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The Other as 'others': A Portrait of Dialogic Relations in Ahdaf
Soueif's *Aisha*

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Degree of Magister in Literature/Civilisation: Discursive Practices.

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A Summary of the Four Short Stories

A Summary of the Research Work in French

A Summary of the Research Work in Arabic

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Dedications

I dedicate this research work to the memory of Dr. Bouhend Mohamed Redha, the candle, whose presence will never be extinguished from my mind and heart, and whose absence inspired me, empowered me, and offered me the honour of working under the supervision of Dr. Lakhdar Barka.

Abstract

Throughout Aisha, her first collection of short stories, Ahdaf Soueif draws a multilayered picture of the Other as others, presenting a series of encounters of her protagonist with this very Other as a set of opposed elements. The latter crystallize into the adult vs. child, male vs. female, and foreigner vs. locale. The text including only four narratives to be investigated among the eight stories constituting the whole work, also displays a possibility of perceiving a non-human Other, namely time, memory, space and characters. Aisha figures as conforming to the portrait of the stereotyped Arab Muslim woman as a sex-subject, submissive, and maudlin character, confining her vision of the Other to the boundaries of her cocooned self epitomizing a self-centered vision of the world. This very reduced vision results in the possibility of viewing the Other as a hindrance to her attaining a clarified and centrifugal representation of the latter, herself and the outside world. The very encounters are also considered as the character's opportunity for a less stigmatized perception of the elements set forth. The main queries to be probed are: 1] what are the different perceptions of the Other by the author? How does the protagonist's encounter with the Other[s] impede her ability to understand the Other, herself and the world around? Or how does this very encounter allow her an enlightened vision of the set forth elements to forge a new start? The current investigation include there chapters. The first chapter aims at illumination the question of the Other from a postcolonial and feminist perspectives and the possibility of viewing it as a dialogic entity. The second chapter probes the Other as a child/adult female representation in The Returning and Knowing. The Third chapter pictures the Other as 'The Foreigner' in an exotic land in 1964 and The Nativity.

The possibility of imagining a dialogic relation between different perceptions of the Other opens new perspectives for adopting magnified representations of the later, oneself and the world, dilating one's imagination.



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General

Introduction

General Introduction

In postcolonial studies and postcolonial literature in particular, [Desai and Supriya, 2005] [Ashton, 1989] the question of the Other has been assigned particular importance and has been considered as presenting a variety of representations. It has stood mainly for the 'uncivilised' 'ignorant' 'foreigner' as a 'Them', or the Other, as opposed to the 'civilised' 'knowledgeable' as an 'Us', or the self, taking part of the 'Us' and a 'Them' binary [Said, 1978, 1995, 2007] This has characterised and resulted from Western representation of the self as having supremacy over the Other, undermining other civilisations [Geertz, 1984] The question of the Other has also been the concern of postcolonial feminist writers demystifying the myth of the 'first world white woman' [Shohat, 1992] [Taplade, 1984] already as part of a conflicting relation with the 'white male' [Beauvoir, 1965] [Irigaray and Marion, 2004] These writers have been stigmatized as 'third world women'.

Ahdaf Soueif as an Egyptian writer expressing herself in English has also voiced her concern for the set forth demystification. She has been concerned with blurring the West and East binary, featuring Eastern people as 'the weak', 'ignorant', and 'uncivilised Other, attempting to dissolve this very essentialised view blending Eastern and Western characters in fictional and non-fictional works. These characters she considered as sharing a history and space. Soueif's attempt crystallized in collections of short stories Aisha and The Sandpiper, novels In the Eye of the Sun and The Map of Love, and nonfiction works Mezzaterra.

The current research work entitled The Other as others: Portrait of Dialogic Relations probes the question of the Other as represented in Ahdaf Soueif's collection of short stories Aisha. In Aisha, particularly in the four narratives The Returning, Knowing, 1964, and The Nativity, Soueif displays a variegated representation of the Other as others. The main character's encounter with the Other[s] seems to impede Aisha's understanding of this very Other[s], herself, and the outside world, perceived through her self-centered lenses. This very encounter also seems to enhance the set forth understanding as the writer allows her protagonist self-transcendence and more openness to her perception of the Other and the world outside her cocooned self. The main questions to be investigated are:

of the Other by the author?

2] A] How does the protagonist's encounter with the Other[s] impede her ability to understand the Other, herself and the world around?

2] B] Or how does this very encounter allow her an enlightened vision of the set forth elements to forge a new start?

The first hypothesis proposes to explore the representations of the Other as others the author presents are: first Otherness as both antonymic and antagonistic attitudes, viewed as displaying a set of binaries, namely, child vs. adult, foreign vs. local, and female vs. male. This very set of binaries, however, is imagined by the author as also a set of complementary units rather than mainly and only as a set of opposing elements, blurring the perception of the Other as a unanimous and ultimate opposite and contributing to the main character's knowledge of herself, the Other and the outside world . Thus Otherness is understood as a complementary and harmonious attitude.

The afore-mentioned Other[s] concerns Aisha's encounters with the remaining characters in the stories as 'human Other'. Besides the Other as human, Soueif offers another conception of the Other as 'non human' [cf. chapter one p and chapter two p], namely time and space, delving both notions in a set of intertwining dialogic relations, spatial and temporal i.e. homeland vs. foreign land, past vs. present and future.

The second hypothesis [A] aims to investigate the protagonist's meeting with the Other[s] as it seems to attenuate her understanding of this latter, herself and the outside world. The author presents a rather self-centered perception her protagonist adopts, viewing the Other[s] as set of binaries different from, opposite to, and foreign to her as long as it does not fit her expectations. Thus, the writer portrays Aisha as a woman submissive to her own desires, surrendering to patriarchal authority as men's sex- object and a maudlin female character nostalgic about a 'lost' past. Henceforth, Soueif seems to deliberately confirm the stereotype of the 'Arab-Muslim' woman' as the epitome of the aforementioned stigmas.

The second hypothesis [B] probes Aisha's encounter with the Other[s] as it seems to represent an incentive as to her reaching a clarified vision of the Other[s], herself and the world. This Soueif could reach suggesting a different understanding of Otherness from the one perceiving it as an antonymic and antagonistic attitude; a redefinition of the Other, as 'The Opposite', 'The Foreigner' and 'The Inferior'. She offers it an alternative imagining as

ection of, and complementary to the self, including the
ce to highlight the, meaning of the encounter as an
opportunity for 're-knowing' and unlearning what has already been known and learned.
Thus, the author allows an understanding of Otherness as complementary and harmonious
attitude. She pictures a multiplicity of Other[s] to offer her protagonist a renewed image of
herself, the Other and the outside world, dissolving its hitherto monolithic representation
in a 'dialogism of Otherness'. The writer also turns to demystify the stereotype of the
submissive Arab-woman reinforcing Aisha's portrait as emerging from her delineated
vision to opt for a new start with the Other[s], looking forward to the future.

The present work will develop in three chapters. The first chapter, entitled **The Moot Question of the Other**, probes the concept of the Other. It is divided into two parts. The first part probes the Other as: **The Stereotyped Hostile Foreigner: A Postcolonial Critique** [Fanon, 1991], [Said, 1978], [Bhabha, 1984]. At this level, **foreignness, colonialism, racism, representation, stereotype, the subaltern, identity, crisis of identity, opposition and sameness** are explored as key words. The following step represents the Other in the light of a feminist theory considering the female/male dialectic. In this respect, the Other features as the weak female in opposition to the strong male as the self [Ahmed, 1992] [Irigaray, 2004]. Besides, the female is imagined as doubly Other and deplored by Postcolonial Feminists i.e. as both male's constant rival and a 'third world' entity, belonging to an 'underdeveloped' setting as opposed to their 'first world developed' counterparts [Lazreg, 1988], [Golley, 2004].

The second part of chapter one investigates the representation of the Other as dialogic entity according to Bakhtinian perception. It is viewed as both important and complementary to the self, championing dialogue, exchanged and mutual knowledge and consideration. The possibility of a conception of a non-human Other appears in the Bakhtinian perception, identifying an' **indefinite, unconcretized Other**' [Bakhtin, 1986]. He also considers it as character, time and space, constituting the literary text.

The second step concerns the importance of narrative in understanding Otherness and the self and Other relation to the outside world. Narratives are crucial means to understanding Otherness in that they highlight the others as writer, character, and reader's relation to one another undergoing the same experience of a story. The possibility of a dialogic relation between those very entities becomes the greatest as the literary work as well as characters,

subject of reader's interpretation, transcending time and space. The self-Other relation with the outside world is by no means harmonious as this latter on its turn necessitates reinterpretation and thorough consideration [Foucault, 1981].

The second and third chapters are devoted to the interpretation of the quartet narratives mentioned above, the main character's encounter with the Other[s] is considered relating the former to the chronotope of character, space and time [Bakhtin, 2002] as very crucial elements highlighting, first the link between them and the one linking the protagonist, Aisha to the chronotope. In all the probed stories, the main character delves into reminiscences of her past, yet in the first and second narratives recollection is focused on more than it is in the remaining others. The main character is portrayed in the first instance, as a self-centered woman, regarding everything outside herself and unknown to it; the Other, as strange and opposite.

Within the second chapter entitled: **The Other, A child/adult Female Representation** as a remembrance of time past, an understanding of the Other as non-human is referred to [Lawrence, 1925][Levinas, 1996] featuring later as time, space and memory. Aisha's meeting with the Other also centres on her past memories as an adult in **The Returning**, returning from England to Egypt and comparing a time and space past with the present as the first set of opposing binaries. Besides, the Other features as 'weak', 'depressing' and 'maudlin' female vs. 'selfish' and 'careless' male as another opposing set. A first allusion to the relation of writing to memory highlights the striking similarity Aisha has with Proust's **Remembrance of Time Past**, featuring his protagonist as a dreamer remembering people, places and time he had experienced.

As a child in **Knowing**, Aisha meets the Other as her authoritative parents, father in particular, her sweet fantasy world vs. that of her parents', and a warm sunny Egypt vs. a cold careless England. She strives to make people part of her fantasy world attracting every one's attention to her performances, conjuring rather plain spaces into paradises of her own creation.

Foreigner in an Exotic Land, Aisha features as a natures and change that the time future is supposed to provide as opposed to a 'still' and 'boring' present as Other featuring her parents' world again and that of the foreigner. She is later compared to other female characters that she communes with in **1964**, namely Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Maggie Tulliver, and Catherine Earnshaw.

The Nativity, shows up the Other as foreigner, a remote exotic Egypt vs. a modern England, a 'weak' 'victimized' female vs. a 'strong' 'preying' male. A second allusion to the relation of memory and writing is referred to as **Aisha** is highlighted as a memory design fixing time and allowing a dialogism of past, present and future vs. nostalgia as a roundabout of meaningless recollections.

The structure of the work is also considered [Genette, 1997] as an artistic product of intertwining texts as genres: the short story and the novel as Souief presents snapshots of Aisha's life within separate stories yet these latter are gathered up, focussing on Aisha as the main character. An allusion to the importance of memory and time is referred to, besides Soueiff's consideration of the question of the Other in her works as compared to her representation of it in **Aisha**.

Aisha depicts both a work of literature and art in general. It stands as a witness of the writer's ability to create a mosaic whereby inspiration, language and technique meet to gather antagonistic and harmonious elements like good and evil, tradition and modernity ambivalent and evanescent entities like time and memory with life and death as destiny determined elements. **Aisha** is a further proof that the subaltern can speak, write, share the fruits of their imagination using a 'foreign' language by an Egyptian writer to enter in a free and everlasting dialogue with readers and trigger their imagination. Henceforth, what used to be foreign, opposite or a threat i.e. an Other, could turn out known and familiar Other by the power of literature as an incentive of empathy and continuity.

I.1] Introduction

The Other has been variously understood as pointing to a difference or opposition to the same. It is often capitalized to indicate its difference [Van Pelt, 2000: 154]. When persons 'define' the Other, it depends mainly on their conception of it with reference to themselves. [Charnay, 1980: 14, 15]. The same concern was voiced by E. Said [Said, 1978] pointing at the traditional opposing stand categorising an 'Us', the self, and a 'Them', the Other. This very representation of the self/Other relation aims at dividing people into two groups: the first constitutes the norm that is valued, and the latter is known by its flaws and is therefore devalued and prone to domination and discrimination. [Said, 1978] These concerns Said voiced particularly when he discussed the West/Orient binary which is investigated later in this chapter. The same view was expressed by Cahoon as he contended that the unity of certain cultural units such as human beings, words, meanings, ideas, philosophical systems and social organization is preserved and maintained through a deliberate "*process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchisation*". Other entities should be viewed as foreign or 'other' in as much as the set forth system of hierarchisation leads to a dualism favouring and privileging the unit and devaluing the Other. [Cahoon, 1996: 6-14]

Chapter one aims at probing the moot question of the Other. Important queries to be posed concern:

- 1] How has the Other been represented from various perspectives, namely philosophical, psychological, structuralist, poststructuralist, anthropological, postcolonial and feminist perspectives?
- 2] Is the other everything that the self is not?
- 3] Do the self and Other translate inevitably into 'Us' and 'Them'?
- 4] Is the Other to be viewed as others, notably to encompass the different representations it has had; to escape the circle of confinement and essentialism, and possibly lead to a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and understanding with the self?

The queries set forth are to be linked to those concerning the representation of the self/Other relation within the investigation of the four narratives in Aisha. This could be

agonist's shift from a rather self-centered view of the self, gradually from very confined perception, shifts to a more 'Other- oriented' one, granted different perceptions of the Other as others by the author i.e. the opposite, the different, the stranger, the male, the adult to become possibly a source of knowledge and understanding and A Portrait of Dialogic Relations, indulging in a continuous dialogue, as the title of the current investigation suggests.

The current chapter is divided in two parts. It starts with providing a generic understanding of the self from a philosophical and psychological stands, alluding to how the concept of self has been widely represented throughout Western thought. This is aimed as an attempt to clarify the self/Other relation, far from undermining other views of the self/ Other relation. It is rather because the self/Other categories have been widely diffused in the West than those of the other societies and civilisations. [Staszak, 2008: 3]. Henceforth, this very step is proposed to explain how the Other has been perceived from a postcolonial and feminist theories, particularly from a postcolonial feminist perspective. The second part aims at considering the concept of the Other as a dialogic entity in order to explain how the very concept is to be conceived as presenting different perceptions that could lead towards a relation of complementation rather than that of opposition . This very relation is to be possibly construed regarding the relation of the Other with its different representations i.e. the others, and also with that of the self aiming at dissolving the immutable dialectic of opposition and hostility dividing both concepts. Finally, the Other is to be considered from a literary stand, within its dialogic frame, to possibly present what special status it has acquired in the narrative mode.

Both concepts of self and Other, the main concepts to be investigated, are tightly linked, therefore, one cannot probe one without including the other. Difference, sameness and opposition are the main key words to be probed explaining how the Other being different, has been condemned to remaining 'The Hostile Opposite', 'The Rival', or 'The Same' and a threat to the self. However, the current work aims at first, blurring this very conception the Other has had attempting at replacing it with a vision of a complementary entity, a source of exchanged knowledge, and a challenging step towards transcending over self-centeredness and egotism. This could lead to a better and clearer representation of the self, the Other and the world around. Secondly, this very investigation tries to open a possibility of viewing the Other as others, notably as encompassing all the representations it has been assigned to prevent any confinement its meaning might suffer, gearing towards

ther than enjoying enrichment and polemics. The
he Other could have is also integrated in the research
considering, the Other as for, instance, the outside world, geography, [remote places],
society, or time, space, and characters in narrative texts. These elements might constitute a
source of threat, hostility, fear, or knowledge, interaction, and understanding; just what the
Other might represent.

In both philosophical and psychological studies , the generic meaning of the self is
that it is the essential entity for distinguishing an individual from the others. In philosophy,
following different theories, the self was perceived as an idea of a unified being endorsing
an idiosyncratic consciousness representing Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, and to a certain
extent Rousseau's understanding of it.¹ [Cahoon, 1996: 13, 255] It is responsible for
individuals' thoughts and actions particular to them. For Psychologists, the self, is
determined by our being conscious of it as constituting our own being different from the
others. It is the subject's personality proper. One's actions that one attributes to one's self
imply one's being conscious of doing them personally and deliberately². [Daco, 1960: 162]
The widespread view of the self conceived in Western philosophy is that of an
autonomous and distinctive individual living in a protected and unviolated environment [
Geertz, 1984: 190] Geertz claims that the western representation of the person is that it is
bounded, unique, a center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action. It is imagined as a
distinctive whole and set contrastively both against its social and natural background. [ibid.
1984, 126] Some queries should be asked and investigated before the set forth allegation is
to be confirmed or infirmed. How was the concept of the self represented in Western
thought? Did it enhance the individuals' alienation from their environment? Did those very
perceptions of the self make it supreme and opposite to the Other? Or did it reinforce their
relation?

Current views of the self in psychology diverge greatly from this early conception,
positioning the self as playing an integral part in human motivation, cognition, affect, and
social identity. [Sedikides and Spencer, 2007] i.e. considering the self in its social
environment as influencing and influenced by the others.

Among the earliest images the West had of other civilisations is their stigmatization of it as exotic and remote lands. Henceforth, Otherness was geographically determined.

The contact between Greeks and non-Greeks diverted the former's attention to the difference between them and the others, however they were strongly unified by a common language, culture and religion. The Greeks were the first to use the word barbarian to refer to non-Greek speakers who uttered non-sense “*bar bar*“. [Felix, 2008 :1]. The Odyssey, the Homeric Epic, could stand as the epitome of such an encounter with the Other as it tells the adventures of Odysseus's adventures in remote lands, returning from the Trojan War. It has also been the tale of how a “*civilized*“ people strived to conquer foreign lands in the name of civilization.³ Both Greeks and Romans viewed themselves as superior to other people from different cultures. However, sometimes they could grant them some recognition on the grounds of the good they could retrieve from those inferior people. [Charney, 1980: 33, 34, 35]⁴ Exotism⁵ was the characterising feature of such relations as the label of exotic land stuck to the image of all remote areas. Although exoticism meant fascination with faraway lands as art, architecture, and monotheist religion, it is less the pleasure of confronting otherness than of having the satisfaction of experiencing the sight of a reassuring version of this confrontation, true to Western people's fantasies, that comforts them in their identity and superiority. [Charney, 1980: 28, 29, 30, 27] This very phenomenon Said labeled *imaginative geography* and contended that “*As cultures are far from being monolithic or unitary in that they include more foreign elements, alterities, differences, also do geographies*“, [Said, 2007:15] [cf. chapter three. P. 59]

I.2. B] The Other: The Stereotyped Hostile Foreigner:

I.2. B.] A Postcolonial Critique

The Other has been represented as the excluded hostile foreigner; an image much deplored and rejected by postcolonial⁶ thinkers in both fictional and non-fictional writings. Foreignness, described in relational terms, tends to be considered as something that proves unfit into the available structures. Each human order is based on continuity, regularity, and

s on its ability to maintain and secure its own identity al', and what is foreign or 'abnormal'. Henceforth, 'the foreign' cannot be integrated in such an order, for it resists any attempt at including it in the realm of the ordered which it interrupts and destabilizes. [Lippitz, 2007: 78]. The Foreigner, unable to rule itself, has been for long a prey of **colonialism** and its dire consequences, critiqued in postcolonial theory.

