campus space. Examining Fahri’s movement above, particularly his transition from the campus to public spaces, it is evident that physical movement affects material depiction of spaces of learning. In *Verses*, learning and academic pursuits take place in a range of spaces and is not limited to formal or structured locations.

Among these spaces, mosques feature significantly as a space of learning. Fahri constantly shuttles between the Al-Azhar university campus for formal university lessons, and the Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq Mosque, situated in a different part of Cairo, for *talaqqi*¹⁸ lessons (3). Movement between the mosque and the university further consolidates Fahri’s characterisation as a scholar of religious studies. In addition, Fahri’s mapped movement to mosques further expands the space of the text, where learning is not limited to the designated campus. In another scene, Fahri is tasked with delivering a religious sermon during compulsory Friday prayers, at the Indonesian Mosque of Cairo (113). This act is integral in furthering both his religious and academic identity, as well as his elevated position as a leader within the Indonesian community in Cairo. By seeing Fahri’s movements as a figure of religious

¹⁸ Qur’anic lessons with a renowned scholar conducted in small groups. (Mohd. Zariat, “The conflict of love” 425)

scholarship in these two spaces, it is evident that learning takes place beyond the university campus, challenging traditional notions of structured and enclosed spaces of learning.

The Azharite identity therefore also grants access to other locations across Cairo and Egypt. As evident above, characters in the text routinely move beyond their private domains and the campus space, travelling for the purpose of learning. This evidence of extensive movement is further evident through the geographical reach of academic characters. For example, in charting his daily movement to spaces of learning, Fahri concurrently maps out the space of Cairo, as he narrates

that morning I fought the Saharan heat to attend Qur'anic lessons at Shubra, fifty kilometres away from my apartment. My place in Hadayek Helwan is located at the southernmost part of Cairo, whilst Shubra is in the north [...] I was exhausted. Today's journeys took up to one hundred kilometres. Going back and forth Hadayek Helwan-Nasr City. Toing and froing Hadayek Helwan to Shubra after the Zuhur prayers.¹⁹ (160)

Fahri's movements are signposted, as earlier, with specific locations, and mapped out according to the trajectory of his journey. The extent of the journey is described as physically demanding, and the use of measured distances further amplifies the challenge of movement. Additionally, el-Shirazy maps out the movement of various other academic characters around Egypt. Earlier in the text, Fahri recounts the movements of his fellow Indonesian scholars: "It has been two days since Hamdi left for student activities at the Indonesian Mosque of Cairo in Dokki [...] And Mishbah is in Rab'ah El-Adawea, Nasr City, drafting a proposal on Islamic economy with the Professor [...] All the tenants of this flat are busy with their own commitments"²⁰ (7). In a later example, Fahri notes the movements of Rudi, who "has gone to a meeting for the secretariat of the Walisongo Student Group. As the representative for the Association of Medanese Students, he is helping organise future visits to historical places in Egypt"²¹ (160). By constantly describing the geographical location of various characters, el-Shirazy provides the reader with specific coordinates of Egypt, taking this text beyond the traditional campus confines. Through providing variation of academic pursuits as reason for

¹⁹ "siang itu aku kembali melawan panas sahara untuk mengaji Al-Qur'an di Shubra yang jauhnya kira-kira lima puluh kilometer dari apartmenku. Hadayek Helwan tempat aku tinggal berada di hujung selatan kota Cairo sementara Shubra ada di hujung utara. [...] Aku benar-benar letih. Satu hari ini melakukan perjalanan hampir sejauh seratus kilometer. Pagi bolak-balik Hadayek Helwan-Nasr City. Habis Zuhur bolak-balik Hadayek Helwan-Shubra" (160).

²⁰ "Hamdi sudah dua hari ada kegiatan di Dokki, tepatnya di Masjid Indonesia Cairo. [...] Sedangkan Mishbah sedang berada di Rab'ah El-Adawea, Nasr City [...] untuk merancang draft pelatihan ekonomi Islam bersama Profesor [...] Masing-masing penghuni flat ini mempunyai kesibukan yang tersendiri" (7)

²¹ "pergi ke sekretariat Kelompok Studi Walisongo atau KSW. Dia mewakili Himpunan Mahasiswa Medan atau HMM untuk membicarakan kerjasama mengadakan lawatan ke tempat-tempat bersejarah di Mesir" (160)

movement, *Verses* also illustrates how the academic identity enables ease of movement, for these characters to move across Cairo and wider Egypt.

Ultimately, through attainment of the academic identity, characters are granted ease of movement and access. Interestingly, while the Azharite identity grants these characters access to campus, private, and public spaces, it also means that the Cairo and Egypt that we see is only as mapped out through the movement of these characters. This hints at limitations of the purported physical and socioeconomic mobility enabled by entry into the university and attainment of the Azharite identity. These limitations will be further explored later in this chapter.

Social Mobility and The Marriage Subplot

The Azharite academic identity thus enables extensive movement, elevating the social status of these characters in a foreign space. However, social status attainment is ultimately achieved through the marriage subplot, particularly through socially advantageous marriages. Specifically in *Verses*, Fahri's travels to Egypt and attainment of the Azharite identity enables him to transcend class hindrances in Indonesia, further allowing socially advantageous cultural contacts.

Marriage is a central issue in the text, conceptualised as one of the many life ambitions for the characters. El-Shirazy illustrates these goals through Fahri's oft-consulted chart, which details his life plans for the next ten years. Delineated on the map are his academic goals: "finishing [his] master's degree in the next two years [...] completing his doctorate in the following four years, having translated fifty books and published a minimum of fifteen works by then"²² (162). Alongside these listed goals, Fahri has also included marriage plans, stating that "I aim to be married in time for my thesis writeup"²³ (228). Fahri's main concern is of how this is yet an unattainable goal (228). As such, marital aspirations are placed of similar importance with academic achievements in the text. The significance of marriage can be understood according to the Islamic values in *Verses*, as Fahri notes that being married signifies "completing half of your religion"²⁴ (229). This follows religious beliefs in *hadith*, or "statements of the Prophet Muhammad that have been written down and compiled" (Jaafar-

²² "target[nya] dua tahun lagi selesai master [...] empat tahun berikutnya selesai doktor dan telah menterjemah lima puluh buah buku serta memiliki karya minima lima belas." (162)

²³ "Aku menargetkan saat menulis tesis aku harus menikah" (228)

²⁴ "menyempurnakan separuh agama" (229)

Mohammad and Lehmann 2). Of relevance is a specific *hadith*, where “Anas bin Malik, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, reported that the Prophet Muhammad said, ‘Any man whom Allah provides with a virtuous wife has been helped to half his Deen (religion), so he should fear Allah regarding the other half’” (Jaafar-Mohammad and Lehmann 2n2). This *hadith* asserts that a Muslim man’s religious values are only fulfilled with his marriage to a pious woman. Fahri is thus reiterating this belief, incorporating religious statements into his marital aspirations.

However, I further contend that marital aspirations are significant as they present opportunities for social advancement in this text. Despite Fahri’s external perception of marriage as a form of religious duty, his motives reveal underlying social aspirations. Following delays in realising his marital aims, Fahri laments the lost opportunity of marrying a fellow Azharite scholar (230). As alternatives, he considers the possibility of marriage upon returning to Indonesia, musing “maybe my fate is to be betrothed in Indonesia, with a covered pious woman, who [studied at] the UI, or the UGM, or UNDIP, or UNS. Or even a younger woman who is still studying at an Islamic boarding school”²⁵ (230). It is notable that Fahri catalogues his potential betrothed according to their level of education and reputation of respective institutions, starting from a student of “the UI” (the University of Indonesia), “the UGM” (the University of Gajah Mada), “UNDIP” (Diponegoro University), finally ending with graduates of local religious schools. This list arguably descends according to popular and certified reputation of respective institutions, as the University of Indonesia is constantly regarded as the highest ranked university in Indonesia (Dilas et al.). A study comparing various university ranking methodologies by Nuning Kurniasih et al. concurs that the UI, UGM, UNDIP, and UNS (Universitas Sebelas Maret) universities are consistently ranked as such in decreasing order of prestige (3). It is therefore evident that Fahri’s hierarchical categorisation of academic identity, according to reputations of various universities in Indonesia, shows weight being placed on the academic status of Fahri’s potential betrothed. The resolution of the marriage plot is therefore not only marked by religious objectives, but also by the degree in which the marriage plot aligns with Fahri’s present academic status, and effectiveness in enabling his socioeconomic development.

The intersection between marriage and social advancement becomes further evident, through the designation of Fahri’s socioeconomic status as a hindrance to the marriage subplot

²⁵ “Mungkin nasibku adalah menikah di Indonesia, dengan seorang akhwat berjilbab yang *ghirah* keislamannya bagus, yang ada di UI, atau di UGM, atau di UNDIP, atau di UNS. Atau malah gadis dari pesantren yang masih muda belia” (230).

in this text. As articulated earlier, Fahri is consistently characterised by his financial hardship. By being described as “a poor farmer’s son from a remote village in Indonesia”²⁶ (251), Fahri carries with him the economic constraints of home. The conflict here centres on the pervasiveness of Fahri’s socioeconomic identity in Indonesia, which remains a marker of his identity in Egypt and prevents him from fulfilling his marital aspirations. Numerous times, Fahri’s financial status impedes the resolution of the marriage subplot. Whilst considering Nurul, a fellow Indonesian Azharite scholar, as his future wife, Fahri is reminded of the discrepancies between their social status. Nurul is described as the daughter of a well-known religious figure in Indonesia, “a well-known headmaster of a prominent Islamic boarding school in East Java”²⁷ (242). This contrasts with Fahri’s identity as “a poor farmer’s son”, and Fahri proclaims that such marriage unions are not possible (242). Thus despite Fahri’s consideration of Nurul as a potential partner, taking into account their academic and cultural similarities, Fahri also reveals awareness of their social disparities in Indonesia. The significance of their failed relationship is that it signals Fahri’s inescapable socioeconomic identity, despite his travels to Egypt and attainment of the Azharite identity.

In another example, Fahri’s financial status in Indonesia and present humble realities as a student in Egypt further plagues resolution of the marriage subplot. The character Aisha is introduced in the novel as yet another potential marital candidate for Fahri. Aisha is described as a wealthy Turkish-German heiress residing in Egypt (326). Additionally, Aisha is also defined by her academic credentials, as she is presently completing her undergraduate education at the University of Munich, and having equally illustrious ambitions to complete her postgraduate studies at the Sorbonne University and the University of Bonn (333). Aisha’s character therefore mirrors Nurul’s social standing and academic status, even taking such character designations to a further extent. However, this also posits Aisha’s socioeconomic status as in contrast with Fahri, and again becomes a hindrance to their marriage. He questions: “will Aisha agree to marry me? [...] Am I equal to her in standing? I do not feel worthy of marrying [Aisha]”²⁸ (251).

How then, should we view Fahri and Aisha’s eventual marriage, when considering the constant internal crises above? Examining the regional popularity of the text in 2015, Mashuri argues that El-Shirazy’s choice of writing Aisha as Fahri’s wife is a narrative strategy that is

²⁶ “anak seorang petani miskin di kampung pelusuk Indonesia” (251)

²⁷ “seorang kiyai besar, pengasuh pesantren besar di Jawa Timur” (242)

²⁸ “Apakah [Aisha] sudah bersedia memiliki seorang suami seperti aku? [...] Apakah aku sekufu dengannya? Aku merasa tidak layak bersanding dengan [Aisha]” (251)

conscious of the readership. According to Mashuri, “Aisha constitutes a formula that is preferred by the increasingly cultured Muslim reading audience in Indonesia, that is becoming attuned to cosmopolitan and intercultural interactions [...] Writing Nurul as Fahri’s wife would not appeal to the fantasies and utopia imagined by the reading public”²⁹ (32). This therefore signifies the influence of societal expectations, in determining plot outcomes in the text. Suminto A. Sayuti and Wiyatmi concur that such strategies correspond with the literary shift in Indonesia at the turn of the century, which saw the rise of texts depicting multicultural encounters (35). Specifically, the portrayal of international marriage between Fahri and Aisha is deemed significant, in influencing shifts towards global perspectives for the reading audience and society in Indonesia (Suminto and Wiyatmi 35).

I offer an alternative reading, that considers how the marriage plot lies in the confluence of Fahri’s movement to Egypt for an Al-Azhar education, and the necessity of socioeconomic advancement. As above, it is evident that his travels to Egypt and acquisition of an Azharite identity enables Fahri to transcend his social status to an extent. However, he continues to contend with financial constraints that prevent him from fully realising his many ambitions. A socially advantageous union acts as the solution, in enabling Fahri to financially realise his necessary socio-economic mobility. I argue that this ultimate realisation of upward social mobility explains the narrative strategy of resolving the marriage plot with a union between Fahri and Aisha, instead of Nurul.

Indeed, Fahri’s marriage to Aisha enables conclusive socioeconomic advancement. This is illustrated through the changes experienced by Fahri, both in mode of movement, as well as the spaces that he consequently moves in. Prior to his marriage, Fahri is consistently depicted as travelling on foot and using public transport, evident through his multiple chartered journeys earlier. However, Fahri is later compelled to match Aisha’s preference for using automobiles – a luxurious mode of transport previously inaccessible to Fahri. Such transitions are embodied in a notable scene depicting Fahri and Aisha travelling to the Egyptian city of Alexandria. As Fahri suggests travelling to Alexandria by bus, Aisha adamantly insists on using a private car, revealing her preference for the comfort of automobile travel and even possession of her own car in Germany (354). Additionally, Fahri’s marriage to Aisha enables his movement around luxurious private spaces. In the same excursion to Alexandria, Fahri initially suggests staying at a student-run guesthouse. This plan is rejected by Aisha, in favour of staying

²⁹ “formula Aisha lebih bisa diterima di kalangan pembaca Islam Indonesia yang sudah mulai melek huruf, serta mengalami kosmopolitanisme dalam menghadapi pergaulan antara-bangsa. [...] Jika Nurul yang menjadi isteri Fahri tentu hal itu tidak menyantuni fantasi dan utopia pembaca” (32)

at a luxury hotel, justifying nostalgia for a previous trip with her mother (354). Fahri correspondingly ruminates that this experience signals “[his] first time staying at a luxury hotel [...] Despite having travelled to Alexandria four times previously”³⁰ (354). Collectively, these nuanced shifts towards luxury connote changes of movement experienced by Fahri, as he transcends his previous financial status through a socially advantageous marriage.

Thus the marriage subplot enables an alternative mode of attaining socioeconomic advancement through university entry in this text. Through travelling to Egypt for university education, a character of lower social standing can achieve upward social mobility, firstly by attaining a prestigious academic identity. A less direct method is via participating in intercultural and interclass relations, permitted by the guise of academic identity. *Verses* furthers the latter method by presenting socially advantageous marriages as the final resolution for desired upward social mobility.

Mobility Limitations and Interruptions

Via analysis of the marriage subplot and socioeconomic advancement above, it can be argued that *Verses* asserts the established university narrative premise, that entry into the university enables upward social mobility. However, I further question the stability of such unambiguous correlations. My findings argue that the premise of upward mobility enabled by university entry in *Verses* can be refuted through examination of latent limitations and politics of mobility in this text.

Earlier in this chapter I underscored that the foreign and university space in this text are as portrayed through the movements of the characters. As the novel follows Fahri’s first person narration, majority of the movements in this text, and ergo the spaces portrayed, are therefore in accordance with his movements. While the Azharite identity grants him and other academic characters ease of movement, it is notable that the spaces they move in are in fact limited to certain cultural enclaves. Specifically, the places occupied by these characters are culturally Indonesian spaces in Egypt. An example is the recurring portrayal of the Indonesian Mosque of Cairo, frequented by Fahri and other Indonesian characters in the text. The mosque is designated as an important congregation space for the Indonesian community in Cairo, a destination “of rest for students seeking respite [...] In addition to attending compulsory Friday

³⁰ “Itulah untuk pertama kalinya aku menginap di hotel berbintang. Sudah empat kali aku ke Alexandria dan tidak pernah menginap di hotel” (354)

prayers and socialising with other Indonesians, the mosque also hosts social meals following the end of the prayers”³¹ (68). Equally prominent is the *Wisma Nusantara*, presented in the text as a building containing facilities and regularly hosting events for the Indonesian academic community in Cairo. Fahri further affirms that there is a familial relationship between the Indonesian academic and ambassadorial community (68). These examples therefore illustrate the magnitude of the Indonesian community in the novel, sufficiently prominent to merit designated religious and cultural spaces.

Yet, limitations of behaviours and movement are especially revealed when characters are compelled to move beyond knowledge of cultural mannerisms, to spaces demanding class-specific proficiencies. Thus, in addition to suggesting that limitations of movement are caused by cultural differences, I argue that the latent mobility politics in this novel are further exacerbated by class differences. A telling episode is when Fahri and his fellow Indonesian peers are invited to dinner at an expensive restaurant by their wealthy Egyptian neighbours. Here, Fahri is portrayed as the only member of the group with prior experience of accessing such spaces – even then at the invitation of socially distinguished others. The restaurant signifies an inaccessible and nonessential space for these characters, and we see constant unease in their movement, whether through their social skills, appearances, or religious adherences. For example, their worn appearances are deemed incompatible with the standing of the establishment; the food served is foreign; and Fahri exhibits unease when asked to dance by his female neighbour Maria, noting these cultural differences as challenges of studying abroad (149). It is only in this space that the socioeconomic status of these characters become apparent. Interestingly, the discrepancies in social status are instead manufactured as cultural differences, as the characters assert that their unfitting appearances and unfamiliarity with the space would be acceptable should they position themselves as Indonesians, as “tourists”³² (142).

Just as the lower classes are unable to fully traverse into higher social territories, the opposite can also be said of characters belonging to the upper classes. As explored earlier, Fahri’s shift to a life of luxury highlights how certain spaces and modes of transport, such as luxury hotels and private automobiles, were previously inaccessible to him. This further shows that characters of higher social status are equally limited in their movement and inability to

³¹ “tempat rekreasi bagi para mahasiswa yang ingin melepaskan penat pikiran [...] Selain solat Juma’at bersama dan bersilatullah dengan sesama orang Indonesia, selesai solat Juma’at biasanya ada makan bersama di belakang masjid” (68)

³² “pelancong” (142)

access the lives of the so-called lower classes. This is especially illustrated by Aisha's inability to follow Fahri's simpler way of life, instead making changes that elevate his lifestyle. As above, Aisha displays inclination towards living in expensive hotels, travelling in private cars, which culminates in changes in Fahri's domestic spaces from simple student abodes to luxury apartments. Fahri's few excursions with Aisha using public transport is also notable for its meandering itinerary: "there was no direct transport to our destination. We took a minibus from the nearby Abul Fida Station, heading towards Tahrir. Once at Tahrir we took the underground metro to Attaba"³³ (337). This scene of movement appears mundane, considering the recurring depictions of Fahri travelling on public transport. However, the journey proves strenuous for Aisha, as Fahri observes Aisha's consequent physical exhaustion (338), resulting in a conclusive change of their mode of transport as Aisha chooses to purchase a private car. The resolution aligns with the luxurious life that characterises their marriage, but it also reveals Aisha's inability to use modes of transport and move in spaces that do not match her social status. Despite purported ease of movement of characters in this text, we are gradually seeing glimpses of limited movements, of spaces made inaccessible based on social standings.

