



Education and Scientific Research

University of Oran

FACULTY OF LETTERS, LANGUAGES AND ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON LANGUAGES

SECTION OF ENGLISH

“Selves and Others”: The Other and their
Encounter in Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator*.

Thesis submitted to the Department of Anglo-Saxon Languages in candidature for the Degree of Magister in
Literatures/Civilisations of Anglophone countries

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“Selves and Others”¹: The Other and their Encounter in Leila Aboulela’s *The Translator*

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¹ “Selves and Others” is adapted from Edward Said’s discourse of ‘self and Other’. (In Bově, 2000:242)



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I, hereby, declare that this work has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Hassiba MAZOUZI



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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the following people:

To my family, Mouad Kamel, Fatima, khadidja, Saliha and Nassima

nowledgments

I want to acknowledge the following people:

Dr. Khadoudja BELKHENCHIR whose great interest in reading and correcting this work led to its completion.

Dr. Abdelghani NAIT BRAHIM for his patience in guiding me through this work and whose valuable advice, comments and correction brought this work to light.

Dr. Sidi Mohamed LAKHDAR BARKA, from whom I learned so much and to whom I owe deep respect. This spiritual father's important remarks on my dissertation made its completion possible.

Mr. Mohamed BOUHEND, God bless him, for his valuable lectures and contribution.

My dear friends: Aicha and Fatima HADJMOKHTAR, Khadidja KHARAFI , and Nassima MEDRAOUI who helped me in my research and data collection.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the portrayal of the “Other” in the Sudanese Muslim author’s novel *The Translator* (1999) and the encounter of this Other in two different contexts (Scotland and Sudan). It probes the three types of otherness depicted by Leila Aboulela in this twentieth-century text: cultural, racial, and gender othernesses. It focuses on the status of the Sudanese Muslim female protagonist as the foreign Other in an intercultural context (Britain) and in an intracultural setting (Sudan). Through a reading of the novel, two perspectives of otherness from the twentieth-century prevail this literary work: the Western discourse of East/West binary and the view of the “westernized” individuals in their native people’s eyes. These theoretical perspectives apply to key issues of otherness that characterize representations of the Arab Muslim character as the Other; either being an immigrant (foreigner) in a western country, or after coming back to their homeland. Additionally, there will be in this dissertation another dimension of the discourse on otherness in the novel. This discourse stresses the performance of this character in human relations and her function as an active wooer that overcomes the differences, prejudices and representations in both twentieth-century contexts. Through cultural communication, dialogue of civilization, unprejudiced gaze and the challenge of misconceptions and misunderstandings; instead of the rejection of the Other, the novel depicts the convergence between the Eastern and The Western characters and the acceptance of the Other in the dominant group. In the first chapter of this dissertation, the three types of otherness are discussed to argue for the important role of representations and stereotypes in the construction of the cultural, racial and gender Other. In the second chapter, the discussion turns to the probe of the description of the intercultural Other that is attributed to the status of the female protagonist in Scotland, and her intercultural competence to open dialogic spaces and narrow the distances. The third and final chapter is devoted to the synthesis of the intracultural Other which is ascribed to the female protagonist’s status as an outsider within her Sudanese native community and her ability to build communicative bridges with the members of her family and regain her position as a member of her family.

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GENERAL

INTRODUCTION



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Literature, as a mode of expression, represents people and their culture and records their history. However, it is more important than just a symbolic or cultural artifact. Literature introduces a new world of experiences and translates to the reader other people's cultures and traditions. It is the reflection of the image of the society and therefore it speaks to the readers and affects them. If the mirror reflects the individual's own face, the literary work reflects the other's face. Literature then translates a vision of societies and contributes to their change and evolution and this role is vividly reflected in twentieth-century new English literature or world literature in English.

New English literature is described as "postcolonial Literature". It is produced either by people of formerly subjugated colonies or by other people about these nations. Generally, it depicts the societies of the formerly colonized nations and allows them to talk of themselves and present themselves to the world. Postcolonial authors write about various important issues, like cultural identity, nationalism and "otherness", which put forward interpretations of these concepts from the perspectives of the people who share a history of subjection to the Other.

The issue of otherness recurrently appears throughout twentieth-century New English literature. This latter has deeply explored this subject to identify the Other from the perception of postcolonial nations, to clarify the differences and the perspectives held about their peoples as being Others, to question the representations of this Other, to assert the identities of peoples considered as postcolonial countries, and to highlight the reality that the Other, whose dimensions will be investigated in this work, is a man's creation. Otherness has been explored by different writers of fiction from different cultures and nationalities. Fictional works like Ahdaf Soueif's *Map of love* (1999), Diana Abu-Jabber's *Crescent* (2004), Monica Ali's *Brike Lane* (2003), Sadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) figure their characters as Others in the eyes of western people and present the vision of the West as Other. However, 'how this issue is depicted' and 'how it is probed' are the questions that make the great difference between one author and another.

Postcolonial fiction holds an important part in treating such an issue. It interacts with the rationalized colonial discourse, yet modifies or subverts it by retelling the history from another point of view and by depicting the reality of the previously colonized nations.

id’ characters, postcolonial fictional authors adopt a
he Other applied to them and to re-define themselves
and their histories in a hybrid space. This ‘displaced’ or ‘hybrid’ space, as Bhabha describes,
is an empowered space in the sense that it can produce counter-narratives of nations that
challenge and displace fixed geopolitical boundaries (Singh, 2008:53). Therefore, the
protagonists of the fictional postcolonial works find themselves in a geographical exile,
struggling between two cultures to establish an identity, facing the vision of otherness, and
conflicting between an old, native world and the new dominant culture. Nevertheless, this
situation is the same in their homeland as soon as they return. Again in their native countries,
they face the vision as the Other by virtue of their absence and unfitness in this ‘new’ country.
In this respect, Postcolonial literature can be identified by its discussion of the subject of
otherness through different genres, mainly the novel that seems to be the primary choice of
many postcolonial authors¹.