Thinkers like Aime Césaire, advocating Marxist theory, linked colonialism to capitalism and was in favour of a classless society whereby the colonized Other regains its equality. [Hassan, 2002: 47] Fanon, unlike Césaire, contended that while colonialism marginalized the proletariat class, there was no room for analogy between colonized workers and Western ones because the formers, besides belonging to a deprived class, belonged nowhere unlike the latter. Henceforth, the colonized Other, besides being considered poor, was also foreign. They endured dehumanization, deprivation and neurosis by the colonised. Such psychological disorders and traumas had been explained by Fanon, relying on a psychoanalytical critique. [Fanon, 1991: 23, 67]⁸. Said's sharp criticism of Marxist ideology stemmed from his rejection of an essentialisation of history to include only the European model imposing its conception of classless societies. He argued for a reconsideration and re-reading of history, emphasizing the notion of discourse and therefore, basing his study on the *"body of writing"* describing imaginative, exotic, and remote places and people under an essentialist heading: The Orient [Hassan, 2002: 47, 48] Orientalism⁹ is essentially a critique of Eurocentric representations and the manufacture of the Other as a category which is inferior, uncivilized, ignorant, and hence, unable to rule itself by itself. The West's stigmatisation of Eastern people and those in the developing world in general as stereotypes is perceived as *"a frequently repeated picture, more or less rigid, of a group of people"*. Stereotypes are related to cultural presuppositions on the part of the observer. They *"mean a group image of a vocational, racial, cultural, or national group"* [Heaton, 1946: 328]. They are possibly acquired in whatever given environment and are not the result of a conscious learning. They render people's experience limited in that they stick to their minds as static *"pictures- in the- head"* [ibid.329]. For Saville-Troike stereotyping is a kind of disaffiliation or rejection and rationalizing prejudice. *"It involves an exaggerated belief associated with category. Its function is to justify our conduct in relation to that category"* [Saville-Troike, 2003: 193-4]. This very confinement

to representation¹⁰ as a restructuring of reality which
? and then in the culture, institutions and political
ambiance of the presenter” [Said, 1995: 129]. Ahdaf Soueif, as an Egyptian writer living
in Britain, expressed the same concerns “...but it troubled me that in almost every book,
article, film, TV, or radio programme that claimed to be about the part of the world that I
came from I could never recognize myself or anyone I knew. I was constantly coming face
to face with a distortion of my reality.”[Soueif, 2004: 2] Said expressed clearly that such
concepts as 'barbaric and 'cannibals' were used by westerners to mean an “*Other*” different
from 'Us', inferior vs. superior, ignorant vs. knowledgeable, barbaric vs. civilized [Said,
2007:41] He equated colonialism and imperialism with the urge to tame the Other's culture
by domination because these people , “*beseached domination*”, they are dependent,
inferior, “*subject races*“. [ibid8] [cf. chapter three, p. 59]

This very conception of the Other had been triggered by racist inclinations towards it.
According to Todorov, “*racism*”¹¹ is the name given to a type of behavior which consists
in the display of contempt or aggressiveness toward other people on account of physical
differences between them and oneself. [Todorov, Mack, 1986: 171]. He denies existence to
the word “*race*” [which he puts constantly in between inverted commas]. What makes race
non-existent for Todorov is that biologically the concept is useless and that it cannot
separate human beings as belonging to different species genetically. Thus, race is a
fallacious concept that racists invented to impose their supremacy on other persons on the
basis of such trivial criteria as skin and body structure [ibid. 172]¹² As a result, phenomena
such as **ethnocentrism** emerged as the belief that one's own language, culture and blood
are superior to others. [Lehtonen, 2000: 43]

Critiquing the notion of colonialism and discussing Man's living in difference with others,
Todorov inaugurates his La conquête de l'Amérique by the following statement: “*I want
to talk about the I's discovery of the Other*” [Je veux parler de la découverte que le 'je'
fait de 'l'autre']. [Todorov, 1982: 1] Todorov delves into the controversial topic which is
that of Man's relationship to other peoples. He got inspired by the Spanish conquest of
South America [in particular Mexico], in the sixteenth century. His concern is “*to study
other cultures and peoples from a libertarian or a non-repressive and non-manipulative*

aimed for the attainment of Man's living difference in *l'egalite*¹³. [ibid. 253] To turn to a more integrating view of the Other as difference Todorov's revision of Rousseau, Smith, and Hegel's¹⁴ works in his Living Alone Together. In Living Alone Together he based his studies and reflections on Otherness, commenting on three of the most distinguished figures of Enlightenment philosophy namely, Rousseau, Smith and Hegel. He discussed the thinkers following works: Rousseau's Discours sur l'inegalite [Discourse on Inequality], Smith's The Theory of Modern Sentiments and Hegel's phanomenologie des Geist [Phenomenology of Spirit] [Wolker, 1996: 44]. He contended that Western philosophy has been less concerned with “the social dimension of human nature“ than with human solitariness and “*the virtues of contemplative life*“ . Secondly, he argued that though ancient Greeks were preoccupied with the use of notions such as “*sympathy and sociality*“, the use of these latter translated their “*desire for companionship*“ and an attraction for sameness and not for people different from oneself. [ibid.44] He stresses the huge importance of sociability translated into the other's gaze [regard]“*enabling persons to be persons*“ [Ferguson, 1996: 25]

To further highlight the Other as difference instead of considering it as an ultimate opposite, Bhabha critiqued colonial discourse, focusing on the subaltern as an important feature of Otherness. According to Bhabha, the subaltern¹⁵, viewed as the non-western, the Other, who escape Western representation [Hassan,2002: 49], is constantly ready to challenge colonial hegemony. He also borrows from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, like Fanon, to illuminate the limitations of colonial discourse. He scrutinizes concepts such as anxiety, narcissism, and fetishism, to denote the ambivalence of that very discourse. [ibid. 50]. He discusses the mimetic and ambivalent features of colonial discourse in that it describes the colonial subjects as ' human and not wholly human'. Colonial mimicry is the desire for a '*reformed*' ,'*recognizable*' Other, as a '*subject*'; as a difference that is almost the same but not quite' [Bhabha,1984: 126] Thus the colonial subject is according to '*the imperialist master*' seen as '*partially present*' , '*partially civilized*', and '*partially Christian*'. They could not grant the Other its sameness fully, nor could they spare it its difference. Bhabha reconsiders “*colonial mimicry*“ and “*sly civility*“ as means of native resistance. These forms of resistance empower the

the coloniser's weapon, provoke their frustration and the colonized subject as sharing the same power. He, therefore, displaces the focus from an interest in the Other's, as foreigner and colonized, neurotic disorders to the coloniser's psychic disorders. [Bhabha, 1994: 85, 101][cf. chapter three, p.67] Young reproaches Bhabha's use of rather essentialist concepts such as hybridity and mimicry as “*static concepts*“. No specificity is provided by Bhabha as to the cultures these concepts are addressed to. [Young, 1990 : 146] A merely rhetorical kind of resistance is offered by Bhabha to the colonized subject. Besides, this kind of hybridity emerges as a “*figure for the consecration of hegemony*“. [Shohat, 1992: 110]. Henceforth, the Other, both as colonized and foreigner, according to Bhabha, is to embrace the same hegemonic status as their colonizers', to escape stigmatization and essentialisation ,and therefore, sink their difference in the colonizer's sameness.

The exclusion of the Other as hostile and a queer foreigner by Westerners induced this latter to endure a phenomenon labeled crisis of identity, essentially when writers chose Western languages as a code of expressing themselves as subjects from former colonies . “*More than three-quarters of a century after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, from which most of them (Middle Eastern states) emerged, these states have been unable to define, project and maintain a national identity that is both inclusive and representative*” [Kumaraswamy, 2006: 63] Therefore, these writers' Otherness translated by difference from the colonised became mere confusion and bewilderment, resulting from their use of a foreign language as their main code of expression. They could not view themselves as different neither could they consider themselves the same as the 'White' foreigner. The same concerns were expressed by Jan Mohamed Abdul. R:

Genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness is possible only if the self can somehow negate or at least severely bracket the values, assumptions and ideology of his culture...However this entails in practice the virtually impossible task of negating one's very being, precisely because one's culture is what formed that being.[Jan Mohamed, 1985: 65]

Todorov argues that human beings are far possibly to be do. Opposition to cultural supremacy and racism does not entail neglecting one's own culture. Human beings are separated by culture differences but are united by a "common identity". The latter is a pertinent factor "promoting communication, dialogue and comprehension of Otherness", which is not a radical attitude. Otherness is not there in order to deny something else; it is there to coexist with something else. "Culture is learned and it can be relearned. No people are born what they are, nor could they stay so forever". [Todorov and Mack, 1986: 176] Jan Mohamed could have possibly misunderstood Otherness to mean up-rootedness from one's culture in an encounter with another. However such an encounter presupposes an engagement of one's out-sidedness as well as one's in-sidedness for a thorough understanding of what it entails to be an Other not in losing but in gaining.¹⁶

I.2.C.a) The Other: A Feminist¹⁷ Critique:

The fact that the self constantly faces the conflict of not recognizing the Other and not entertaining any reciprocity with it has been the basic point of disagreement between De Beauvoir and Sartre. Although he acknowledges that man exists in a world of the Other in Being and Nothingness, Sartre argues that: "While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the other, the other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the other, the other seeks to enslave me...conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others". [Sartre, 1989: 364]. However, Beauvoir emphasizes reciprocity as the building block of the self/Other relation. She contends that one's subjectivity is not inertia, withdrawal, or separation, but rather a movement towards the Other so that the difference between the self and this latter no longer exists, and one can call the Other her or his. [Beauvoir, 1974b: 245], [Tidd, 1999: 164, 65]. In Le deuxième sexe, [The Second Sex] she explores the male/female dialectic in that men consider women as subjects of oppression and an ultimate Other, inferior and weak. "Humanity is defined by man and man defines the woman not relating to herself but in reference to himself...she determines and differentiates herself according to him; she is the inessential compared to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute; she is the Other".¹⁸ [My translation] [Beauvoir, 1949 :16] However she championed living with the others, Beauvoir was criticized for favouring individualism over co-existence with others when she considered it a kind of

me to transcend and know one's self better. [Beauvoir,

The male/female dialectic has also been a subject of debate between Lucy Irigaray and Emmanuel Levinas. Irigaray claims for the existence and perception of different subjects that a normative view colonizing Western philosophy has blurred. For Irigaray the feminine subject must be perceived as Other, namely enjoying its own freedom, distinction and *raison d'être*, irrespective of the resemblances it might have with the male subject. [Irigaray and Marion, 2004:68] She critiques Levinas's stand for not recognizing the interaction between different subjectivities and that the female Other belongs to a totally different world than that of the male. For her, the recognition of gender differences and autonomy is far more important than that given to the foreigner as Other, in maintaining a distinction and *"elaboration of subjectivity and culture"*. This leads to a sustaining of difference between two *"kinds of human species"*. [ibid. 69] For Levinas, the Other is not the woman but the son, maintaining and preserving a patriarchal tradition and converting the Other to the same. To recognize an intersubjectivity between the masculine and feminine means for Levinas a prevention of the subject preservation as autonomous, and its weakening, by highlighting its limits. He denies the female subject its alterity i.e. being an Other different and autonomous from the male, so as not to permit the possibility of the male being Other on its turn. [Levinas, 1987: 85].¹⁹

Hannah Arendt considered feminism and women issues as part of the *"public person"* and not a matter of a private self detached from the rest of the world. [Cutting-Gray, 1993: 35] She denied translating Otherness in terms of racial or gender opposition. She resented the idea of individuals belonging to a social group and getting transformed into *"a collection of private selves"* [ibid. 37]. Otherness should not be perceived in terms of *"other-self-contained-egos"* and not in terms of Others blending their alterity with that of Others; with capitalization reinforcing these latter's irreducible difference. [ibid. 40] To view everything outside oneself as an ultimate danger and threat, means to forbid and condemn difference under the disguise of an erroneous or illusory inviolate self. Such politics shatters the idea of a heterogeneous world for a monolithic unitary one, invoking sameness, if everything outside the self, becomes the incarnation of a *"hostile Other"*. [ibid. 41]. The deprivation of privacy for Arendt, lies not in the natural relation and

presence of others. She labels this kind of private retreat
y, “inner emigration” [ibid. 42, 43]. A female subject,
she insists should be conceived as complementary to the male subject not a subject of
totalitarianism or a hostile Other. [cf. chapter two, p. 39-40]

I.2.C. b) The Other: A Postcolonial Feminist Critique

The same representation of the female as a hostile Other, an inferior and weak being, and a threat to male ego, dominated postcolonial feminist studies. Spivak relied on the theoretical projects of feminist, Marxist, and deconstructionalist thoughts. This allowed her a multilayered critique at more than one level of various hegemonic structures. She had been able to challenge the male dominance over many areas of critical studies: Marxism, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. She sharply rejected the politics of silence and the underestimation of the subaltern as the silent foreign Other. Besides her critique of the essentialised perception of the labeled 'Third- World-woman' as inferior, marginalized, men's sex-slave by Western feminist thought, she argued for a deconstruction of such stereotypes. [Hassan, 2002: 49]

However, Spivak was criticized for having confined the area in which the colonized can claim a history only through writing. The Subaltern is prone to silence in colonial discourse and in the counter discourse of the postcolonial critic. She had also been criticized, especially by Neil Larson and Dipesh Chakrabarty, of setting the building of “dominant forms of knowledge and politics” as a condition for the subaltern to be heard. Therefore she is said to be claiming for the same hegemonic discourse she is supposed to deconstruct i.e. conjuring up the subaltern as the replica of the colonizer or foreigner.

Insisting on the difference between 'first' and 'third world' feminism, Chandra Mohanty Taplade believed that: *“For too long, women in the third world have been considered not agents of their own destiny, but victims. A potent image has been constructed, even in feminist scholarship, of ‘an average third world woman’ who leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender”*, [Taplade, 1984: 47-56], sexually constrained. So, women in the developing world have been stigmatised as doubly others; featuring the female weakness and inferiority plus the ignorance and dependence

of the world. They have been denied their Otherness
ence and the possibility to restore a new image for
themselves. “...some have even gone further to argue that because feminist and national
consciousness emerged at the same time and as a reaction to western imperialism,
feminism is an illegal immigrant and an alien import to the Arab world and, as such, is not
relevant to the people and their culture”²⁰. [Golley, 2004: 521] Arab women have been
named ‘pawns of Arab men’ by western women. [Bulkin, 1984:167-168]. They have been
represented as obscure creatures, submissive and secluded. Their main concern was their
homes and children and the other females in the ‘Harem’ [Golley, 2004: 522] They have
been condemned to remain 'third world'; “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound,
domestic, family oriented, victimized...” [Taplade, 1984: 47-56]

Notwithstanding, Lazreg investigates the way both western and 'third world' women's
feminist conception of Eastern woman. She insists on the continuity of themes tackled by
French colonial and neo-colonial discourse, and resumed by Eastern feminist writings
[Lazreg, 1988: 83] Namely, the most recurrent themes are the oppression of third world
women by men, religion and family preoccupations which hamper their emancipation and
participation in professional life. According to Lazreg, these forms of essentialisations
such as victimized, uneducated, domestic and submissive are associated to Eastern women
out of a lack of knowledge of the nature of the latter [ibid. 89]. A lack of knowledge
condemned women in the developing world to dwell in the circle of ignorance, dependence
on men, inability to decide and therefore instead of enjoying their Otherness as part of their
distinction from others that could build their identity, remained the excluded stereotyped
Other. [cf. chapter two, pp. 39-40, and chapter three, p. 68-69]

To link the elements investigated so far to the main characteristics distinguishing Aisha as
the protagonist of the quartet narratives, one could interpret her attitude as that of a woman
shrinking from her environment, though striving to belong to it. Her coming back to Egypt
from England after a long absence, induced her to feel estranged from everything around
her. She confined her perception to what she had already known and learned, viewing the
Other outside herself as strange, foreign, opposite, and a threat to her self-preservation.
Therefore, her parents as adults she excluded from her child and teen age world, her
husband featured as the male opposite, the locale people in Egypt were the foreigner that



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the exotic pharaoh from unknown lands. Yet **Aisha** product whereby Soueif has displayed a dialogism of character, time and space in her displaying of a multilayered portrait of the Other as others, encompassing conflicting, opposing, and complementary relations and tendencies.

The Bakhtinian vs. Vygotskian Perception

For Bakhtin the self/Other relation should be linked to the dialogic nature of human interaction:

The dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth, In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and his discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. [Bakhtin, 1984: 293]

Human beings experience a process of interaction throughout their participation in an open ended dialogue. This highlights the idea of sociability of language in being an important means of communication to stay alive, for life itself is dialogic. The sociable nature of language Bakhtin alludes to as discourse. The situated act of dialogue in discourse is the utterance. [ibid. 183] Bakhtin calls the quality of the utterance, being directed to the others, its addressivity. [ibid.95]. Therefore, the participant or addressee is by no means a passive listener, but an active contributor in a communicative process and so is the addresser. On the active role of the hearer within a dialogue Harris also argues: “...when the communicator faces the hearer, the communicator's purpose or intent must be to confront the hearer in a way that enables the hearer to discover that rigorous demand is set before her or him” [Harris, 1991: 97]. The hearers are invited to respond either positively or negatively. They have the freedom to choose. [ibid. 67] When Bakhtin turns to give examples of possible participants in a dialogue he emphasizes that this addressee could be an interlocutor involved in everyday dialogue, or a group collective of specialists, in a particular field, people from a different ethnic group, opponents and enemies, people intellectually superior or inferior to us and it can also be an *indefinite, unconcretized Other* alluding to a possibility of the involvement of a non-human Other [Bakhtin, 1986: 95] An important feature of Bakhtin's understanding of the Other is his insisting on the distinctiveness of the latter i.e. its alterity—the otherness of the Other. It is the very fact that this other expresses itself from a different perspective and has a different stand that allows the productivity of dialogue with other people:

...the event if I merged with the Other, and instead of two
...what would I myself gain by the others merging with
me? If I did, he would see no more than what I see and know myself; he would nearly
repeat in himself that want of any issue out of itself which characterizes my own life. Let
him rather remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do
not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my
own life. [Bakhtin, 1990: 87]