This leads to further queries of the kinds of spaces available to various mobile bodies in this setting, and of the possible limitations to their movements. In contrast to the extensive portrayal of academic characters, we can look to the brief mention of immobility of Indonesian migrant domestic workers. Fahri remarks that the life of Indonesians in Cairo, who are predominantly scholars and academics, differ greatly from other Indonesians in the region, citing migrant domestic workers living in Saudi Arabia as an example. Indonesians in Saudi Arabia comprise mainly of female domestic workers, and Fahri paints a bleak picture of their lives, of "not getting paid, [facing] physical and sexual abuse from their employers, becoming impregnated by fellow Indonesian labourers, facing arrest for being illegal immigrants [...]"³⁴ (68). Unlike the freedom and ease of movement, as well as stature accorded to the academic characters of *Verses*, other Indonesians living in the region of differing professional identities are subjected to limited movement and perilous experiences. Although only briefly mentioned, this remark provides insight into the experiences of other mobile bodies in the world of the novel. It further heightens the novel's awareness of contrasting experiences of movement, as influenced by one's professional identity.

³³ "Tak ada pengangkutan langsung ke sana. Kami naik bas mini dari *mahattah* Abul Fida yang tak begitu jauh dari apartmen kami menuju Tahrir. Sampai di Tahrir kami naik *metro* bawah tanah ke Attaba" (337)

³⁴ "tidak dibayar majikan, diseksa majikan, diperkosa majikan, diperlakukan seperti hamba oleh majikan, dihamili oleh sesama tenaga kerja dari Indonesia, ditangkap polis kerana tidak mempunyai keizinan tinggal secara rasmi" (68)

The most evident sample of limitations and problematics of academic identity and mobility can be seen in the rising and final conflict of the novel. Following his wedding, Fahri faces a series of misfortunes stemming from sexual assault accusations by Noura, a female neighbour whom he had earlier saved from long-term domestic abuse. However, he then rejects Noura's romantic proposals, resulting in her false accusations as a form of retaliation. Fahri is then imprisoned in Egypt, and consequently his prior qualifications from the Al-Azhar are nullified following his expulsion from the university (427). As a result, this episode leads to the loss of academic identity, social status, and ease of movement, as embodied by Fahri's imprisonment. The anxiety of his imprisonment revolves around his very expulsion from the Al-Azhar (426). Without the Azharite identity and qualifications, Fahri's journey is deemed a failure, as he laments, "I am reminded of my parents's sacrifices. Of how the land inherited from my grandfather – our sole inheritance – was sold for me to study at the Al-Azhar. And now everything has gone to waste. I feel like the most useless human being on earth"³⁵ (427). The loss of academic identity is thus amplified through consideration of its effects on his family and their financial conditions.

Once stripped of his identity as an Azharite scholar, Fahri loses the freedom and stature previously accorded to him in the world of the text. In prison, Fahri is reduced to "the Indonesian" - a crude method of address reminiscent of earlier scenes of intercultural conflicts in the novel. His Azharite identity further loses its value, as he becomes accused of using it to hide his purported depravity: "How dare you outrage the modesty of our women. You are a student of the Al-Azhar, you say you are scholar of religion, and yet you are a human in wolf's clothing!"³⁶ (370). He also becomes subjected to numerous physical abuse and emotional distress, all whilst locked in a dark underground prison. Within the confines of the prison space, Fahri suddenly becomes *immobile*.

This episode of immobility perhaps only serves as minor conflict to challenge the resolved marriage plot, as Fahri's new marriage becomes faced with turmoil following his imprisonment. However, I argue that Fahri's imprisonment also shows the volatility of the academic identity, exploring how hindrances can escalate and cause the end of mobility. As articulated thus far, Fahri's ease of movement and transition across cultures and class is enabled by his academic identity. Prior to his imprisonment, Fahri was betrothed to Aisha, and has

³⁵ "Aku teringat semua pengorbanan orang tuaku. Sawah warisan datukku, harta satu-satunya, dijual demi agar aku boleh belajar di Al Azhar Mesir. Dan kini semuanya seperti sia-sia. Aku merasa menjadi manusia yang paling tiada gunanya di dunia" (427)

³⁶ "Kau berani menginjak-injak kehormatan anak gadis kami. Kau ini mahasiswa Al-Azhar, katanya belajar agama, ternyata manusia bejat berwatak serigala!" (370)

begun moving in and occupying spaces of luxury with ease. Yet when this identity is removed, as embodied above through his expulsion, movement no longer becomes an option for Fahri, and he is restricted to the confines of the prison, when moving at all. Thus the thematic premise of the text, with relation to physical mobility, academic identities, and upward social mobility, reveals latent limitations.

The text further shows numerous academic characters rendered immobile, following their political beliefs. Fahri's compatriots in the prison space are other academic characters, rendered equally immobile due to the loss of their academic identity (376). On one hand this sanitises the moral landscape of the prison, as Fahri is surrounded by other characters from similar backgrounds, serving time for principled reasons. Yet it further corroborates the problematic dependence of a character's freedom to move on their academic identity.

The resolution of the text eventually reinstates the thematic premise, that academic, moral, and religious faultlessness, will always be rewarded with mobility and improved social status. The ending of the text not only counterbalances Fahri's temporary immobility; it also advances it by granting further mobility. This is evident from how the narrative ends with further international movement, as characters in the text experience further travels for academic purposes. Fahri's immobility is rectified by the reinstatement of his academic identity, following his acquittal and release from prison. Upon his release, Fahri learns that his previous academic work has been published into a monograph, resulting in a degree of academic fame and invitations to deliver public lectures in the United States (479). An idealistic ending, perhaps, but it also amplifies how the text returns full circle to the notion of mobility, and how it is determined largely by the movement of people for the purposes of academic work and learning.

I therefore contend that *Verses* offers fluctuating discussion of university entry and upward social mobility. As we can see from the conflict faced by Fahri in this text, the profusion and significance of academic mobility shows that it comes with its own politics, where the academic identity enables freedom and ease of movement, contingent on the soundness of the identity. In the following novel, we further examine the degree in which academic identity is dependent on mobility, where the novel centres itself on the notion of immobility.

4.4. The Tempeh-Selling Azharite: Rethinking Academic Mobility and Social Advancement in *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (*When Love Glorifies God*)³⁷

Published three years after *Verses of Love*, Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (*When Love Glorifies God*, henceforth *When Love*) also catalogues the experiences of Indonesian students living in Egypt. The narrative centres around Azzam, a young male Indonesian scholar studying at the Al-Azhar University. Surrounding him is the expansive Indonesian community in Egypt, a multitude established earlier in *Verses*. On the surface, *When Love* follows the formula introduced in the earlier novel, portraying a cast of characters navigating the consolidation of their Islamic religious values alongside marital aspirations. Yet the novel departs from *Verses* on various aspects. Firstly, the non-academic community is more prominently portrayed when compared to *Verses*. While possibly a mere characterisation strategy, the prominence of the non-academic community sets up the novel as a story that traverses both the academic and non-academic world. This follows present observations on the ease of movement and socioeconomic advancement enabled by academic identities, but *When Love* also explores movement characterised by academic deficiencies. The struggles between academic and financial hardship become central concerns in the text, and whose in-depth explorations are enabled by the polyphonic narrative.

When Love thus challenges and modifies the manifold premises established in *Verses*. Recurring themes such as the Azharite identity, academic mobility, and social advancement, have become contested elements in the novel. My analysis of the novel further contends that it complicates the premise that academic travel and university entry can lead to upward social mobility. In this section, I will explore *When Love* as a text that follows similar contextual conditions, setting, and prototypes, but ultimately deviates in its critique of unproblematised correlations between university entry and social advancement. My analysis finds that *When Love* completely subverts *Verses*, in its outward challenging of framework established in the preceding novel. In *When Love*, the degree of access and ease of movement experienced by mobile bodies in the text is dependent on the strength of their academic identity. To illustrate, I will examine the images of movements of characters in the text, focusing on their motives, modes, and meanings of movement. The various degrees of academic identity in the novel

³⁷ In this section, citations refer to Habiburrahman El-Shirazy's *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (2007) unless otherwise noted.

elucidate how ease of movement is dependent on the strength of a character's academic identity.

Academic Failures and Immobility

When Love delineates manifold motives for international academic mobility and entry into the university. This is a key difference between *Verses* and *When Love*, in that the latter utilises multiple narrative voices and viewpoints, which further enables nuanced perspectives of the intersection between academic mobility and socioeconomic status. Primarily, entry into the university is still perceived as an opportunity for socioeconomic advancement. However, the novel immediately complicates the correlation that entry into the university enables social mobility, and academic success cease to become the only path to financial emancipation. From the outset, *When Love* is centred around Azzam, a protagonist defined by his academic failures and financial hardship. Azzam's entry into the Al-Azhar University in Egypt has been marred by prolonged financial hardship, following his father's demise in Indonesia. This tragedy leaves him as the sole provider for his family, and in combatting financial hardship, Azzam decides to begin a tempeh-selling business whilst in Egypt. As his business flourishes, Azzam views the financial surplus as a sustainable form of income for his family in Indonesia. He thus decides to continue his business endeavours and prolong his stay in Egypt, by deliberately failing his examinations and remaining there for nine years.

Through the viewpoint of another character, Azzam's tenure in Egypt is characterised by his hard work. However, instead of hard work characterised by academic rigour or devotion to university education, Azzam's hard work is through "selling tempeh, soup noodles, and opening a catering service"³⁸ (32), earning him the moniker "the tempeh seller"³⁹ (29). This label leads to a recurring sense of deficiency in the novel. Thus, *When Love* posits that social advancement is no longer guaranteed by a character's entry into the university, nor via academic success. In fact, this novel suggests alternative perceptions of success.

Portrayal of university entry is also no longer limited to the underprivileged, and in turn motives for entry vary beyond monetary and upward mobility motives. This is evident through the narrative viewpoint of the character Furqan, a wealthy Indonesian student completing his graduate studies at Cairo University (29). Unlike most characters in the novel, university entry

³⁸ "menjual tempe, jual bakso, dan membuka perkhidmatan catering" (32)

³⁹ "penjual tempe" (29)

for Furqan is not necessitated by financial emancipation. Instead, Furqan's academic ambitions are largely motivated by prestige (345). Furqan is evidently structured as a foil to Azzam, enabling nuanced perspectives of university characters and their motives for mobility, when compared to *Verses*.

The character Anna Althafunnisa presents us with an interesting angle in analysing motives for university entry, beyond more conventional motives of financial emancipation and prestige. Anna is portrayed as a highly accomplished student in this novel, as her achievements of graduating with the grade *Mumtaz*⁴⁰ signals a precedent for Southeast Asian female Azharites (114). Unlike Azzam and Furqan, Anna's entry into the university is not determined by socioeconomic necessities, nor the pursuit of prestige. Instead, Anna's pursuit of university education is largely determined by unadulterated desire for academic excellence (114).

On the surface, *When Love* follows *Verses* in proposing that the attainment of academic identity elevates the social status of characters in the novel, as well as granting them ease of mobility. This has been established in Anna's movement below, where it is evident that academic success is rewarded with ease of movement and access to numerous spaces. Anna is constantly portrayed in the novel through her freedom and ease of movement, often navigating the expanse of campus and city, especially when necessitated by academic motives. A significant scene tracks her movement across the main campus of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Although the Al-Azhar University dominates the setting of the novel, the characters are in fact spread across different campus locations and universities. Pertinently, Anna is not based in Cairo, instead living and studying at the female chapter of the Al-Azhar University situated in Alexandria (59). This space is thus foreign to Anna. In this scene, Anna is summoned to collect her examination results, thus requiring her to travel to the main university campus in Cairo. News of her academic achievements inspire her to walk around the campus and the city, whilst reflecting on her progress since in arriving in Egypt. Anna recognizes the *Muraqabatul Bu'uts Al Islamiyah*⁴¹, a prominent administrative building which serves as her first entry point into the university (119). She subsequently navigates familiar locations, as she charts her plans to visit nearby bookstores, a favourite restaurant, before ending her journey with visiting a peer's home (119). Throughout her itinerary, Anna's movement is defined by ease of movement, as well as jubilation resultant of her recent academic success (119). This trajectory bears similarities to Fahri's ease of movement and jubilation in *Verses*, as he navigates the Al-

⁴⁰ Summa cum laude.

⁴¹ The Islamic Research Academy of the Al-Azhar University ("Prosedur Pendaftaran").

Azhar campus and its surroundings in the same manner. However, Anna's familiarity with the space is also notable, as she does not habitually move around these spaces. It can thus be argued that a character's degree of academic rigour allows them ease of movement, regardless of location.

Anna is further characterised by the ease of international movement enabled by her academic capabilities. Previously, Anna had completed a one-year exchange program to Wales, United Kingdom, prior to her studies at the Al-Azhar (316). This is a significant journey that defines her exceptionality, as English Language proficiency is deemed a rare accomplishment in this academic space (271). To further augment her command of mobility through academic achievements, Anna is then granted permission to travel to Malaysia to conduct research for her master's thesis. Anna outlines her immediate travel plans:

Her plan is to travel to Malaysia to conduct research for her thesis. She decides to travel that week [...] and will stay with Wan Aina whilst in Kuala Lumpur. This will enable her to complete her work easily [...] She aims to carry out her research plans at the IIUM library in Petaling Jaya, and the library of the National University of Malaysia in Kajang.⁴² (120)

The ease of movement exhibited above becomes significant when contrasted with the norm of international movement in the text. In *When Love*, international travels back to Indonesia or beyond the Middle Eastern region are presented as financially unfeasible journeys. This is encompassed through Cut Mala's concerns upon hearing her brother Fadhli's desire to return home: "if you are to return [to Indonesia] how will you fund that trip? You need money to buy the ticket"⁴³ (430). The financial aspects of movement will be explored shortly - suffice for us to establish now that Anna's ease of international movement is atypical and only enabled by the academic motives of her travels.

Indeed, the novel consistently facilitates movement that result from academic achievements, with academic shortcomings evoking contrasting responses. A notable evidence is the differing experiences and movements of students arriving for examinations at the university. This is embodied through the contrasting experiences of two students: Ali and Nanang. Ali's movements on the day of the examination is described as "travelling calmly,

⁴² "Rancangannya ia hendak melakukan penelitian di Malaysia untuk bahan tesisnya. Maka ia merasa, sebaiknya ia berangkat minggu ini [...] Fikirnya, ia dapat bersama Wan Aina selama di Kuala Lumpur. Sehingga urusan penelitian untuk tesisnya [...] akan menjadi lebih mudah [...] Ia merancang hendak melakukan penyelidikan di Perpustakaan IIUM di Petaling Jaya, dan Perpustakaan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia di Kajang" (120)

⁴³ "Kalau abang mahu pulang dari mana abang akan mendapatkan wang? Beli tiket itu perlukan duit bang" (430)

with a pleased smile”⁴⁴ (305), considering his adequate preparations for the exam. In contrast, Nanang departs for the campus “looking pale”⁴⁵, being unprepared for the examinations (305). Indeed, other equally ill-prepared characters are illustrated as moving with agitation, such that “crossing the campus gates is enough for them to break into cold sweats”⁴⁶ (305). The narrative thus asserts that academic deficiencies will manifest into inconvenient movements.

Analysis of Furqan’s movements further exemplify accelerated mobility in the novel. In contrast with the financial obstacles preventing international travels above, Furqan regularly returns to Indonesia, such that the journey is now perceived as routine and insignificant:

[...] Returning home to Indonesia is not a rare experience for Furqan, as he makes the trip twice a year. So there is nothing special about his upcoming trip. Everyone perceives it as routine. If other students were to return, it would be a completely different atmosphere. The one-way journey home seems more special for students who have not once returned in five years.⁴⁷ (351)

Furqan thus experiences a similar ease of international movement to Anna. However, Furqan departs from the conditions of mobility set by Anna, in that his movement is facilitated by wealth. As such, the novel compounds wealth and socioeconomic status as alternative enablers of movement.

Against the above narratives of ease of movement, el-Shirazy presents the central protagonist Azzam as a character limited in his modes and motives of movement. In contrast with both Furqan and Anna, Azzam does not possess financial means, nor is he characterised by academic rigour. Analysis of his movements illustrates these difficulties. In a particular scene, Furqan is depicted as using his own car in Cairo. He passes by Azzam, who is navigating the city on foot and by bus:

Outside the gates [Azzam] passes by a white Fiat sedan, not realising that the car is driven by Furqan. He is not aware - and neither is Furqan - that he is crossing paths with Azzam, the friend whom he had arrived with in Egypt, sitting on the same plane,

⁴⁴ “Ali berangkat dengan tenang dan senyum mengembang.” (305).

⁴⁵ “Nanang berangkat dengan wajah pucat” (305).

⁴⁶ “masuk gerbang kampus saja telah membuatnya berkeringat dingin” (305).

⁴⁷ “Furqan sangat sering pulang. Tiap tahun pulang dua kali. Jadi tidak ada yang istimewa dengan kepulangannya. Mereka menganggapnya hal yang biasa. Berbeda jika mahasiswa lain yang pulang. Yang lima tahun tidak pernah pulang terus mau pulang ke Tanah Air untuk selamanya. Terasa istimewa” (351).

some nine years ago [...] Azzam began walking towards Abbasiya Square, looking for a bus to the Al-Saeda Zainab [market].⁴⁸ (274)

Such jarring contrasts are consistent with designations of Furqan as the foil to Azzam's character. Azzam frequently invokes the memory of arriving in Egypt with Furqan, lamenting the differences in their academic trajectory. The differences in their modes of transport materially embodies how travels to Egypt, and specifically entry into the Al-Azhar University, does not function as a class leveller in this novel.