Postcolonial novels paved the way to the formerly colonized nations to represent
themselves and to speak out their identities since the novel has this characteristic of
heteroglossic structure. Heteroglossia is a term introduced by Bakhtin to describe the novel’s
organization of socially diverse and competing discourses. In this light, the many voices
present in the novel stress the heterogeneous nature of the novel and the diversity of groups to
which they belong. So the novel’s representational form gives voice to peoples to assert their
identity, tell their history, claim their values against negative stereotypes and cultural
hegemony, question the present ideologies, and challenge misconceptions about their cultures.

Most postcolonial novels are classified under the genre of the “cross-cultural
romance” to which Aboulela’s novel belongs (Hefferman, 2003: 1). This genre is based on the
narrative of a romantic relationship between two characters that come from different national,
racial and ethnic backgrounds. This genre, that has dominated postcolonial English literary
production since the late twentieth century (Keen, 2003:15), functions to reconcile diverse
transcultural characters with each other and with their own societies. The motives of lovers
struggling to come together across barriers, whether of race, culture, gender, class or religion

¹ Postcolonial authors chose the novel as a genre to express their ideas for the novel has its representational
power that enables the authors to portray their nation’s reality and history ; and because the novel is known as
being communal and public and thus as more accessible to the reader.

ures of reconciliation between groups that had been colonial and postcolonial discourses. These romances serve to bridge the gap across borders through a process of reconciliation and encounter with the Other often at odds with gendered, racial and cultural differences that exist between the two characters. The novel's secular orientalist man having a romantic relation with an Arab Muslim veiled woman produces a revisionist historical narrative that participates in the dialogue of civilizations. The female Arab Muslim protagonist, in the novel, is the one who initiates a dialogic relationship with the Other through accepting the male Scottish protagonist, helping him in his health collapses and opening to him a spiritual way through his conversion.

Twentieth-century postcolonial fictional authors have been eager to inform the reader about their true "selves" and nations and how the Other is perceived and treated in various contexts. Arab fictional writers have produced more sophisticated works that can be considered as a translator between the Arab-Islamic societies and the Western countries. These fictional works were doubtless written under the intellectual and imaginative influence of the discourses at work during that period such as the discourse of representation and the Other. Their postcolonial works can be read as a "writing back" to the dominant western narratives and to the colonial and postcolonial discourses. They rewrite the interpretations of their cultures and re-read the histories of their formerly colonized nations from the perspective of their authentic and concerned people. Using various narratives such as the "anti-narrative", postcolonial fictional authors depict the authentic images of their indigenous characters as being marginalized and oppressed rather than foes or terrorists. This presents the colonized or ex-colonized people in more human light against the negative images endowed to them in some western discourses. Thus among the many challenges facing postcolonial writers are the attempts both to re-present their cultures and to combat preconceptions about their cultures. Accordingly, postcolonial authors, including Arab writers, are the spokes people of their nations.

English-speaking Arab writers, considered as postcolonial authors of this century, are also deeply affected by contemporary discourses. They have greatly participated in the debate over important contemporary issues in their writings such as Hoda Barakat's *Stone of Laughter*, Sahar khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* and Raeda Taha's *A Single Metre*. Their novels have explored the subject of otherness so that to depict how the Other is perceived by them and to

ns to the Other. Although they are aware of the
the Other and those who perceive them as the Other,
mainly in the case of the West and the Other East, many authors such as Farida Karodia and
Safi Abdi seem able to offset their writings so that to narrow the distances between Others
and construct a communicative bridge between them.

There has been a growing body of postcolonial and Arab diasporic literature in English that explores the issue of otherness. The focus of much of the Arab writings on the issue of otherness has centered on topics as the categorization of the Other within the same boundaries¹ both as a reflection of the inner struggles and stratification within their countries. Yet in the present time, their writings can be read as a reaction to the colonial discourse which put their colonized or ex-colonized nations into the position of the Other, either the inferior, backward and uncivilized or exotic Other. This image of the Other which was and is still based on ignorance and misrepresentations is well portrayed in various Arab writers' novels like Tayeb Salih, Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Aboulela. Yet female migrant Arab writers seem to focus in their writings on the woman's position and otherness.

Migrant literature is the writing produced by writers who have experienced the life of exile in foreign countries which are initially strange to them. They are pioneers in reflecting the difficulty to reconcile differences that exist between two different countries in their writings. Migrant authors focus on the social contexts and economic elements in the migrant's native country which cause them to leave, on the experience of exile and estrangement itself in the foreign country, on the mixed and reversed perception which they may receive in the native country, on the visions of otherness, racism and marginalization, and on the sense of rootlessness and loneliness and the search for identity which can result from displacement and cultural diversity. Female migrant literature produced by Arab women migrants living in Europe tries to probe the specific position of women and their otherness in a foreign culture. It has recently given much more importance to the effects of gender and otherness processes on women from various ethnic and racialized perspectives and has urged a positive role for women in the dialogic spaces. Writing about women's narratives in the postcolonial Arab World, Miriam Cooke (2000:177) argues that female authors who have been able to balance

¹ "Arabic novels have tended to focus more on social conditions experienced with a particular class whether Bourgeois, peasant, or urban and the relationship among members of the various classes, than on the movement of the individuals from one class to another." (Meyer, S., J, 2001: 12)

national, local, class or ethnic allegiances have initiated when what was considered to be inevitable binaries. Postcolonial Arab female writing has shed light on the concepts of the cultural and racial differences between individuals and groups, but it mainly stresses the projects of gender and feminism, forging new realities and redefinitions of the self. Similarly, Grace (2007:64) argues that for many Arab women writers, insurrection lies in understanding and empathy, not further division.

African female novelists are considered as active members of postcolonial female authors. They appear to challenge and reflect the more predictable vagaries of the personal and socio-cultural needs of a new generation that has emerged since the first African novel, *Things Fall Apart*, was produced by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe in 1958. Novelists like Chimamanda Ngozi Aiche from Nigeria, and Tsitsi Dangaremba from Zimbabwe and Leila Aboulela studied in this paper, have taken the lead in telling eloquent and challenging stories of women's lives as both part of the region's narrative and as exiled in a foreign country. Due to "hypersensitivity", as Aidoo calls it, to the pains and confusions to African women (Parekh, 1998:33), their works are clear mirrors that reflect the African woman's picture. Their novels, that share some similar issues with other Arab authors, are also a great contribution to the field of postcolonial literature.