This passage points to Bakhtin's insistence that the difference and distance of the Other from the self should be maintained and considered essential; not mere imposed sameness. It is the constant struggle with difference and misunderstanding that renders dialogue and thought productive. Therefore, consensus between participants in a dialogue is never a measure for dialogic productivity. This line of thought is utterly different from Vygotsky's understanding of dialogue. Unlike Bakhtin, he claims for the absolute sharing of information between interlocutors and he favours internal dialogue, or monologue, over external dialogue. His understanding of dialogue is related to the distinction he made between, inner, or what he termed "egocentric speech", and "external speech". [Wertsch, 1980: 151]. "Inner speech, Vygotsky explains, "is speech for oneself. External speech is speech for others". [Vygotsky, 1987: 257]. For him the ideal speech is one in which the shared "given" in a conversation between addresser and addressee is maximal and where misunderstanding between them is minimized. His view of dialogue is that the exact information contained in the speech of the listener is a *replica* of that contained in that of the speaker. Each interlocutor constitutes an *insider* to the Other's world [Vygotsky, 1987: 69]. This condition presupposes the assumption that dialogue is an enterprise based on cooperation whereby the aim is focused on *maximal* agreement. It is of at most importance to point out that the difference between Bakhtinian and Vygotskian perception of dialogue is their representation of the self/Other relation. Vygotsky claimed for a dialogue with the Other that blends the participants together, highlighting their sameness by, presumably decreasing the chances of misunderstanding, granting them identical ways of thinking and amount of information. However, Bakhtin argues for a relation with the Other perceived from outside the self i.e. a relation based on difference from and possibly conflict with the self, yet which induces dialogue and interaction. This allows for the weakening of egocentric perception of the Other in terms of sameness and concentration on the self as

ding to Bakhtin, translates the shaping of a knowledge
n“ of the self's connectedness to the outside world in
Author and Hero and Discourse in the Novel. He attributes a “double-voicedness“
positions [Bakhtin, 1981: 354] for the self/“I“ .Firstly stands the “*I- for myself position*
[Bakhtin, 1990: 24]. It determines the inner construct consisting of one's ideas, ideals,
attitudes, values, and preferences...etc are perceived from one's own cognition i.e. how one
views one's own self and feels about it, Secondly, there is the position of “*I and the Other*“
[ibid.23,25] that concerns my relation to outsiders under the supervision of my own look.
Finally comes the position of the “*Other- for- me*“. “...either as my own lived experience
or as the lived experience of this particular and unique other human being “ [ibid. 23]. It
is the gateway allowing the Other's gaze on myself and mine on theirs. Thus the famous
'know thyself' directive presupposes an encounter of intertwining competing
epistemologies either within the same self [as one's own Other] or from without. Besides,
in his notion of the dialogic self, Bakhtin argues that it is oriented precisely toward such an
actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that merely
duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement,
sympathy, objection, and execution [Bakhtin, 1986: 69]. However, pertinent and promising
such intentions and ideas are, some reservations should be noted about Bakhtin's
understanding of the self/Other relation considering the following passage:

*To be means to be for the Other, and through him, for oneself. Man has no internal
sovereign territory ; he is all and always on the boundary; looking within himself, he looks
in the eye of the Other or through the eyes of the Other...I cannot become myself without
the Other; I must find myself in the Other; finding the Other in me. [Todorov, 1984: 96]*

The set forth passage highlights Bakhtin's recognition of the Other as existing, its
contribution and relevance to the existence of the self besides the primacy of its role in the
knowledge of the self of itself. However, the following words and phrases could be
misleading gearing towards appraisals of the self over the Other. 'To be for the Other, and
through him for oneself', a constant emphasis on oneself that might caricature the Other as
a mere means of self recognition or appeasing existential queries. Man '*has no*' internal
'sovereign' territory; he is '*all*' and '*always*' on the boundary looking within '*himself*'. This
could stand as a denial of self sovereignty which is essential for one's self-esteem. '*I*

Other may entail the Other's existence is confined and therefore, it is there only to be used by the self. To critique Bakhtin, Jeffrey Nealon asserts that this latter's theory slips towards the same solipsism as Enlightenment theories of the subject. Nealon's reservations point to the possibility of the subject's 'objectification' of the others i.e. appropriating them as objects for the sake of its own self-understanding[Nealon, 1997: 130] [Delehanty, 2001: 33], One should rather aim at a negotiation of perspectives, which means the possibility of not seeing one's self through the narrow lenses of the self but to allow the Other's gaze to tell one more about one's self and about the Other. This could also mean entails the denial of difference as self-assertion that is played out as a no-loss game, for the consideration of difference cannot empty the self. It is there to enrich it and be enriched by it.

I.3.A] A Non-human Other: A Writer/Reader Encounter

The writer is also to delve in the aforementioned experience of Otherness crystallizing his very act of writing whereby the reader discovers the characters, place, time, culture, style, as different others. It could allow readers meet this non-human other through their imagination namely space, time and foreign culture. This encounter is to stand as a counter argument for the Barthesian 'death of the author' condition stated above. Readers might embrace the text encompassing within themselves the same elements during the process of reading emphasizing Bakhtin's reader /writer dialogism. He claims the literary form to be open-ended and interactive with its readers [Delehanty, 2001: 33].

The author/hero dialectic compared to that of the self/Other is weakened and claimed different in that the agents in the first relation occupy a different "plane of existence" [ibid 36] from the second pair of agents . Within the second pair, the actions thoughts and whole existence of the Other is never controlled or predicted by the self. However the author has full command of his/her hero's consciousness because first it is their creation to which they have determined a destiny, space and a time[Bakhtin, 1990: 12, 13] Yet, protagonists could somehow escape their creators' grip gaining a space of Otherness and autonomy, when summoned to readers' interpretation who might shape them differently. This open space could also be held by the characters in that they might influence the lives of readers, thoughts, actions and destinies, becoming both active Others. [cf.chapter two, p.35]

Understand Otherness :

Where theory seems to leave pitted spaces as to understanding Otherness the narrative mode may take the lead. Narratives enhanced by imagination uses a less distanced language that may draw one closer to the dialogue presupposed in the reading process between reader and writer or self and Other. Empathy could be as a further incentive in this mutual recognition. Therefore it could be considered as an empowering practice. Jacques Derrida: calls for a window of opportunity to put into question the foundations of Western philosophy in that all disciplines have been affected by it, however literature he believes could be a space to critique such foundations: “ *In literature...philosophical language is still present in some sense; but it produces and presents itself as alienated from itself, at a remove, at a distance. This distance provides the necessary free space from which to interrogate philosophy anew*” [Kearney, 1984: 109] Harris contends that imagination could have one's assumptions challenged to be able to encounter the Other anew. “...imagination characteristically looks at reality from the reversed, unnoticed side” [ibid. 9] For Ricoeur narratives articulate an experience of the 'other-than-self' element by the self. They consider the 'life' of characters in relation to moments of their responsiveness or failure to respond to others. The responsive self for him concerns primarily its transcendence of its condition to responding “faithfully and thoughtfully to others” and to expect responses from them [Ricoeur, 1992: 165-8]

However, artists' use of their imagination was said to transmit their imperfect view of things and the audiences get affected by this distorted view of reality, translated in Plato's reproaching the audiences' fall under the spell of the artist .Besides, questions such as 'is literature dead? [Doody, 2000], as in Alvin Kenan's article “The Death of Literature” [1990] [qtd. In. Beaty, 2000: ii] or if it is still a 'reliable' and an 'up to date' source of knowledge in a cyber era, still constitute a space for debates [Paulson, 1993] “ *Literary modes are very natural to us very close to ordinary life and to the way we live as reflective beings*” .They highlight individuals' view and consideration of the others , living together [Murdoch,1998:6] E.M Forster in Aspects of the Novel insists that the novel allows introspection within the inner lives of characters and their motivations as part of reader's knowledge about the others and the world [Forster, 1966:52-3]. This very kind of knowledge stems from “*the seriousness of art itself*” as “*aesthetic seriousness*”; a “*seriousness of perception*”. Readers' experience of narratives has an aim, a seriousness of its own. It makes their imagination work to perceive things they could not hitherto

experienced before but never saw clearly. Following this
conveys knowledge” or “a kind of knowledge” the
possibility of having various ways of knowing drawn from “two basic types of knowledge”
each using language as a system of signs: the sciences which use the “discursive mode”,
and the arts, which use the “presentational mode”. In this sense one can claim that art as
containing and presenting a kind of knowledge particular to it, could be viewed as
presenting ‘a truth’ rather than ‘the truth’ [Wellek and Warren,68]

Derrida on deconstruction contends that the reader of any text will typically seek out what
has been excluded to demonstrate the illusion of completeness within a system. To
deconstruct is to identify points of failure in a system points at which it is able to feign
coherence only by excluding and forgetting that which it cannot assimilate, that which is
“Other“ to it. Stories are a way of maintaining the ubiquity of the Other and the meaning,
the belief and awareness that at some crucial point “everyone and everything is related to
everyone and everything else even in exclusion“. [Harris,1991: 1]

As to Man's relation to the world as possibly non-human Other and a source of knowledge,
the relation is by no means harmonious as Foucault explains it:

*We must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face with which we
would have only to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no
prediscursive providence which predisposes the world in our favor. We must conceive
discourse as a violence which we do to things, or, in any case a practice which we impose
on them. [Foucault, 1981: 67]*

Man enters into conflicting relations with the world in his search for knowledge. It is by no
means a harmonious, linear, and disconnected. This is clearly pointed at by Foucault's
using words as 'violence' and 'impose'. Knowledge is far from being finite, for the world is
not the accomplice of it. There is so much to be known, and the realm of the unthought-of
is far from being limited or accurately articulated by the thought. The violence we do to
things and the practice imposed on them discards any possibility of attunement Man might
assume with the world, according to Foucault. Thus, he seeks to transcend the illusion of
the sovereign self in command of the world by situating it in a world larger than it and

ject, one would be responding to the way things are
out. He also disdains notions such as “*a settled way of
life*“, that he thinks endorses too much ambiguity and is itself a form of imposition. This
entails that Man should embark on a life of perpetual questioning to avoid imposition of
any kind, precisely that of “*available knowledge*“. [Foucault, 1970: 316] ²¹

Chapter one concerned the concept of the Other in its relation to the self, perceived from different perspectives, namely the postcolonial, feminist, and the literary. Another aim of chapter one was to investigate the concept of difference translated into opposition or sameness. The interest in the Other as a diverting step towards demystifying the legend of the overwhelming self, did not prevent it from being categorised as 'The Opposite', 'The Threat' to the self, 'The barbarian', the 'uncivilized', 'ignorant' 'foreigner', and 'The Weak' female. As a dialogic entity, the Other had been perceived as a source of interaction with and reciprocal knowledge about the self and the outside world. Maintaining its dialogic characteristic, the Other as author in literary texts could stand as an incentive and a cementing force of readers' understanding of narrative texts. It allows an experience of different selves, namely the author and the characters'. Besides the settings and times encompassed in the stories could stand as the non-human Other constituting not a lesser important opportunity for knowledge and dialogism with readers for an illuminated image of narratives.

Henceforth, the Other has been condemned to a process of exclusion discarding all the possible representations it could have highlighting one image as 'The most' appropriate to satisfy the presenter's essentialised vision. To possibly free the concept of the Other from this very limitation of meaning, could be to consider it as others i.e. as encompassing all the features it had been said to display. The Other could be the opposite, the rival, the enemy, the threat, the foreigner, which may stand as an raw, elementary, and erroneous picture of the Other. But the Other could also be the friend, the lover, the partner, a source of knowledge and inspiration about this very Other, one's self and the outside world. Otherness should be conceived as a distinguishing feature engulfing individuals' freedom, emancipation, and enjoying their difference. However, blurred and caricatured an image, the first perception should be maintained to draw a consistent comparison between the presenters' mere fantasies and egocentric views and what might be true. The concept of Otherness is part and parcel of how people construct their identities and view themselves as parts of a society, different from other people. Such roles people build for themselves do not necessarily oppose or alienate them from the others.

1] For a detailed understanding of philosophical and psychological views of the self see: [Rousseau, 1964: Vol. II, 36,]. [Murray, 1993: 12, 13] [James, 1981: 239] [Geertz, 1984, 190] [Nietzsche, 1967, 200, 270] [Freud, 1955: 17] [Ricoeur, 1970:] [Greenblatt, 1980: 2, 257] [Laing, 1969: 19, 20] Also for an understanding of the relation of the self to writing as oscillating from a complete denial to recognition of its importance, see: [Levi- Strauss, 1981: 625] [Barthes, 1977: 143, 145] [Foucault, 1977: 137] [de Man,1979: 921] [Freud, 1955: 17]

2] *“Nous avons conscience de ce que notre "Moi" n'est pas le "Moi" des autres. Le "Moi" est donc la personnalité propre d'un sujet. Et si l'on dit: "Moi", je fais ceci, cela implique que nous avons conscience de le faire personnellement et volontairement".*[Daco, 1960: 162]

3] The Cyclops with his large size and single eye, representing a monstrous appearance could allude to the uncivilized people living in a wild land in a cave. Another representation of the Other, this time as a wicked woman, is the collocation of this latter with the Medusa as a wild, grimacing face of a woman with snakes in her hands. See Cotterell, A. 1997. [Cyclopes. Pp. 151, 2, 166, 175,193]

4] The Greek and Roman's encounter with other cultures, especially areas they termed the Orient, was characterized by those latter's appreciation of art, music, architecture and monolithic religions in exotic lands such as Persia, Arabia, and India

5] *“La société orientale s'y transforme soit en décor facile, ou en aimable carte postale... “* [Charney, 1980: 33]

6] *“Postcolonial studies”, referring as often does to the rapid growth in the eighties of scholarly interest in colonial relations and nationalisms, is best understood as a belated project. It is based on a long history of debates about issues such as the struggle for independence, the appropriability of the colonial languages, the role of regional cultures in nationalist traditions, the marginalization of gender and women’s issues in many newly independent nations, and the role of indigenous traditions in shaping a postcolonial modernity. These discussions that took place among creative writers and critics, theatre workers and teachers, revolutionary thinkers and nationalist leaders at various moments and sites of the newly independent world continue to be echoed in contemporary postcolonial scholarship”. [Desai and Supriya, 2005:2]*

On the meaning of post colonial literature, Ashcroft contends that writing back to the centre’ is a form of reply colonised people give to the colonial power and legacy, while “they write their own histories and legacies using the coloniser’s language(e.g. English, French, Deutch) for their own purposes. Indigenous decolonisation is the intellectual impact of postcolonialist theory upon communities of indigenous peoples, thereby, their generating postcolonial literature” [Ashcroft, 1989: 9]

7] **Medieval/Christian understanding of foreignness:** Metaphysical understanding of a progressive order or hierarchy moving from physical and visible to the invisible heavenly realm of ideas is exclusively Christian and medieval and even Greek in origin. Within the limit of the soul are the invisible, intangible, and divine which is believed to be eternal in human beings. The soul typifies the rational order of the whole, while the more disorderly, earthly world of the human beings must be made and included to follow that very order. Following this line of thought, foreignness is said to be only transitional. It is a “sickness“or “sinfulness“that is possible to be cured in the hereafter. [Lippitz, 2007:81]

8] *“cet opprimé qui n'appartient pas à la même essence que son maître“* [Fanon, 1991: 23]

tion laisse deviner à travers ses pores, des boulets rouges, des ent être les premiers, ce ne peut être qu'à la suite d'affrontement Cette volonté affirmé de faire remonter les derniers en tête de fil, de les faire grimper a une cadence (trop rapide disent certains) les fameux échelons qui définissent une société organisée, ne peut triompher que si on jette dans la balance tous les moyens, y compris, bien sur la violence " [ibid. 67]

9] On Orientalism: "A way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience"[Said, 1995: 1]" Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institution, vocabulary, scholarship, images, doctrines"[ibid.2]. "Orientalism is a western style for dominating, reconstructing and having authority over the Orient" [ibid. 3] However, Muslims also have prejudiced views about the non-Muslims. "Do you belong to the Cross or the Crescent?"[Es- tu de Croix ou du Croissant?] [Charney, 1980: 143] is a recurrent question they posed to the non-Muslim travelers in the 19th century. They have always distinguished between believers and non-believers. This has often resulted in the Islamist fundamentalists crimes in the name of Islam.

10] On Representation: They have a "special flawed nature and they are intimately tied up with worldliness, that is, with power position and interests" (Said, 2004:48-49) See also [Cramsch, 130, 131]

11] Todorov distinguishes racism and racialism which are related. He labels racism aggressiveness and a feeling of superiority towards other individuals, and racialism the same attitudes contingent on scientific knowledge to justify racism. [Todorov and Mack, 1986: 173]

12]The Nuremberg laws distinguished four racial categories: 1. Germans [persons with four German grandparents] 2. Second degree Mischlinge [all persons with one non-Aryan grandparent] 3. First degree Mischlinge [all persons with two non-Aryan grandparents, who in addition, did not adhere to the Jewish religion and who were not married to a Jew] 4. Jews [all persons with two or more non-Aryan grandparents] [Galbin, 1997 :142]

Hybrid and Mischlinge were used interchangeably in nineteenth and twentieth century as racial theory and practice to indicate mixed-race individuals. Hybrid referred to a biological entity, totally different from its current use that connotes a cultural paradigm. Racial theorists such as Gobineau, Chamberlain, and Fritsch considered race mixing between unrelated races a destruction of pure 'racial types', distabilising the classification between races. Its consequences are the emergence of mongrel races, stricken by mental diseases and physical disabilities. [ibid.143]

13] However, Todorov argued that the Spaniards and the Aztecs employed different codes of communication. Though they excelled in the art of orator, their view of the world was ritualistic, restricting sophisticated levels of communication to their communing with the gods. The Incas for example believed Spaniards to be gods [to illustrate their inability to perceive difference [passés ,Maîtres dans l'art de la parole rituelle, les Indiens réussissent d'autant moins en situation d'improvisation" [Todorov and Mack, 1986: 92]. This could entail that those people's thinking is primitive, relying on their ability to memorise previous experiences rather than perceiving new ones. Despite all the consideration he ascribed to the question of the Other, he further acknowledged Western superiority over non-Western people. This he illustrated by praising the success of a limited number of Spaniards in conquering the Aztec empire thanks to their mastery of communication: "Il ya une technologie du sublime qui est aussi susceptible d'évolution que la technologie des outils, et dans cette perspective, les Espagnols sont plus en avance que les Aztèques (ou pour généraliser: les sociétés à écriture, que les sociétés sans écriture". Ironically for a scholar who championed difference, Todorov is assuming that the Spaniards' access to the writing code made them endowed with higher mental structures that granted them the possibility of perceiving difference. [ibid. 92].

to describe the self/Other relation, discusses the struggle between master and slave. He highlights the moment of an “independent consciousness” : “Through work and

labour, the consciousness of the bondsman [the slave] comes to itself”, and his awareness and feeling of himself. He shows an awareness of the master/slave dialectic as suggesting an inclination of dominance for the former and a propensity for servitude for the latter [Hegel, 1967: 238, 239] The end of this struggle culminates in the appropriation of that which is other different, and foreign by the victorious self. To reach self-assertion, the Other must be subjugated in order to familiarize it and dissolve its foreignness in its familiarity. In such a struggle for self-autonomy and recognition, the self becomes altered, different, strengthened and enriched by this experience

15] The subaltern is a term borrowed from Antonio Gramsci and used by Spivak and the whole Subaltern Study Group to designate people of the colonies other than the Europeanized native elite. T

he term is sometimes also extended to encompass Asian and African socio-cultural phenomena that escape Western modes of representations. [Hassan, 2002: 49]

16] Yet we need to return to the understanding provided to us by one's own self or one's home culture to maintain the sense of 'dialogue of identities'. It also offers a rather positive sense to outsidership when it stands as a means of self and Other knowledge. [The know Thy self through the knowledge of others]:

“There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture...Of course, a certain entry as a living being into a foreign culture, the possibility of seeing the world through its eyes, is a necessary part of the process of understanding it; but if this were only aspects of this understanding, it would merely be duplication and would not entail anything new or be enriching. Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing in order to understand, it is merely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding---in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others“. [Bakhtin, 2002: xiii]

The encounter with others from different cultures is basically dialogic for one way of knowing one's self invites a way of conceiving others. An indirect result is the formation of an exchange of meanings building the self.