In the above scene, el-Shirazy further alludes to the types of spaces that Azzam regularly moves in. Azzam's constant movements around markets and shops, instead of the university campus, reveal discrepancies relating to academic identities and movement in the novel. Specifically, characters defined by academic rigour such as Anna and Furqan are both moving in spaces that consolidate their identities as university students. In contrast, Azzam is constantly depicted as travelling to local marketplaces to purchase ingredients for his tempeh-selling business. He therefore only moves in spaces relevant to his identity as a food vendor catering to the Indonesian community in Egypt. This incongruity indicates that despite his identity as an Azharite scholar, Azzam is rarely situated in academic spaces.

Where Anna's movements around the university earlier is characterised by her jubilation resulting from achievements, Azzam's irregular excursions to the university are imbued with guilt and regret. One such instance portrays Azzam coming to the university bookstore to purchase an important textbook. However, his actions are belated, as "[the book] was released a month ago, and yet he has not been able to collect it. Unlike other Azharites, his personal situation prevents him from committing fully to his studies. The tempeh business was consuming all his time in Cairo"⁴⁹ (135). This scene further encapsulates the relegation of Azzam's academic commitments, in favour of his business endeavours. As the narrative progresses, the reader is afforded insight into Azzam's inner conflict, regarding the discord of his identity as an Azharite and a tempeh-seller as reflected by his detachment from the university space. Starting with lamentations at his delay in buying the textbook, Azzam then

⁴⁸ "Di luar pintu gerbang [Azzam] bertembung dengan sedan Fiat putih yang dikenderai oleh Furqan. Ia tidak tahu yang memandu kereta itu adalah Furqan. Sebab ia memang tidak perasan. Furqan pun tidak tahu bahawa yang baru saja berselisih dengannya itu adalah Azzam teman satu pesawat saat berangkat ke Mesir sembilan tahun yang lalu [...] Azzam melangkahkan kakinya menuju Mahattah Abasea. Ia mahu mencari bas ke [pasar] Sayyeda Zaenab" (274)

⁴⁹ "[Buku itu] sebenarnya sudah keluar satu bulan yang lalu. Namun ia belum sempat untuk mengambilnya. Karena kondisi pribadinya menghalanginya untuk bisa benar-benar aktif kuliah seperti mahasiswa Al Azhar pada umumnya. Kesibukan hariannya membuat tempe dan memasarkannya nyaris menyita hampir sebagian waktunya di Cairo." (135).

expresses sorrow whilst looking at news of recent graduations, reflecting on his own failure to complete his studies (139). As he moves further around the campus, he is faced with another regrettable situation, when his business commitments prevent him from attending a public lecture by a renowned academic (146). He ponders regrettably that “he spends more time at the Al-Sayeda Zainab Market buying ingredients for his tempeh and meatball soup business, than attending lectures by renowned academics on campus”⁵⁰ (141). This observation exemplifies the juxtaposition of spaces occupied by Azzam, as opposed to Anna and Furqan earlier. Thus analysis of movement highlights the potency of spaces in influencing characters’ identities, as well as revealing inaccessible spaces.

Azzam’s immobility, due to his financial and academic shortcomings, is the most significant example of discrepancies in ease of movement. A constant method of characterising movement in this text is of the timelines and trajectory of characters’ arrivals to Egypt, ending with their eventual departures. For example, the distinction between Azzam and Furqan is often exemplified by their similar starting points, having travelled together to Egypt “on the same plane”⁵¹ nine years ago (29). This recurring image amplifies their projected parallel trajectories, highlighting the influence of mobility in erasing class divisions. However, Azzam’s academic progress has since been hampered by financial problems, leading to his inability to focus and complete his undergraduate studies. Contrastingly, Furqan has progressed with ease, completing both his undergraduate and graduate studies (29). In a similar scene, Azzam meets a fellow student Miftah, and reflects on Miftah’s arrival as his junior four years ago (144). Since then, Azzam’s hampered education has relegated him to joining Miftah’s cohort (144). His academic shortcomings have thus rendered him stagnant, to an extent academically immobile.

By extension of his academic stasis, Azzam’s immobility is further compounded by his nine-year residence in Egypt (158). In contrast to Furqan’s habitual trips home and Anna’s academically-motivated travels, Azzam is plagued by his inability to return to Indonesia. This dilemma has been briefly mentioned, as financial instability prevents numerous characters from returning home. However, Azzam’s compromised academic identity further complicates his return, as he refuses to “return as a university dropout [...] [his] only way out is through continuing to work hard here”⁵² (32). This principle leads to a conundrum, as I have reiterated

⁵⁰ “Ia lebih banyak pergi ke Pasar Sayyeda Zaenab untuk membeli bahan dasar membuat tempe dan bakso daripada ke kampus untuk kuliah” (141).

⁵¹ “Teman satu pesawat saat datang ke Mesir dulu” (29)

⁵² “Saya tidak ingin pulang dan putus kuliah di tengah jalan. Maka satu-satunya jalan adalah saya harus bekerja keras di sini” (32).

that Azzam's business endeavours are not only indispensable in sourcing funds for both his family and his return trip home – it also prevents him from fully committing to his studies. As such, Azzam has thus been rendered *immobile*, bound in Egypt for nine years.

Incongruous Movements and Decadence

Through its extensive coverage of the financial difficulties faced by characters throughout and even towards the end of their university experience, *When Love* subverts ideal linkages between university entry and upward social mobility. Similar to *Verses*, minor transgressive actions in the novel result in conflict and immobility. However, such hindrances are resolved in *Verses*, through reinstating promise of social advancement and reinforcing Egypt as a space of emancipatory possibilities. *When Love* posits the contrary – entry into the university does not lead to upward social mobility, and the notion of material wealth itself is repeatedly problematised. It begins and ends with criticisms of luxury, and constantly evades fulfilment of upward mobility, instead choosing to problematise the notion of wealth. Images of ease of movement and upward social mobility in *When Love* must therefore be critically examined, to explore latent mobility politics and problematics.

The most palpable criticism of wealth is through moments of conflict caused by moving in spaces deemed culturally and religiously ambiguous in the text. An interesting space constantly navigated by characters in the novel is the hotel. Despite significance of the university setting, characters, and issues throughout the novel, the text begins with the unexpected setting of a luxury hotel. Throughout the novel, hotels constantly emerge as an important setting, and is gradually connoted as a space antithetical to the university. Hotels symbolise unattainable luxury and is a space markedly unrelated nor frequented by the academic characters. It is therefore notable that the first image of Azzam is in a luxury hotel in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, whilst manning his food business. This exemplifies his primary characterisation as a businessperson rather than an Azharite scholar. Indeed, Azzam consistently reveals his desire to lead a life of luxury by becoming a successful businessman, as he confesses “he aims to at least get a master's degree. But he also harboured another obsession, which is to become rich! As he was already known as a businessman rather than an accomplished scholar in Cairo, he might as well pursue this path and become a respected

businessman back in Indonesia”⁵³ (331). However, Azzam’s movement within this hotel space is defined by indentured limitations, as his access to this space is enabled only by his assignment as a cook. Observing events at the hotel, Azzam ponders his limited movements, of how “[he] was not able to participate in events, as he was tasked to prepare grilled fish [...] [unable] to experience the romantic atmosphere of the renowned El Muntazah area”⁵⁴ (27). Thus for Azzam, university entry does not elevate his socioeconomic status through attainment of education, nor has it improved his life through business endeavours. Instead, he is constantly bound by class and financial constraints, even whilst navigating spaces that denote wealth.

Furqan’s frequent movement around hotels portrays him as a character of wealth and luxury, in evident contrast with Azzam. Such is the luxury of movement enabled by his wealth, that Furqan is able to rent a luxurious hotel room whilst preparing for his thesis defence (127). Furqan’s navigation of the hotel space shows familiarity, as he requests specific rooms based on prior experiences of this space (124). Where Furqan’s vista of Cairo from his hotel room is a vantage point of the city from above (126), Azzam can only access limited views of the city of Alexandria from his position on the fifth floor of the hotel (2). As such, Furqan’s movements around hotels function to show the different ways in which characters are granted movement in this novel. Financial status further creates gradations to the accessibility of spaces. To an extent, it can be argued that limitations of movement around spaces of wealth are further tied to their academic identities. Furqan justifies his residence at the hotel as facilitating his examination preparations (127). On the other hand, Azzam’s participation in luxurious events as a tempeh seller grants him access into the hotel. Whilst Azzam is relegated to the fringes of the scene, Furqan dominates centre space as a respected student (29). The narrative thus continues its portrayal of the intricate relationship between ease of movement and academic identities.

Furthermore, the narrative reveals latent critique of the hotel as a space incongruous with the academic characters. As above, the introductory image of Azzam shows his movement in non-academic spaces, partaking activities unrelated to his identity as an Azharite student. The novel further sets up the hotel as a space synonymous with impropriety. The hotel space enables contact between Azzam and members of the upper classes, leading to his interaction

⁵³ “Ia menargetkan minima ia berpendidikan M.A. Tapi ia memiliki satu obsesi, iaitu mesti menjadi kaya! Ia sudah terlanjur dikenali sebagai businessman di Cairo, tidak dikenal sebagai aktivis kumpulan belajar, maka sekalian ia tidak mahu kepalang tanggung, ia harus jadi businessman yang disegani di Indonesia nanti” (331)

⁵⁴ “[ia] tidak boleh meni’mati majlis itu, sebab ia sibuk menyiapkan ikan bakar [...] Azzam yang ingin istirehat di malam terakhir merasa tidak boleh istirehat. Ia yang sedikit ingin merasakan suasana romantic di El Muntazah yang sangat terkenal itu sama sekali tidak boleh merasakannya” (27)

with the character Eliana. In the novel, Eliana is portrayed as the wealthy daughter of the Indonesian ambassador to Egypt, who was educated at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Both her social status and education background are used to signify her deviation from cultural and Islamic religious norms of the text. In a notable scene, Eliana offers to reward Azzam for his hard work with a “*French kiss* - a special kiss from France”⁵⁵ (35). Azzam perceives this as an impudent act, in that it disregards his identity as a respectable student of religion: “This wretched French-educated woman! She knows that I’m an Azharite scholar, how dare she treat me as she would a white man! Insane!”⁵⁶ (36). Azzam’s response thus reveals the base extent of Eliana’s actions. While accessing the hotel signals a degree of attained luxury for Azzam, ultimately this space also leads to degrading and perceptibly corrupt interactions.

Further criticism of incongruous movements can be observed through Furqan’s tragic subplot. During his aforementioned residence at the hotel, Furqan falls victim to an extortion plot, where he is sexually assaulted whilst unconscious. This episode becomes a prolonged conflict for Furqan, as he is first blackmailed with incriminating photos, before being diagnosed with HIV following the encounter. The juxtaposition of “fifteen incriminating photos of you”⁵⁷, against “a desk that has your laptop and a copy of your thesis on it. And lastly, your university identity card!”⁵⁸ (368), reveals the detrimental effect of this conflict on Furqan’s academic status. Signifiers of his academic identity, such as his laptop, thesis, and university card become implicated as items of blackmail, and are positioned in equally incriminating positions.

The hotel is further flagged as a problematic space, as Furqan’s demoted status is ascribed to his movements and habitation of the hotel. Furqan’s residence at the hotel is posited as a form of decadence enabled by his financial means, yet incongruous with his identity as a university student. Thus, his behaviour of occupying the hotel space is conceptualised as a form of misuse of privilege, and misguided method of attaining knowledge. The error of his movements is amplified by criticism voiced towards his actions, as a senior scholar tells him “I think this is God’s condemnation of your lifestyle, which does not befit a scholar. It was excessive of you to stay in a hotel with the excuse of seeking concentration”⁵⁹ (268). An extensive comparison follows, of the long history of ascetic scholars, who have forsaken worldly luxuries in their pursuit of knowledge. As a sample, Furqan cites a renowned Islamic

⁵⁵ “*French kiss*, ciuman khas Perancis” (35)

⁵⁶ “Dasar perempuan didikan Perancis tidak tahu adab kesopanan! Sudah tahu aku ini mahasiswa Al-Azhar mahu disamakan dengan orang putih saja! Gila mungkin!” (36)

⁵⁷ “lima belas foto tidak senonoh. Mas modelnya.” (368)

⁵⁸ “Itu meja di mana ada laptop dan naskah tesis Mas. Terus terakhir lihat ini, kad mahasiswa Mas!” (368)

⁵⁹ “Ini teguran dari Allah atas cara hidupmu yang menurutku sudah tidak wajar sebagai seorang penuntut ilmu. Menurutku kau sudah berlebihan dengan menginap di hotel untuk alasan agar bisa konsentrasi.” (268).

scholar, who resorted to drinking his own urine to survive whilst seeking knowledge, reflecting on the contrast with himself, “dining in the expensive restaurant at the Meridien Hotel”⁶⁰ (270). It is thus clear that Furqan’s lifestyle, and specifically his movement within luxury spaces such as hotels, becomes viewed as the cause of his downfall.

Further instances of misappropriated movement lead to conflicts that highlight the hostility and subtle intercultural tension experienced by the mobile academic character. As an example, the liberal interactions and travels of Azzam’s housemate Nasir leads to a hostile encounter with the Egyptian security forces. Nasir had invited an Egyptian acquaintance met during his numerous travels to their house. This act is received negatively by the Indonesian characters, evident through Azzam’s admonition: “[Nasir], you’ve been in Egypt for a long time. Surely you know that we need to be cautious! Why didn’t you ask for our permission first?”⁶¹ (222). Initially Azzam’s fears appear unfounded, but clearly sets a cautious tone towards intercultural relations in the text. The plot immediately rationalises the paranoia, as Egyptian security forces arrive at their flat to arrest the acquaintance, said to be a wanted criminal. Notably, this scene follows earlier tension between the local and the foreign exhibited in *Verses*. The figure of the Indonesian scholar in these novels is accorded respect and ease of movement, provided that granted mobility does not transgress their academic identity. As warned by the security forces, voicing the local in *When Love*, “Don’t cause too much trouble in Egypt. You are only here to study. Remember that!”⁶² (241). This scene illustrates the underlying fears and dangers of unchecked movement, and warnings against transgressing beyond academic motives. Thus blame is largely apportioned on Nasir’s liberal movements, of how his reckless act and movement have consequently unsettled the stability of their own private space.

The ultimate consequence of these examples of misuse of movement is also immobility. The hostile situation in Azzam’s flat, caused by a visit from a compromising figure, ends with Nasir’s regret and decision to cease travelling for leisure. For Furqan, this means forced returns to Indonesia and permanently being barred from returning to Egypt. As such, I contend that in the novel, instances of forsaken academic identities result in immobility. *When Love* therefore complicates what *Verses* attempts to communicate: the notion that moving to Egypt for education will lead to upward social mobility.

⁶⁰ “makan dan minum di restoran mewah Hotel Meridien” (270).

⁶¹ “[Nasir], kamu kan sudah lama di Mesir. Dan kamu sudah tahu bagaimana kita harus berhati-hati! Kenapa kamu tidak minta izin kami dulu!” (222)

⁶² “Jangan banyak berbuat masalah di Mesir. Izin kalian di sini hanya untuk belajar. Ingat itu!” (241)

4.5. Academic Mobility and Social Advancement in the Indonesian Azharite Novel

This chapter began by examining the issue of class in campus novels, of how entry into the university remains embedded as a necessary step towards upward social mobility, as well as the limitations of this premise. I aim to close this chapter by returning to the campus novel genre, examining how the study of texts in this chapter adds to the critical tradition. I further consider the background conditions that necessitate entry to the university for upward social mobility, in the case of El-Shirazy's Indonesian religious romance novels. The most evident finding in this chapter is the significance of travels to Egypt and the Azharite education, in enabling upward social mobility for Indonesian characters. How then should we consider this finding, in relation to the campus novel genre?

As prefaced in the introduction of this chapter, the Indonesian religious romance novel phenomenon is evidently detached from the campus novel label. It is important to note that whilst minimal, Indonesian literary tradition has conceptualised its own variation of the campus novel genre. Jakob Sumardjo observes the rise of campus novels as variations of popular novels in Indonesia in the 1970s (4). According to Sumardjo, the first instance of the genre in Indonesia is Ashadi Siregar's 1974 novel *Cintaku di Kampus Biru (My Love on the Blue Campus)* (9). Following Siregar, there was a rise in student-centred campus novels through the decade, produced by writers such as Marga T., Marianne Katoppo, and Sri Bakti Subakir, to name a few (Sumardjo 9). Whilst the film adaptations of majority of these works then achieved significant success, indicating that "the genre has spread its wings beyond the written form" (Oemarjati 139), there has been little study on the Indonesian campus novel since then.

Instead, *Verses* and *When Love* are often considered in relation to other Indonesian literary traditions of mobility, particularly the *sastra santri* movement (Prie GS 11). Loosely translated as Muslim devotional literature, this movement is seen as the product of *pesantren*⁶³ alumni, and Badrus Shaleh purports that "*pesantren* literature emerged immediately at the start of the Reformation, becoming more popular following the election of Kiai Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) as the first religious leader to become the fourth president of the Republic of Indonesia"⁶⁴ (xiii). More specifically, El-Shirazy's works are often linked with the works of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), to the extent that El-Shirazy is dubbed as "little

⁶³ "Islamic boarding schools" (Hariyadi 456)

⁶⁴ "wacana sastra pesantren muncul tepatnya setelah era reformasi berlangsung dan menjadi demikian 'naik daun' setelah Kiai Abdurrahman Wahid atau Gus Dur menjabat sebagai kepala negara, sebagai ulama pertama yang menjadi presiden di ke-4 Republik Indonesia" (xiii)

Hamka”⁶⁵ (Prie GS 14). It is important to note that Hamka’s works did not focus specifically on narratives of university education at the Al-Azhar. Rather, the focus is on the religious Haj pilgrimages. Instead, their similarities are primarily due to the centrality of travel trope and foreign setting, as both El-Shirazy and Hamka showed penchant for setting their works in the Middle East. Hairus Salim contends that select narratives of religious Haj pilgrimages to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina are predecessors to the mobility trope in El-Shirazy’s works. Specifically, Salim singles out Hamka’s *Under the Protection of Ka'bah*⁶⁶, a tale of religious pilgrimage following failed romance, as laying the foundations for religious romance novels such as *Verses* (Hairus).

The earliest novel to focus on the Indonesian Azharite experience is the novel *Student Soleiman*, written in 1935 by Muhammad Dimiyati (Bandung). In his study of Indonesian novels that focus on the Al-Azhar University, Bandung Mawardi states that “*Student Soleiman* preceded *Verses* and *When Love Glorifies God* where the Al-Azhar is concerned” (Bandung). The novel details a character’s aspirations to travel from Indonesia and study at the Al-Azhar University. Ultimately, the narrative ends with the protagonist’s departure from Indonesia for Egypt. This is thus a major difference between *Student Soleiman* and the texts studied in this chapter, in that it is a text that aspires towards the university narrative, ending with the moment of entry.

