

A Trilogy

I Shall Present You with Another City is the first volume in which the narrator is in Edinburgh where he is a student at the university. He is writing a thesis on the theme of sex and violence in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The novel describes his life as an overseas student in Britain, and dwells on his relationships and love affairs, especially the one with his landlady who ends up by bearing his child. The volume ends after he has submitted his thesis and been awarded a Doctorate for it.

These are the Borders of my Kingdom, the second volume, finds the narrator back in Tripoli, Libya, married to a Libyan woman and teaching at the university. He is not in love with his wife and is generally dissatisfied with life in Tripoli. He undergoes a mental crisis which affects his personal and professional life. His mental crisis consists of trances where he finds himself transported to a fairytale world resembling a setting from the *Arabian Nights*. In that world, he is a prince who meets and falls in love with a beautiful princess.

A Tunnel Lit by One Woman, the third volume, is also set in Libya. The narrator meets and falls obsessively in love with a young woman colleague who is the image of the fairytale princess of his vision. He leaves his wife and pursues the young woman, and is overjoyed when she agrees to marry him. But things go wrong and he begins to feel that she was only a fleeting vision and that she never existed. The novel thus ends on a note of despair.

Among the many master-strokes in the trilogy are the narrator's references to his childhood and youth, and his evocative descriptions of the statues in the temples of Apollo and Artemis in Cyrene. He also excels in some contrasting descriptions of natural scenery, like the Scottish Highlands on the one hand, and the Libyan desert where he used to live with his family.

Ahmad Faqih was born in Libya in 1942 in the village of Mizda, south of Tripoli. He left the village at the age of fifteen in order to continue his education. In 1960 he took his first job as a Government employee and started on his career as a writer and journalist. He later went to Egypt to a UNESCO funded institute and returned to Libya as a full time journalist, and running the amateur theatrical group Al-Masrah al-Jadid. In 1965 he published his first collection of short stories which won him a prize in Libya. Through the auspices of the British Council he came to London to the New Era academy of Drama and Music. He returned to Libya to become the Director of the national Institute of

Drama and Music and to become editor of various cultural journals. In 1976 he came to London and became head of the Libyan Press office. He finally left the world of officialdom to obtain a Doctorate at Edinburgh in modern Arabic literature. He has written over fifteen books of short stories novels and plays, all published in Libya in Pan-Arab journals. His play 'The Gazelle' was produced at the Shaw Theatre in 1982. His stories have been dramatized for television and cinema. In 1989 he was given the highest accolade by the Libyan government for his contributions to the culture of Libya He lived for a few years in Rabat Morocco and now lives in Cairo.