17] According to Anne Ferguson, “the key goal to feminist theory was a radical one: to use theory to critique male dominant power relations in order to empower all women”. [Ferguson, 2002: 88] The trends in feminist theory have been first the radical critique movement organizing trend, second gender difference theory, and finally the contemporary difference between women postmodernist focus. [ibid. 199] Many feminist theorists were influenced by Marxist ideology in that they “developed a radical feminist critique of patriarchy as a system of oppression based on gender which was analogous to Marx’s idea of systems of class exploitation based on private property”. Radical insights in feminist theory- especially leftist attitudes “gave rise to a lesbian-feminist separatist practice on the one hand, and those who wanted to synthesize an autonomous but not separatist leftist feminist theory.” [ibid. 200]

“Essentially, feminism is the elevation of so-called women’s issues—equal pay for equal work, political equality, legal access to contraceptives and abortion, protection from rape, liberation from gender stereotypes ,etc—into a full-blown ideology” [Goldwag, 2007:18- 19]

*it la femme non en soi mais relativement a lui...elle se détermine
'inessentielle en face de l'essentiel. Il est le sujet, il est l'absolu ;*

19] In Other respects, Levinas comments on Otherness: "I am defined as subjectivity, as single person, as an I, precisely because I am exposed to the Other. It is my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the Other that makes me an individual; an "I". [Kearney, 1984: 62] He argues that the value of the Other must exceed the value of the self. In ethical terms, he contends, the Other's right to exist supersedes one's own. Difference for Levinas is of utmost importance as it is required by the self to implement meaning to its existence as it cannot survive by itself alone "within the ontology of sameness" [ibid. 60]

He also declared:

"How in the alterity of a you, can I remain I, without being absorbed or losing myself in that you? How can the ego that I am remain myself in a you, without being, nonetheless the ego that I am in my present, that is, an ego that inevitably returns to itself? This can happen only in one way: through paternity. " [Levinas, 1987: 91]

20] **On feminism in the Arab world:** " a product of decadent western capitalism...it is the ideology of women of the local bourgeoisie, and...it either alienates women from their culture, religion and family responsibilities on the one hand, or from the revolutionary struggle for national liberation and socialism on the other." [Golley, 2004: 521]

21] This could also entail Man's recuperation of hegemony that knowledge sets on him/her, turning the balance of power in their favour. Foucault argues that the will to truth cannot be eliminated, but its hegemony can and should be contested. [Foucault, 1970: 316]

“As opposed to place which has a name, an identity and a given history and distinguished character, time is anonymous when we give it a face it is the same face the world over...time tells us nothing about itself except by the signals that it is passing”. [Welty, 1977: 163]

II.1.1] Introduction

Soueif's concern for the question of the Other translated mainly in considering people and languages sharing different cultures from her own as an 'Arab writer' whose linguistic code is English, following the trend of many other writers who became “*The superstars of contemporary English literature [who] aren't English and haven't been for years....the English, who virtually created the novel, are now being ventiloquised by others* “ [Marr, 1999: 26]¹

She does not reject Arabic, her mother tongue as an Egyptian, yet she uses English the language that she learnt to read in as a child and a professional. Besides, as her ‘detractors’ often argued, “*She wrote in English about sex* “ [Trabelsi, 2003: 3] Because of sexual scenes in her first novel **In the Eye of the Sun**, it was banned in many Arab countries because she insisted on blurring the image of the 'Arab Muslim' woman as a taboo and an Other.

Soueif works were criticised by her opponents in the 'Arab world' as not belonging to Arab literature at all, casting her as a foreigner. Besides they were labelled “immoral” and “*an insult to Arab women*” [Wassef, 1998: 4]. Speaking about ‘Arab women’ and their sexuality openly and discussing other marital issues, induced more and more critiques of her works as containing harmful ideas which are imposed and geared towards the destruction of the “*Arab social fabric*” [Trabelsi, 2003: 4]²

The consequences that might follow the choice of some writers to be free in writing and expressing themselves in the language they revel in and also the choice of the themes tackled induce their works to be rejected and banned. Therefore, some Egyptian readers do not want to accept Soueif as “*one of their own* “. Her style is described as “*exotic and foreign* “by her western readers [Darraj, 2003:102]

and non-fiction that she is both an Egyptian and an
of a hybrid writer.³

Concerning Aisha it is very essential to mention right from the outset that the four stories chosen highlight the work of memory and time and a controversial vision of the Other. They represent a remembrance of time past. However, each narrative differs from the other in the time distance relating it to the present. Soueif's displays a variegated portrait of the Other as others, delving her protagonist Aisha in a series of encounters with them. Instead of perceiving the Other as having a rather confined and defined representation, entering into a binary relation with other elements as: child vs. adult, foreign vs. local [cf. chapter one .pp. 11-12-13-14-15-16], and female vs. male [cf. chapter one, p.16-17], she represents the set forth elements as complementary units. Thus, the author portrays the Other as no more hostile and opposite standing in a position of ultimate difference and strangeness, but as a web of intertwining others . In the main, she could blur the idea of the overwhelming self as the centre of all attention [cf. chapter one p 10], demystifying and decentering her protagonist's rather self-centered perception of the Other and the outside world. Offering a multitude perception of the Other, the writer could allow Aisha an encounter, an understanding, and knowledge of different facets of herself.

II.1.2] On non-human Other

Throughout this investigation, the main character is linked to time and space as 'non-human' Other [cf. chapter one, p.23] Following this line of thought D.H. Lawrence and Martin Buber⁵ had their say on the notion of the non-human Other. They both argue that the dialogic relation between human beings could extend to the non-human. D.H Lawrence contends that this very relation is born "*between the self and the whole circumambient universe*" *between me and the animals, me and the trees or flowers, me and the earth, me and the skies and sun and stars, me and the moon, me and the timber I am sawing...me and the dough I knead for bread*". [Lawrence, 1925: 172] Expressing his view on otherness in general, Lawrence contended: "we have thought and spoken till now in terms of likeness and oneness. Now, we must learn to think in terms of difference and otherness". [Lawrence, 1964: 17] His standing with another man, he is very aware of his being different from him, and he feels he is truly himself. "... *then I am only aware of a presence and of the strange reality of otherness. There is me, and there is another being.*

There is no comparing or estimating. There is only this
ness“. [Lawrence, 1919: 80]

For Buber the Other does not have to be human. He gives importance to such things as “trees“ which, as he understands, “can face me“ as a person, “speak to me and elicit a response“ [Levinas, 1996: 30] Buber insists on the inter-human relations in which people are confronted by the Other. He designates this pattern of relations by being dialogical. According to him, it is human's responsibility to make the Other present to us. [Buber, 1957: 75] This Buber claims is everyone's capacity to imagine the “real“. It entails “not a looking at the Other, but a bold swinging... an energetic swinging of one's being into the life of the Other“. [ibid. 1957: 67-8]

Besides the element of the non-human Other the main character is linked to the other characters in the stories as human Other in each narrative. Time, space and character are to be considered, following Bakhtin's understanding of the chronotope. It designates the amalgamation of time and space governing the preliminary condition of all narratives and other linguistic acts [Bakhtin, 2002: 134]

In the investigation of the first two narratives, an attempt at answering the following questions is the main aim. How does Aisha's encounter with the Other[s], as human and non human [cf. chapter one p 25, 35], both hinder and enlighten her perception of herself, this very Other, and the outside world? Is Aisha to dwell as a submissive, oppressed and men's sex-object, confirming the stereotyped image of the Arab-Muslim woman? [cf. chapter one, p. 24] What could the implications of such journeys and encounters be vis-à-vis the possible perspectives set by the author for her work?

The second chapter is entitled **The Other as Child/Adult Female** as a remembrance of time past, for in the course of it the protagonist the protagonist will be viewed as an adult then as a child, plunging into reminiscences of her past, in a back and fro movement between England and Egypt. She returns home to Egypt from England within the introductory narrative: **The Returning**. Soueif allows her protagonist such a journey applying the stream of consciousness technique⁴. Aisha is to be described in relation to the

encounters when coming back besides the objects in

II.3] The Returning as The Home-Coming

In the opening narrative one meets Aisha with her *“little red car”*, returning to Egypt. *“I need those books”*, Aisha insists on her way to her long deserted flat. She has come back to Egypt from England after a six years absence. *“She did not recognise this square”* [Soueif, 1983:12-11] Recognition seems impossible right from the start. Then Aisha starts comparing a setting that used to be with the one in front of her. *“She remembered a green garden with spreading trees and flower beds and paths of red sand. She saw instead a construction site”*. The intrusion of constructions into nature displays what used to be in an old time and what is really there for Aisha. The few trees spared there are *“dusty and yellow”* *“the whole place was strewn with bricks”*. A dusty taste it leaves in the readers mouths. Again, the old familiar green setting has been conjured up into an arid garden of *“cement”* *“steel rods”*, *“mounds of sand”*, *“a demolition”*, such a *“drastically reduced space”* seems to stifle in Aisha’s eyes. Aisha is to remember again eyeing the road, *“bumpy and dotted with potholes.”* She arrives to *“their house”*. It used to be *“pretty, reddish brown and beige”*. Now, it is *“flunked by tall apartment blocks”*, diminished, *“looking bleaky”*. [ibid.12]

So, the main character remembers and imagines to compare old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, and an imagined past with an inescapably ubiquitous present as it really is. The curious women Aisha notices *“hanging out of windows were still there”*. Yet she cannot help wondering: *“did they belong to the same people as six years ago? Or different? Younger sisters, perhaps, daughters, with the Islamic head dress. Out of the corner of her eye she could not tell”* [ibid. 12]. She just ignores them, as she had always done. She walks purposefully. Not recognising is Aisha’s lot now. Is ignoring the only escape left for her? Is she not able to recuperate the old? How does one feel flanked with strangeness and the unfamiliar? A lonely puppet in a deserted theatre, or an out of place? The same characteristic displaying binary relations feature in recurrent themes in modern Arabic literature and those of literature written by Arab writers in English. It *“takes the form of pairs of opposites or polarities”*. Examples of these pairs are *“town and country,*

Paving her way to her flat, Aisha is not to give up. May be she would catch a familiar scene and jump on it. So, she turns to the door man. Yet it is not Abdu the old one. It was “*a strange man with a stripped galabiya*” . Abdu and his wife Amna, left long ago. Unfamiliar? Strange? Not recognizing dusty setting? Is it the end? No Aisha is to remember again. Abdu and Aisha “*were incorporated into her dream of coming home*” [Soueif, 1983: 13] Aisha is immersed in a stream of consciousness web trying to flee such an 'alien world'.

She has repeatedly imagined the scene of her home coming in detail. “ *It would be the beginning of the academic year, a warm October day. She would drive up to this door with Saif* “ [ibid. 13] [her husband] Again, the use of the words imagine, dream, remember are called upon by the writer to strengthen Aisha’s rejection of the strange real world around her, merging with an imaginary, long lost world that now belonged to a time past. Yet, there is no Abdu and Amna to greet her on her coming home. No Saif as well, as she has expected. The Other as she imagined it, everything outside herself, turns to be a stranger.

Now Aisha is to enter her apartment. Is she to encounter the same strangeness? The passage is dark .She finds “*a worn-out key*” .Her hand remembers as she comes back home like Ulysses at the end of his journey, returning home as a complete stranger under his disguise. The writer uses collocations such as “*forgotten smell*”, “*familiar smell*” and “*ghost smell*” to put more flesh on the main character’s ‘vain’ and repeated efforts to come to grips with a familiar world and reality like the smell of fresh paint. ” *It’s not really here but I’m smelling it*” [ibid.14-15]

So far Aisha's encounter with the Other, that which is not herself, includes the unfamiliar time and space; opposing the past to the present, and a fading green space to grey shabby constructions as she tries constantly to relate everything to her own self and to what she already knows. Besides, an investigation of Aisha’s meeting with the objects in her apartment is part and parcel of the 'non-human' Other ambivalent embrace that is supposed to hinder her reunion with herself at a first 'reading glance'.

ets is “the white marble basin in the middle of the green living room wall. ‘It was the very first thing they [Aisha and Saif] had bought for the house‘. Then appears the rocking chair. “A present from her professor of poetry”. The rocking chair “became her favourite seat”. It was a wedding present. In the large mirror Aisha, catches her dim reflection, remembering again. An old Victorian mirror which was “declared hideous “by her husband Saif. [ibid.16] “Her reflection staring back at her was not the one she was used to seeing there. It was a different person: one strange to this mirror.” The changes move into focus. “A slimmer face framed by shorter, more curly, though still black hair”. [ibid. 16] The changes on Aisha’s face displayed by her reflection in the mirror appear to her gradually. Her own face in the mirror seems to conjure into a strange Other that she is not to recognise. Then she has to remember hotel rooms where she used to stay with her husband in Paris, Rome, Brussels, Vienna, and Athens as a known space to blur the very strangeness. However, she comes back again to her reflection on the mirror and her own strangeness. “Her expression too was different. The wide-eyed, open, expectant look was gone. Instead there was — what? Repose? Something that people took for serenity. But she knew. She knew it was frail as an egg-shell’. [ibid, 1983: 17] The old familiar expression is no longer there. Aisha has struggled to resurrect it back. Yet, she meets a stranger in her mirror. The stranger no one but her own- self – whom she has tried to feel alive putting her fingers on the mirror. “The mirror was a wall between herself and the warm flesh behind it It was cold“. Aisha seems not to be able to grant any reality for her reflection in the mirror. It is cold as ice, beyond reach as a ghost, as unreal as a dead face reminisced anew. Is this ghostly setting to stand as a “metaphor for her relationship with him?” [Saif]

She could see him, sense his contours and his warmth but whenever she made a move to touch him there would be a smooth, consistent surface. It was transparent, but it was unbreakable. At times she had felt he put it there on purpose and she had been furiously resentful. At others it had seemed that he was trapped behind it and was looking to her to set him free. [ibid. 18]

Aisha’s reflection in the mirror depicted an alien face to her, ‘unreal’, ghost- like unidentifiable; an opposite strange Other [cf. chapter one 16-17] She has tried a recollection, an imagining of her husband’s face; may be to cast more life into her own.

relation between sameness and difference has often been
for in the sense that they, self and Other, are mirror
images of each other, each different yet somehow the same and, henceforth, linked by their
reflection. The “labyrinth of looking-glasses“ is the image that describes this relationship.
[Kearney, 1998: 17]

However, the boundary between the expected, old familiar warmth and life proves
unbreakable. It hints at Aisha’s cold relation with her husband, a ghost- like figure in a
mirror. He seems out of reach, making the distance between them feel eternal. Yet he is no
freer than she is. He seems trapped in this confined 'glass-space', hoping she can set him
free, as trapped and flanked as she makes him appear. Saif seems to clutch to the rags of
Aisha’s memory, her past and a world she used to know but knows no more. A world she
can ‘live’ and ‘be in’ through reminiscences. It is a world she has longed to remember, to
imagine yet it turned clad in fictional dress. Aisha reconsiders her relation with her
husband, how cold he was, careless of her “*crying till she could not breathe*”. He prefers
smoking, reading and listening to music instead; totally indifferent to her, “*she slept alone,
unknowing, in large double beds that mocked her.*” The tapestry portrays “*the Arab
Knight and poet Antar on horseback and his beloved cousin Abla in a litter on a camel’s
back*“. Aisha remembers telling her husband that Antar “*thought a lot of himself like you*’.
[ibid.19] She refers to a world of imagination and the ‘unreal’ to imagine her husband as
an ‘Arab or Frinji’ knight, “*he would have gone out and slain dragons and ghouls*”. He has
learned to do things without her, like travelling, making adventurous trips to the desert. He
has learnt to be alone without her. Aisha's memories of herself are not to compete with her
memories of her husband. She feels she has not got a past. Besides, it seems to her that “*it
had seemed to her that ‘her past was devouring her present.* [Ibid. 22] She seems to have
tried to belong to the same world as he did, but in vain. This could entail he is the self and
she is the Other; the female inferior stranger. Her attempts at rapprochement seem to widen
the gap between her world and his. He wanted to be alone without her. He seems alone as
she does. Only memories of him are available now. Memories of his childhood with her,
and memories of her estranged marital life. Her present is overwhelmed by his past and
memories of him.

The last object Aisha recovers from her past she is to find in the cupboard. “*Her veil and
small pearl embroidered Juliet’s cap nestled in tissue paper. They were covered with black*

She carries the white card box where the veil is, “*she put
her hand on the box and set fire to it*“. Is it desire to finally break up
with her past and memories? Aisha feels dizzy, crying again. “*this too was familiar*“. Her
answer was always “*I don’t know*” when people enquired about her “*Recurring illnesses*”,
which they said, were “*hysterical*” [ibid. 22]. She just sleeps, finally tired of her sobs.

When Aisha awakens she realised that “*she did not have an instant doubt about where she
was. She knew. What she did not know was when she was*“. She seems to be out of time.
Yet this time “*she knew*“. She asks: “*what happened?*“, “*where is he?*” [Saif] “*What did I
dream?*” she seems to compare what has happened to her to a dream. Her memories in her
apartment has it been all a dream? A dream of a past that now has been converted by her to
a mere imaginary world she has resurrected to try a merge with her own self, familiarity,
and the reality of ‘when she was’. She returns again to the mirror, she has not seen a
round-faced girl with long, straight black hair. Instead she has seen a woman with the curly
hair and the pearl necklace. “*She looked at the mirror with recognition, relief and sorrow.*”
Now she sees clear what she really is with recognition. She is retired and sad. She seems to
compromise with what is really there. So, she decides to leave the room. She scanned the
literature shelves and picked out five books on seventeenth century poetry, in the living-
room. She leaves the flat, “*switched off the light and pulled the door too. Then she put her
key in the lock and turned it finally, twice*”. [ibid. 23-24] She drives her red car again and
goes away. Do her blossoming recognition and her awakening of what she has called a
dream prompt her to feel what she strived to make real but in vain? Her recollected past
woven into an imaginary world, has she decided to break up with it, finding Aisha again, to
part with it in search of a new world?

Soueif's application of the stream of consciousness technique in **The Returning** allows for a time economy, blending the past in a series of memories the main character recollects, merging present and past in one story. On time economy Genette says: "So that the story follows up the narrative, the duration of the latter should not exceed that of the former". [My translation] [Pour que l'histoire vienne ainsi rejoindre la narration, il faut bien entendu que la seconde n'excède pas la première" [Genette, 2007: 230] it could be illuminating to recall back another similarity that Marcel Proust's **Remembrance of Time Past [La recherche du temps perdu]** has with **Aisha**, emphasising the vital role memory and time shift plays in such works. The structure of Proust's work is not meant to be chronological. It is rather 'centrifugal'. The narrator is made to move around his memory, trying to fall asleep; with a smoothly flowing awareness of the places he has visited and lived in. Proust displays his protagonist's reminiscences displaying the latter's consciousness to readers. [Moss, 1962: 16] Discussing Proust's **La recherche du temps perdu**, Genette contends that it is characterised by a 'coming and going' movement [un mouvement de va-et-vient] whereby reminiscences control the narrative [Genette, 2007: 35] Those reminiscences have a euphoric effect even if they recollect a painful past. [ibid. 46] According to Ricoeurian understanding, every action has a purpose and is related to another. An action can be both a response to a past one and it is itself in a position to be responded to by a future action. Ricoeur contends consequently, that action takes place in a historical time. This latter includes two more essential senses of time: the cosmic time that has a general conception. It is the time of the world that unfolds according to universal laws and within which many changes occur. There is also lived time which has an idiosyncratic conception, and within which an individual values some moments more than others. It is time represented from an individual's perspective. [Ricoeur, 1992: 163] Some writers choose to indulge their characters only in a time present. For instance, unlike Soueif or Proust, Hemingway's stories all take place in the present. They behave like plays that we watch the performances on stage. His characters have no 'pasts' and no 'futures'." *Outside the spotlight of their present they are nothing*" [Welty, 1977: 90]

Likewise, **The Returning** seems to inform us about the importance of memory to fix time. The journeys through time reveal so much hidden truths to us about the world around

de ourselves that once transcended to the Other could wing. They offer us an opportunity to renewal. For narrative is about remembering and remembering entails repetition in order to avoid it and promote change as a liberating move from an old story to a new one [Green, 1991: 291-2] Dating back to antiquity, story tellers understood the interesting effects that could be attained by *deviating from chronological order*“ using time shift as *“narrative avoids presenting life as just one damn thing after another, and allows us to make connections of causality and irony between widely separated events“* [Lodge, 1992: 74, 75]“*Time shift is “naturalized as the operation of memory, either in the representation of a character's stream of consciousness...or more formally as the memoir or reminiscence of a character-narrator“* ⁶. The time we lose might be recuperated through writing and through art which functions as a preserver of memory itself.