As such, the literary phenomenon pioneered by El-Shirazy has local predecessors, all of which closely follow the historical and longstanding relationship of movement between Indonesia and Egypt. Mobility from Indonesia to Egypt are varied, from labourers travelling for work, religious pilgrimages to the Islamic Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, and scholars attending various institutions for religious education. Examining Joshua Barker and Johan Lindquist’s 2009 work on “Figures of Indonesian Modernity”, Noel Salazar observes that majority of these figures are notably mobile bodies: “the *TKW* (*Tenaga Kerja Wanita*), or overseas female labor migrant, who embodies the contradictions of class and gender mobility [...] and *Pak Haji*, or Mr. Hajj, who wears the white cap that proclaims he has made the pilgrimage to Mecca” (“Theorizing Mobility” 161).

Of particular relevance in my studies is the long history of Indonesians travelling to Egypt for university education. Michael Laffan notes that the earliest evidence of Indonesian student communities in Egypt can be traced back to the early 1860s, and whilst minimal in its

⁶⁵ “HAMKA kecil” (Prie GS 14)

⁶⁶ *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah*

early days, Laffan observes that these communities have only grown through the years (3). Laffan illustrates this through the material evidence of their presence, through Indonesian-owned buildings, number of students, and their spectrum of cultural variations (13). Holger Warnk further notes that the travels of Southeast Asian students to the Middle East reach Kuwait, Jordan, and Qatar, in addition to the traditional locations of the Al-Azhar University, or in various institutions in the Islamic Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina (114).

To be clear, the Azharite education or university education from Egypt was not always regarded as enabling social mobility in Indonesian social context. These travels for knowledge were historically regarded as practices of lower-classes. This is an extension of social beliefs that relegate Islamic values and lifestyles as associated with the lower-classes. Laffan notes how the movement of Indonesian students to the Middle East for studies were often impacted by global issues, such as the war period between 1939-45 (8). What this then causes is significant financial hardship whilst abroad, where comparisons were made with fellow Southeast Asian compatriots, such as Malaysians, who were less affected by the global financial turmoil (Laffan 14). Thus the Al-Azhar university education, whilst in essence prestigious, was not idealised as having emancipatory functions.

The favourable regard towards the social and financial value of Azharite education was expedited by the end of the Suharto era in Indonesia. Machmudi asserts that the sending of Indonesians for religious education in Egypt has a long history of defiance against Suharto's New Order (30). According to Ariel Heryanto, the end of Suharto's rule led to a wave of 'Islamisation', which saw the popular rise and commodification of Islam in Indonesia (Heryanto). Essentially, social advancement intersects with university education, academic mobility, and the marriage plot due to what is termed by Mohd. Zariat as "luxury [...] begotten from [the character's] 'perfection'" ("Islam, Romance" 64). Characters must be cosmopolitan, well-educated, and have achieved a rounded life complemented by the stability of marriage, as a requirement in Islam ("Islam, Romance" 64). Eric Sasono explains the complex intersection between academic identity and social standing through highlighting "personal achievement" as an important issue in the text (57). It should be noted that Sasono's observations are drawn from the film adaptation of *Verses* and *When Love*. Nevertheless, Sasono's observation of characterisation runs through both the text and its adaptation. Sasono further notes that "higher education is not just an end but is perceived as a tool for social advancement. Both of the lead characters in the films come from low to middle class families and they marry women of upper-class family background. Education in this light is regarded as a tool to level out social class" (57). This is essentially what has been explored in this chapter – the notion that upward social

mobility is necessitated by travel and entry into the university abroad, particularly Middle Eastern and Egyptian institutions.

It is also important to note that the university education must be one attained abroad, particularly in the Middle East and Egypt. Hairus Salim reasons this as a religion-driven decision, observing that historically, Indonesian Muslims have perceived Cairo as an Islamic space (Hairus). This perception is derived from the fact that Indonesians in Cairo are predominantly there for the purpose of religious education (Hairus). As such, it becomes the ideal setting for the emerging Muslim middle class, enabling the intersection of religious values with cosmopolitan desires. In contrast, the foreign setting might be based on reasons of prestige. Intan Paramaditha observes Egypt, and particularly the Al-Azhar University, as being an aspirational location for middle class Indonesians (72). According to Paramaditha, “Egypt codifies an authentic Muslim space and the transnational trajectory pursued by middle-class Indonesian Muslims” (71). Thus we are seeing in *Verses*, and later in *When Love*, the figure of the cosmopolitan and well-educated Muslim as portrayed in popular media.

In all, my exploration of the contextual conditions leading to the literary phenomenon of *Verses of Love* and Indonesian religious romance narratives set in the foreign university setting points towards a central finding: that there are variations of the campus novel genre thriving in international settings whilst detached from the critical tradition. It is too simplistic to say that the critical tradition has ignored these literatures; a more productive way of seeing this omission is to say that there is much to be learned by widening the cultural and geographical scope of studies of the genre. By examining *Verses* and *When Love*, my studies of the two novels in this chapter are able to explore how the class mobility and university relationship appears in other cultures and locations. When viewed against the campus novel genre, it is therefore interesting to see how issues such as class mobility and the university are universal, but also intricately linked with local histories and conditions. As such, these studies are necessary for the genre in that they widen the scope and corpus of the genre, as well as querying the limits of the dominant critical tradition.

A final interesting point to note is that my studies found that these texts are not just detached from the Anglo-American tradition, but also offer new routes of travel. As explored thus far, travel and cultural contact in campus novels have always been between Britain and America, or between East and West in either direction. However, *Verses* and *When Love* have offered us new trajectories and specifically bilateral directions of travel, as we follow the route from Indonesia to Egypt. This further refreshes the existing critical tradition of the genre, by offering alternative routes, and its corresponding relations, conflicts, or limitations. In the next

chapter, I will offer a final alternative perspective to studying the genre through the lens of mobility. This will be done by looking at the novel form of movement, of returns.

Chapter 5 | Degrees of Success: Representations of Return Narratives in Selected Post-University Novels

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have explored the politics of academic mobility in campus novels through analysis of motives and starting points, as well as differing experiences of corporeal mobility. In this final chapter, I will conclude my analysis of movement by focusing on the end of journeys in campus novels. Exits or departures from the university are the most prevalent endings of campus novels, also often the final act of movement seen in these texts. However, I have discovered that beyond the Anglo-American critical tradition and corpus of the genre, the trajectory of movement differs, as numerous texts have instead constructed the moment of university departure at the start of the narrative. This results in an extensive study of what has happened since the return, and constant negotiation between the past and the present.

My research in this chapter therefore aims to study the ubiquity of university return narratives, and how it presents alternative perspectives to studies of the genre. This will be done by examining Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) (henceforth *Season*) and Norsiah Abd. Gapar's *Pengabdian* (1987) (henceforth *Submission*). This chapter introduces texts that are set following departure from the university space, interspersed with flashbacks to the university in the past. As such, this chapter conceptualises the texts studied as university return narratives. The two texts were selected on the basis of centrality of the university departure and return narrative, despite coming from geographically and culturally diverse literary traditions. My analysis contends that in select spheres where international academic mobility is intertwined with the society and nation, through mechanisms such as state-funded education missions, the university narrative is measured by the successes or failures of the university return narrative.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of exits in campus novels, examining how and why campus novels often end with departures from the university space. I will then propose the study of alternative endings and final movements, such as university returns, considering their prominence in non-Anglo-American literatures. I will first articulate my concept of 'return narratives', borrowing from several established models and critical studies. I will then provide a brief overview of prevalence of return narratives in campus novels across various literary traditions. In the next section, I will explore the significance of university returns in two

primary texts, focusing on the portrayal of return and its meaning and influence on the narrative. Finally, I will examine the contextual conditions which may have influenced the centrality of university returns in these literatures, specifically focusing on the importance of education missions in each socio-cultural context.

I ultimately argue that return mobilities are significant images of corporeal mobility presently absent from the genre, both in writing and critical studies. This absence must be rectified, as it is a critical aspect of university narratives, especially beyond the Anglo-American literary traditions. Additionally, the analysis of university return narratives enables us to push beyond the established conventions of the genre, to investigate alternative ways of looking at space, time, and movement in the campus novel.

5.2. Exits, Departures, Returns

In campus novels, friction is evident and movement stops numerous times. There is, of course, evidence of movements being stopped based on socio-political conflicts and threats, as explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Chapter 4 also explored samples of halted movements, of the challenges faced by quotidian movements across the university and various physical spaces. Significantly, in numerous campus novels the most evident moments denoting end of movement are portrayal of exits and departures from the university space.

Existing studies on departures are minimal, but they note that departures are consistently the desired resolution in campus novels, with minimal changes over time. Adam Begley in his 1997 study notes that two pioneering texts of the genre, Mary McCarthy's *Groves of Academe* (1952) and *Pictures from an Institution* (1954) by Randall Jarrell, are "[both] about leaving campus – the action, if it doesn't involve swearing off academic life, leads at least to exodus from a specific college" ("The Decline" 143). In a 2008 article, Sally Dalton-Brown extensively examines the significance of exits in a corpus of more recent campus novels, such as Richard Russo's *Straight Man* (1997), *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee (1999), and Francine Prose's *Blue Angel* (2000).

Dalton-Brown argues that exits are necessary as desired escape, from the increasingly problematic academic space. According to Dalton-Brown, the university in campus novels has been designed as a setting void of ideals, "an environment that almost appears to encourage foolishness, fakery and philandering" (591). As such, "egress [from the university]" is desired, "if today's academic is to recover his ideals" (Dalton-Brown 591). However, exits are

conflicting issues, and often come at a cost. As I have established in preceding chapters, campus novels have been consistently about entry and desired inclusion. Thus exits are rife with contradictions in campus novels, as “the academic who fought for his place in that world understandably regards such an egress with ambiguity” (Dalton-Brown 591). As a result, the university in the campus novel is often set up as an entrapping environment, from which exits are desired narrative resolutions approached with contradiction.

These dilemmas have been formulated as conventions of the genre, particularly established by the seminal campus novel *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis. Dalton-Brown asserts that the model set by *Lucky Jim* constructs the campus novel to be geared towards, and end with, the dilemma of exits. Exits are one of two resultant outcomes in campus novels, as Dalton-Brown observes “the academic either wins the battle to stay in academe, or escapes” (592). The conundrum lies in that remaining means surviving, whilst the latter is the desired resolution, because exits denote freedom, as with exits “conventionality ends as the protagonist rediscovers a creative originality once freed from generic confines” (Dalton-Brown 592).

Dale Salwak further asserts *Lucky Jim* as setting the model for campus novels ending with departures. Salwak conceptualises the departure at the novel’s end as a necessary resolution to the peaks and largely troughs of the narrative trajectory. According to Salwak, the ending [of *Lucky Jim*] is a satisfying conclusion to all of the comic injustices that have gone on before. This happy ending is not contrived; it comes about naturally and can be explained in part as a convention of the novel, in part the protagonist’s wish-fulfillment, in part as his final nose-thumbing at the spiteful and the malicious people whom Amis brings to life. The ending is based on the affirmation of a moral order, and as such it is both acceptable and laudable to us. (224)

Examining Salwak’s arguments, I argue that the notion of “happy ending” lies in the many victories achieved by the protagonist come the end of text. Salwak notes the significance of these victories, that “the imaginative core of [the text], then, is not the fact that Jim rebels or that he wins, but in the *way* he rebels and wins” (224). Thus, departures symbolise an ideal ending, a victorious end, in campus novels.

That exits in campus novels are intertwined with novelistic endings is also an important aspect to consider. Peter Rabinowitz sees endings – and its counterpart, beginnings – as “privileged positions” (58). According to Rabinowitz, “among the rules that apply quite broadly among nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American prose narratives are rules that privilege certain positions: titles, beginnings and endings (not only of whole texts,

but of subsections as well—volumes, chapters, episodes), epigraphs, and descriptive subtitles” (58). Privileged positions are therefore moments of purported significance aided by its position in a text, and endings benefit from the presumed finality of its position. Giuliana Adamo further presents studies of the designations of endings. For Adamo, the ending of a novel is often codified by the literary genre, and constructed to aid the formal structure (“Beginnings” 100). This belief is influenced by studies made by Hamon Philippe in his article “Clausules”, where Adamo picks up Philippe’s notion that modern endings are determined by literary genres, and operate on particular “code of closure” (“Twentieth” 64). Adamo contends that endings in modern novels function as the point of relation between the text and the real world, that “the closing strategies prepare the reader's transition from the novelistic universe to daily life” (“Beginnings” 97).

My queries begin by considering images of exits in relation to its position as novelistic endings of campus novels. Guided by the theories of endings above, it is evident that endings are often determined according to literary genres. As such, the recurrence of exits in the closing moments of campus novels presents exits and departures from the university as the codified and conventional ending of campus novels. Existing studies such as Dalton-Brown and Salwak above interpret these endings as resultant of the university’s devolution, into a problematic space that necessitates escape. Thus their analysis perceives the conventional ending of exits as resultant of social factors.

However, there are some limitations to the writing and study of exits as conventional endings of campus novels. Part of arguments reasoning the genre’s decline lies in the exhaustive conventions and consequent critical tradition. As encompassed by Dalton-Brown, conventions of the genre, including its narrative arc towards escape, presents “a remarkably stale picture” (593). It is one thing to construct exits as the model mode of ending campus novels, another if exits have become the only narrative resolution viable for the genre.

Furthermore, exits as conventional endings are also not without their limitations. Adamo notes that endings are the purported moment of transition between the novel and reality. However, such transitions are not evident in the endings of campus novels. Dalton-Brown concludes her studies by highlighting the problematic alternatives proposed for campus novels. For Dalton-Brown, a possible exit for the academic figure in literature is to exist “between the pages of the intellectual thriller or film”, citing *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown, and the Indiana Jones series as evident success stories (599). However, Dalton-Brown notes that these alternatives are limited, as they prevent academia from consolidating its place in literature and reality, instead being compelled to exist as another form of genre fiction (599). Endings in

campus novels are thus moments of conflict, where exits are desired but have since become a generic purgatory, and departures only mean moving into other novelistic universes. Further research is therefore necessary, in ensuring studies of exits as a viable form of movement in campus novels.

In many ways, part-campus novels are possible alternatives that can rectify these limitations. Part-campus novels are texts where departures do not take place at the end of the novel, rather occurring in the middle or as an end to a subplot. These texts are perceived as relatively less limited variations of the genre. Petr Antene compares David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988) – the final work from Lodge's 'The Campus Trilogy' – and Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), as examples of works where the university is meshed with the outside world, rather than created as separate spheres. In *Nice Work*, the university is considered in relation to the industry (Antene 228), whereas *White Noise* presents extensive examination of American society and behaviours (Antene 229). Antene asserts that these are pioneering depictions, where "both *Nice Work* and *White Noise* transgress the usual confines of the campus novel by including events that take place outside the university" (235).

But further alternatives might have been hinted at in Carlin Romano's assessment of Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Marriage Plot* (2011). Romano does not specifically look at narrative endings, but instead notes that the genre closely follows discernible spatio-temporal conventions, known as 'academic time' and 'academic space'. For Romano, there is palpable correlation between the publication of campus novels with the start of academic time – "the fall semester" (Romano). This temporal start is illustrated by the "renewed underlining of reading in [Vladimir Nabokov's] *Pnin*, the unpacking of cars in [Don DeLillo's] *White Noise*" (Romano). Of academic space, there is little dispute over the template provided by real-life institutions as narrative setting, as Romano simply notes that "the setting [of *The Marriage Plot*] at the outset is Brown, Eugenides's alma mater" (Romano).

Romano ultimately suggests that *The Marriage Plot* highlights a noticeable gap in the genre, one thus far unexplored. This is that the text is "a campus novel about leaving campus behind" (Romano). According to Romano, exploration in the text of what happens after the university and the significance of "the perilous transition into postcollegiate life" are a rarity for the genre, which often leaves out these crucial aspects of the university experience (Romano). For one thing, Romano questions the sustainability of the conventions of academic time and space of the genre, arguing that the campus novel has perhaps "outgrown its neighbourhood, and is more complicated than it seems" (Romano). Specifically, problematics regarding characteristics based on time and space were raised: "Is it any novel that begins on a

campus, or must matters peculiar to campus life [...] form the heart of the story? If a story just ‘happens’ to take place on campus, is that enough? Do novels about scholars, and novels about students, belong in the same category?” (Romano). Focusing on the changes made to treatment of academic time, particularly through portrayal of post-graduation scenes, Romano argues that changing of temporal frames in *The Marriage Plot* “geometrically recarves” the genre (Romano).

A geometrical revision of the genre. This is essentially the aim of this chapter, taking from the gaps highlighted by Romano, and building on efforts of earlier studies of part-campus novels. Following Romano’s cues, in this chapter I posit an alternative perspective towards the study of campus novels, by looking at what happens after the moment of departure, after the end of academic time. To explore the possibility of university narratives extending beyond the set spatio-temporal frames of the genre, I will be focusing on a specific image of mobility – conceptualised in this chapter as ‘university return narratives’. I contend that there is an untapped abundance of texts beyond British and American literary traditions, that begin where Anglo-American campus novels end – at the moment of departure and return from the university.

University Return Narratives

In his work *Ethics and Nostalgia in The Contemporary Novel*, John Su provides a comprehensive conceptualisation of ‘return narratives’, as a longstanding tradition which can be traced back to Homeric notions of returns (1). Su argues that returns are often portrayed as journeys necessitated by longing and nostalgia for home (1). As such, returns are inseparable from negotiations and nostalgia of the space of home. Such associations with nostalgia narratives have led to negative perceptions of return narratives. This is due to its portrayal in academic research, which sees returns as often in danger of idealising past narratives, and having nationalist undertones that border on xenophobic sentiments (Su 2).

How then should we view return narratives, in the context of campus novels? As noted earlier, what happens after university departures is not completely absent from campus novels. This is evident through the abundance of part-campus novels. However, these studies do not focus on the concept of returns, precisely because returns are not a form of mobility that can be found in Anglo-American campus novels. This follows earlier articulations of motive of movement and function of the university, as a place to aspire to, and subsequently exit from.

There is a clear demarcation between the spaces prior to the university and preceding it, and rarely are they the same space. Thus returns, of moving back to previous spaces such as home, are images of mobility absent from Anglo-American campus novels.