New English literature is the outcome of a developing global culture that produced cross-cultural communication but at the same time asserts identity via the awareness of difference. Arab English-language writers enrich this field of literature by their writings that identify the Other and negotiate between history and contemporarity. Their English literature discussing the issues of otherness, representation and stereotyping at the end of the twentieth century paves the way to the probe of important questions: how do Arab writers who write in English (the Other's language) react to the issue of "otherness"? How do they perceive the Other and how do they perceive themselves in the eyes of the Other? How do they contribute to the re-representation of their nations? And how do they contribute to the dialogue of cultures through their writings? The answer to these queries clarifies the important role of English literature produced by Arab authors in defining otherness from their perspectives.

The issue of otherness has been tackled from various perspectives that usually convey the meaning that the gap between the different Others is unbridgeable. The Focus on the

ferences that manifest their otherness stamps various unbridgeable gap between the different Others, one of the contemporary Arab authors' novel. Leila Aboulela's *The Translator*, is probed in this dissertation. This literary work has been written in a dynamic way to portray the movement of the protagonists from one setting to the other (from Scotland to Sudan and vice-versa) and to reach the conclusion that the Other has a dispute role in changing their position as well as their perception in the eyes of people who view them as Other. It has been interpreted on the basis of the portrait of the Other and their role in intercultural and intracultural relations at the end of the twentieth-century. This interpretation addresses the possibility of eradicating the separating barriers and opening new spaces for dialoguing.

Leila Aboulela, is labeled as a "hybrid writer" as many other Arab writers who write in English. Ashcroft claims that "*The hybrid writer is already open to two worlds and is constructed within the national and international, political and cultural systems of colonialism and neocolonialism. To be hybrid is to understand and question as well as to request the pressure of such historical placement.*" (1995: 144). For Abouleila, her writings generally explore the misconceptions that exist in the spaces between the East and the West, and the cultural struggle of Arab Muslim immigrants and their role in dialoguing with the Other. Through her diaglossic literary works and her divers characters, Aboulela demonstrates that Africans in Europe (Britain) are not the only Others who experience the differences and exclusion in a new land with different culture, people, language and religion. Arabs, Muslims, coloured people and Easterners in general may also face this perception as foreigners in a western country. Her literary plotting is basically built on the differences between the characters' backgrounds and the new societies, and the difficulties they face in these foreign contexts. However, Aboulela seems to open in her writings vast spaces for dialectical relationships through challenging representations and stereotypes and giving the opportunity to the Other to speak and re-present themselves. Hence, as otherness of the Arab Muslim has stamped Arab literary thinking by the end of the twentieth-century, Aboulela's writings have been read as a reaction to anti-Arab and ant-Islamic feelings expressed after the Gulf War. She set out to write fiction showing the inner thoughts and the emotions of her Sudanese Muslim characters while living in a Western country and after coming back to their homelands. She also depicts her characters' struggle to preserve their identities and present their authentic images to the Other.

“mutual ignorance” and limited contact between her cultural and racial backgrounds. They reveal that the media that usually distort facts and realities are the primary contact between them and usually the direct reason for their representations, misconceptions and prejudices. Therefore, they propose the alternative of having a process of translation and communication between them to erase this ignorance and to eradicate misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices. This aim can be smoothly reached through her fictional works that are produced to serve this goal. For this process of translation, many Arab authors have chosen the English language both as a medium to express themselves and to make their thoughts, their worlds and cultures, beliefs and values understandable to the western audience who feels the need to know the Other not only through what the media represent, but through what this Other tells about themselves. So through Arab writers’ English writings, this audience can have a clear and authentic vision of Arab societies and their cultures.

Knowing the Other’s language is part and parcel of the process of dialoguing and interacting with the Other. The use of English by Arab authors as a medium of expression and communication does not imply an acceptance of British values and British semantics (Borges, 1967:157), but the primary purpose is to use English for cross-cultural communication, to translate their cultures so that the English used by those authors conveys their cultural values and norms and articulate their identities. Khan *et al* (2007:6) states that the postcolonial writers tried to acclimatize indigenous culture and tradition in English. Thus the use of English as a medium of translation in the works of Arab migrant writers has facilitated the transportation of their worlds, cultures and knowledge into the west for non-native English authors are able to express their cultures through English with authentic detail and insight into both cultures.

Aboulela’s western literary influences and her choice to write in English rather than in Arabic have placed her in a different but not uncommon position among diasporic and migrant writers. She has created for herself the role of a critic of the cross-cultural encounters between people from different worlds. Her literary works are described as intermediaries between the Arab Islamic world and the West as well as between Arabic and English. She includes various perspectives to her writings so that to mediate Arab culture to the West. Fayad claims that literary works produced by Arab writers who write in the European languages of their colonizers are stamped with inevitable hybridity of cultural practices



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works evolved through her literary career according to and they stand as an example of balancing her ties to both Africa and Europe.

The position of Muslim Arabs and coloured people as Others in foreign countries attract Aboulela's sympathies as an Arab Muslim writer and as a Sudanese woman. She investigates the tensions between East and West as they involve women and speaks for those who are not able to represent themselves. She wants to tell their stories through her fictional characters and perhaps create a bridge by which they will understand and be understood by the Other. She, in effect, translates via her writings their unfitness and struggle into a different culture and a different language to help further the process of bridging. She argues through her literary works that the distances between the entities East and West can be narrowed if misrepresentations are erased and a space for dialogue between the two parts is opened.