We met Aisha an emancipated educated Egyptian woman on her returning. Coming home, she struggled to come into grips with her present and real world already confronting the unfamiliar setting and time as non-human Other, her flat, the objects in it ,and the characters in the narrative, including her unrecognised reflection in the mirror as human Other, her relation to her husband all seemed alien to her. So, she converted her present into a past immersed in memories and imagination to recuperate the old familiar Aisha. She was depicted by Soueif as a maudlin female character submitting to her reminiscences, imprisoned in her obsessions of a nostalgic past, rejecting any belonging to the present, and therefore, turning a blind eye to the world outside her cocooned self. She strived to carve a picture of her husband no other than the one dwelling in her imagination; a selfish man doing things without her, failing to understand her as a lonely woman. She overlooked his estrangement that the mirror succeeded in displaying. Aisha could not borrow other lenses to see through other than her own. However, the very Other that seemed to hamper Aisha's merging with the outside world as alien and opposite guided her to knowing. It was no more the past no more the old setting. It was the present that she had to call herself to so as to detach the past from the chains of iron nostalgia to set it free as complementary to, and informing the present. So, she decided to leave it locking the door of her flat twice with her literature books in her car, as she drove speedily. This could be the passage through which the author confirmed then demystified, the myth and the stereotype of the cocooned Arab-Muslim woman as denied freedom and knowledge. Here is Aisha knowing and encountering herself again as hitherto lost in the past, resurrecting it to a present. Aisha, could be viewed as the female character whose self renewal could grant her a novel start.

II.6] A Childhood revisited

In Knowing, Soueif makes Aisha recall her sweet hybrid childhood, swaying between Egypt and England. In a 'diary-reading -like' narration, the child Aisha oscillates from a setting to another and travels from a time to another, meeting relatives and characters in stories like an Alice in a wonderland. Henceforth, the child Aisha is to be related to space and time both in Egypt and England, her family and to the characters in the tales she read.

Knowing immerses the reader in Aisha's childhood where one is to meet a studious, dreamy girl, fascinated by fantastic stories and fairy tales, conjuring her nightmares into bizarre encounters with 'hybrid monsters'. The child remembers, unveiling the pages of a 'diary-reading-like' narration. She journeys between Egypt and England comparing space, time and characters in both places. The child strives for familiarity, for a world she has known. The queries to be asked and probed throughout this investigation are: how does Soueif allow the child's journey in search of the known, meeting the unknown as the Other space, time and character that leads her to knowing? It is very important to remind readers that this is not an attempt to questioning a child's, rather natural, reference to a world of imagination and dream compared to a more down-to-earth adult world. The aim of this investigation is to show how both spaces could be complementary and informing one another; not necessarily opposed.

Knowing starts with "*I remember*". In its setting, the child Aisha enjoys "*a time of happy dappled sunlight*" in a "*flowering garden*" like an Alice in a wonderland; the greenness and freshness she missed in The Returning. The child moves to describe the living room of her parents' house in Egypt containing "*lots of lots of books*". The people men and women in the living room "*all do clever things. They write books and make music and paint pictures. Their pictures placed on the walls of our apartment*". The child's

s completely different from her own. *“The grownups
They can do anything, explain everything”* However
in her own world appears *“a horrible creature with long curving arms on the ceiling of her
room and she screams”*. However the father is there, not the mother - to explain. *“It’s the
shadow of the chandelier, little goose”*. He is a psychologist. He is depicted by the child as
‘strong’. [Soueif, 1983:65] A consideration of Soueif's biography could be illuminating in
so far as it reveals that the author's father is also a psychologist who used his daughter as a
case study. [Masaad, 1999: 82] This allusion to the writer's biography does not entail
adopting a strictly biographical approach, but it could highlight writers' being influenced
by events and situations throughout their lives that they translate in writing and thus
allowing art to merge with reality and reality with art.

The child shifts to speak about *“the magazines or picture book”*. Her Dada Zeina chats to
the other women while she is *“absorbed in the pictures”*. The adults have books and she
has pictures. Aisha goes on describing and narrating [This] *“woman is my grandmother.
My mother’s mother”*, performing her prayer. Her grandmother is *“delicate and frail”*. yet
she went to the pilgrimage alone. *“My grand father (her husband) having had neither the
true nor the inclination to accompany her and look after her”*. The child already has in
mind a representation of a woman as ‘frail’ and ‘pious’ and that of a man ‘careless’,
‘selfish’ not willing to help. The reader might recall Aisha’s perception of her husband Saif
in **The Returning**. [ibid.66-67] [cf. chapter one, pp. 16-17]

Later, we follow Aisha in her grandfather’s shop to meet her again imagining and
remembering. She describes the loft upstairs. The shop is “dark” with. She finds the place
ghostly with little light spared there. So, she strives to render it a paradise, arranging the
tumbled furniture. The child flees a setting that she finds unimpressive to another,
imagined space of her own making. She feels *“frightened and brave”*, though. The
paradise she sees may be more attractive than the ‘real world’ around her. So far, Aisha
seems to journey between an adult world to her own world; a kid's space she knows,
coloured in imagination oscillating from a setting to an Other.

When she describes her grand father again Aisha depicts him as *“Am Morsi, a big man
with greying hair and sharp, black eyes. He has large workman’s hands and gruff voice.*

f- made- man. 'The strong male' representation is to

To call the grown-ups' rather disconcerted attention, the child Aisha [takes] a pinch of stuff' example from the narguila and puts it to her nostrils, after it has been offered by her grandfather and his friend. *"After a second I break into three exaggerated sneezes and my grandfather and Hajj Zayed burst out laughing."* [ibid. 71] The child wants to play the clown and she is happy to do so. She felt like smoking and so she does. The writer's depiction of Aisha the child is of a daring and intrepid young girl. After trying smoking, Aisha five years old now, is to try something else. *"The wooden outside bathroom clogs"* despite her aunt's strong objection. [ibid.72] She gets the wooden clogs walk with them. She gets a lot of presents from her uncles and aunts a *"bridal dress with a long veil and train"*, *"sugar-dolls-and knights"*. In Ramadan Aisha spends *"evening round the fire, cracking nuts and roasting chestnuts. A month of exotic sweets"*, *"A month of playing with a beautiful coloured lantern with a real lit candle inside....."* [ibid. 73] Later, she describes the feast Eve with the cakes women prepared. Another important event in [Aisha's] life is the summer holidays in Alexandria on the beach. Thus, this is the 'exotic' picture Aisha the child draws of Egypt, a sweet time and space and character past she revels in recounting and belonging to, experiencing an Other in England.

Aisha turns to speak about stories. She knows Cinderella well and she has *"unbounded confidence"* in clever Hassan. She knows the story of Little Red Riding Hood which ends up involving *"the wolf as a domestic pet"*. [ibid. 1983:74] Here is a very interesting passage which, though long, I think is worth quoting as a whole.

Divine order. Evil is a passing naughtiness; the mighty forces work for the good and all stories end happily. I endlessly make up tales surrounding the pictures in the books I cannot yet read. I pore over a book full of Rodin sculptures and my parents are delighted with the sunny little fables I produce. My life is woven into tales and my tales become part of my life: aunts and uncles are characters in a story book and Hansel and Gretel join me under the desk in my grandfather's shop. I invent characters who become my friends and perform a play with them to an assembled family audience 'The child has such a lively imagination', they say, and surround me with admiration and love. [ibid.75]

mmunes with and belongs to. This is how Aisha's life
tional characters. A world of reality versus an Other.

Everybody admires her because she has a lively imagination. Fiction is part and parcel of her 'real life'. Her parents know that characters in stories are unreal. They know because they are grownups.

Aisha is to leave Egypt, taking another time machine, to Britain on "*a long journey across the sea alone with my father*". She embarks on another machine to travel through time. This time it is a boat and not her red car in **The Returning**. She describes Britain as "*A cold, dark, wet, windy place with a lot of trains*". It is no more the sunny summer in Egypt; it is an Other cold weather in England. Then appears her mother whom they waited for after she has been absent for months. This is another shift of time, place and character for Aisha, so how is she to react?

Aisha does not seem to like the new place much. It is "*much darker, much colder than I'm used to*" she misses her relatives. An air of nostalgia is loading her narrative. Aisha's new life in Britain is characterised by her being "*initiated into a semi-grown up role*". She is left out alone at home. She is no more the spoilt child in Egypt but an Other. Her parents say that The Brownie will leave sweets for her that she will find in the morning. Another important passage depicting Aisha dreaming while she is awake. At night she awakened suddenly she sees a hamster. "*He is a cross between a tiny man and a hamster*". He is running quickly, up right on two legs and he wears a little green suit and hat. He has human face with a black mouse snout and pointed pixie ears. Aisha is now 'living' the dream in reality. She is awake seeing all what she is to see 'really'. Now, the hamster is to adopt a human figure. '**He**' is, as Aisha personifies it, mimicking a human appearance. Yet Aisha does not find her expected and long awaited presence, supposed to be left by the Brownie. She fetches it desperately but in vain. She has to wait for the morning to find a bag of liquorice under her pillow when her mother awakens her. The power of Aisha's belief in what she is seeing is so striking. Provided she thinks she sees it, this 'reality' of her own is to prevail and persist. When Aisha tells her parents about what she saw the answer was "*you couldn't have dear*" "*But I did*", "*you must have dreamt it*" "*but I was sitting up in bed. I wasn't asleep*" "*you couldn't really*". Her parents insist that the Brownie come only when children are asleep.

en the weird creature because she has not been asleep. an she does, who do clever things as grown ups, who are wise, probably wiser than she is, assured her that the Brownie, contrary to the story she has told and believed, comes only when children are asleep. Her parents look uncomfortable when she has to narrate her story. Yet she [I] **“cannot understand”** why.

Aisha mentions an important event: *“I learn to read”*. She calls the printed world she reads *“black marks”* which now *“made sense”* to her. *“I want to do nothing but read. I read and I read and I make up more stories..... my world is peopled with fascinating characters and bursting with adventure”*. She reads about Vampires at night. *“Here is new material for my imagination”*, she says [ibid. 76]. Yet her imagination induces her to have night-mares, *“an octopus is trying to catch me to drive a stake through my heart”*. Fortunately her parents come on time to save her. It is her father again, the psychologist who tells her to recall the frightening scenes and objects consciously before she went to bed so that she stops having night-mares. The recipe seems to work to a certain limit.

Aisha becomes more and more demanding, for she finished the books quickly. This time it is her mother who gives her access to her books – especially the Arabian Nights. [ibid.78] With the **Arabian Nights**, Aisha enters *“a world of Oriental souks and magic and Djinnis”*. She thinks that *“the world has undreamt – of possibilities”*, she is completely immersed in a world of magic. So after having night-mares and visions of strange creatures taking part of her 'imaginary real' world, Aisha decides not to give up. She devours more and more books and welcomes as many new characters to her world as possible. She seems not to care that her parents think it is all ‘unreal’, woven by her imagination, though they know more than she does. *“I know now my parents are neither omnipotent nor omniscient. They cannot stop the vampire from appearing but at least they can be there when he arrives. I insist that they stay in and win. I will never be left alone after this. And I am miserable”*. [ibid. 80]

Aisha is ‘utterly’ ‘sure’ what is going on in front of her open eyes is ‘true’ and ‘real’. Yet, her fear is to win and hurl her back to the grown ups world and their own conception of ‘reality’. She still needs her parents to protect her from that unusual, scary yet enjoyed world. At least she is convinced that it is ‘real’ for when she is called to it she is awake and not ‘asleep’. The child knows her parents can not stop the vampire from appearing, or the

characters belonging to her imagined world, yet “they” to give up the idea that what she witnesses and lives and imagines is not real. She ends her narrative stating: “*I am miserable*”. She longed to belong to her world and felt the need to escape it when it became too scary. So are both spaces worlds apart?

II.7] Conclusion:

To round up, it is necessary to trace back the main steps one has gone through to answer the questions set forth in the introduction to **Knowing** i.e. Aisha’s repeated attempts to escape and alienate herself from the adult ‘real world’ to a world of fiction drawn by her imagination and how the author allowed such a journey relating the main character to the setting, time and the other characters in the story. An attempt at linking **Knowing** to the first narrative **The Returning** in which Aisha the grown up resolved to her memories of the past to flee her present and view the world outside from inside has also been tried. An obsession to see the Other from within and not like it 'really is'.

Harking back into Aisha’s childhood we met Aisha as journeying from a time space and character between Egypt and England. She was described as a studious reader of stories estranging her further from an adult world. She enjoyed creating stories and characters she called real people, and made them part of her own world and made herself part of theirs. It was a world she created, believed and knew to be true. She emphasized that she could view this world eyes wide open. We met Aisha as a child whose parents were constantly absent from home and who seemed to deny Aisha’s world any existence or truth. They knew their world was ‘more real’. Yet it was mostly her father who ‘held the truth’ all the time. Her mother featured as a still absent puppet.

The whole mood of the story seems to be pointing to the disillusionment of the main character. This disillusionment stems from her 'incapacity' to make the Other adult perceive of her world which she thought ‘real’. It is a world she imagined and ‘made true’. Yet, she could voice her concerns about it. She could make people come to it and be aware of it. She could tell her own narrative and refused to be imposed any other especially her parents’ who were not able to protect her from the visions she had of her own world yet could save her from fear. Aisha's claimed for narrative is understood as a voice which is

It concerns a woman's voice that is "*the narrative* ordinary medium, "*to vie with the male in the process of textual creation*"[Malti Douglas, 1995: 5-6] By restoring their own narratives, women intend the eradication of misrepresentations and preconceived ideas about them either as children adolescents or adults as being 'weak', 'emotional', 'dependent' and 'sex subjects'.

The dreamy child seems to end up desperate, coming to the awareness, and having to know, as the title of the short story suggests, that all is much ado about nothing because after each attempt to embark into a better dream world, she is made to go back to what she thought a strange and arid reality. All the visions she has been experiencing are but illusions as her psychologist father explains. Yet, is not the real adult world the child strived to flee as an Other strange space, the same space that could lead to her knowing about it? Despite the possible alienation it might have burdened the dreamy world with, the same Other world allowed Aisha to be aware of it, to know it, to live its difference, to get out of herself to an Other franchise. The adult could protect her, and in the cold English space and distant time she could learn to read. She could recall and feel the sun in Egypt. The supposedly alien outsider Other has been there to highlight the difference and shape the sameness.

In both narratives, Aisha the adult and Aisha the child embarked in search of a more known world which she strived to call hers. She was looking for herself. Remembrance seemed the right way out. A sweet past Aisha revelled to resurrect, a setting and characters she learned by heart. She was unable to imagine, to know, to accept and to make herself part of an Other. The present time, the shabby constructions, the strange unknown people pictured an opposite strange Other. However, the dreamy exotic warm wonderland and people in Egypt, the spoilt child she was, portrayed the One. The freezing sun and parents was the Other. Aisha could lock the door twice, leaving a nostalgic past behind when surrendering herself to knowing the Other. She could penetrate the adult's world seeking their protection. The old obsessions of childhood she dragged along to adulthood seemed to have dissolved in the double reverberating of the turning key. Compared to Soueif's **The Returning**, the Lebanese writer George Salim's protagonist in his short story **Al- Quitar**, the train, is also described relating to time and memory. The latter is a man who embarks on a train a mysterious search in the desert, attempting to reach a paradise, and to forget



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...nist refuses to abandon his past memories either good
e. [Young, 1982: 18]

The Returning could be considered the free space through which Aisha voiced her concern about both female and male concerns especially the latter's estrangement from one another, symbolised by the metaphor of the mirror , epitomising coldness and distantness. Literature, compared to other fields of inquiry, becomes the space whereby the situation of women in society transcends factual descriptions to reach a more deeply rooted ground. It touches the emotional, intellectual and spiritual of the very situation. "...it mirrors different levels of truth" crucial to the understanding of society with its norms and imposed rules. [Haim, 1981: 512]

Notes to Chapter Two

1] Though some scholars acknowledged the active role non-native writers of English performed, some still behave as ethnocentrists. Todorov critiqued Gates' statements that despite the latter's belief in the white scholars task to "master the canon of criticism" he was to surrender this mission, as if prompted by 'modesty', "to turn to the black tradition itself to develop theories of criticism indigenous to our literatures". This entails that for one to criticize and study 'black literature one has to use tools particular to it so as not to mix cultures, and thus allowing 'cultural apartheid'. It is not sufficient to show good conscience claiming to be anti-racist and therefore show easiness to choose the right side. It is rather more difficult and useful to be aware of such practices in order to avoid the pitfalls of allegiances one strives to resist and ends by allowing, for "every desire is at base a desire to impose oneself on another". [ibid. 179].

2] Yet, Soueif did not have to apologize neither for not writing in Arabic nor for writing about themes that she thought important. Here is what she had to say about her choice: "It is very difficult to explain that this was not a choice, that you work with the tools that are best for you...I don't know why, but the fact is that I write better in English than I do in Arabic" [Brooks, 1999] She asserts that writing in English gives her more freedom because she can use English in literary terms better than she can use Arabic, playing with the language as easy as she can. She insists that the question of language arises because, principally, of the "sexually frank" passages in her books. For Soueif, it does not make any difference because when her works are translated or to quote her "when you arabise them" she would still keep those passages [Wassef, 1998]. When asked about how free she is coming from a rich and vibrant tradition as an Arab and ironically called British novelist, Soueif replies:

"I think I am, yes, an Egyptian novelist writing in English. What else could I be? And I guess I am as free as anyone can be. I write about the things that I care about, the things that I want to explore. I'm not aware of any particular constraints that come with being an Arab woman and a novelist". [Ahmede, 2007:2]

3] For Bhabha, hybridity "is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures. It is rather always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid [Bhabha, 1994: 114]

4] James was the first to use the term stream of consciousness "Consciousness... does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is most naturally described. In talking hereafter, let us call it the stream of consciousness, or of subjective life"[James, 1981: 239]



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“No one today is purely one thing” [Said, 2004]

III.1] Introduction

The distinguishing feature of the remaining narratives is that within the course of the narration the relation of the Other to the main character crystallises in its being The foreigner. In **The Nativity**, in particular, the Other shows up as the male and the society's authority vs. the female as a 'sex-subject'; The weak, and a rape target. The main questions to be answered, probing the set forth stories are: How is the foreigner highlighted as an Other opposite and hostile, considering Aisha's relation to the foreign characters in Britain as British and emigrants? [cf. chapter one, p. 12] Is Aisha to be conjured up into an alien back to Egypt regarding her people as uneducated and ignorant, facing a crisis of identity and sustaining the self-centeredness she displayed in the previous narratives? What perspectives does Soueif grant her protagonist beyond the stereotyped image of the maudlin, weak, and rape victim Arab-Muslim woman? Space and time are linked to the main character again as she journeys from Egypt to England as a foreigner and locale.