Just as images of returns are absent in Anglo-American campus novels, there are also limited studies that singularly focus on return narratives in university fiction. Instead, work on university returns in literature can be found beyond the Anglo-American tradition, in Xiaoling Shi's studies on Taiwanese variations of the genre, known as "Taiwanese overseas student literature". Shi examines the breadth of Taiwanese prose fiction, which focus on characters departing for education abroad. In her studies, Shi notes that there is a constant prevalence of home in the background, as a space that characters must return to, yet returns ultimately do not take place (Shi 132). Significantly, Shi explores the adamant refusal and absence of return narratives to Taiwan following the end of the education period. Of particular relevance is her examination of Bai Xianyong's 1964 short story "A Death in Chicago", and the question of return focused on the central character Wu Hanhun. As Wu Hanhun navigates his life in America, the normative trajectory of return looms in the background, appearing more vividly towards the end of his narrative. However, Wu Hanhun never returns, instead committing suicide in America (Shi 132). This disruption of the expected academic route becomes a central concern. For Shi, this absence of expected returns is due to the "already tenuous" political relationship with home, with Taiwan (134). Specifically, Shi contends that "Wu Hanhun does not want to go back Taiwan because Taiwan is essentially not his home. His homeland is the mainland, to which he cannot return because he is one of those banished by Communist China" (132). Present studies, where university returns are articulated, reveal the meanings of non-returns and how it reveals complex relationships with the space of home.

My notion of return narratives is defined primarily by the movement of return and travel that follow university exits. It is important to emphasise that returns require the journey to be a movement back to the space of home. Thus, I frame university return narratives in this chapter as simply narratives that detail the return home following the end of academic time and departure from academic space.

Despite lacking critical studies, non-Anglo-American literature is rife with primary texts where university returns are central. A notable example is Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1887), a landmark work in Philippine literature and renowned in the Southeast Asian region. The narrative is spurred by the return of a character from his education abroad in Spain, where the space of abroad is constantly intertwined with the space of the present in the Philippines (Anderson). In my previous chapter, returns are evidently the normative trajectory of

movement in Indonesian Azharite narratives. The sequel to El-Shirazy's *When Love Glorifies God* is also spurred by the return of the protagonist Azzam, and his life following his return to Indonesia. Beyond Southeast Asia, the trope of the returning student is also central in numerous Arabic texts. Mona Takieddine-Amyuni notes the longstanding history of East-West encounters in novels of academic mobility (2). Notable texts include Tawfik Al Hakim's *A Bird from the East* (1938), Yahya Haqqi's *Lamp of Umm Hashem* (1944), and *The Latin Quarter* (1954) by Suhayl Idris. Interestingly, these novels consistently culminate in returns. In these texts, Amyuni observes a degree of romanticisation of the West, as "the West represents for the young Arab a place for higher education and culture, sexual liberation and complete freedom" (3). However, it is notable that these texts follow a cyclical trajectory, beginning with a negotiation of home (the East) that is only possible when at a distance from it (the West), and uniformly ending with returns home and a rejection of the West, both geographically and ideologically.

I considered how these examples come from distinct literary traditions and geographical regions, and sought other examples from the region. Thus *Season* and *Submission* were selected, on the basis that they each originated from varying regions. More pertinently, both texts are comparable in that university returns spurred the narrative and continue to become central in the texts.

5.3. "This nonsense you learn at school won't wash with us here": Futile Returns in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*⁶⁷

In thinking of seminal texts that lie in the nexus of movement, returns, and the university, I have selected Tayeb Salih's 1966 novel *Season of Migration to the North* as a starting point for my arguments. Initially published in Arabic in 1966 as *Mawsim al-hijra ilā al-shamāl*, the novel was subsequently translated into English in 1969. The text is often known as a landmark work in Arabic literature, such that in 2001 it was proclaimed as "the most important Arabic novel of the 20th century" by the Arab Literary Academy ("In Memoriam" iii). Edward Said uses this novel as one of his examples against rethinking Eurocentrism in knowledge making, arguing that there is a degree of "power and interest" to the study of this novel ("The Politics of Knowledge" 380). To begin, Said notes how the novel itself is a rewrite of Joseph Conrad's

⁶⁷ In this section, citations refer to Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (2003) unless otherwise noted.

Heart of Darkness, before gradually going down a chain of revisions and introductions (“The Politics of Knowledge” 380). The study of the novel, Said proposes, opens us to the context of socio-political concerns of Arabic writings of its period, “a time of nationalism and a rejection of the West” (“The Politics of Knowledge” 380). It then introduces us to the corpus of contemporaneous Arabic novels and writers, such as Naguib Mahfouz and Yusuf Idriss (Said “The Politics of Knowledge” 380). Ultimately, Said contends that *Season* opens up the possibilities of studying the novel form, thus far “a narrative form at the center of which had heretofore always been an exclusively European observer or center of consciousness” (“The Politics of Knowledge” 380). Wail Hassan further asserts that the novel is “Salih’s best known work, [which] established his reputation both in the Arab world and abroad as a major novelist” (*Tayeb Salih* 82). Further accolades note that the novel is remarkable for its revolutionary negotiations of postcolonial anxieties and East-West tension, that this was “a classic of post-colonial literature, about the dissonance between East and West, cultural displacement and the shortcomings of modernization” (Savaş).

Season is oft known as the story of Mustafa Sa’eed, a polarising character whose notorious exploits whilst studying and subsequently working as an academic in England is linked to the deaths of numerous romantic partners. Significantly portrayed in the text is Mustafa’s lurid past abroad, contrasted with his present life, returning to an outwardly mundane existence in a village in Sudan. Intertwined with Mustafa’s narrative is the return narrative of the Narrator, a younger man whose name remains ambiguous throughout the text. The text begins with the Narrator’s return, and gradually develops into an extensive examination of Mustafa’s past, and its repercussions on the present. Having concealed his past life from the village, Mustafa arrives to the village as a stranger. However, death and various tragedies recur in this village, as Mustafa’s presence again causes instability to a select setting. Mustafa’s narrative is resolved with his disappearance, presumed dead through suicide or accident. Through all this, the Narrator is tasked with both resolving the conflicting stories of Mustafa’s past, as well as the conflicts of the present.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the significance of movement and migration in the novel. In his 2009 studies, James Tar Tsaaior explores how the migration trope highlights geopolitical conflicts in the novel. Tsaaior notes that the migration trope in *Season* follows a long tradition in African and Black aesthetics, which utilises “the journey motif” preceded by earlier African oral forms (225). The novel is affected by the migration trope on two levels; firstly, how migration is enabled by the divides created by the imperial project, and secondly, examining how migration is part of the mechanisms of colonial education (Tsaaior 226).

According to Tsaaior, the text succeeds in its act of ‘writing back’, in revising and re-negotiating the construction of Africa in colonial discourses (231). However, this rejection ultimately collapses, in that such actions and its agents in the text fail to do so (Tsaaior 231). Tsaaior attributes this failure to the ineffectuality of reciprocating through mimicry, citing Mustafa Sa’eed’s failure as an example: “Mustafa Sa’eed, for instance, who migrates to Europe as a ‘conqueror’ and vows to liberate Africa with his penis largely fails because he employs the same tactics which the European did namely racial essentialism, hate, ‘sexual’ violence, and the rape of Africa” (231). Ultimately Tsaaior contends that these failures and inadequacy of actions have led to the failed returns of the character Mustafa, causing “his efforts [to] end in his imprisonment and eventual return to Sudan and a life of anonymity in the village as a farmer” (231).

My analysis is thus centred on the notion of failed returns, examining university returns as a central image of mobility in this text, further analysing their portrayal as futile acts. In my findings, I focus specifically on the dual images of return, reading the novel as charting the narratives of return of two central characters from a significant period studying abroad. My main interest is in examining the influence of their past education and life abroad on the present, as the novel is abundant with queries into the university past, academic identity, and the significance of these factors following their return to the space of home. Through the conflicting perceptions of returns in this text, I argue that returns are deemed problematic in this text. This is due to the ideological clashes between the designated foreign education and sensibilities of home, manifesting in scenes of instability in the novel.

Futile Returns

Return narratives are evident from the beginning of *Season*, as the narrative commences with a passage recounting the narrator’s return from his university education abroad. The oft-studied opening passage is as follows:

It was, gentlemen, after a long absence – seven years to be exact, during which time I was studying in Europe – that I returned to my people. I learnt much and much passed me by – but that’s another story. The important thing is that I returned with a great yearning for my people in that small village at the bend of the Nile. For seven years I had longed for them, had dreamed of them, and it was an extraordinary moment when I at last found myself standing amongst them. [...] Because of having thought so much

about them during my absence, something rather like fog rose up between them and me the first instant I saw them. (Salih 1)

In this passage, it is evident that we are presented with a narrative of the narrator's return to the space of home. The act of return is especially highlighted through the clear geographical dislocation, as the narrator recounts his trajectory from "Europe", then returning to "my people in that small village at the bend of the Nile" (1). Of particular relevance to my studies is the fact that the dislocation was necessary for the narrator's education, and that this narrative is taking place after the end of academic time – "seven years to be exact, during which time [the narrator] was studying in Europe" (1).

Opening the text with the image of return immediately sets this novel apart from the conventions of university narratives, in that the narrative begins with the end of academic time. In fact, the return from the university is deemed of greater significance than the narrative of the university past abroad. The narrator refers passingly to the university past, noting that "[he] learnt much and much passed me by" (1). This reference is subsequently underplayed by his description of the end of the academic time. The image of exiting and returning from the university instead dominates the opening, portrayed with magnitude by the diction, as the return is described as an "important thing", and "an extraordinary moment" (1). The magnitude of the act of return, over the university narrative, is possibly due to feelings of longing for home. In the passage, the narrator's perception of returns explicitly denotes "long[ing]", "yearning" and "dream[ing]" of home (1). Emphasis on feelings of longing is further achieved by the reiteration of extreme geographical distance and time gaps, such as the narrator's insistence that "for seven years I had longed for them" (1). Thus nostalgia for home is a possible reason for the weight given to the university return narrative in this text.

The weight given to the return is also amplified by the reception and significance accorded to the character's return. In the early days of his return, the narrator was initially accorded with nationwide recognition. This is evident through how the narrator becomes the subject of celebratory attention in the village. On the day of his arrival home, the narrator is greeted by numerous people, and bombarded with queries: "Everyone had put questions to me and I to them. They had asked me about Europe. Were the people there like us or were they different? [...] They say that the women are unveiled and dance openly with men" (3). This level of attention can be explained through how he now acts as a bridge, providing them insight to the Western world. However, it is also notable that the reception towards his stories of travels culminates in the main concern of people at home of his return, where they reveal "we were

afraid [...] you'd bring back with you an uncircumcised infidel for a wife" (4). This shows that despite the accolades afforded to his academic travels and achievements, the central concern is still the manner of his return, of the baggage that he would be carrying back with him. That the narrator returned without confirming their fears shows that his return has been perceived as a successful return by the space of home.

My arguments focus specifically on the reception towards act of return within the text, looking at how academic returns have been perceived. In this text, successful university return narratives are initially denoted by academic success. Whilst the opening return narrative sets the stage for East-West debates, it also provides insight into how returns are calibrated according to perceptions of success. For example, the far-reaching recognition and celebration of the narrator's return can be indicative of the local perception towards returns marked by academic success. This is revealed in the narrative not through direct conversations, but as filtered through the narrator's opinions. Interestingly, the narrator's awareness of the prestige brought about by his return, and conveyance of it, is infused with verbal irony. In his first interaction with the character Mustafa Sa'eed, Mustafa recites the accolades described of the narrator: "I have heard a lot about you from your family and friends [...] They said you gained a high certificate – what do you call it? A doctorate? [...] They say you were remarkable from childhood" (9). As a response, the narrator pretends to underplay the extent of his academic achievements, through "putting on an act of humility" (8). In fact, the narrator reveals annoyance at Mustafa's glib reiteration of his accolades, disclosing in his narration that "this did not please [him] for I had reckoned that the ten million inhabitants of the country had all heard of my achievement" (8). As such, it is notable how the return narrative that spurred the text is deemed significant in the text due to its achievement of academic success. But it is further important that the extent of the success is ambiguous, and only ever as filtered through the narrator's perspectives.

Rather than being a text that merely highlights the return narrative as a story of academic success, the text however challenges the notion of successful returns. It is Mustafa Sa'eed who first interjects and disrupts the narrative of successful returns. Following the narrator's continued underplaying of his academic achievements, that his success "entailed no more than spending three years delving into the life of an obscure English poet", Mustafa responds by stating "we have no need for poetry here. It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine" (9). It must be noted that Mustafa redresses the condemnation by claiming ignorance, attempting to reinstate the significance and prestige of the narrator's return, stating that "knowledge, though, of whatsoever kind is necessary for the

development of our country” (9). As the text progresses, we see further fissures in the purported narrative of success, through sustained external disdain directed towards the narrator’s return and academic achievements.

The respect accorded to the narrator’s return dissipates, through the gradual disregard and questioning of his academic achievements. Consistent with the narrator’s affected humility, the narrator reveals irritation at the disregard gradually shown to his achievements. For example, the narrator consistently laments the simplistic reduction of his identity as a poet. He admits “somewhat bitterly [...] whether [he] liked it or not, [he] was assumed by people to be a poet because [he] had spent three years delving into the life of an obscure English poet and had returned to teach pre-Islamic literature in secondary schools before being promoted to an Inspector of Primary Education” (57). Gradually criticism becomes more pronounced, of the usefulness of his achievements, of what his return can bring to the space of home.

The narrator’s academic background also becomes perceived with hostility, as he is deemed to have internalised Western ideals – ideals from ‘there’ that are incompatible with the space of ‘here’. To illustrate, consider the extended conflict, surrounding the narrator’s objection against the forced betrothal of Mustafa’s widow to an older man. This conflict is significant, in that it ultimately unsettles the stability of the village, of the space of home. The narrator’s objections are discordant with the patriarchal customs of the village, where decisions of a woman’s betrothal are finalised by her male guardians. The narrator’s academic past is subsequently admonished as causing his contestations, through criticisms such as “this nonsense you learn at school won’t wash with us here. In this village the men are guardians of the women” (98). Numerous times in the text, the narrator’s academic past is condemned as influencing him with ideologies that challenge the mores of home. In another episode of conflict, the narrator is again admonished for his rejection of traditional mores, and desire for ideological changes at home “in this age” (99). A mouthpiece representing the local asserts the narrator that “the world hasn’t changed as much as you think [...] some things have changed [...] yet even so everything’s as it was” (100). As a final act of rebuke, the members of the village disparage the narrator’s desires for changes in attitudes and customs by critiquing his academic past, stating that “schooling and education have made you soft” (133). Thus whilst university return narratives and academic mobility are initially regarded with esteem in this text, gradually there is a shift towards perceived derision and aversion of the ideological changes that can be caused by education and mobility.

The building reversal of initial respect culminates in the narrator’s disillusionment and eventual rejection of his own success, questioning the success of his own return. The narrator’s

initial longings and desire for home becomes replaced by doubts of his return, and his place in the space of home. The aforementioned conflict concerning Mustafa's widow and her forced marriage to another man results in a tragic scene of struggle, ending with the death of the two characters. Ruminating on this incident, and how he was powerless in preventing it, the narrator consequently laments on his possible incompatibility with the space of home, of his incapability in effecting change:

There is no room for me here. Why don't I pack up and go? Nothing astonishes these people. They take everything in their stride. They neither rejoice at a birth nor are saddened at a death. [...] And I, what have I learnt? They have learnt silence and patience from the river and from the trees. And I, what have I learnt? (130).

This moment of reflection connotes a significant shift of narrative perspective. The narrator has throughout the text been a passive observer, and we rarely hear of regret or other responses, particularly with regards to the events following his return to the village. I argue that through questioning "what have I learnt?", the narrator has actively expressed doubts, and deeper considerations of the education that he has obtained, in contrast with the manner and lessons learnt by those in the village. Thus the novel questions the ways in which academic mobility should be perceived, particularly where meanings of success is concerned. Success is not denoted through academic achievements, but rather, in its usefulness to home and the people.

Such is the treatment of return narratives in *Season*, that Mustafa Sa'eed's own return narrative furthers the complexity of this image of mobility. On the surface, Mustafa's narrative of academic mobility begins and implies similar achievements to the narrator. Mustafa is described as constantly travelling, his mobility for the purpose of education and earned through academic merits. Mustafa's past is traced back to his poor beginnings in Khartoum, before chancing upon the opportunity to "study at a school [...] A nice stone building in the middle of a large garden on the banks of the Nile" (20). After proving precocity as a young student in Sudan, Mustafa is told to travel further to seek education, that "this country hasn't got the scope for that brain of yours, so take yourself off. Go to Egypt or Lebanon or England. We have nothing further to give you." (23). Following Sudan, he immediately advanced and moved to a different location, as a peer attests that "Mustafa Sa'eed covered his period of education in the Sudan at one bound – as if he were having a race with time. While we remained on at Gordon College, he was sent on a scholarship to Cairo and later to London. He was the first Sudanese to be sent on a scholarship abroad" (52). His capabilities culminated in his graduation from Oxford, and subsequent appointment as an economics professor at London

University, at the young age of twenty-four (32). Mustafa's precociousness and academic capabilities are therefore illustrated by the speed in which he travelled from one place to another, each time progressing to a new space of education after outgrowing the old.

In its first departure from the narrator's trajectory, Mustafa's precocity is infused with contestations. On one hand, Mustafa's academic capabilities is purportedly well-regarded abroad. Such were his capabilities that at his murder trial, his immense academic achievements were considered as a line of defence, as Mustafa recounts "listening to [his] former teacher, Professor Maxwell Foster-Keen, trying to save [him] from the gallows, [...] [drawing] a distinctive picture of the mind of a genius whom circumstances had driven to killing in a moment of mad passion" (32). However, Mustafa also destabilises conventions of academic achievements in the text, as there are contradictory stories about his achievements. As recounted by another character, "The overriding characteristic of his writings was that his statistics were not to be trusted. [...] No, this Mustafa Sa'eed of yours was not an economist to be trusted" (58). These contradictions are consistent with the construction of Mustafa's character in the text, as fleshed out by hearsays and anecdotes. Yet it also challenges the narrative of prestige accorded to university return mobilities.

Ultimately, Mustafa challenges conventions of the university return narrative, further unsettling the narrator's already contradictory portrayals of return. Firstly, there are apparent differences in narrative weighting in the text. Where the text begins with an extensive portrayal of the narrator's return, Mustafa's actual return narrative only figures twice, and in disparate locations in the text. The first time we hear of Mustafa's return is through conjectures, as the narrator questions Mustafa's novel presence: "Suddenly I recollected having seen a face I did not know among those who had been there to meet me. [...] Mustafa who? Was he one of the villagers who'd gone abroad and had now returned?" (2). Instead, Mustafa's presence in the village is explained as "a stranger who had come here five years ago" (2). Through differentiation of diction, Mustafa's movements are therefore initially phrased as an 'arrival', having "[came] here", rather than a form of 'return'.