Leila Aboulela's novel, *The Translator* (1999), overtly portrays the Other as their representation affects their positioning in a different context. Concepts of representation and stereotyping of the Other who is othered due to their different cultural, racial and gender characteristics are genuinely intertwined throughout her narrative. She attributes these characteristics to the Eastern Arab Muslim character, Sammar in the Scottish setting. But it also figures this character as the Other in her Sudanese community as a result of the break of communicability and subjectivity. It is obvious that this novel is strongly dominated by structural parallels (Scotland/Sudan, different cultures and weathers, western male/Eastern female protagonists), binary depictions and inversions as well as binary oppositions. The novel's story takes place in two totally different settings, dividing the novel into two main parts; it mirrors two different worlds; and it develops between two radically different characters, each of whom seems to be in need of the other to complete their personality and life. Their relationship projects the reciprocal actions of two opposing subjects in two dividing milieus. However, the author's talented style and sensitive description of social and psychological details give a harmonious atmosphere that leads smoothly to the encounter and acceptance of the two others in both settings. Thus, what is typical to the issue of otherness in this novel is the ability of the Other to overcome cultural differences and personal misjudgments, to create reciprocal relationships and integrate into human relations.

The Translator's objective is not only to portray the Other but to assert that by means of 'translation', reciprocity, comprehensibility, and dialoguing, the protagonist can overcome

itions created by economic purposes or ignorance such as the veiled woman. Ghazoul asserts this notion through explaining that the novel teaches us an important lesson that the intellectual and spiritual can overcome physical division in our world (Al-Ahram newspaper). This dialogue between the novel's characters hint to the dialogue between individuals and nations. It contributes to the universal dialogue of civilizations and the lively discussion of the religious and cultural content of Islam that has now been re-presented by various Arab Muslim writers who assert through their literary works that this dialogue may achieve its goal in a peaceful way. This cultural bridge and dialectical relations are symbolized in the romantic relationship between an Eastern Muslim woman and a Western secular man, and the protagonist's dialogic role within her native community. To disrupt the representation of the protagonist's otherness and the cultural and personal misunderstandings and negative stereotypes between them, Aboulela creates this emotional relationship between the two protagonists to emphasize the possibility of erasing the cultural barriers between the binary East/West and sustaining intercultural relations between them. On the other hand, *The Translator* both as the novel and the protagonist's job stresses through the return of the protagonist to her native community, the possibility of breaking the barriers of misjudgements and misconceptions to open a space for intracultural relationships between the members of the same community.

The Translator implicitly addresses itself to the twentieth-century orientalist discourse on otherness and demonstrates its connection to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. It depicts the differences between the East and The West through its character's orientalist and oriental views. The orientalist views are western general assumptions about the Orient; while oriental views are the assumptions of people who come from the Orient. Yet this text also shares an evident affinity with the reformulation views of the twentieth-century concept of the oriental Other. While the western narratives see the oriental Other as an incorporable "foreigner" of the experience of encountering an Other in a different society, one who is put into an alienated and marginalized position, Aboulela, tries to create through her novel an acceptance of the Other despite their differences through respecting these differences and challenging misrepresentations. The figure of the Eastern Arab character in the novel could be viewed as a foreigner who is perceived as the Other in a western society but who is able to build human relations with its members. In this context, the text locates the Muslim Arab character inside and outside the definition and control of the Western stereotypes and representations. The intersection between the Eastern Muslim culture and the western culture takes place in this

Eastern and Western cultural representations but at the list and occidentalist views which are the perceptions of the west in the eyes of oriental people. Thus, this literary work can be read as a certain literary rejection of both discourses mainly the western discourse about the Orient.

The Translator, set partly in Aberdeen and partly in Sudan, bridges the chasm of cultures in Aboulela's life and in the life of her novel's protagonist. It articulates and provides a gentle challenge to misconceptions about women and Islam. In this novel, the most powerful challenge to cultural identity is located in the love relationship based on the encounter of a postcolonial Muslim woman and an "orientalist" western man. In general, orientalist people are those who gave a negative image of the Orient through depicting it as backward and weak. The author portrays this relationship through capturing the rich detail of daily life and culture in the Scottish setting and one of the devices of this capture is the rhetoric of metonymy that highlights the important role of translation in the process of the recognition and acceptance of the Other. As a consequence, the author manipulates the most obvious literary techniques of deep symbols and profound metaphors which explain the texture of life and the role played by those who have to negotiate between diverse cultures and identities.

The Translator (1999) was written partly to translate the life of the Arab Muslim immigrants in the western foreign contexts and their roles in challenging the difficulties of displacement and unfitness and the view of otherness. In this same trend, the Arabic Islamic culture is 'translated' to the western audience by means of correcting the negative stereotypes and representations. It differentiates and conflates the Eastern and Western visions of the Other because of the determined nature of representation and the instability of the Other's identity as well as the figure of the outsider in their homeland, within their native communities. These perspectives pave the way to this work to attempt to answer these research questions:

- What is *The Translator's* perception of the Other? Or who is the Other in the novel?
- How is the protagonist perceived as the Other in the western setting?
- How does the protagonist become an Other within her own family?
- How does this vision as the Other affect the protagonist's self-perception and her relationships within both contexts?

In her novel, the Sudanese author, Leila Aboulela, uses the concept of the Other in manifold perspectives. She presents her characters, most importantly her protagonist, as the cultural, racial and gender Other in Scotland in the first part of her novel. In the second part, she portrays her protagonist as the Other or outsider within her family. In both settings, the novel focuses on the Other's attributes and strategies to alter their othered status and gain acceptance. In this process, this dissertation's hypotheses are as following:

- First, the Other in the novel is the characters whose different attributes manifest them as the aliens or strangers within the majority group.
- Second, the status as the Other is attributed to the female protagonist in the Scottish setting by virtue of her different cultural, racial and gender representations.
- Third, her status as an outsider within her family is the result of her long absence, subjectivity and the break of communication between her and the family.
- Fourth, the protagonist's marginalized positioning is also manifested in her self-perception as the Other in both contexts. She unconsciously adopts various behaviours and criteria that reflect her inner-sense of otherness.
- Fifth, being aware of her status, the protagonist is able to overcome it through the recognition and 'translation' of herself and the Other, initiative communicability, dialogic resistance and self-retrospection, and subsequently she establishes intercultural and intracultural relations.