III.2] A Misfit Adolescent

The third story pictures Aisha as an adolescent in England. She constantly attempts to replace a seemingly arid present to a future she deems better and promising. She juxtaposes two times as opposed categories; a time and its Other. Here are the inaugurating sentences: *“I stood in the snow, freezing and waiting for the bus. I was lonely”*. Aisha’s encounter with the setting around is frozen just like the snow beneath her feet. A young girl of fourteen awakens alone each morning in the dark, while her parents, her young sister and brother slept. Communing with fictional characters might appease her loneliness: *“I like Maggie Tulliver, Anna Karenina, and Emma Bovary and understood them as I understood none of the people around me. In my own mind, I was a heroine and in the middle of the night would act out scenes of high drama to the concern of my younger*

play Charmian admirably for an eight- year- old”.

As in the previous narratives, **The Returning** and **Knowing**, Aisha finds herself alone, confronted to an alien space and time. So, what she does, is immediately turn to her imagination to find solace in dreaming, which sends her to a world of her own, foregrounding the sameness between the child and adult Aisha. In **1964** the protagonist is fascinated by fictitious characters. Maggie Tulliver, Anna Karenina, and Emma Bovary. She understands them and belongs to them more than she does understand the people in the real world. She is one of them. She is a heroine in her own mind. She used to belong to the world of fairy tales Cinderella, and Little Riding Hood and Noddy, the Djinni and The Brownie and the Hamster. Now fourteen, Aisha’s world has to grow with her to encompass Maggie Tulliver, Emma Bovary and Anna Karenina and more names to come. As an adult in **The Returning**, Aisha quits her world of past remembrance locking the door twice behind her, back to the ‘real world’ with her speedy car. As a child in **Knowing**, Aisha is forced back to the real world again by her fear and night mares to a world of grown-ups who think so little of her and understand so little of her world. How about **1964**, what would Aisha the teenager heroine make of her world this time?

Aisha moves on to tell about her adventure on the Stratheden, a boat heading from Port Said in Egypt to London. She has to abide by the rules set by her parents as Egyptian academics: “.....beneath my mother’s surface friendliness there was a palpable air of superiority. We were Egyptian academics who come to England on sabbatical to do Post-doctoral Research ”. Aisha longs for an adventure on board the Stratheden. Against her parents ‘surface friendliness’ and ‘palpable air of superiority’ she meets an Indian boy, Christopher, “tall, thin, and seventeen year old with a beaked nose”. She gives him her address in London. Then Aisha has to face her parents’ wrath, discovering Christopher’s, letters and photo with her. The situation displays the meeting between foreigners considering other foreigners as the Other inferior and alien. Yet, Aisha is the least “troubled with the loss of Christopher. Just by the loss of a potential adventure. Anything that happened to me in those days represented a potential adventure”. [ibid. 30] Here she

ppportunity to a 'potential adventure'. However, others

After she missed an adventure with the Indian Christopher, "*a curfew of eight thirty pm*" is imposed on Aisha by her parents. '*.... No path to rebellion was open*' to her. She waited for something to happen obligingly within the set boundaries". "*Nothing ever happened*", "*life was passing me by*". Luckily for Aisha something is to happen with her mother's proposal to meet the Vicar's children. She could even go out with them (unlike with the Indian Christopher). Aisha "*was thrilled*". Life is to go on. Is a potential adventure on the brink of becoming possible? The present seems to waver against her expectations and the future might be the saviour.

Aisha's new British friends are "*angular girls with varnishing eye- brows and hair pulled back*", the boy has "*extremely short hair and glasses*". Her "*knowing heart*" made her "*resolute*". "*The possibilities were infinite*" for her. She is going to move to the café and play the "*juke box*", or go to the youth club. She imagines them to be like the Gezira Club at home (In Egypt), "*only much more exciting and liberated*". Is a potential adventure possible at last? "*Instead, we went to church*", Aisha says. It is not even "*an old and picturesque church. It is " modern and bare*". Yet Aisha is made to rejoice being accepted as a Muslim to their church.' She '*prayed for something to happen to relieve the tedium of life*'. She feels desperate. She has to listen to the Vicar's sermon who speaks of "*alien races, alien beliefs*", and who is there "*to guide them into the love of 'Our Lord*"" [ibid.31]. She has no doubt he meant her. After the sermon, Aisha is made to feel 'an alien' among the people who are supposed to be friends. Aisha and her people have been represented as alien. The orientalist view of the Other Edward Said investigated is of great concern here (cf.chapter one p. 12, note 9 p13, and note 11], People of a different culture are being stigmatised as alien to the white- Christian-European civilisation and as pagans and unprivileged. D. H Lawrence's view of the gradual "*annihilation of the 'White psyche', race and civilisation* are also of great concern in this respect [Lawrence, 1924: 70, 169] Lawrence's openness to change is most prominent in his idea of the 'old White psyche' that must be annihilated gradually as well as the 'white epoch', 'civilisation' and 'race'. [Lawrence, 1924:70-169] This death of the 'white norm' could make room for other races, and other colors. "*Everybody was large and pale with straight light brown hair and*

d dark and was agonisingly conscious of my alien
en hair, as I waited to be sought out and guided into
the love of Jesus”. [ibid. 31]

Aisha feels estranged from both setting and people. She knows that – “*however unknowingly*” – she “*has been betrayed*”, and she “knows” and decides she “*would never go out with the Vicar’s children again*”. After perpetual attempts to escape the supposedly ‘stale-static’ present in which nothing happened to expect a better future full of adventure and life and thrill, Aisha feels an alien again. She is back to the present; feeling betrayed, desperate and disillusioned. She could not attain for that much dreamt about world of adventure.

Yet she is still to compare the stillness and ‘death-like’ meeting with the Vicar’s children to that of “*Teddy boys and the Rockers*” she meets on her way home. “*They are all that I was missing,*” she says’. Her heart yearned for another adventure when she walks past one; her heart would thud in anticipation of his speaking to her. Yet, her parents are never to accept. This is what Aisha has to say about herself, feeling out of space and time:

“And I realised that with my prim manner and prissy voice they wouldn’t want me for a friend anyway. I was a misfit: I had the manner of a fledging westernised bourgeois intellectual and the soul (though no one suspected it yet but me) of a “Rocker”. [ibid. 32]

The contrast stemming from what Aisha thought she is and dreamt of becoming is striking. She imagined another Aisha that she has not found yet. She strives to be a rocker and experience adventure, but this is not to be possible since people around her already have an ‘idea of what she [seemingly] is, which she thinks she is not. However she cannot change anything. This phenomenon Genette links to the dilemma of the ‘I’ used by the first person narrator [Genette, 2007: 260-1]¹

...e up experiencing an adventure. This time her parents
friend's son called David. Rushing to get home, David
kissed Aisha in their front garden, yet he never asked her out again. Aisha had to
confess: "*But I had had an adventure: my first – ever kiss. I had felt nothing at all, but I
became more and more a heroine and borrowed from the library Mills and Boon
romances....*" Even with the adventure "coming true", Aisha still can feel nothing. The
world around is still alien to her. She has to become a heroine not in the world around but
in her own. She has been used to this. [Soueif, 1983: 33]

Her first meeting with the comprehensive school does not seem that exciting as she thought
it was. It was not like "*schools in books like The Girls Annual [where] all seemed jolly
good fun*". She finds it rather "dark" and "cold". A freezing encounter with an Other space.
On her attempt to merge, to blend in silently and belong to the crowd in the school, "*she
wasn't about to declare herself a "Mohammedan" or even a "Muslim²" for the latter "can
be excused from assembly on the grounds of being so, yet, Aisha's attempts at fading into
the masses were unsuccessful*". [ibid. 34]

Then comes the conversation with Susan, her school- mate. She is slight and pale with
freckles and red hair as opposed to Aisha who is dark with thick black curly hair. Susan's
first question to Aisha is about her origin and Aisha says she is from Egypt. Susan has an
idea about Egypt which is that of Pharaohs and crocodiles, where people go to school on
camels, live in tents and where one man could have ten wives. She does not care about
Aisha's denial of those stereotyped images. The confrontation with Susan conspired to
alienate Aisha still further from the world around. One feels Aisha as a fractional woman
trapped between her being Egyptian, Arab, and her being British. The notion of the
"*fractured [Man] more than blossomed in Arab American novels*". *A major theme
recurring throughout these novels* "...*the primacy of the journey to find one's fate, to seek
patrimony, to understand who one is...it is a gathering of stained glass, fractured, yet full
of light and color*". [Orfalea, 2006: 127]³

Susan's representation of Egyptians living in tents and riding camels strengthened Aisha's
exclusion. It matches Shaheen's representation of Arabs in Hollywood as ignorant, wealth-

1] It implies that Aisha does not belong where the
as they do, though she speaks the same language. The
reader could have felt the seeds of what orientalism and the inevitability of becoming a
mimic of western manners [cf. Chapter one, p. 14]. The young girl seems to speak out of
total ignorance of what Egypt is really like now. The supposedly 'pharaoh' who is
answering her question speaks 'Standard English', and her parents are university teachers in
Britain. Besides, they live in a Belgian apartment and not in a tent. She does not conform
to the stereotype in Susan's 'head- pictures'[cf. chapter one, p. 8, 9]. Aisha could make
friends neither with the white girls, because they "*live in a world of glamour and
boyfriends*" to which I had no *entrée*", [Soueif, 1983, 37] nor with the dark girls regarded
her "*with suspicious dislike*". She is the Egyptian who gets it right. The African, a
'foreigner who is to teach the British their language'. [ibid.35] There flowers the seed of
the identity crisis Aisha is to suffer from and which is to deliver its fruits in the last
narrative, **The Nativity.**

Aisha has just to yearn for her sunny days in Egypt feeling an outcast. She has to go back
to the world of books, stories and music, "*uninterrupted by cold blasts of air or reality*" in
the library. She communed with Catherine Earnshaw, and she has visions of herself as an
age "*thirty seductress, smoking cigarette with a score of tall, square- jawed young men*" at
her feet. She transcends her imagination to the world of magic, dreams and music to feel
more at home. She is "*on familiar ground*" once in the corner café, heading towards the
juke box to play some records she bought secretly. "*But I was happy*" she confessed and
"brilliantly alive", as though she has been denied life before, or she has felt dead
elsewhere. [ibid.38]

In the last situation in the story, Aisha feels "*terror struck and elated*" for she thinks she is
about to enter a world of glamour, passion, excitement and adventure. It is the St Valentine
day. Aisha decides never to miss it. Yet, she suddenly finds herself facing a seemingly
transformed space that was school. It is no longer cold and hostile. [ibid, 1983:40] "*It was
Vibrant, throbbing*"; "*a magical place*". She goes dressed as a princess in a black night
dress and "*le talon bébé*" with David in her company. Yet, the girls have brought no boys
with them. The music is playing yet the dance floor is empty and Aisha confesses bitterly:

I tried to enjoy the music but it felt dead and flat. Time passed as I was waiting for something to happen while the evening slowly crumbled away and the stars went out one by one. I knew now there was no hidden world, no secret society from which I was bared. There was just nothing. What I have been imagining about St Valentine day turned to a deadly boredom day. [ibid.41]

Nothing she has dreamt of happened. Her disillusionment seems the greatest as she has to realize that “*there was (just) nothing*”, hurled back to reality. The world around her feels meaningless. Aisha’s ‘easy-made’ and ready-made response was merely her decision to quit school. She is to concentrate on “*her studying for her Egyptian prep*”. Her mother seems to be more concerned with her father’s reaction than with her daughter’s decision or its cause. “*Daddy won’t speak to you*” he is “*horribly displeased with you*”. Yet, nothing is to change Aisha’s mind. “*I’m not going to school anymore*” is her sharp answer. She is to live her private life with music and books “*impervious to the cold, disapproving atmosphere that pervaded the evening*”. [ibid.42]

III.3] Conclusion

Aisha has been presented as the misfit adolescent; dissatisfied with the present that seemed meaningless and non-exciting. She dreamt about the future that she thought an escape. Yet, nothing seemed to please her as she missed every opportunity for living a true thrilling adventure. Her ideal fictional characters: Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Catherine Earnshaw and Maggie Tulliver seem to have faced the same ordeals and unrealised dreams. In her interview with Joseph Massad, Soueif spoke about her favourite female characters and argued that the novels in which they feature as protagonists “*are primarily about women, about a woman finding or not finding herself*” [Massad, 1999: 88]

James argues that Flaubert's Emma Bovary, the protagonist of his novel **Madame Bovary**, is a victim of the imaginative habit. He labelled her “*an embodiment of helpless romanticism*,” “*A pretty young woman who lives, socially and morally, speaking, in a hole, and who is ignorant, foolish, flimsy, unhappy, takes a pair of lovers by whom she is*

lemma leads her to give up her husband and her child.
despair" and reaches a tragic end, committing suicide.

[Zabel, 1985: 477] Maggie Tulliver is the heroine in George Eliot's **The Mill on the Floss**. It is the story of a misfortunate young lady considered "*no more than a woman*", domesticated, and 'intellectually limited'. She is oppressed by her father who, though cared about her future, has a biased view of women. Maggie is a disillusioned seductress who ends tragically, dying with her brother [Ashton,1990: 50] Emily Bronte's Catherine Earnshaw, another character in Aisha's world, is the protagonist of **Wuthering Heights**. She is portrayed as a character having a personality split. Her obsessive love for Mr Heathcliff pictures her as a wild and daring female character. She marries another man, however and dies suffering from a fever. Tolstoy's **Anna Karenina** scrutinises" *the complexities of adulthood and the realities of adultery and marriage*". Anna Karenina a married woman falls in love with Vronsky. This leads to the breakdown of her marriage and to her committing suicide at the end. [Hemmings, 1974: 124] The fictional characters with whom Aisha communes and identifies seem to have faced the same fate. Yet Aisha is to know again, transcending space, time and character as alien Other, and she is sent back to knowing. She could have a clear picture of how the people, she thought she belonged to, perceived her; a distant alien pharaoh emerging from an exotic land. The present has always been present to her knowing. It has been more than a time Other, demystifying a premature future signifying nothing.

III.4] The Nativity/The Duped Femme du Monde

To follow the same procedure as in the previous narratives an attempt at answering some questions, probing the last narrative is necessary. How does Aisha grant herself an adventure to know everything she has not known and ‘to really live’ what she has been reading in books and what she has been imagining about a tribal Other in Egypt? Why does she turn a duped character, lacking the knowledge needed to live in a tribal and traditional setting, facing an identity crisis? Aisha seems to turn in the gyres of a double absence, not to belong anywhere; neither to the peasants in her traditional Egypt, considering her a foreigner, nor to England, viewed as an alien. How does Soueif allow a character reversal from a disillusioned, victim of rape, and weak woman to a female character liberated from the trappings of obsessions and desires and free to voice her own narrative merging with the Other?

In The Nativity, Aisha is portrayed as a desperate wife shrinking from her husband’s love and striving to have a child. Her nanny, Dada Zeina blames it all on the “*Evil Eye*”. For Aisha is “*young and beautiful and fortunate*”, so people must envy her. “*she does not love him(her husband) as a woman should love her man*”. Is it The Evil eye? Is it responsible for her disturbed sexual and marital life? The same feeling one gets reading The Returning with Aisha described as an unhappy wife forsaken by her husband. Time and again she had to “*turn her head away and drift the whirling cornices of the walls or the intricate lace of her pillow*”. In the most intimate moments with her husband Aisha chooses to be indifferent to him and oblivious to his love. They seem like “*strangers*”.

Dada Zeina reminds Aisha how primordial a visit to the Saint Sidi Abul Suoud is. The “*master*”, Saif, has left the doctors “*look at him handle him, squeeze him*”. This hurts his “*man’s pride*”, yet, a child is not to be hoped for. Aisha has done all she could so far. She has to go to the Saint. Dada Zeina says they will pray for him. “*May be the knot will be broken*”. [Soueif, 1983:132]

to conceive a child, refusing to stand as a childless
er love for her husband fading, she decides to do
something about it. [ibid.134]

The place is a *desert* in "Masr Atiqua" (Ancient Egypt). Aisha appears to the black clad Bedouin ladies as a "foreigner" with her "beige trousers", "gym shoes" and her "jacket and cotton shirt". The echo of the Other locale vs. foreigner seems to loom large. She 'failed' to belong where her British 'friends' did, crystallised as a stereotype, living in tents and riding camels in 1964, and now she is labelled a foreigner at home.

Dada Zeina decides she and Aisha will visit a presence first before going to the Saint. Aisha does not object. She accepts to go the Saint to have the "knot broken" i.e. to allow Aisha have a child and may be restore back, her husband's fading love. She has to change the present, so, she obeys her nanny.

The place is a *desert*, with a tent, musicians playing drums and tambourines. Men with turbans and women with galabiyas smoking "hashish". Does not it remind Aisha of the Arabian Nights, a book she read when a child? It looks like the oriental souk with exotic images of Bedouins in deserts⁴. The same representation Susan had thinking of Egypt with people living in tents and riding camels. It is the first time Aisha has the opportunity to experience such an exotic and dreamy setting looking like a foreigner, though a "native", or a "journalist" like the women in the desert decided to call her. Aisha decides to stay in the tent, to watch the presence where women are dancing in trances, their hair loose. The children are watching their "mothers in abandon" [ibid.135] Aisha seems to ponder about the whole scene. She finds strange the fact that she should have read about the whole scene in books as a child and as a grown up. She dismissed it and she thought about the place as merely a decor of a remote past that now is facing her for real. [ibid135-137]

now through books. She used to read books when a believed in a world she has merely read about, known from her class mates in England or from some people like the Vicar speaking about “Aliens coming from alien places”. So, her knowledge of the scene has confined her tribal Egypt to dwell in her imagination. Now she is here. She has to confirm what she has imagined and what she has read about; the exotic land of the remote Other [cf. chapter one p11]. She is to live the whole thing for “real”. She is in a desert, in a tent, hearing tambourines and watching women dancing in a trance, and later she will visit a Saint and might conceive a child. Is not it wealthy material for her imagination; the old longing for adventure she cherished in her childhood Knowing and teenage1964? She has been granted a chance to ‘test’ her imagination; to really live what she merely has read about.