The narrative then presents us with the intricate trajectory of Mustafa's travels, evident in the depiction of his academic travels above. Despite the extensive coverage of his movement, the eventual end of his travels is cursory:

The long and short of it is they sentence him to imprisonment, a mere seven years, refusing to take the decision which he should have taken of his own free will. On coming out of prison he wanders from place to place, from Paris to Copenhagen to Delhi to Bangkok, as he tries to put off the decision. And after that the end came in an

obscure village on the Nile; whether it was by chance or whether the curtain was lowered of his own free will no one can say for certain. (69)

This passage encapsulates the transitions and disjunction of Mustafa's movement. Mustafa's "coming out of prison" begins his departure as a criminal, before his "wander[ings]" denote his itinerant existence, and culminating with his arrival, as he "came [...] [to] the village on the Nile" as a stranger.

As Mustafa's travels had begun with his first journey to "school" - "a nice stone building in the middle of a large garden on the banks of the Nile" - his journey has come full circle, returning to a point on the Nile (20). However, despite starting with the trajectory of academic mobility similar to the narrator, Mustafa's return is filtered through numerous transitions, changing him from a prodigal student, an accomplished academic, to a felon, and finally a stranger. Thus his return is devoid of the prestige of the narrator's return, and ultimately Mustafa's return suffers a worse fate than the disenchantment that is the narrator's return. By arriving as a stranger, Mustafa's return becomes completely devoid of meaning, his accomplishments and experiences lost.

The futility of Mustafa's return can perhaps be seen as desired, due to Mustafa's intentions of returning to a life of stability, in his attempts of erasing his past. For Mustafa, there is a constant fear of the discovery of his disreputable past, as he confesses that "were it not for my realization that knowledge of my past by the village would have hindered my leading the life I had chosen for myself in their midst there would have been no justification for secrecy" (65). Thus the absence of prestige attached to Mustafa's return is perhaps due to his desire for a stable life upon his return, far removed from the turmoil of his past abroad.

It is notable that the first, and only, instance of Mustafa's slippage reveals his acquired academic knowledge. Whilst inebriated, Mustafa begins to recite "English poetry in a clear voice and with an impeccable accent", to the surprise of the narrator (14). This scene is significant as it activates the conflict and destabilises the space of home. On one hand this scene reveals Mustafa's desire to communicate with the narrator, in order to share his suppressed past and resolve his narrative. However, this scene further confirms Mustafa's belief, that to have revealed the extent of knowledge he had returned with, is to unsettle and destabilise the space of home.

By desiring a life of stability and masking his past, Mustafa's return brings back none of the wealth of knowledge which he had acquired abroad. This thus further questions the conceptualisation of academic return narratives in this text. Ultimately, the narrative of stability

and secrecy that Mustafa seeks of his return does not prove sustainable, and the only solution for Mustafa is to undergo further movement – to leave. Prior to his disappearance from the text, implied through his suicide along the Nile, Mustafa bids farewell and suggests his further movements to the narrator, announcing that “[he senses] that the hour of departure has drawn nigh, so good-bye.” (67).

As tangible evidence of his academic achievements, Mustafa has published numerous important academic texts. These tomes are stored in a mysterious room in his village home, along with numerous artefacts from Mustafa’s life abroad. The use of asyndeton as the narrator lists down the books encountered in Mustafa’s secret room, and anaphoric repetition of his name as author, evokes the scope of achievement: “*The Bible* in English. Gilbert Murray. Plato. *The Economics of Colonialism* Mustafa Sa’eed. *Colonialism and Monopoly* Mustafa Sa’eed. *The Cross and Gunpowder* Mustafa Sa’eed. *The Rape of Africa* Mustafa Sa’eed. *Prospero and Caliban. Totem and Taboo.*” (137). Much can be said of the placement of his books, interspersing them amongst alluded prominent texts, ranging from *The Bible*, to known figures such as Plato, to alluding Sigmund Freud’s 1913 text *Totem and Taboo*. By placing his texts on the same level with these texts in the space of this room, it provides glimpses into not just the extent of Mustafa’s academic achievement, but also perhaps his own aggrandized perception of his own achievements. However, the confinement of these texts inside the secret room denotes their insularity and inaccessibility to the world outside, thus becoming of no benefit to the immediate surrounding village.

I contend that further analysis of the secret room of texts and artefacts shows the apex of futility of academic returns in this text. Within the secret room, Mustafa has created a repository of sorts, collecting numerous texts and artefacts transported back from his time abroad. Yet despite returning with these objects that embody knowledge, the objects are shut in the room and away from the world outside – especially the village. This can be argued as consistent with Mustafa’s refusal to divulge his past, and the manners of his return. However, I argue that the room symbolises futility of return, as embodied through material possession. In the room, the narrator observes numerous known tomes interspersed with Mustafa’s own works, as argued above. Significantly, the narrator comments on the language of these texts: “Not a single Arabic book. [...] An insane idea. A prison. A huge joke. A treasure chamber. ‘Open, Sesame, and let’s divide up the jewels among the people.’” (138). The mystery surrounding Mustafa’s secret room has been foreshadowed throughout the text, as characters consistently imagine it as a room of treasures, invoking similes to the treasure of King

Solomon, and humorously noting that recitations of “Open, Sesame, and let’s distribute the gold and jewels to the people” would be needed to unlock the room (107).

However, the narrator eventually ascertains that the contents of the room were of no use to the space of home, and far from being treasures that would benefit people at home. The worthlessness of the books is linguistic – in the space of home, only Mustafa and the narrator can speak English. This is evident because the English language was the first common ground between the two characters, through the peculiarity of the seeming stranger Mustafa suddenly speaking English whilst inebriated (14). In the room of foreign books, we are presented with a space that encompasses the written word, with none of these words being written in the Arabic language. The ‘treasures’ – of knowledge, of education – preserved are therefore meaningless, because they are inaccessible to everyone, apart from Mustafa and the narrator. The room and its contents ultimately symbolise the futility of Mustafa’s academic achievements and knowledge, hidden from the world outside, bringing little benefit to the space of home, which he had set out from under the intentions of education.

I argue that the futility of university returns is ultimately articulated through its contrast with absence of education in the text. This is especially embodied by the depiction of the character Mahjoub, and how he is centred in a discussion of education and its social function in the text. In a scene of return of micro scale, the narrator returns to his village from Khartoum, after engaging in a conference organised by the Sudanese Ministry of Education (117). What follows is an extensive discussion on the discrepancies between the government and the people, particularly where education is concerned. Interestingly, these discrepancies are voiced out by Mahjoub, as mouthpiece for the people. The scene juxtaposes their two voices – with Mahjoub vocally expressing his discontent of the state of their nation, and the narrator internally expressing his disregard for the corruption that belies such discussions as the government conference on education. But where Mahjoub represents agency and action, the narrator contrasts in his diffidence and external passivity.

Tsaaïor sees this scene as representative of the failure of the text, in suggesting “the socialist alternative to Sudanese development” (232). On this, Tsaaïor touches briefly on how Mustafa, purportedly the embodiment of socialist ideals in the text, fails to effect any changes to the space of home following his return. Instead, it is Mahjoub again who initiates any semblance of change. Tsaaïor notes that there are a few factors that attribute to Mahjoub’s prime position as effecting change, when compared to Mustafa, and even the narrator, such as “his limited education, lack of resources”, against “the capitalist pretensions of the emergent bourgeoisie of the nation in active collaboration with their metropolitan counterparts” (232).

In the next text, we will be seeing another fictional work that focuses on university return narratives, where returns are examined comprehensively and measured based on binaries of success or failure. Interestingly, state-sponsored academic mobility again becomes central and drives literature in another part of the world.

5.4. “Returning with success”⁶⁸: Moral Returns in Norsiah Abd. Gapar’s *Pengabdian (Submission)*⁶⁹

Published in 1987, *Pengabdian*, loosely translated as *Submission* (henceforth *Submission*) centres around the life of Siti Nur, a female medical doctor in Brunei Darussalam (henceforth Brunei). Brunei is a small sultanate located in Southeast Asia, and was a British Protectorate until its independence in 1984 (Chin, “Malaysia” 8). The narrative timeline in *Submission* counts down to the moment of independence as its closing point. It has been five years since Siti Nur’s return from a long period of studying in England, but various plot points in the novel are triggered by multiple return narratives in the text. In particular, the return of Sam, an old romantic interest and fellow medical doctor from his studies abroad leads to a rekindled romance plot, but with underlying conflicts caused by their religious differences. The return of her younger brother Zul from his studies in England also causes conflicts in the novel, as it is caused by the premature end of his education due to taboo circumstances. Siti Nur is designated as a pious Muslim Malay doctor, and these facets of her identity are significant in determining her response to various subplots in the text.

At its publication, *Submission* was written for a writing competition held in 1983, in conjunction with Brunei’s independence (Mohd. Daud, “Contemporary English” 242). In 2009, the author was awarded the SEA Write Award, a prestigious award for writers from nations that are part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Norsiah’s win denotes a watershed moment for women’s literature in Brunei, being the first female recipient of the award since entering the awarding list in 1986 (Chin, “Bruneian Women’s Writing” 587). The novel also continues to hold national recognition and relevance, being taught in Bruneian secondary schools since 2001 (Dayang Aminah 1). The novel has since been republished for its 7th edition in 2010 (Nor Faridah 118).

⁶⁸ “pulang dengan kejayaan”

⁶⁹ In this section, citations refer to Norsiah Abd. Gapar’s *Pengabdian* (1987) unless otherwise noted. All translations from Norsiah Abd. Gapar’s *Pengabdian* are my own.

Despite there being little secondary and critical material published on *Submission*, the few available have identified the significance of the figure of the mobile educated woman in the text. One of the most prominent is an interview with the author, in which the author asserts her portrayal of the protagonist Siti Nur as being shaped by her academic travels and achievements. Norsiah contends that the text addresses “misconceptions about educated women (especially educated in the West)” (Nor Faridah 119). According to the author, Siti Nur is written as a character “who is highly educated and trained in the West [...] she is opposed to the stereotyping of western educated women as those who would forget their religion and tradition” (Nor Faridah 119). By consciously structuring Siti Nur as such, it is evident that the protagonist is conceived as a response to a purported stereotype. As will be evident in my following analysis, Siti Nur repeatedly rejects the above characteristics, instead becoming its polar opposite.

My research is driven by the centrality of the education past in this novel. It is a specific form of education – university education attained in the West, specifically, following travels from Brunei to England. Despite its prominence and recurrent mentions in the novel, the university is physically absent, merely existing in moments of nostalgia or imagined allusions. Instead, the novel extensively explores what happens after the end of academic time. The normative post-university trajectory presented in this text is of the returns of characters from their respective universities abroad, to the space of home. My work in this chapter therefore focuses on the significance of these university return narratives. I argue that university return narratives in this text are divided along binaries of success/failures, where the success of return narratives both symbolise and influence the space of home. On the other hand, failures in its many forms, ranging from academic to moral failures, unsettles the stability of home and are uniformly denounced.

Binaries of Success and Failure

Submission primarily catalogues the space of the present, grounded at home and past the end of academic time. However, this space is populated by people who have returned from a significant period spent studying abroad. In this text, we see multiple images of academic mobility and return narratives. Returns are set up as the normative trajectory of movement, and academic mobility ends with return journeys home.

Return narratives initially function as character traits, particularly in introducing characters according to their professions. The first depiction of the character Sam in the text is through a conversation with Siti Nur, where Siti Nur both introduces Sam via his profession, and his recent return: “Since the young surgeon’s return from the United Kingdom a month ago, this is the first time that he has asked to meet Siti Nur”⁷⁰ (4). Elsewhere, portrayal of Siti Nur’s character early in the text also considers her profession and measure of return, as her mother reviews, “It has been five years since Siti Nur’s return from abroad [...] returning as a renowned intelligent and young Malay doctor. Could it be that her reputation has kept suitors at a distance? Or is it Siti who is reluctant to let them in?”⁷¹ (21). It is evident that characters are defined by their returns, as a way of introducing their profession. However, the interactions above also show how returns are significant in impacting relationships in the text. Sam’s return implies reduced distance and renewed relationships, whereas Siti Nur’s return is perceived as causing distance and preventing new relationships.

Returns are further central as means of nostalgic reflection on past relationships, which occurred whilst abroad. Although set in the present space of home, the novel continuously reverts to the past foreign space, through memories of the university as backdrop to numerous romantic relationships. Upon meeting Sam back in Brunei, Siti Nur thinks back to their past relationship whilst abroad (35). She muses, “whilst sitting next to Sam, she could not help thinking of their past. Of their times abroad, on English lands which brought them closer.”⁷² (35). In another instance, the minor character Shukri reminisces about his time abroad in England, where he had met Siti Nur and fallen in love with her (81). Another example also sees Zul thinking back to his time abroad, comparing the relationship he had with “the white girl Sandra”⁷³ to his present life in Brunei with his wife Marina (111). It is significant that the space of abroad is designated as a space of meetings and romantic possibilities. But what is further interesting is that these characters have all returned, and yet the space of abroad consistently pervades the space of home through unceasing nostalgia. Thus the text exists on two planes, in which the return to space of home constantly has to negotiate the foreign university past left behind.

⁷⁰ “Sejak pakar bedah muda itu kembali dari United Kingdom sebulan lalu, inilah kali pertama ia mengajak Siti Nur untuk keluar bersamanya” (4)

⁷¹ “Sudah lima tahun berlalu dari saat Siti Nur kembali dari luar negeri [...] Menjadi sebutan orang sebagai seorang doktor muda Melayu yang bijaksana, berbudi bicara dan rupawan. [...] Apakah sebagai kuntum yang ulung tidak ada kumbang yang berani menghampiri? Atau Siti yang tidak merelakan?” (21)

⁷² “Duduk di sisi Sam begitu, tanpa kerelaan hatinya, masa silam datang bertandang ke ruang ingatannya. Waktu mereka di seberang laut dulu, di tanah Inggeris yang telah mempererat perhubungan mereka.” (35)

⁷³ “Sandra gadis kulit putih” (111)

The space of home is also populated by other characters who have undergone returns, both recent and belated. The central conflict in the text arises from the premature and problematic return of Siti Nur's younger brother Zul, a conflict which will be explored later in this chapter. In the background, the text is permeated by the constant return of other characters. This is evident from the description of minor characters primarily through their returns, such as Junaidi, "a student on his summer break", and Irwan, who "like Junaidi is also spending his summer holidays in Brunei"⁷⁴ (115). Additionally, the narrative anticipates a final act of return, by Siti Nur's brothers. Their return is foreshadowed throughout the text, as Siti Nur's mother Fatimah recounts their absence and belated return, only returning to celebrate the nation's independence at the end of the narrative (107). Thus the space of home is constantly impacted and shaped by the returns of characters, by the motion of people going to and fro. As such, this is a text where academic time has long ended, and the normative end to academic mobility is through the return home.

Return mobility is therefore a significant motion present in this text. I contend that the text enables a comprehensive study of post-university narratives, through demarcated notions of returns, where returns are divided into binaries of success or failure. The most evident signifier of successful returns in this text is of academic success. In a particular scene, Siti Nur's mother Fatimah thinks of her children who are presently studying abroad. Central to Fatimah's concerns is of their well-being, and the manner of their return: "Fatimah constantly prays that her children abroad will be safe, and will return with success"⁷⁵ (63). I argue that this is a central tenet of academic mobility that *Submission* enables us to explore – the manner in which people conduct themselves whilst undergoing university experiences abroad, and ultimately, the manner of their return, demarcated between binaries of success and failure.

Successful returns are first and foremost characterised by academic success. A significant example is when Fatimah rehashes the success of her sons, who are all presently studying abroad. According to Fatimah,

her sons are all currently studying in England, with their expenses being sponsored by the government. From time to time Fatimah feels proud and thankful that her children are academically brilliant. She thinks to Zul, her eldest son who is undertaking a technical course, Zain who is studying engineering, although she was unsure of his

⁷⁴ "Junaidi seorang penuntut yang sedang bercuti musim panas [...] Irwan seperti Junaidi juga sedang menghabiskan cuti musim panasnya di Brunei" (115)

⁷⁵ "Fatimah selalu berdoa di dalam sembahyangnya supaya anak-anaknya semua selamat di rantau orang dan akan pulang dengan kejayaan" (63)

specialisation. Hadi who is studying law and Zamri her youngest son who is in medical school. When Zamri graduates from medical school two of her children would be called doctors. Fatimah thinks back to their past life as she prepares dinner. Of the difficulties of raising six children.⁷⁶ (62)

This interior monologue accomplishes numerous things. Firstly, that the setting of home in the text is heavily hinged to another setting – of abroad, where numerous characters are presently undergoing university education. Of further significance is how the narratives of academic mobility has been set up for the moment of return. To an extent, anticipation of returns embodies underlying hubris that accompanies academic success, of having “two of her children [who] would be called doctors”. However far from mere pride, Fatimah’s desire for the successful returns of her children is due to the financial emancipation enabled by their university returns. This is evident through how her rehashing of present comforts is justified, as in contrast to their past financial difficulties.

Thus successful returns are primarily significant as it enables financial emancipation, particularly for underprivileged characters in the text. Siti Nur’s return is an extensive embodiment of this principle. Prior to her travels for education, Siti Nur and her family are described as living a life of poverty. However, her academic success consistently sustains her family, cumulating in a government scholarship to pursue pre-university studies and a medical degree in the United Kingdom (36). Thus her return and employment as a medical doctor enables her family’s financial emancipation, as her mother asserts that Siti Nur’s financial stability and assistance “has changed the life of her family today”⁷⁷ (21). In addition, Siti Nur’s academic success and financial stability is depicted as being imperative for people beyond her immediate family. Fatimah comments that Siti Nur continues to provide financial assistance to their extended family in Malaysia, ranging from “sending financial aid to her widowed relative in Miri”⁷⁸, to “funding the schooling of her father’s relatives in Limbang”⁷⁹ (21). It can therefore be argued that Siti Nur’s successful return is necessitated by the dependence of many, and has far-reaching benefits, even beyond the nation.