By examining Aboulela's novel, herself a veiled woman, Aboulela experienced the life of exile in Scotland for a decade. She probably experienced many of the misconceptions described in her novel. Aboulela asserts the fact of being alienated and perceived as Other in Scotland¹. She confessed in an interview that she was homesick for Khartoum and that people around her did not know much about her culture and country (Sudan), the two things that made her identity. Her exile led her to start writing in 1992. Through her characters, she writes about the struggle and the pressure of Muslim Arab people to preserve their identities and to represent their countries within western societies. Indeed, her writings reflect not only

¹ In an interview with Leila Aboulela in Al-ahram newspaper, she said: "one of the things i noticed most when I first came to London is that this was a secular society. It felt to me there was an ingredient missing from my life, whereas in Sudan or in another Muslim country, this ingredient is all around me.

This dissertation will attempt to show the way in which the Other, often a stereotyped or a misjudged subject, changes guise depending on the period and historical circumstances. After the September 11th events, the image of the Arabs and Muslims has been negatively accentuated by what Bush administration called “the anti-terrorism campaign”. These events have not only been written in history, but postcolonial literature has been greatly affected by them via the emergence of various writings of different Arab and non-Arab authors who either emphasize or defend this definition of otherness in relation to Arabs and Muslim. This dissertation also argues that transcultural contacts arise in encounters by making the female protagonist an African Arab Muslim figure and the male protagonist who is an object of the female protagonist’s desire both an “orientalist” and a westerner. Through this cross-cultural meeting, Aboulela’s novel tries not only to present the African self’s connection to the wider multicultural world, but to assert the African role in bridging the gap and dialoguing with the rest of the world.

The concept of “difference” is the logical result of the process of comparison. Comparison, that puts the Other and those who imprisoned him in a microscopic gaze of otherness that involves differences and similarities, reveals the image of the Other who is not like the majority members of a particular group. Being culture, ethnicity, physical traits, religion or gender, the “difference” notion draws the separating boundaries between the Others whoever they are, national or transnational. In this sense, the Other is not the privation of the self, it only identifies a general un-likeness of individuals or situations in relation to each other (Corbey *et al*, 1991:82). Thus since the “human” has been organized on the basis of community as being shaped by the unifying principles of culture, nationality, religion, race, gender and even shared civic and social responsibility, comparison has been an inevitable process to define the “different” Other.

On the other hand, the totalizing idea of community enacts and sustains the “differentness” (Scuka, 2005:47) of the Other. Here, “Differentness” means having different characteristics and attributes, such as skin colour, language or religion, from the majority group. The myths, fantasies, and ideologies which found the community, and which typically assert its cohesion and communion around such markers as nation, culture, citizenship, race,

the drawing of dividing lines among the in-group consequently, while these practices aim to affirm the commonality or self-sameness of a community's members, they introduce the "differentness" and the stratification of the Other. The divisions of civilised/uncivilised, man/woman, Westerner/Easterner, and white/non-white are part and parcel features that stem from the notion of "difference" when these differences are not respected as human diversity but as clear cut distinctions that exclude the Other and attribute the superiority feature to a particular part over the other. This human "differentness" has always shared an important part in literature, mainly "minority literature" (Deleuze *et al*, 1983:16). "*A minor literature is not the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language.*" (Ibid: 16). In this literature, the difference between a text's characters reflects the otherness of these latter and their exclusion. So the identical and the non-identical, the self and the Other are the criteria that coalesced to identify the "different" Other.

In this dissertation, the first chapter focuses on the concept of the "Other" in *The Translator* pertaining to the western and postcolonial communities. The debate begins with a definition and cultural history of this concept. Then the reflection continues with a description of the varieties of the Other portrayed in the novel. This section begins with the definition of the cultural Other embodied in the protagonist's cultural differences within a foreign society. It stresses the national, ethnic and religious identities. The study, then, discusses the racial Other which is based on the racial representations of minority groups and coloured people. It then focuses on gender otherness in light of woman representation and self-perception as Other within two different contexts.

The second chapter starts with a brief introduction to New English Literature and then proceeds onto historical research about the representation of the East and West as Others. Then the discussion moves to the portrayal of the protagonist's status as the Other in the first part of the novel using the discourse of otherness defined in the twentieth-century and contemporary articulations as well the contemporary discourse of representation. The second part of the chapter, then, shed light on the Other's intercultural relations as evinced by the character of the Eastern Arab Muslim woman in the novel.

The third chapter turns mainly to the second part of the novel and the ways in which the "outsiderness" of the protagonist, relates to it. This chapter will begin with considering



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d by various definitions and will be viewed in their
ss, here, is discussed as the image of the female
protagonist, being a “westernized woman” as Other by the members of her family and her
self-perception as an outsider in her nearest native community i.e. this part will be shown to
be a site of otherness produced by absence, misunderstandings, and adjustment to another
culture.

The Other in *The Translator*

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Identity and otherness

1.3. Theories about the Other

1.4. The cultural Other

1.4.1. National identity

1.4.2. Ethnic identity

1.4.3. Religious identity

1.5. The Racial Other

1.5.1. Race as a biological conception

1.5.2. Race as a social conception

1.5.3. Racial representations

1.6. The Gender Other

1.6.1. The Other woman

1.6.2. Woman's self-perception

1.7. Conclusion

In literature, the Other¹ is a common figure. It is portrayed as an individual, an entire society, a social class, or a community perceived by the dominant group as not belonging to it and as being different in some fundamental ways: culture, religion, skin colour, gender or ideology. In migrant literature as well as postcolonial literature², the Other is portrayed as literary characters struggling with their othered status in the host nation and in their native countries as they return back. In this sense, each community sees itself as the norm and acknowledges those who do not meet these norms as the Other. This means that the Other in a different society is a different, prejudged, misrepresented or even a marginalized person who also sees this society as the Other. They are generally treated according to the stereotypes, prejudices or racial representations formed about their society, culture or religion. Consequently, any different individual becomes the Other in the eyes of other people who perceive him as different from them. This Other is either endowed with negative or neutral visions i.e. he is perceived either as the danger, feared, threatening Other or as the different, unfit Other. These two cases are generally the offspring of stereotypes and representations which usually follow the action-reaction trend. Thus the Other is the victim of other peoples' perception and representation which create the relationship of mutual otherness.