In the same tent Aisha meets a man named Farag who is used to coming to presences. The man appears in a pair of cheap black leather trousers tucked into plastic boots and “*his hair is frizzy and brown*”. He offers Aisha to accompany her to see the Saint. “*you shouldn’t really wander round here alone. But this is my patch – if you’re with me no one can bother you*” [ibid.138-139] So, besides the vulgar muscles he had making his strength show off, he knows the place perfectly well. He informs Aisha that he is a butcher and she accepts the offer, shaking his hand. She does not seem to think about what “*her husband will say, making a friend with a butcher and squatting in the dust*” like those women dressed in black. She just over looks her nanny’s warnings begging her not to go with Farag. Despite her nurse’s warning: “*we’ll have nothing to do with him*”, Aisha does not seem convinced of giving up her visit to another Saint with Farag. In a pilfered moment of day dreaming, Aisha stands watching the butcher, while the women are dancing. She thinks about Farag and the way he looks, noticing that he does not look like man she is used to knowing. She recognises that sshe knows so much about art than she does about real life that she constantly ignores, turning her gaze to a world she knew. [ibid.142]

So Aisha feels like quoting poetry seeing Farag, lost to the rhythm of music in the tent. She has to remind herself that what she sees is ‘reality’, real life and not art. It is not a story she has read in a book. Farag is not an Antar, the Arabian knight on a horse. Again Aisha’s imagination she has continuously to call back whenever she tries to translate what she sees

...e over self-centeredness she relies on perceiving the
...on to her is pertinent and conclusive to sum up
everything. “*don’t you know anything?*”[ibid.144]

Then Aisha enters the Saint’s hiding behind strong Farag who makes way for her and her nanny through the crowd outside the tent. The room is full of candles and Aisha has to talk to Set Habiba the Saint's wife for “*no one could approach him except through her, for she had the key to his heart*” [ibid. 148-149]. This is what her nurse Zeina knows and says. Aisha has to confess to Sit Habiba; to tell about her ordeal, her desire to have a child, a grille separated her from the wife’s Saint while she is talking. She confesses that she is no longer in love with her husband, yet she desired a child strongly. [ibid. 150]

Aisha seems reluctant and hesitant following the pauses she produces in her speech. She does not intend to have sexual relations with her husband. She does not love him anymore. yet ,she wants a child because people say so. The Other's authority as husband and society is omnipresent. She does not know exactly what she wants. She should not leave her husband whom she loves no more only because he is sound for her and he is a good man. Besides she desires a child so the only way is to stay with her husband. “*The child will make her safe*“, that is what the others say and want and she just has to abide by the rules. After Aisha and her nurse pray for The Saint and cite verses from the Koran next to his Shrine they are shepherded by Farag again out of the courtyard of the mosque. Farag does not miss the opportunity to praise Aisha as being a “*lady*” because “*the women there are all peasants*”. So she deserves according to him, to go to better presences” *more classy*” [ibid.151]. “*In flats...real luxury and stuff*”. He promises to look after her for it is “*his quarter*”. No one can come near her [Soueif, 1983:152 Besides, Saturday, the day he proposes, will coincide with a festival celebrating the Nativity of Saint Sidi Ali the patron Saint of his quarter; the slaughter house. Despite her nurse’s strong opposition she expresses questioning Aisha “*do you have to see everything? How many days are there in a life time, then?*” Aisha insists on Farag's accompanying her to her car. He is to show her the slaughter house. Aisha is portrayed by her nurse as an “*obstinate*”, who once she’s got an idea in her head, no one can stop her. She longed for adventures when a child and a teenager, so here is another chance to live ‘a real’ adventure as an adult. Farag the butcher might symbolize a hero she has encountered in a story. A kind of Shatter Hassan, a Mr

r the Tarzan in her childhood dreams. This time she is
d.154] she has always dreamt to be. She is with Farag
'the strong Mr know -all' who will show her places she has never seen before. He will
grant her an adventure besides "*he had not taken his eyes off [her]*". [ibid.153]

Dada Zeina expresses her blatant disapproval of Aisha's behaviour and her knowing
people of "**Farag's type**". She thinks he is not a protector but "*as some sort of parasite; an
opportunist grabbing a ride in a posh car*". She could not help reminding Aisha of her
husband but in vain. Dada Zeina knows that Aisha has never known "Farag's type" "*he is
not like the men you know. He's not like those foreigners or the boys at school or at the
Gezira-Club. You don't know anything about his type*". Aisha's reply to such objections is
simply that Farag is a "*pleasant and polite man*" and that he was thrilled to offer them
protection especially for her a "lady" unlike the "peasants". Besides "*Farag saw the car an
everything.....*". Her nurse's angry answers "*you don't know anything, do you? I swear by
god that you don't know a single thing*" do not seem to mean much. Aisha wants the world
to know: "*let things come to a head. Let them all know she would do as she pleased and
there was no harm in it. Let them know there were more ways of being in this world than
the way they chose. And let them know she was not content with the way mapped out for
her*" [ibid.155]

Aisha wants to be her own self; she has been searching for it in stories and in her
imagination, in a world of her own. So that could be one reason why she came to the
presence. She strives to speak to her demon like "*millions who speak to their demons with
more familiarity than she did to her husband*". She wants to keep that demon happy. Is it
'more real' than her husband? Is this demon a symbol of a self she has kept looking for and
appeasing for years? Has it been a journey from imagination, fiction and the world of
fantasy or the unreal to a 'real world' where demons Saints and presences still exist? And
how about the people with whom she is now? "*they are ignorant, primitive people. What's
new?*" "*Everyone knows about that. Read any text of social anthropology*". [ibid.156].
They are mere strangers, foreigners. They are the Other opposite and inferior to the people
she knows.

On her way to meet Farag on Saturday, Aisha is described again facing a strange setting. Her car parked near the police station seems an alien machine, sleek and shining. It sits among the “*squatting camels the piles of hay and junk*”, the smell of sewers and slaughter and of the fannery. The shirt trails of camels, buffalo, sheep and goats, horses, mules, donkeys and the odd dog. [ibid.157] She feels out of place, clad in a western black dress and a “*woman on her own*”. Yet, Aisha thinks it is a plain black dress. She thinks it “*foolish to borrow one of her nurse’s long galabiyas*”. As she draws nearer the festival, she tries to avoid the “*deafening sound of drums*” and the thrash of men and women in black malayas. Farag comes as it has been planned for. [ibid.158] She thinks that everything is to go on well in Farag's territory. The butcher makes no effort as he creeps smoothly among the mass of people in the festival making way for her. Aisha feels very thrilled, living an adventure ‘really’, watching men dance in loose gown.

“*This is wonderful*”. She feels. Among the wonderful decor Aisha has been attracted to in the festival is a woman “*who wore a man’s striped galabiya and her legs were crossed. [Ibid.159] On her feet were thick black men’s socks and golden mules and her head was turbaned....*” [ibid.159]. The woman is smoking. Farag forbids Aisha from smoking as she asks him to, watching the woman in the turban, dressing like a man, do. Dressing up as a man meant for Isabelle Eberhardt, meant feeling strong and protected in the Algerian South. “I have donned the cloak of the restless wanderer“, she contended. [qtd. In Ablel-Jaoued, 1993: 106] “*Dressing up as the Other, [meaning both as a man and as an Oriental] becomes a second nature*“. [ibid. 111]

The 'woman-man' Aisha sees is different, “*She’s a strong woman*”, Farag answers. He goes further explaining to Aisha: “*She just is. She runs her own business. She does as she pleases and she’ll never surrender to a man. Even if she chooses to marry someone, she’ll hold the right to divorce in her own hands. She’s tough. I’ve seen her beating men up. No one dares cross her.* [ibid. 161]

So, this is Farag’s representation of a “strong woman”. A “strong woman” is the one who dresses like a man **eberhardt**, runs her own business, as she pleases and does not surrender

as well as she tries to do as she pleases going out with husband. What is important for her is “*to know everything*”, to experience everything and to experience an adventure. How about Farag’s image of Aisha? She is a lady not a peasant. She is attractive as he could not set his eyes off her. However, does she fit into the picture of a strong woman? She drives a car. She is there alone with men. Will she surrender to them? Is she to dwell within the confined circle of the weak Other? She surrenders to the temptation of smoking hashish. “*and where else would she ever get a chance to try it?*” *so much talk of hashish, and she had never had a chance to try it*”. “*she longed to try and now she had*”. [ibid.162]

As Aisha moves to be shepherded by Farag [ibid.163], she feels hot, and “*didn’t feel very confident or steady*”, after a puff of hashish. Farag has always been there, though. “*He took her arm and led her through the crowd*”. She seems to take his words and him for granted. “*I’m an expert. I know what I’m doing*”. These are his words, since childhood. [ibid.164] Again Farag puts one hand on her back and another on her arm. He feels he is familiar to her, or does he prefer women who surrender to men?

Aisha carries on discovering guided and 'protected' by Farag. We meet her on her way to the Saint trodding the tombs. She has known Farag and she thinks she “*had learned so much*”. However Aisha starts to feel uneasy having to answer the butcher's questions about her husband and why she has not told him she is married. He refuses to let her go as she asks him to. He induces her to fall and bump her head against a tomb, then Farag rapes Aisha. She tries to resist him, but he rapes her in the name of God. [ibid.165.166.168]

The last scene features Aisha on the operating table facing death. “*No one knows yet whether her child will live*”. She trusted Farag to protect her and show her what she has never seen before and what she has never known before, yet Farag raped her and made her surrender as an Other weak woman. As compared to Soueif's Aisha, Lawrence's female characters were portrayed as rather 'strong and non-submissive women' opposing women's generally being labeled men's sex objects. Instances from his fiction are: Ursula in **Women**

l in The Captain's Doll, Harriet in Kangaroo, and
chapter one, pp 18-19]

The major characteristic of this last narrative is Soueif's opposing of Aisha and Zeina as characters highlighting a controversial relation between both of them, each considering the other as Other . Aisha has been portrayed as rather 'naive' and completely out of place as regards the wider culture of her homeland [Egypt] that she knows very little about as opposed to Zeina. The character of Dada Zeina pictures the traditional Egyptian woman as opposed to that of Aisha, 'the bourgeois intellectual'. Zeina orally transmits narratives to her protégé Aisha against the latter's parents will. She is the only character in the whole collection to be granted two narratives: Her Man and The Wedding of Zeina. Zeina recounts the story of her forced marriage and having to chase her co-wife⁵ as compared to Aisha's narratives telling the story of a comfortable life between Egypt and England. Aisha figures as a 'foreigner' in the desert in her 'European dress', whereas Zeina appears in a black *galabiya* and *tarha*. Zeina knows what 'butchers mean', as she came from a family of butchers, however Aisha does not and does not want to heed any of her nanny's pieces of advice and therefore, she gets raped. “ *The [somewhat melodramatic] consequences of Aisha's attempt to move outside of the cultural norms of her class suggest that the boundedness of these worlds [hers and Zeina's], cannot as Aisha hoped, be transcended in the pursuit of her own individual freedom. As such, Soueif's text offers a critique of Aisha's world view*“ [Narain, 2005: 506]

In chapter three the protagonist has been presented as a misfit foreigner in 1964, who seemed to belong nowhere. She venerated the future hoping it would cater for the unusual, the exciting and the world of magic she strived to live in. However the world of enchantment turned to nothing. A picture of each female character Aisha has been influenced by in her adolescence was also drawn. They seem to have led an unhappy life and to have missed the sense of longed for adventurous life they dreamt about.

In the same chapter the main character in The Nativity had gone to visit the Saint's shrine to conceive a child although she loved her husband no more. The same coldness and emptiness she felt having to recollect instances of her marital life in The Returning. The visit to the Saint allowed her to see and experience things she had never seen or done before, so, her curiosity was aroused the most having to have a guide to make her know more and discover an exotic tribal world. The world that she had read about in her childhood and adolescence she was to live for real. She took Farag the butcher for her protector, and she trusted as a courageous strong man who cared to satisfy her curiosity and make her experience the unusual. Farag induced her to surrender to her desires of watching exotic festivals and souks, and also converted her from what she fancied an 'emancipated lady', going out alone at night with strange men, and doing as she pleases to a duped 'weak woman' and a mere victim of rape. The butcher seems different from her imagined Shatter Hassan.

Also in chapter three the relation of writing to memory, as different from nostalgia, was reconsidered to shed more light on the idea that Aisha could be perceived as a product of memory that might represent a feature of a non-human other. An allusion to the structure of the work as palimpsest was also mentioned, considering Aisha as a work of art and literature combining other genres. Comparing Soueif's previous and later works to Aisha, as another part of chapter three, was meant to highlight the differences and similarities her first work had with the others and to further illuminate the writer's consideration of the question of the Other in those very works.

As a read about and communed with, she does not die at
investigate her past experience and quit the obsession of it
locking the door of her flat twice in **The Returning**. Aisha ended on the operating table in
the last scene, fighting for life, and she has been spared another beginning by Soueif to be
her own self, set her imagination and memory free to know and to display to readers the
magic, the ambivalence, and the torment of what lays there.

Soueif allows her protagonist to reach an original new self and thus free Aisha's narrative
to intertwine with that of myriad female characters “*reaching back in time*“ and “*touch an
old original self*“, to get back a part of it “*which lay buried, deep as any pharaoh, all these
years*“, “*to make gestures...associated to freedom*“ [Ballantyne, 1975 :194 12]⁶
Scheherazade's power as a female character culminates when she saved herself and the
entire kingdom by the power of the narrative, delaying and then stopping the genocide of
king Sheherayar's killing of virgins at dawn, and thus preventing the kingly genealogy
from extinction and death, and returns to life [Ouyang, 2003: 412]

Aisha goes inside the dungeon of time held by her ankles. Her changed perspective could
be the most important element to experience change. The story of her life is no more than
a version of it. The patches that Soueif represents as Aisha's life are to be gathered and
connected by readers as diverse as they are, for there is no finite pattern of telling a story
either as readers when interpreting them or as writers. There is always room for renewal,
discovery, connection and learning to rebuild and reconnect with others. The writer
pictured Aisha as the returning phoenix resurrecting from her ashes, saving her from death
back to life and knowing and transcending the shell inside her cocooned self to reach the
world outside back to the Other.

Before one concludes, it is necessary to recall the huge importance Soueif granted to memory and the 'time dialogism' i.e. the intertwining relation past, present and future enjoy throughout the quartet narratives preventing the tale from getting immersed in the dungeon of mere nostalgia. The difference is significant.

Nostalgia meaning *nostos*, the return home [Green, 1991: 295], and remembering are in some respects antithetical. The first is a forgetting, merely repressive, however memory could look back so as to move forward and conjure up "*disabling fictions to enabling fictions, altering our relation to the present and future*" [1991.298]. Because forgetting is a major obstacle to change. Besides, "*Understanding the past changes the present and the ever-evolving present changes the significance of the past*" ,and thus creating a kind of time dialogism [cf. chapter one, pp. 20-23] [Rabinowitz, 1987:179]. The author could be said to have applied the pattern of circular return that matches Paul Ricoeur's phrase to read time backward. He contends that understanding depends on knowledge of the end, though linear reading is important. "*By reading the end into the beginning, we learn to read time backward...In this way, the plot does not merely establish human action in time... it also establishes it in memory, and memory in turn repeats-recollects-the course of events*". [Mitchell, 1981:165, 179, 186] Toni Morrison insists on the inevitability of considering a non-fixed pattern of telling stories "No author tells the stories. They are just told---meanderingly- as though they are going in several directions at the same time...I am simply trying to recreate something out of an old art form in my books..." [Mc Kay, 1983: 420]

The narratives as a work of art could also be read as an archeological construct "*...events moving backward as in an archeological dig that unearths deeper and deeper layers, moving back to the originating events*" [Green, 1991: 318] The importance of a life that used to be i.e. the past, and the one yet to come i.e. the future for people constitutes what Ricoeur calls '*the narrative unity of a person's life*', be them 'real' people or characters in stories. Retrospection and introspection are what narratives articulate. They allow a vision of one's life as a whole throughout past, present and future. [Ricoeur, 1992: 163]

ves Emerging from a Palimpsest

It is also important to discuss the structure of the narratives as an amalgamation of texts principally, or intertextuality⁷ web that could be applied to genres, namely the short story and the novel in that she relied on the stories of the life of one character to deliver one narrative uniting the whole work as an intertextual fabric. Allen contends: *“the essential thrust of the structuralist project seems to be toward the intertextual, in that it denies the existence of unitary objects and emphasizes their systematic and relational nature, be they literary texts or other artworks”* [Allen, 2000, 96]. Genette produces a theory of *“transtextuality,”* which Allen explains as *“intertextuality from the viewpoint of structural poetics”* [ibid. 98]. Perceiving literature as essentially *“transtextual”* or a second-degree construct created out of shards of other texts that become palimpsests. Allen points out that *“palimpsests suggest layers of writing and Genette's use of the term is to indicate literature's existence in ‘the second degree,’ its non-original rewriting of what has already been written”* [ibid. 108]. Particularly in this category, Genette is concerned with intended and self-conscious relations between texts, especially in terms of specific genres, *“I mean a category of texts which wholly encompass certain canonical (though minor) genres such as pastiche, parody, travesty, and which also touches upon other genres-probably all genres”* [Allen: 2000, 108]. One reads Aisha as a work of art, following an archeology that presupposes an unearthing of its layers; a collection of intertwined short stories that read as a novel. An analysis of these layers involves what Genette would call the 'generic reactivation', meaning a consideration of the contribution of each genre in the construction of another, as Bakhtin's discussion of how other genres participate to shape the discourse of the novel, allowing a dialogism of genres. [Genette, 1997: 210-12] 13] Genre transformation throughout history determines both its finite and infinite nature as described by Rosmarin in The Power of Genre [1984]: *“...a finite schema capable of infinite suggestion”*. [Rosmarin, 1984: 44]

Malak spoke about the quality of palimpsestic texts Soueif produced from a linguistic perspective. He indicated that while the writer and her characters' first language is Arabic besides the setting and action, the reader could sense the power of translation forged into a hybrid text⁸ resulting from a fusion of English and Arabic. This results in the *“original text, once existing in the writer's mind, is non-existent”* [Malak, 2002: 161], and therefore emerging from palimpsests as new constructs replacing old ones. The notion of hybrid

id as he labelled them texts “*mixed in some way*“,
gration, and crossing of boundaries. [Yakoubi, 2005:

202]

III.8] Soueif's Choice of Themes and Characters in Her Fiction Works :

III. 8: A Complementary Vision of The Other:

Before concluding, it is relevant to review Soueif's choice of characters and themes in her fiction and nonfiction works in order to compare them to **Aisha**, as her first work, and to focus on her perception of the Other in these very works.

Soueif's protagonists are female characters who are in constant search for their own voices and the control of their narratives [Darraj,2003:2]. She focuses on the condition of the Egyptian women in particular and of women in general what the Tunisian psychologist Mahmoud Dhaouadi calls “*the Other underdeveloped*” [Dhaouadi. 2002, qtd. in Trabelsi, 2003: 3]. She rejected the stereotyped picture of Arab women in particular forged as “*sexed social beings*”, “*not self-defined autonomous beings*”[ibid. 10] So, through her writings, Soueif aims at adopting values such as female emancipation, the right to education which may seem western but they are there to “transcend geographical boundaries”. She means to construct an image of the ‘modern Arab woman’, forging her own way neither by submission to “neo-colonial hegemony nor to “neo-colonialist xenophobia” [ibid.10]

Her female characters are born anew out of an old womb to a lighted space not to sink into a lethargic slumber but to face mighty challenges in order to deserve their new picture. This is to write and become ‘masters of discourse’ and to erase labels that feminist writers deplored.

The Sandpiper is the second collection of short stories that Soueif had produced. What is prominent and interesting about this literary production is that in it Soueif reverses the situation of the Egyptian young girl or woman claiming for her narrative, trapped between East and West. She creates Western female characters that are also denied their narratives, caught in a foreign Eastern setting. For instance, the unnamed British female protagonist in

It lends its title to the whole collection—recounts the story of a young Egyptian. She tells about instances of her unhappy union with him [Soueif, 1996: 25]. She used to write stories, yet later she becomes unable to produce words on paper. Unlike Aisha, she recedes to her fate. This might mean that the writer struggles to demonstrate that the west had deprived the East of its narrative for so many years, leaving it tarnished with exotic images and an orientalism that contributed only in the belittling of the Eastern character. Soueif seems to say that now comes the time for the East to tell its own ‘true’ narrative. This also seems to confirm Soueif’s power for empathy with both Eastern and western characters.