⁷⁶ “Mereka semua sedang menuntut di England. Semua atas biasiswa kerajaan. Fatimah ada masanya begitu bersyukur dan bangga dikurniakan anak-anak yang baik-baik otak dalam mengikuti pelajaran. Ia ingat Zul anak lelakinya yang tertua kini sedang mengikuti kursus teknikal, Zain mengambil jurusan kejuruteraan, dalam bidang apa tidak pula ia tahu. Hadi sedang mengambil bahagian undang-undang dan Zamri anak lelakinya yang terkecil sedang mengikuti ijazah perubatan. Bila Zamri lulus nanti akan dua oranglah anak-anaknya bergelar doktor. Fatimah yang sedang menanak nasi untuk makan malam itu, mengingat-ingat masa silam. Akan kepayahannya membesarkan anak-anaknya yang seramai enam orang itu” (62)

⁷⁷ “mengubah corak kehidupan mereka sekeluarga kini” (21)

⁷⁸ “menghantar bantuan berupa wang kepada sepupunya di Miri yang telah kematian suami” (21)

⁷⁹ “membiayai persekolahan anak-anak saudara [ayahnya] di Limbang” (21)

Returns are also determined by the measure and reach of reception, where nationwide recognition awaits successful university returns. This is most evident in the plaudits accorded to Siti Nur's return. As mentioned earlier, the prestige surrounding Siti Nur's return is extensively illustrated in this text, evident in the following depiction: "it has been five years since Siti Nur's return from abroad – returning with success and renowned across the nation. She became admired as an intelligent young Malay doctor, with beauty and courtesy to match"⁸⁰ (21). The importance of Siti Nur's return to the nation is further compounded by her numerous endeavours following her return, from her tireless work as a doctor at the General Hospital, to her public identity as the host of a televised medical programme (84). The extent of Siti Nur's contribution to the nation is such that she persevered to leave a tangible legacy for the nation whilst succumbing to a terminal illness. This desire led to the publication of a medical textbook entitled *Children and Their Diseases*⁸¹, which details her research into children's diseases in Brunei. Siti Nur's successful university return is therefore consistently denoted as a form of extreme dedication of academic knowledge and capabilities to serve the nation.

Against Siti Nur's model of return, the novel presents us with variations of return narratives. This is evident in the portrayal of Sam's return narrative. Sam's trajectory of academic mobility initially mirrors Siti Nur's, in that they were both successful students who had been awarded government funding, which enabled them to pursue pre-university studies and attain medical degrees in England (36). However, Sam's return narrative differs from Siti Nur's, in that his achievements are not accorded the same accolades or sense of prestige. It is underscored that this is due to his racial identity as a member of the minority Chinese community in Brunei. As a result, Sam grows disillusioned upon his return, and wishes to quit the government workforce, instead deciding to open a private practice (38). Sam reveals, "as a non-Malay citizen, he felt that he was being marginalised, despite having better qualifications"⁸² (38). Sam's decision to terminate his service to the government leads to a conflict with Siti Nur, who is disappointed to discover that "the person she once respected is actually selfish, putting himself and his status above the needs of the country and his people"⁸³

⁸⁰ "sudah lima tahun berlalu dari saat Siti Nur kembali dari luar negeri, pulang dengan kejayaan cemerlang, yang mengharum ke pelosok tanahair. Menjadi sebutan orang sebagai seorang doktor muda Melayu yang bijaksana, berbudi bicara dan rupawan" (21)

⁸¹ *Kanak-Kanak dan Penyakit*

⁸² "sebagai seorang anak tempatan yang bukan Melayu ia merasa dirinya diketepikan walaupun ia mempunyai kelulusan yang lebih baik" (38)

⁸³ "manusia yang dikagumi dan dihormatinya selama ini lebih mementingkan keperluan diri dan kepentingan status hidupnya dari keperluan negara dan anak bangsanya sendiri" (38)

(38). The significance of Sam's return is that it diverges from Siti Nur's return, on account of his racial identity. Specifically, Sam's return narrative leads to perceived workplace prejudice, in contrast with the respect accorded to Siti Nur. This means that the magnitude of his achievements do not erase the underlying racial divides. As Sam's initial decision to cease contributing to the nation becomes a point of contention, this also shows that in this text, narratives of successful academic returns can collapse if not followed through with consequent contributions to the nation.

Interestingly, despite not achieving nationwide prestige, Sam's successful return becomes a contested narrative that reveals racial fissures in the society. Sam is propositioned by his father to leave the government service, in favour of opening a private practice funded by wealthy members of the Chinese community in Brunei. Sam's father Peter argues that Sam is the best candidate to helm the project, as his successful return has earned him the respect of the community. Peter cites Sam's position as "a local, a citizen of the country. [...] the first of our race to have returned as a specialist in the medical field"⁸⁴ (42). Thus in the same way that Siti Nur's return narrative becomes a source of pride for the nation, Sam's successful return becomes claimed as representative of a marginalised race and community in this space. This shows that academic mobility and success in the text is tainted by racial differences. It is notable how change of locations and attainment of success are incapable of alleviating these fissures.

Sam's return also differs from Siti Nur's, where the intersection between financial wealth and mobility is concerned. As explained earlier, Siti Nur's return enables her family to escape their life of poverty, through her successful career as a medical doctor. On the other hand, Sam's privileged background does not necessitate similar narratives of financial emancipation upon his return. The difference can be deduced from samples of Sam's rhythm of mobility, as he is described as constantly being on the move. Following the end of their university education, Siti Nur had immediately returned to Brunei, whilst Sam opted to stay in England for further studies (38). Much later, Sam also travels back to England, to complete further studies and specialisations (39). His repeated movements are in direct contrast to Siti Nur's immediate return and consequent stasis. I argue that discrepancies of financial wealth ultimately grant Sam further mobility and academic success. Siti Nur's financial

⁸⁴ "seorang anak tempatan, yang sudah menjadi rakyat di sini. [...] pertama-tama anak bangsa kita yang telah beroleh kepakaran dalam dunia perubatan" (42)

responsibilities to her family contrarily requires her immediate return and prevents her from further movement.

Further studies of rhythm of movement and wealth show similar discrepancies. Repeated returns and constant motion are movements associated only with wealthy characters. In learning of another character's return for the holidays, Siti Nur comments that this is a luxury only granted to characters of financial means. According to Siti Nur, "[the lives] of rich kids must be nice, mum. They can even return home for the winter holidays"⁸⁵ (23). This is in contrast with Siti Nur's limited movements, where "back then [she] could only meet [her] family once in every two years"⁸⁶ (23). Thus for characters like Siti Nur, who lack the financial means to travel, returns are a rare and cherished form of movement.

Successful returns are also calibrated according to the moral codes of characters upon return. Whilst academic successes lead to recognition and contributes to financial and social progress, success is also measured by each character's adherence to the code of conduct imposed by the space of home. These purported codes are primarily measured by the strength of a character's religious values. In the text, academic mobility enables intercultural interactions, which in turn affects a character's moral and religious values. These interactions then lead to significant shifts and consolidation of religious values, particularly Islamic values. Whilst studying abroad, Siti Nur "befriended a Malaysian peer [...] it is through this woman that Siti Nur became educated in Islamic teachings, thus becoming the person that she is today"⁸⁷ (37). Although belated, Sam experienced a similar encounter and process of religious renewal. Sam becomes acquainted with religious students from Malaysia, and his observation of their lifestyle led to a religious epiphany. Abroad is constructed as a space of sin and excess, "a country strewn with corner shops selling porn magazines; with photos of naked women [...] alcohol [...] gambling dens [...]"⁸⁸ (49). Sam expresses admiration towards his Muslim peers, of their ability to withstand the seduction of these sinful elements, continuing their religious practices even in a foreign land. It is this admiration that ultimately influences Sam towards embracing Islamic values. The centrality of foreign settings proposes that these self-discoveries are enabled by their travels, that changing places enable revision of perspectives. One place is, albeit reductively, set out as a space of moral righteousness; the other as a space of hedonistic

⁸⁵ "senang juga [hidup] anak orang-orang kaya ni ma. Cuti musim sejuk pun boleh balik ke Brunei." (23)

⁸⁶ "Macam Siti Nur dulu dua tahun sekali baru berjumpa keluarga" (23)

⁸⁷ "telah bersahabat rapat dengan seorang wanita dari Malaysia yang menuntut di jurusan sama [...] melalui wanita ini Siti Nur telah mendalami selok-belok pelajaran agama Islam sehingga telah menjadikan dia seperti sekarang ini" (37)

⁸⁸ "negeri yang berselerak dengan kedai-kedai hatta di kaki lima menjual barang-barang porno; gambar-gambar perempuan berbogel. [...] minuman keras [...] tempat-tempat perjudian" (49)

wrongs. As such, religious piety in this text is seen as a sign of personal zenith. Characters returning from abroad with consolidated religious identities are perceived as having successful return narratives, in that their returns befit the moral codes of home.

The final marker of successful returns in this text is through returns based on patriotic sentiments. This is especially evident in the strategically timed return of Siti Nur's younger brothers, who have chosen to return to celebrate their nation's independence. The novel's denouement builds up to the nation's independence in 1984, from its status as a British Protectorate. Throughout the text, the returns of Siti Nur's brothers have been constantly foreshadowed, punctuated with the reminder that their return will be in time to participate and witness the nation's independence. Fatimah correlates the significance of their return and its timing as such:

she is reminded of her children who are presently living abroad. How she misses them! But they would not be returning home this summer [...] they will only be returning once their country achieves its independence. They wished to be with the family to witness that occasion.⁸⁹ (107)

Siti Nur later observes her brothers upon their return, particularly in the moment of the nation's independence. Symbolically, she considers their returns as intertwined with the future of the nation, musing that "she hopes her brothers would become noble citizens with a sense of duty towards the nation"⁹⁰ (158). These variations of successful returns fulfil the initial premise underscored of successful returns, of Fatimah's prayers for the safeguarding and returns of her children from their studies abroad.

"returning empty-handed"⁹¹

Against all this, the text presents the return of Siti Nur's brother Zul as antithetical to narratives of successful returns examined above. Despite completing the normative trajectory of movement by returning home, Zul's return is a departure from norms of the text. It is a return characterised by manifold failures, encapsulated by his mother's criticism, that "it has been two months since [his] return, returning empty-handed"⁹² (109).

⁸⁹ "ia ingat akan anak-anaknya yang kini sedang berada jauh di seberang. Betapa rindunya pada mereka. Tapi mereka tidak pulang cuti musim panas itu. [...] mereka akan pulang di saat negeri ini mencapai kemerdekaannya. Mereka mahu bersama keluarga di saat bersejarah itu nanti" (107)

⁹⁰ "ia berharap adik-adiknya itu akan jadi perwira bangsa yang tahu akan tanggungjawab" (158)

⁹¹ "pulang dengan tangan kosong"

⁹² "Sudah dua bulan [Zul] pulang. Pulang dengan tangan kosong" (109)

From the outset, Zul is constructed as a character that deviates from the norms of the text, constantly unsettling the behavioural codes of home. Zul's first portrayal in the novel is through his return to Brunei. Greeting Zul at the airport, Siti Nur expresses contempt for his physical appearance: "Zul was dressed in a black tee shirt and faded blue jeans [...] his curly hair kept to shoulder length [...] and the most offensive thing in Siti Nur's eyes is the earring dangling from his pierced left ear"⁹³ (84). Siti Nur notices the curious eyes of the public, which she perceives is caused by their differences, as "one person looks like a hippie, the other looks like a female religious teacher"⁹⁴ (84). In this space, Zul's appearance strays from the norm, and he is perceived in the public space through his contrasting appearance with Siti Nur. Indeed, the normative way of dressing in this text is to dress appropriately, in accordance with the religious and cultural codes of home. At a religious ceremony involving both Zul and Sam, Sam is described as fittingly dressed in a religious outfit, but in contrast, Zul's donning of a similar outfit appears dishevelled, "looking like a pirate with his shoulder-length hair and religious cap"⁹⁵ (91). The crux of criticism levelled against Zul's appearance is that it is optically disruptive, and remnants of a lifestyle foreign to the space of home. According to Siti Nur, "it is not forbidden to follow latest trends [from abroad] but you have to consider its accordance with our own cultural norms and values"⁹⁶ (86). The implication here is that Sam and Siti Nur have both returned and been accorded respect by the space of home, due to their adhering appearances. Conversely, Zul's appearance following his return is perceived with contempt as it defies the conventions of home.

Zul's return is constructed as the earliest of numerous conflicts in the text, where the problem centres on his forced return and obligation to wed his pregnant partner (19). This episode is seen as a taboo act, only exposed through further transgressive actions such as his partner's abortion, which results in her hospitalisation (19). This episode indicates numerous broken taboos in the space of the text, where Islamic and cultural codes abound, and abortion, premarital sexual relations and pregnancy are condemned. Exhibiting awareness of her context, Norsiah asserts the initial response to her writing of transgressive issues, "including issues surrounding abortion. It took 20 years for the issue of abortion to be accepted by the general public as something beyond just a moral issue" (Nor Faridah 119). Three decades later, and the

⁹³ "dengan baju T berwarna hitam dan jean biru yang sudah lusuh warnanya [...] rambut[nya] yang ikal itu disimpan panjang hingga ke bahu [...] dan yang paling menyakitkan mata Siti Nur ialah seutas subang terayun di cuping telinga kirinya" (84).

⁹⁴ "seorang macam hippie saja sementara yang satu lagi macam seorang ustazah" (84)

⁹⁵ "dengan rambutnya yang panjang sampai ke bahu itu, dan dengan songkoknya tidak ubah seperti seorang lanun" (91)

⁹⁶ "bukan dilarang mengikut fesyen itu tapi lihatlah dulu kalau ia bersesuaian dengan tatasusila bangsa kita" (86)

attitudes towards such acts in Brunei persist, hardened by legal regulations that see abortion as punishable with up to ten years in prison (Penal Code). Thus the appearance of prestige and morality established by Siti Nur's righteous returns are broken down by Zul's transgressive returns. The conflict is summed up by Fatimah, as she notes the contrast: "all her children have led successful lives. She thinks to Zul who will be returning soon. Zul who is the first to taint their family's reputation"⁹⁷ (62). Zul's return therefore departs from all variations of returns in the text, as it is a return associated with shame and disrepute rather than respect.

Another problem arising from Zul's return is that it negates the narrative of financial emancipation of Siti Nur's return. Introducing Zul's return as an early point of conflict, Fatimah approaches Siti Nur for advice and financial assistance in enabling her brother's return, as "[Zul] says his return and wedding are only possible if they are willing to fund him, as he does not have even a dime to his name"⁹⁸ (19). His return is therefore prevented by financial difficulties, and it is only through Siti Nur's assistance that Zul is able to return. This highlights the discrepancies of rhythm of mobility denoted by financial privilege in this text. Zul further poses problems for his family, as the necessitated marriage to his partner is only possible at the expense of his family's finances. These samples show how Zul repeatedly causes financial problems to his family, and thus the financial emancipation enabled by Siti Nur's return is undone by Zul's return.

Instead of improving the socioeconomic status of their family, Zul's academic failure also positions him as a financial burden to the family, as he is unable to find employment. In addition, Zul's premature return without completing his studies further amplifies his return as a form of academic failure. Recounting his life abroad, Siti Nur notes that Zul is unable to return to England, as his hedonistic lifestyle has led to lacklustre academic performance, ultimately failing to progress and complete his studies (86). This adds to the notion that Zul's return is a distinct failure, as Fatimah laments, "she has heard rumours about Zul. Of how he never went to school; instead fraternising with wealthy kids and failing his examinations"⁹⁹ (62). Without completing his studies, Zul's return lacks the prestige of Siti Nur and her brothers' academically successful returns. The criticism surrounding Zul's return also clarifies the motive for academic mobility in this text, in that travelling for education must realise the

⁹⁷ "Anak-anaknya semua berjaya dalam hidup. Ia teringat akan Zul yang akan pulang tidak lama lagi. Zul yang pertama mengukir cerita pahit dan hitam di dalam keluarga mereka" (62)

⁹⁸ "Kata [Zul] ia boleh balik asalkan kita bersedia membayarkan tiketnya dan belanja pernikahannya kerana dia tak berwang walau sesen pun" (19).

⁹⁹ "ia terdengar desas-desus tentang Zul di England. Bagaimana ia tidak pernah datang ke sekolahnya; berfoya-foya dengan anak-anak orang berada dan tidak lulus dalam ujian" (62)

normative trajectory of successful returns. This is evident through arguments surrounding the degree of success in measuring Zul's return. In seeking employment upon his return, Zul argues that despite his academic failures, his time abroad accords him with respect and a dignified status back home. This is evident in his argument that "I've just returned from England [...] Even if I have failed, I've studied in England. I can't just do menial jobs!"¹⁰⁰ (109). However, Fatimah acts as the mouthpiece of the space of home, setting out the normative expectations of his return: "Returning from England is nothing to be proud of. That's not what people want. People want to see your qualifications"¹⁰¹ (109). *Submission* therefore centres around return narratives constructed according to successes and failures.

5.5. Educational Missions and Returns

In this chapter, I have proposed the study of university returns as a novel perspective on academic mobility and the campus novel genre. I have compared two texts where university returns are central as images of mobility from which narratives emerge. My analysis of return narratives has highlighted the importance of return narratives in these texts. Considering these texts as belonging to drastically different cultures, locations, and literary traditions, it is notable that the anxieties and significance of return narratives are universal. As argued thus far, portrayals of returns are based on binaries of success or failure. This section examines contextual conditions, in rationalising how university narratives are embodied by movements imbued with societal significance. I contend that the significance of returns can be understood through examination of the contextual conditions of academic mobility in these texts. Ultimately, returns are important as these texts are framed against the backdrop of state-sponsored or institutionalised academic mobility, where returns are not only the normative trajectory of movements, but also the only acceptable form of ending these journeys.

Critical studies have identified the importance of the journey trope and returns in *Season*. As explored earlier, returns in the novel are perceived as the normative end to the journey. Tsaiior remarks that these journeys follow the "journey motif" of earlier African oral traditions, where journeys are "circuitous" and completed by returns (225). More pertinently, *Season* is read as a text reacting against "European canonical writing on and about Africa"

¹⁰⁰ "Zul baru pulang dari England [...] Walau tidak lulus dari England juga. Takkan Zul nak buat kerja sembarangan!" (109)

¹⁰¹ "Tidak usah dibangga-banggakan kau dari England itu. Orang bukan mahukan itu. Orang mahukan kelulusan" (109)

(Tsaaior 222), where critics uniformly perceive the novel as an inversion of the colonial mobility narrative. Tsaaior outlines the dominant tone of colonial writings on Africa, where “European explorers, travellers and writers proceeded to uncritically construct received and unrepresentative images of Africa as ‘the dark continent’” (223). Against this, the writing of movement in the novel, of multiple journeys to the colonial centre and back, is perceived in direct opposition to the earlier narratives. The chaos inflicted by Mustafa Sa’eed throughout his travels is read as a form of deliberate conquest, as Tsaaior observes Mustafa’s romantic and sexual manipulation of numerous British women as a form of “retaliation of Africa’s rape by colonial Europe” (229).