Otherness is a mutual relationship. Any individual who is perceived as the Other, perceives those who are different from him as Others. In this sense, individuals are the Other because they are focalized by the self of the observer so that the Other is the object while the self is in the position of subject of focalization (Corbey *et al*, 1991:15). Through this perception people create their roles and identities as El-Solh *et al* puts it:

The concept of 'otherness' is also integral to the comprehending of a person, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to an 'other' as part of a

¹ “[The Other] is used invidiously to name the way a hegemonic culture or gender group views different and subaltern ones as exotic or inferior or just alien, and therefore as something it would be a good idea to erase or assimilate by some form, overtly violent or not ,of ethnic cleansing”(Miller.J.H.,2001:1)

² Postcolonial literature: is the writing which “came after empire”. It is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship and resists colonialist perspectives. It is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire. It is also often a nationalist writing through which the colonized people seek to take their place as historical subjects in an increasingly globalized world.(Boehmer, E., 1995:3)

(1994:1)

Hence, based on stereotypes and representations which stem from differences, the perception of the individual by the other members of the group determines his position among them and their relations with him. Accordingly, he is identified either as belonging to the community or as an Other. Depending on the relationship with the Other, Todorov analyzed the concept of otherness and distinguished three dimensions:

1-An axiological dimension: a Manichean value judgment of the other, good/bad, like/dislike

2.A praxeological dimension: the decision to get close to or turn away from the other ranges from the identification to him to his domination, through submission or total ignorance.

3. An epistemic dimension: the extent to which one knows or is familiar with the other.

(In Nait Brahim, 2006:53)

According to the interpretation of the novel, these three dimensions are interwoven in both settings through the narrative and will be illustrated in the following chapters. The Other and their relationship with the members of both societies are vividly pictured in the novel, though it seems that the novel stresses the epistemic dimension of otherness.

1.2. Identity and otherness

Identity and alterity¹ are concepts with deep social, psychological and philosophical roots. They have had different meanings through history, and they have created history by their application to different subjects. Identity and alterity are primarily used to refer to race and ethnicity from cultural perspectives. When applied to geographical boundaries and national belonging, they are defined in terms of nationality and when applied to changing gender roles they are defined in terms of sexuality. In other words, identity and alterity are

¹ Alterity: “in its modern sense is normally used in opposition to identity...The word generally designates figures of otherness in relation to one’s identity or ego.” (Boynton, 2005: 29)

as well as ethnic settings, of the self and the Other as

The construction of identity-for identity, whether of Orient or occident¹, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction-involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from ‘us’. Each age and society re-creates its “others”.

(Said, 1994:332)

In fact, identity is a pivotal component of social life and is constituted through the contact with the “difference”. It develops from and is essentially constructed through the mutual recognition of samenesses and differences and thus through relation to the Other (Grier, 2007:2). From a psychological point of view, identity referred primarily to:

a coherent sense of self or the feeling on the part of the individual of being the same as how he or she is viewed and identified by other(s). Thus identity refers to a well-adjusted personality that emerges from the same, or identical identification of self and Other.

(Meijl, 2004:1)

Hence, identity comes into existence in parallel with the “rhetoric of otherness” that creates it by comparison to the Other as a different “same” or by emphasizing and stereotyping difference as the otherness of the Other as Horsely claims:

Identity may be conceived as developing from, and essentially constituted through, the mutual recognition of sameness and differences through relation to the Other.

(Horsely in Grier, 2007:2)

The focus on differences between individuals is both the reason for and the result of the construction of identity. Quite simply, we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not. These differences may belong to any number of familiar typologies including culture, race, religion, gender, class or other criteria taken to be ‘distinctive’ in

¹ Occidentalism: is the expression of a constitutive relationship between western representations of cultural difference and worldwide western dominance. It is a mode of representation that produces polarized and hierarchical conceptions of the West and its others. (Morăna *et al*, 2008: 345)

category behaviour is primarily the source of otherness, that foregrounds differences and leads to the generation of otherness in the sense of “being different”. Grier argues along similar lines: “*In the contemporary world we find groups obsessed with asserting the ‘identity’ or ‘sameness’ of their members in order to affirm the contrast with what they perceive as different or Other.*” (Grier, 2007:1). Hence, whatever the differences that shape the meaning of “us” and “them”, whether they are racial, ethnic, geographic, “generic” or ideological, there is always a possibility that they form the basis for a self-affirmation and self-identity that depends upon the categorization of the different other individual or group. This categorization is based either on one criterion of difference or various intertwined criteria as in the case of the novel’s protagonist whose different cultural and racial background and her gendered nature mark her as the Other in the twentieth-century British context.

1.3. Theories about the Other

The twentieth-century authors of fiction who explored the issue of the Other in their writings were influenced by the different theories established about this issue. The issue of the Other has been a rich field with various philosophical, social, psychological and postcolonial theories and definitions. Theorists like Levinas, De Beauvoir, who influenced feminist philosophers, Derrida, Said, Bhabha and Spivak all presented important notions on this issue. Though these theorists’ notions differ in some details, they share important similarities in defining this concept.

The concept that the self requires the Other to define itself is an old one and has been defined by different theories such as the postcolonial theory, the feminist theory and the psychological theory. For the purpose of this paper, the postcolonial theory will be explored to identify the Other in the novel. Within the postcolonial discourse, the Other is still defined as a historical agent and otherness is linked to the subaltern Other. Postcolonial theorists such as Spivak, Bhabha and Said, have focused on the process of othering that manifests a person or group as fundamentally different from oneself and have shed light on the acts of dehumanization (the refusal to recognize the humanity) of the Other that function to disempower colonized people. Herman has put it this way: “*Identity and alterity (otherness) are key concerns in the context of postcolonial studies, which focuses on the power relations*

07:258). Moreover, within postcolonial thinking, the the “non-belonging” or the “alien” due to the negative images and representations constructed about them or the community they come from. Based on these representations, they are utterly excluded or rejected by the members of their community or a foreign one.