In the Eye of the Sun is Soueif’s first novel. In her first long work soueif portrays Asya, like Aisha, enduring her westernised Egyptian husband’s strong grip until she decides to set herself free. She comes to the awareness that she has been a mere puppet in the hands of her parents and her husband who loves her only “*when I behave the way he wants me to behave*” [Soueif, 1993: 299]. She breaks up with all the ties imposed on her though she has to face a list of ordeals. She endures her American lover’s orientalist representation of her. Again Gerald Stone wants to shape Asya’s narrative, matching the exotic images he has of an Eastern princess. [Davis, 2003: 2] [Soueif, 1993: 563, 632]

The Map of Love⁹ is Soueif’s most known long fiction work. In it she merges the historical with the fictional. Amin Malak described the novel as a “*tour de force*” of *revisionist metahistory of Egypt in the twentieth century*”. [Malak, 2002: 141] She ‘borrows’ real people from history to feature in her novel meeting their fictional cousins.¹²

She hated reading stories where male characters are meant to be Egyptian but they are not. Mr Rochester in **Jane Eire** and Mr Heathcliff in **Wuthering Heights** are, she thinks, kind of Eastern men: “*tall, dark, handsome, enigmatic, a stranger, proud, aloof*”. *Such characters, when one gets close to them will discover their “depths of sensitivity and empathy and passion and tenderness. That is what Soueif made of Sharif pasha. She created a genuine Egyptian man”* [Burnett, 2000:102]. The choice of her characters stems from her self confidence and courage, creativity and imagination as a writer.

For Soueif coming from a part of the world where "*social reality takes a primary role over art*" [Ahmede, 2007:2] does not entail that the artists should not write about what they feel most passionately about. Although such writers transform problems into themes they discuss relying on their imagination. The particularity of such themes or places of the world do not deny, according to Soueif, that "*in the end, there is a common humanity that unites us all*" [ibid. 2] The unique experience that literature grants its readers dilates their reading scope to make an Egyptian or an Algerian read, enjoy, and empathise with works written by Indians, Americans or Russians.

Soueif has also written myriad articles for British and Egyptian newspapers like The Guardian and Al Ahram. She wrote about the oppressed people in the Arab world especially in Palestine and Iraq. She also fought in writing, for the co-existence between Arab Christians and Muslims. She made several trips to Palestine and Iraq to see for herself the suffering of the people there and to transmit as true a picture she can to her readers. Reading Mezzaterra, one would have the best instances of such sufferings and an idea about what dangers some writers, like Soueif are likely to encounter for the sake of telling the truth. [Soueif, 2004:..29-62]

When asked about the idea that art is a form of "*self-protection*" returned to the artist to the world as a personal treasure", Soueif replied that people who are engaged in art are responsible of something that has its own autonomy. Besides they bear the responsibility of the most valuable thing in the world which is culture. [March, 2005: 3]

The last part in chapter three has been devoted to a series of analyses that attempt to link chapter two to chapter three, both devoted to the investigation of the four narratives. The first analysis is an allusion to the importance of memory for fixing time, shaping artistic products and featuring as non-human Other with its power to engender knowledge of and possibly a better understanding people and the world. The second analysis is devoted to the imagination of the whole text constituting the quartet narratives as emerging from a palimpsest as a new construct, with a novel imagination of the short story becoming "novalised", and bearing archaeological attributes as a work of art with multiple layers to



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n proposes a look at Soueif's consideration of the works, comparing it to her perception in *Aisha*. This very last part aims also at strengthening and maintaining the idea of dialogic relations that *Aisha* could encompass as language, story, and structure, and that the title of the research work attempts to explain.

Notes to Chapter three

1] **Genette on the nature of ambivalent character:** “un héros qui n'est ni tout à fait lui-même ni tout à fait un autre. La conquête du 'je' n'est donc pas ici retour et présence à soi, installation dans le confort de la subjectivité, mais peut être exactement le contraire: l'expérience d'un rapport à soi vécu comme légère distance et décentrement, rapport que symbolise à merveille cette semi-homonymie plus que discrète, et comme accidentelle du héros narrateur et du signataire”. [Genette, 2007: 260-1] Genette distinguishes two kinds of narrators:

: “Le narrateur absent de l'histoire qu'il raconte (narrateur hétérodiégétique), ...l'autre est un "narrateur présent comme personnage dans l'histoire“ (narrateur homodiégétique) (Genette, 2007: 255. See also pp. 256, 7, 8]

2] “The meaning of the word ‘Muslim’ is obviously undergoing change under the pressures of politics and history. Our definition, this time, as Muslim, as inescapably Muslim- a term that today refers primarily not to belief, but rather, in the eyes of The CIA, The INS and of ordinary people, to something that is ineradicably there now, apparently- in our genes, names, our place of origin.” [Ahmed, 2008: 6-8]

3] Aisha's embarrassment and uncertainty, having to answer Susan's questions, reminded me of Vance Bourjaily's **The Fractional Man**, a chapter of his novel **Confessions on a Spent Youth** whereby the protagonist Quince when asked about prominent Lebanese and Syrian Americans in America, he imitated a cousin of his, Saloom, who is less Americanized: “I tried to produce his voice, now his diction. He was shorter than I, and I slumped a little. He scowled and smiled a lot, and I started doing so, too. The questions were searching---on what streets did the Arabic speaking people live...in Brooklyn, Syracuse or Chicago? Who was the proprietor of this restaurant, that bakery? “How would you expect me to know?. I'd say, or Saloom would say, whichever I was by then, scowling or smiling“. [Bourjaily, 1971: 256].

4] This very setting reminds one of an image of Algeria drawn by writers: “A big country almost entirely covered with sand and the ubiquitous palm trees. Sitting in the shade of these trees men are found swatting to savor the pungent smoke of an enormous pipe. Nearby, a horse seems to bray triumphantly. In the distance, a strange looking animal with an uneven back: the camel. Then come the lion and the hyena, a particularly ferocious animal. On the shore, pirates are about to kidnap a young woman...“ [Esquer, 1925: 3. Qtd. In Lazreg. 1994: 37, 38] It could suggest that Soueif conjured up the same image to describe the Egyptian desert, and therefore, encrusts that very image in the readers' minds.

5] However, in **Her Man**, Zeina betrays another woman, Tahiya, her co-wife, raping her, entailing that for Soueif the blame for sexual discrimination is not gender-specific. [Malak, 2002, 142]

6] Sheila Ballantyne's discussion of Norma Jean, her main character's resurrecting a new self.

7] Although Julia Kristeva coined the term intertextuality, she improved on the term initiated by Bakhtin in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, first published in 1929. He suggests the concept of polyphonic novel as a criticism of historicist literary criticism conception in that it considers the novel as consisting of a unitary perception of reality, focuses on the writers' opinion, or displaying their psychology. The concept of the

...esses the different “idiolects“ used by characters and the extra
...otes permitting, consequently, different facets from which reality
...nomic novel confirms the idea of intertextuality governing literary
works as no more unanimous systems i.e. having a fixed structure, as is the case of the realistic novel.
[Morgan, 1985: 11]. In this respect the literary work is considered in its relationship with other texts [ibid. 1]

8] In **Discourse in the Novel**, Bakhtin asked: “What is hybridization?“, meaning 'linguistic hybridization' i.e. the fusion of texts expressed in different languages. He contended that it is "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor“. [Bakhtin, 1981: 358]

9] Examples from **The Map of Love** of historical personalities are Qasim Amin and Muhamed Abdu.

Emily Davis refers to the novel as a political romance in that it involves a love story between a British lady and an Egyptian Pasha within the trappings of imperialist Britain. Davis says: “*The romance evokes transnational coalition---significantly, of women---and unearths genealogies of their resistance in order to critique and transform the postcolonial state and to comment upon the international balance of power in the wake of British imperialism*”[Davis, 2007:1) When Amal the protagonist reads lady Anna’s, the British protagonist, journal, she reads it as a romance. What is important for her is reading this British lady’s past experience “*losing one’s self in the past as an evasion of the present*” [ibid.8] The reader might recall Aisha’s attempting a similar escape in **The Returning** that I alluded to earlier in chapter one. Davis enquires about the ‘real’ reason for Amal’s addiction to Anna’s narrative. Is it “*a desire to engage in with the lessons of the past for the present, or is the real desire to retreat from the present altogether?*” [ibid. 8]

Mona Fayad discussed the Algerian novelist and film maker Asia Djebar’s novel **L’amour, la fantasia** in **Fantasia : An Algerian Cavalcade**, 1985. She compares Djebbar to Soueif in using history as a material for their writing, acknowledging the role of the Algerian women in the war of independence from France. [Fayad,2008: 1]



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General Conclusion

The current research work entitled *The Other as others: A Portrait of Dialogic Relations*, was an attempt at investigating the question of the Other in the light of four narratives from the eight stories constituting Ahdaf Soueif's collection of Short stories *Aisha*, whereby the author seems to draw a variegated picture of the Other as others. It is a different image from the one the Other has been confined to mean, considered from the perspective of post colonial and feminist theories merely viewed as part of a binary relation to another entity, completely separate one from the other. Before presenting a conclusive view of Soueif's very image, one has to sum up how the whole research work had been structured.

The work had been divided into three chapters. The first chapter constitutes of two parts. The first part after was devoted to first providing an understanding of the Western concept of the self from philosophical and psychological perspectives as the first step to illuminate the question of the Other. The self has been represented as the center of attention and consciousness, superior to the Other considered as all that the self is not; different, stranger, and opposite to it. In some special and rare instances, the Other has been considered as the same as the self, yet such perceptions turned to merely deny the Other its specificity and difference i.e. its otherness. The question of the Other was probed as first, representing an image of an *imaginative geography*, then it was considered in the light of a postcolonial and feminist theories. It has been confined to mean the inferior element as part of a binary relation: the self vs. other, the male vs. female, the local vs. foreigner.

In the second part of chapter one, the Other was considered as a dialogical entity following Bakhtinian understanding, entering in constant communing and dialogue with the self as rather complementary to it not its opposite. The possibility of conceiving of a non-human Other, also mentioned in chapter two, was also included, mainly as elements of literary works: character, time and space. In the main, following the same line of thought, the Other has been considered from a literary stand as being illuminated and reached from throughout narratives as the product of storytelling.

The second and third chapters were devoted to probe Soueif's presentation of the Other in the quartet narratives. The writer's presentation in both chapters portrayed the Other as no more The hostile opposite that one should perceive as the ultimate enemy of the self, or an element inferior, less important than, stranger to, or the direct opposite of self, though it was made to hinder the realization of it as mentioned above temporarily . Notwithstanding this view, the other in Aisha could enjoy a multilayered image and recuperate its dialogic nature. The reader encounters it as the male resurrected by Aisha's memory in The Returning, the adult in Aisha's childhood in Knowing, as the main parts making up chapter two.

The element of human and non-human Other in both narratives, were represented as the chronotope of time, space and character blended in Aisha's memory as reminiscences of a nostalgic past. The Other seemed to hinder the protagonist's transcendence of her rather self-centered and confined view of the Other as the set forth elements translated in the outside world. Everything outside her cocooned self seemed strange she presented as opposite and a threat to it.

The same picture of the Other by the main character was drawn in chapter three. It was portrayed as the foreigner in 1964 and The Nativity, featuring the main character respectively as a misfit adolescent and a disillusioned 'exotic' seductress. Her communing with fictional characters like Emma Bovary and Maggie Tulliver cast her still further as an 'eternal adolescent' with a 'very confined view of the world'. Time and space as non-human Other, still part of snapshots of Aisha's life, figured as the promising future that seemed to enshrine the teenager's arid present, besides the present that had to mean and prove what Aisha the adult, the woman had dreamt about and read as a child about Egypt; the exotic oriental setting encountered in tales. The Other has been conjured up to include its representation as a source of knowledge of the self and the Other as opposite, different, strange, or the same as it might seem.

vision to the tight relation writing has with memory and establishing a dialogic relation between past, present and future with a possibility of exchanged knowledge and understanding these time spans could shed on one another. This could blur any confined and defined nostalgic view of time. The structure of the four narratives was also probed as emerging from a palimpsestic construct in that they share the attributes of different genres, namely short stories, as the author presents them as 'separate' chapters and a novel as they portray a picture of Aisha's character, presenting different facets of her life. The other works Soueif produced single out a special attention to the question of the Other, as she mingles characters, settings, histories of hybrid nature, sharing genealogies and lives together, demystifying the myth of pure identity and delineated spaces.

Soueif seemed to confirm the picture of the stereotyped inferior Arab woman as a limited creature, prone to men's will, as an eternal child, swirling in her fantasies, mimicking Western manners, and as a victim of rape, decaying to death and extinction. She also represented Aisha as an emancipated woman knowledgeable about European and Arab literary traditions and as an Egyptian who does not live in a tent, nor ride camels or live in secluded harems as Susan thought. Aisha decided to depart with the past leaving her obsession with it locked in her flat and deciding to start anew. She has been granted another life as the readers get back to **The Returning** to meet her in her speedy car, locking the door twice after her obsession with the past as female phoenix resurrecting from her ashes. Aisha seems to confirm the roots of her Arabic name, Aisha, which is a girl's name that contains the root "aish"; in Arabic meaning live" [Trabelsi, 2003: 4]. She escapes in her car as a time machine, looking ahead to life and knowledge.

As a collection of narratives, **Aisha** could be considered as a work of art painted with foreign and local colours, reflecting traditional and modern perspectives, and inviting hybrid characters, settings and times on its stage. Further investigations and imaginations of the very work might probe other characters' visions of the world as compared to Aisha's. **Aisha** could be considered from an aesthetic stand point exploring its structure as an archaeological work with variegated layers displaying the features of different genres, notably short stories and novel. Aisha could be approached as a series of intertwining



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d Dada Zeina's life stories. It would be interesting to
eif's 'hybrid novel', encompassing female 'hybrid
narratives, namely: Anna, Amal, and Isabel's.

Literature is about life and a returning to it. It depicts it, deviates from it, clings to it, or
departs from it. The infinite possibilities readers' interpretations offer to literary works
remain the greatest witness to the possibility of literature's eternal presence, its dialogic
power, carving its traces on readers' and writers' hearts and minds as experiences they
share with each other.

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The four short stories investigated are part of a collection of eight narratives **Aisha**, telling the story of Soueif's protagonist Aisha, following different phases of her life, traveling from Egypt to England.

The Returning: The first narrative tells the story of Aisha, an educated Egyptian woman remembering her life in Egypt six years ago, returning from England. She confronts a rather strange setting from the one she used to know in the past, an unfamiliar present and people she does not recognize. **The Returning** also highlights a rather controversial relation Aisha has with her husband Saif, as she features as a forsaken wife. After tracing back snap shots of painful reminiscences, she finally decides to quit her apartment with literature books, locking its door twice.

Knowing: The second story is a 'diary-reading-like' narrative whereby Aisha, a five year old child, recalls her childhood in Egypt and England. She is portrayed by the author as a studious dreamy child fascinated by fairy tales and striving to belong to a world of fantasies and magic. Her parents appear as a pair of adults strangers to her world.

1964: The third narrative recounts the story of Aisha as a misfit adolescent in England, belonging to the same dreamy world of stories as a child, and feeling one of the characters there. She constantly looks ahead to the future that she aspires would bring something new and allow her to experience an adventure. Her confrontation with the English characters features her as an exotic foreigner coming from remote lands as an Arab Muslim. Aisha feels as an out-of- place, struggling with the incomprehensiveness of her 'authoritative' parents and not being able to live an adventure.

The Nativity: The fourth story displays Aisha as a wife desperate for conceiving a child to save her endangered marriage. She consents to go to Presences and Saints, heeding her nanny's, Dada Zeina, advice. Lured by the exotic setting of a tribal Egypt whereby she appears as a foreigner to the Bedouins, she meets a butcher named Farag and reconsiders her striving to live an adventure she dreamt of as a child and adolescent. She feels free from her husband's constraints guided by the butcher in the Presence and bewitched by the oriental scene and music. However, Farag, whom Aisha deems her guide and savior, raped her. Aisha appears on the last scene struggling child labour and death on an operating table.

Cette these est basee sur la collection de nouvelles Aisha, écrite par la romancière Egyptienne Ahdaf Soueif, suggérant que les quatre nouvelles choisis pour l'analyse, visionnent une imagination de l'Autre comme étant "autres" à travers le protagoniste féminin Aisha. C'est une lecture qui permet d'apporter des réponses aux questions suivantes:

- 1) Comment est l'Autre présenté comme étant "autres" par l'auteur?
- 2) a- Comment peut l'Autre représenté une barrière vis-à-vis l'atténuation du protagoniste d'une vision claire d'elle-même, de l'Autre, et du monde?
b- Ou comment peut l'Autre aider Aisha à atteindre une image plus claire des éléments ci-dessus, en adoptant une attitude moins egocentrique, et en entrant en relation dialogique avec ces mêmes éléments?

Les hypothèse proposées sont les suivantes:

- 1) Soueif représente l'Autre comme autres proposant une série de 'paires binaires': enfant/adulte, féminin/masculin, native/étranger. Un Autre inhumain peut être représenté comme étant le temps, le lieu, et les autres caractères dans l'histoire.
- 2) a- L'autre peut représenté une barrière vis-à-vis l'atténuation du protagoniste d'une vision claire d'elle-même, de l'Autre, et du monde en l'imaginant a travers la perspective, plutôt egocentrique de la protagonistes entant que 'paires binaires'.
b- L'Autre peut aider Aisha à atteindre une image plus claire des éléments ci-dessus, en adoptant une attitude moins egocentrique, et en entrant dans une relation dialogique avec l'Autre, elle-même, et le monde, permettant le partage d'une compréhension mutuelle.

من خلال مجموعتها القصصية عائشة, تتعرض الكاتبة المصرية أهداف سويف إلي تجسيد نظرة الآخر "كآخرين", و ذلك من خلال عائشة, كبطلة هذا العمل الفني.. تتميز هذه النظرة كونها تعكس رؤية عائشة كشخصية متفوقة علي نفسها. من خلال هذا العمل أيضا تتجلي إمكانية تصور الآخر كالزمان و المكان و بقية الشخصيات المكونة للقصة. يقترح هذا العمل مجموعة من الأسئلة.

(1) كيف صورت الكاتبة الآخر "كآخرين"؟

(2) أ. كيف يستطيع الآخر منع البطلة من رؤية لآخر, نفسها, و للعالم الخارجي بمنظار أكثر تفتحا؟

(2) ب. أو كيف يستطيع الآخر تمكين البطلة من رؤية لآخر, نفسها, و للعالم الخارجي بمنظار أكثر تفتحا؟

الفرضيات الممكنة هي:

1. تتضمن ملامح الآخر في تصور الكاتبة له "كآخرين كعلاقات "متناقضة" و متكاملة في نفس الوقت من أهمها رؤية البطلة كطفلة للعالم الخارجي و للآخر مقابلة رؤية والديها, رؤية المرأة مقابلة رؤية الرجل, رؤية الغرباء عن البلد مقابلة رؤية السكان الأصليين.

2. أ. يحول الآخر دون تمكن البطلة من رؤية لآخر, نفسها, و للعالم الخارجي بمنظار أكثر تفتحا و ذلك برويتها لهذه التركيبات كمجموعة من " الميزات المتناقضة".

2. ب. يستطيع الآخر تمكين البطلة من رؤية لآخر, نفسها, و للعالم الخارجي بمنظار أكثر تفتحا و ذلك برويتها لهذه التركيبات كمجموعة من التركيبات تتمتع بعلاقة تمكنها من الدخول في حوار مستمر.

من مميزات هذا العمل الفني أيضا بروز كتاب كسوييف من أصل عربي و مسلم لتصوير و تجسيد قصص و حقائق لأشخاص عانوا من التهميش لسنوات عديدة.

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Authenticity, 17, 20, 32

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Dialogic, 27, 28, 35, 52

Difference, 23, 27,30,31,32

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