My focus is particularly on the fact that the mobility narratives in the novel are specific forms of academic mobility. Critics have noted that education is an important factor in enabling these journeys to take place. In Sudan specifically, academic mobility in *Season* is also a consideration of the negative effects of colonial education. *Season* was written in the context of colonial rule in Sudan, where the novel considers Sudan’s independence in 1956, while at the same time reviewing its colonial past (Tsaaior 225). According to Amyuni, *Season* is a story of men who “grew up under colonialism in the Sudan and during two world wars in the West” (8). As such, the novel is written as retrospective response to colonial rule.

Considering the post-colonial context of the novel, studies have been critical of the role of education as one of the many avenues enabling the colonial project to thrive. Tsaaior observes that geopolitical relations and the migration trope have been enabled by pursuit of colonial education (225). According to Tsaaior, the colonial education functions as a way of civilizing the ‘colonised’, inducting them as “collaborative agent in the colonial project” (226). This is evident in the examples of local schools governed by colonial officers in the novel (Salih 20) but is also more palpable in the portrayal of academic journeys to the colonial centre. According to Tsaaior, the colonial project creates a specific form of academic mobility, where “Africans travelled to European metropolitan capitals like London, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid, etc. in a migratory or exilic strain for the purpose of acquiring education which was heavily colonial in content and quality” (226). This is the very journey we see in *Season* – of characters travelling “from the South (Sudan) to the North (Europe) [...] return[ing] to his village after acquiring colonial education [...] becoming a surrogate agent in the politics of the colonial project (Tsaaior 226).

This idea that travel enables pursuit of education is further problematic, as it reveals latent prejudice and dominance asserted by colonial forces. As explored earlier, Mustafa showcases precocity deemed worthy of further education, illustrated by the speed in which he

acquires knowledge but also the pace of his travels to various foreign spaces for education. However, Tsaaior notes the underlying assertion of colonial dominance, as it purports education in local contexts as inadequate, when compared to education in the colonial centre. According to Tsaaior, Mustafa's "quest for colonial education" reveals latent inculcated "patronising" views, that Sudan, and by extension Africa, is incapable of educating Mustafa (228). Thus movement is deemed necessary, based on the reductive view that "there is nothing that Sudan can offer" (Tsaaior 228).

But this is not a phenomenon specific to Sudan. In fact, the anxieties of colonial education and travel is a recurring concern in the postcolonial Arab world, manifesting in its cultural and literary discourses. Academic mobility in *Season* is set against the history of student missions from the Arab world to Europe, and wider context of the *nahda* movement in the Arab world. As aforementioned in Chapter 2, the *nahda* signifies an important period of cultural and intellectual renaissance for the Arab world. Saree Makdisi traces the movement to debates dating back to the nineteenth century, when the notion of modernity began to find root in Arab societies (805). Amidst questions of the meaning of modernity in the Arab world, prominent intellectuals such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi perceives the learning of European thought as necessary for modernisation (Makdisi 806), where "for Tahtawi, the European states (particularly France) became standards to which Arabs could aspire, although in order to 'be modern,' one had somehow to 'become European'" (Makdisi 806).

A key aspect of the *nahda* period is the proliferation of education missions to Europe, as a way of fulfilling the ideals of the movement. The primary motive of these education missions is to equip Arab intellectuals with European knowledge, with the aim of returning and imparting said knowledge to help improve the state of the nation. Daniel Newman outlines the advent of these missions, tracing them to Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798 (9). This was a moment of Arab-European contact that saw gradual influence of European powers over Arab societies, such that it was felt necessary to learn various skills from the Europeans (Newman 11). Whilst European-led schools have been established across Egypt and Tunisia since the eighteenth-century, what also follow the *nahda* movement are state-funded education missions, with the first educational mission departing for France in 1826 (Newman 13).

The *nahda* movement was not without its criticisms. Whilst it aimed to achieve harmony between Europe and the Arab world, between science and religion, this project grew unrealistic, as its proponents, such as al-Tahtawi and his followers, began to problematically idealise Europe and the West (Hassan, *Tayeb Salih* 1-4). In fact, the *nahda*, in all its genuine

ambitions of “simple synthesis (*tawfiq*) between Western modernity and Arab Islamic heritage [...] seems in hindsight to have been a flawed vision” (Hassan, *Tayeb Salih* 7). Instead, Hassan offers that Tahtawi’s predecessors opt for “a critical reevaluation of the Arab heritage that does not sacrifice Arab identity” (*Tayeb Salih* 8). These considerations of ideological clashes, as well as experiences of the journeys, began to manifest in the literatures of the period. A notable example is al-Tahtawi’s account *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi talkhis Bariz* (*The extraction of pure gold in the abridgement of Paris*), which documents his experiences in Paris from the years 1826 to 1831 (Schaebler 23). Following al-Tahtawi’s seminal work, other writings on Europe by Egyptian scholars were also produced by Mustafa Lutfi al-Manfaluti, ‘Abbas Mahmud al-‘Aqqad, Ahmad al-Sawi Muhammad, Mustafa ‘Abd al-Raziq, Tawfiq al-Hakim, and Taha Husayn (Attar 20). This thus shows the scope and influence of the European experience in Egyptian writings. As such, *Season* holds a significant position in various socio-political and literary traditions and is indeed seen as both a natural successor and critic of the *nahda* movement.

Academic mobility and returns are equally central in *Submission*. It is also notable that the novel similarly presents forms of mobility enabled by structural financial aid. On the surface, *Submission* differs in that academic mobility is purportedly not the result of colonial education, as the travels of various characters are enabled by state-sponsored government scholarships. Specifically, academic mobility in the novel is set against the practice of Bruneian citizens being sent on government scholarships for overseas education. However, further research shows that this practice has its roots in colonial education. This practice can be traced back to the rule of the Bruneian monarch Al-Marhum Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Akhazul Khairi Waddin, who reigned between the years 1924 to 1950 (Melayong 166). According to Muhammad Hadi Muhammad Melayong, the establishment of formal education in Brunei by the British administration required a significant number of skilled educators (167). As such, in 1929, the British Residency sent selected Bruneian students to the Sultan Idris Teacher College in Malaysia, with the hopes of nurturing future educators and administrators upon their return to Brunei (Melayong 168). This then progressed to sending students for education in Singapore, with the first two students sent to the Telok Kurau Secondary School in January 1950 (Melayong 171).

This longstanding tradition is difficult to quantify. Tibok and Hiew remarks that data on the scope of historical student mobility in Brunei is limited, and it is difficult to determine the scale of these travels of Bruneian students abroad (2). However, the magnitude of these programs can be further proven by the scale of funding allocated. According to Tibok and

Hiew, free education is one of the advantages enabled by Brunei's wealth, derived from its lucrative oil and gas industry (1). This continues to further education, as Tibok and Hiew note that the pursuit of higher education abroad is further enabled by the amount of funding bodies in Brunei (5). Such benefits illustrate the nation's financial capacity to push its citizens to pursue education up to tertiary level, locally and abroad (Tibok and Hiew 5).

Read in this context, the academic mobility narratives in *Submission* therefore reveal complex relationship between mobility, education, and the nation. Academic mobility is seen as necessary for individual as well as societal emancipation, where successful academic returns are for the benefit of home. In *Submission*, this relationship is explored through latent anxieties of the negative effects of this expansive practice of academic mobility. Failed returns are contrastingly problematic and seen as harmful influences for home. There is then a perceived need to safeguard the nation and home from the harmful ramifications of academic mobility.

Further detrimental than failed returns are refusals to return at all. The most concrete argument explaining significance of return in *Submission* is that there is promulgation of fear of 'brain drain' as injurious to national stability. Tibok and Hiew observes the problem of brain drain as a resultant anxiety that follows the mass mobility of Bruneian citizens under government scholarships (6). It is purported that the pull factor in causing brain drain is in the lucrative opportunities available abroad, in contrast with seeming absence of prospects in Brunei (Tibok and Hiew 7). Lutfi Abdul Razak considers gendered perspectives, where the relative over-education of women in Brunei to their male counterparts is seen as a possible cause for emigration and subsequent brain drain (26). This is particularly significant as their emigration is sometimes a form of defiance, where Bruneian women who have been educated abroad do not return, "renege on their scholarship contract agreements to serve the country" (Lutfi 26). Because these forms of academic mobility are state-funded, the onus is therefore on the characters to return, in order to repay the funding which has enabled their movement.

These anxieties have been further observed by Kathrina Mohd. Daud, in her research examining citizenship and the figure of the Bruneian female in *Submission*. Mohd. Daud observes the significant intersection between travelling abroad for education and development of the Bruneian national identity ("Articulating"). Of particular relevance is her observations of problematic brain drain, where loss of Bruneians through refusal to return signals significant problems for the nation, particularly considering its small population (Mohd. Daud, "Articulating"). Mohd. Daud consequently argues that the novel reflects anxiety and desire to safeguard the nation against the purported influence and attraction of Western ideologies ("Articulating"). The significance of return as a form of deterrence against non-returns can be

further understood through similar models of academic mobility in the neighbouring Southeast Asian region. Koh Sin Yee examines the “state-led return migration programme” in Malaysia, an official effort to counter the effects of brain drain in Malaysia (188). Elsewhere, we can see similar weight being placed on returns in Singapore, as Aaron Koh presents an extensive study on the problems surrounding academic return mobility in Singapore (193).

I thus examine *Submission* as being equally critical of the influences and problematics of foreign education. The novel achieves this by demarcating return narratives according to binaries of success and failure, where successful returns are calibrated by academic achievement and preservation of local ideals. *Submission* ultimately highlights, and inculcates, the importance of returning as a form of deterrence against social and national anxieties.

Thus far, I have explored how returns are an important image of mobility in university narratives. Post-university novels, or university return narratives, are significant – for some cultures and locations, departures are not the end, but rather, the beginning. Departures signal the return to space of home, where home is a different geographical location altogether, requiring significant international movement. But just as home has been carried with them upon their travels to the university, so too does the experience of the university and foreign lands remain influential following their subsequent returns home.

Returning to the main aim of this thesis, of examining mobility as a way of pushing against limitations of existing critical traditions, I argue that the present narrow traditions and locations of the genre are disadvantaged, as they do not include forms of movement prevalent in global literary traditions. My findings therefore show how studying beyond the Anglo-American tradition expands our studies of the campus novel. Studying these texts highlights the prevalence of student missions in literature, examining their production of a specific form of university narrative. The university narrative in these texts is significantly shaped by returns, while at the same time the university past remains central. This is a form of academic mobility previously unseen in studies of the campus novel, especially as it is attributed to specific contextual conditions. By not studying these texts, or excluding them from the critical tradition, we are neglecting the narratives of other groups of people from varying cultures and nationalities. This leads to the loss of narratives of those who have experienced significant geographical dislocation in order to enter university space, and how they have experienced this movement.

On a formal level, I contend that examination of new images of movement challenges and alters existing frames of the campus novel genre. Additionally, the centrality of returns also alters the conventions of the genre by beginning the novels with the conventional ending

of departures. This shows how a specific form of movement shapes the portrayal of the university narrative elsewhere. As explored in the opening of this chapter, the frames of academic time and space are necessary for campus novels, where narratives must be enclosed within a set space and bound by academic time in order for them to qualify as campus novels. In particular, I explored how campus novels often end with departure from the academic space. In earlier chapters I have also explored how the materiality of campus setting is mapped out by movement. Thus movement is also significant as it gives the structure of the campus setting, in turn qualifying texts as campus novels.

In this chapter, the study of returns enables us to review the campus novel genre, by suggesting alternative perspectives of the genre that are not bound by academic time and space. Specifically, returns give us alternative perspectives beyond the tired portrayal of exits as endpoints in campus novels. Analyses of narratives of return in this chapter are based on narratives *after* the end of academic time and space, where the campus space is glaringly absent. It can be argued that these texts are therefore in conflict with conventions of the campus novel, and should therefore not be discussed in the same genre. Yet I further argue that these texts can revise our perspective of the genre, to the extent of inclusion in the corpus and critical tradition of the genre. Existing studies have already pointed towards the need to move away from the restrictions of academic time and space presently plaguing the genre. This is as discussed earlier, where I argue that the advent and rise of part-campus novels challenges views or definitions that present the genre as being singularly situated within a campus setting. The campus novel must therefore acknowledge and assimilate with the outside world, learning to transition beyond it.

Conclusion

The initial impetus for my research was a simple line of questioning: whether the non-Anglo-American campus novel? This was a simple problem to spot – through examination of critical studies of the genre, the genre purports, and continue to assert, its identity as being strictly Anglo-American. However, further research shows the emergence of higher education beyond Britain and America, and evidence of fictional works that accompany such rise. The marginal position presently afforded to campus novels beyond the dominant Anglo-American tradition is therefore a conspicuous gap that needs to be researched.

Following the new texts and movements that I have thus examined in this thesis, I essentially posit that there are numerous new directions for the campus novel genre. In this thesis, I have explored global variants of the campus novel genre, focusing on novels produced beyond the British and American tradition. In establishing a cohesive framework for comparing these texts, my analysis centred on images of mobility, examining the meanings and politics of movement across university narratives. Furthermore, my thesis also presents mobility as enabling productive comparisons and a cohesive framework, for studying campus novels from culturally and geographically diverse contexts. In addition to this, each chapter showcases the different ways in which context imbues images and experiences of academic travel, often revising, challenging, and even presenting travel and the university as precarious experiences.

With new locations come new issues, new languages to consider. In addition to the above findings, I also believe that there are further implications and lessons beyond what I have presented. In particular, my studies have explored new locations of higher education, with the suggestion that there might be possible shifts in centres for higher education. In fact, it has long been proposed that we are now looking at the decentralisation of higher education from the West, to the rise of Asia. Throughout this thesis, I have also presented explorations of new thematics, issues, even the possibility of reading the campus novel genre in other languages. Whilst I concur that majority of these novels were read in translation; we also now know that there is a great representation of the genre in Arabic literature. We are also able to examine the portrayal of the university in Malay and Indonesian language novels, thus further looking at the centrality of the university in fiction in Malay Southeast Asia.

The Indonesian Azharite novels put religion at the forefront, revising the debauchery that for so long defined the Anglo-American campus novel. In addition, the focus on religious education in the Azharite novel introduces the figure of Islamic religious scholars to the genre,

thus enabling the study of new character variants and populace of the genre. In fact, many of the texts which I have explored enabled us to enter new hallways and departments. The Anglo-American campus novel has always been known for being the forte of members of the humanities in higher education, more specifically – a favoured form by the English Faculty. However, the texts explored in this thesis brought us to medical schools, Faculty of Near Eastern Studies, and if we were to look further into the case of the campus novel in India, into the depth of engineering faculties.

In considering studies that informed my research, I acknowledge the limitations of scope of materials. Specifically, I am aware of emerging key studies that I did not have the opportunity to explore in further detail, such as the 2019 text *The Campus Novel: Regional or Global?* edited by Dieter Fuchs and Wojciech Klepuszewski. This is an important work in furthering studies of the continental European campus novel and beyond, against the Anglo-American tradition. I also note the recent publication of Lavelle Porter's *The Blackademic Life: Academic Fiction, Higher Education, and the Black Intellectual* (2019), which examines African-American academic fiction. Finally, my research would have further benefited from examining Brandon Taylor's Booker Prize-shortlisted novel *Real Life* (2020), as an emerging and acclaimed text that both revitalises and revises the genre. I foresee further studies that can be spurred from reviewing these numerous recent efforts in diversifying the campus novel tradition, in relation to my scope of study of Arabic and Asian texts.

Further research can also be done into literary works and traditions that I have not been able to explore in this thesis. I believe that much can be learned of East Asian variants of the campus novel genre, such as the Taiwanese 'overseas student literature' tradition, or narratives of student protests in South Korean literature. These works consider the significance of the Gwangju Uprising, a massacre which involved student protesters in South Korea in the month of May 1980. Recent notable samples of these works include Han Kang's *Human Acts* (2017), and Kyung Sook Shin's *I'll Be Right There* (2014). Additionally, the increasing recognition of South Korean literature prompted by Han Kang's reception of the Man Booker International Prize in 2016, and further aided by translation of works by these writers, shed light to this trend. The student narrative is also a recurring trend in Korean-American literature, where the recent success of R.O. Kwon's *The Incendiaries* (2018) is a prime example of this, as is the 2017 novel *Everything Belongs to Us* by Yoojin Grace Wuertz. Perhaps an early start was even made by Susan Choi, whose oeuvre is discernibly characteristic of campus novels, starting with her early work *The Foreign Student* (1998), to *My Education* (2013), and the more recent novel *Trust Exercise* (2019). Further research can also be done into the intersection between the

university and colonial education in established Southeast Asian literary fiction, such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Buru Quartet* (1980-88) and *Noli Me Tangere* by Jose Rizal (1887), as unexplored relatives of the campus novel.

I also propose further research into contemporary issues affecting higher education, considering the impact of present conditions on the campus novel. In particular, there needs to be further consideration of the rise of decolonising curriculum movements, such as the 2015 #RhodesMustFall campaign in South Africa, as well as its growth at the University of Oxford. I believe that revision of critical traditions and canon such as those attempted in this thesis is a possible way in which the study and teaching of campus novels can benefit these recent movements.

Analysing campus novels is perhaps a mere method in a sea of methodologies of looking at the university – its histories, its present concerns, and what can be prophesied of its future. What this study contributes to existing work is an in-depth analysis of the human aspects of the university, to the minutiae such as emotions, thoughts, of the characters that habit this space. Much that has been said about higher education focuses on the bulk of people, collating them into numbers, presenting them as everchanging statistics that feed into bigger numbers where immigration and the economy is concerned. However, increasing exodus from academia, as well as questions of its relevance in a world that is embracing start-up efforts and maverick dropouts, calls for other methodologies beyond examination of oft-peddled numbers. Perhaps it is time to look at the people who make up this sector, to reason their growing disillusionment and refusal to be a part of it.

In examining the campus novel as inseparable from the university, I further consider the values of this research, in contributing to contemporary debates on academic mobility. There is a caveat in looking at literature as representative of real life, but with the study of campus novels this is a near-impossible feat. As a product of academics and writers-in-residence, this is a genre based on experiential narratives. Although much has been said about taking them as manuals for academic life, it cannot be denied that the genre serves as a humanising dimension to existing discourses on higher education.

Considering perspectives of the campus novel, if traditionally the genre has been viewed with derision, then its position grows more tenuous based on the decreasing esteem accorded to intellectuals today. However, we are also moving away from the age of anti-experts to a return to experts, a necessity in the COVID-19 world. In closing this thesis that aims to review the campus novel genre, and thinking of the multitudes of ways in which it can be

further studied, I believe that the genre has much more to offer, if only we learn to look elsewhere. Beyond Britain and North America, the campus novel genre is still very much alive.

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