Consequently, questions of representations and stereotypes have come to the fore in the definition of the Other in postcolonial theory. According to this theory, representation refers to “ways in which any form of cultural expression stands for an aspect of reality, be it persons, things or practices.”(Aaltio-Marjosola *et al*, 2002:63). This means that these forms of representational expression, being art, literature, film and so on, stand as an aspect of reality for another group or person. These various forms of representations results in the creation of the duality: self and Other for it is primarily through such representational acts that the identities of both self and Other are repeatedly constituted and reproduced. (Altio-Marjosola, 2002:63).Hence, since representation is the whole repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which “difference” is represented at any historical moment (Hall, 1997: 233); it plays its role as a power of identifying the Other. On the other hand, stereotypes, here, share an important part in the identification of the Other. They are considered to be that picture in the mind of individuals about other people. When these pictures are consensually shared within a society, they affect the entire society in a common way and even the person who is being stereotyped (Macrae *et al*, 1996:462). These images determine the perception and positioning of the individual within a specific community. According to them the individual is signaled as the different Other. Cross defines stereotyping as:

The general inclination to place a person in categories according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristic such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to him qualities believed to be typical to members of that category.

(Cross in Thompson, 2008: 23)

Thus, both representations and stereotypes are the primary elements in building up the three images of the Other probed in the novel. Being a veiled woman, for example, characterizes the protagonist as the Other due to the representations hold about Islam and the Muslim woman.

entations is the orientalist representations of the Orient

The term 'the Orient' holds different meanings for different people. Americans associate it with the Far East, mainly Japan and China; while for Western Europe, and in particular the British and the French, it conjures up different images. It is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.

(Said in Ashcroft *et al*, 2008:55)

This concern for the discursive representations of the Other and their crucial implications for the constitution of any identity has been explored by Said's thesis on the effects of 'western' (orientalist) discourses on "oriental peoples" and on the construction of western identity itself. In his book entitled *Orientalism*, Said (1978:3) critically examines the manner in which Orientalism as a discourse that represented and produced the Orient politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively. Richon also seems to agree with Said that "*orientalist representations of the Other constituted Islamic cultures and people of the Near East as barbaric, exotic, licentious and cunning Other*" (In Aaltio-Marjosola, 2002:64). These representations are important in the portrayal of the characters as Others in the novel for the orientalist discourse is not imprisoned in the past but its continuity still has a trace in the present perception of the Other. This gives the meaning that this orientalist discourse plays an important role in the representation of the immigrant Oriental characters as the Other in the British setting even though immigrants in general holds the category of the Other in this context. Kamali arguably confirms that in the United Kingdom "*Such a 'we' is not only based on the real category of immigrants, but rather on 'otherised' group with immigrant background who 'differ' from the category of 'us' based on colour of skin, hair, religion, or other attributes.*" (2008:93). Thus orientalist images affect the perception and the categorization of the oriental immigrants in the novel.

In their novels, many Arab postcolonial writers like Jamal Mahjoub¹ and Fadia Faqir¹ have portrayed the Other from a postcolonial perspective. Their narratives' protagonists who

¹ Jamal Mahjoub (1960-) is a Sudanese author whose postcolonial novels such as *Nubian Indigo*(2006), *The Drift Attitudes* (2007) treated postcolonial themes

act either in Western or Eastern settings to forge an
tatus as the Other. Through their narratives, they re-
present their nations and depict the supposedly genuine image of their people. Their
ethnographic novels of the mid-twentieth century were considered as sophisticated works
revealing various aspects of their native societies and hybridizing two different identities.
Being part of this category of authors, Arab women writers have participated in the depiction
of the Arab woman as she is viewed in her native society and within a foreign culture. Writing
about multicultural fiction that constructs an identifiable discourse of the post-colonial
peoples and Muslim women novelists in the late twentieth century, Stotesbury claims:

*Recent fiction produced by Muslim women novelist writing in English
appears to explore and contest the continuation of western images of
Islamic women... [Their novels] posit complex personal relationships
experienced by women whose identities are co-defined by Islam and the
post-colonial condition.*

(2004: 69- 70)

Leila Aboulela, like many Arab women writers, has dealt with the issue of the Other from
various angles in her novel. She depicts the portraits of her protagonist as the Other both in
Scotland and Sudan. Her novel's perception of the Other: cultural, racial and gender confirms
to the general definition of the Other as proposed by many contemporary theorists as mainly a
self/other relation identifying one person from another.

Another theory that probes the concept of the Other is the feminist theory. This theory
examines the gender differentiation that categorizes men and women into different categories
and attributes to the woman the category of the Other. The French feminist, Simone De
Beauvoir, contributed to the discussion of the concept of the Other by adopting the Hegelian
notion of the Other in her description of how male-dominated cultures or patriarchal societies
treat women as the Other in relation to men. This gender Other is the consequence of man
/woman differences, their positions and roles in societies, their verbal and non-verbal
communication and the vision of the society to the woman. Warner claims that:

¹ Fadia Faquir (1956-) is a Jordanian-British writer and independent scholar and defender of human rights. This role is reflected in her writings such as *Pillars of Salt* (1996) and *Cry of the Dove* (2007).

of sex and gender would not be possible to interpret the difference between genders as the difference between self and other Having a sexual object of the opposite gender is taken to be the normal and paradigmatic form of an interest in the other or, more generally others.

(1990: 191)

De Beauvoir defines the Other as the minority; the least accepted one and mainly a woman, when compared to a man. According to her it is clear enough to demonstrate that societies are divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. She argues that though these differences are superficial, they do really exist (1949:3).

Said also applied this gender notion of the Other to describe the image of the Orient formed by the orientalist discourse. In his referential work, *Orientalism*, Said studied the importance of the power and knowledge relations of the production of images, and how the male Western subject had come to exercise power over the female Oriental object. He states that Orientalism *“is a discourse structured by notions of western masculinity in which the west is strong, upright, rational, and male, while the Orient is weak, passive, irrational, and female.”* (1994:137–138). This use of the concept of gender to describe the East/West relation is reflected in the novel through the Scottish male protagonist and the African female one and through the use of an extract from Tayeb Salih’s literary work that will be explored in the following chapter. Both his work and *The Translator* focus on the gender Other as well as the role of representations in the perception and the encounter with the Other.

Additionally, recent globalization has accentuated the markers of otherness. Under conditions of postmodernity and globalization, otherness becomes impossible to ignore. It appears as an integral part of everyday life and constantly holding the potential for conflict, creativity and disruption. *“The currents of globalization have altered the contours of difference and otherness, simultaneously rendering them more immediate, more exiting and profoundly more problematic.”*(Aaltio-Marjosola, 2002:57). Jordan and Weedon also argue that in postmodern societies, the celebration of difference and the commodification of otherness is everywhere, mainly in the West. They strongly state that: *“The celebration of racial and cultural difference is a marked feature of the radical twentieth-century avant-*

...nist) in the West.” (In Davison, 2002:142). However, that accentuated the differences contribute to the manifestation of the West as the Other. Palmerg claims that in the discourses of globalization “a general notion of the West is reinstated in the position of the general opposed Other.” (2001:12). For example, in the novel, the Pakistani Character’s discourse conveys this image of the monolithic West as the Other.

Otherness as the mutual relationship of the self and the Other is depicted into three interwoven dimensions in the novel. The three portraits of the of Other: cultural, racial and gender, interpreted in this narrative, mirror the protagonist’s status in the Scottish society. She is depicted as the cultural Other since she is a foreigner coming from a different exotic culture. As a racial Other, she is portrayed through her perception as a Sudanese ‘coloured woman’ ; while the gendered portrayal as the Other is manifested in her view as a woman as well as her self-perception as the gender Other. Moreover, since the identity of the ‘self’ is seen as constructed through discursively externalizing rejected characteristics of an ‘Other’, which is thereby constituted as different, the protagonist’s otherness is also manifested within her native community where she is perceived as an outsider.

1.4 The Cultural Other

People give themselves a cultural identity precisely by unconsciously creating those cultural Others. Cultural otherness is a process we go through when we categorize and evaluate those we perceive as different from “us” because of their different ethnic identity, religion, or national identity. In other cases, the cultural Other is an individual or a group of people who is regarded as culturally different , a stranger that does not fit in the whole social and cultural status quo or an exotic¹ alien. Hence, the cultural Other refers to a person who is culturally other than oneself and is singled out as different. Cahoon explains it:

What appears to be cultural units: human beings, words, meanings, ideas, and philosophical systems, social organizations are maintained in their apparent unity only through an active process of exclusion, opposition, and hierarchization. Other phenomena or units must be represented as foreign

¹ The invention of the “exotic” evidently satisfied needs amongst a European and, later, an Atlantic, civilization which increasingly assumed the right to define human values and conduct in their highest expression. Other cultures, other creeds were not merely different, not merely lower, but positively-even objectively-strange. (Rousseau and Porter 1990:6-7)

ng a hierarchical dualism in which the unit is
e Other is devalued in some way.

(1996:4)

In the novel as well as in our world, the foreigners who have different national identities, ethnic background, and different religion are viewed as Other different from the members of the society whom they also see as the Other. This case is overtly portrayed in the protagonist's status as the other within the Western Scottish setting. Thus the protagonist's different identities contribute to her perception as different from the members of the western society.

In the tremendous changes occurred in the world during the twentieth-century, it has become clear that cultural otherness has been the most identifiable element of individuals. Here, the cultural Other implies that the most common characterizations are created on the basis of a group or individual not belonging to the culture of origin of the majority group due to their cultural differences. West argues that:

Cultural differences are not things that exist independent of social contexts and power relation; they are, rather, signs of struggle, interpretations of human tendencies, practices, features, and customs defined in the relationships and struggles among groups of people in particular contexts for particular reasons.

(2002:1)

Hence, within any cultural group, there are undoubtedly conflicting conceptions of cultural identity that leads to the categorization of the different cultural Other. Yet what will be emphasized, here, is an interpretation of the cultural Other that regards the perception of the foreigner over conceptions of cultural identity as the theoretical field on which the discourses of *Orientalism*, representation and stereotyping play themselves out. What is at stake here is the way in which the Arab Muslim character is defined as Other within the British community on the basis of the binary East/West. The distinction between East and West, Orient and Occident is a binary opposition that has seriously shaped cultural discourses since the eighteenth century. In Said's *Orientalism*, the West has constructed the Orient as its cultural Other and then makes this Other conform to the western image so that to make this projection as the "authentic reality" (1994: 59). This relation is portrayed in the *Translator* through the protagonists' encounter that reverses the stereotypical distinction built on the relation of Occident and Orient. The former is represented by an orientalist Scottish man, "Rae Isles";

woman. Therefore, the romantic relationship between
the encounter hints at a possible dialogic relation between the
two civilizations.

In this respect, the perception of the cultural Other involves three main concepts: national, ethnic and religious identities. Through reading the novel, the use of postcolonialism as a theoretical lens for understanding and interpreting the representation of the Other in the first part of the novel becomes a necessity. One of Postcolonialism important points is “*the belief that past and continuing neo-colonial encounters hold important ramifications for gender, ethnic, national, religious and other identities in all walks of social life.*” (Aaltio-Marjosola, 2002:62). Therefore, the Arab Muslim female protagonist is perceived as the Other within the Western Scottish society by virtue of the orientalist discourse about the Orient. This ‘postcolonial’ encounter results in the demarcation of her differences and her perception as the cultural Other.

1.4.1. National identity

The most frequent factor that identifies the protagonist as a different member from the members of the Scottish community and characterizes her as the Other is her national identity. This identity has an important role in the accentuation of differences between peoples and drawing boundaries between them. National identity is defined as “*The social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the ‘Other’, rather than being dependent on objective criteria such as language or race or cultural uniformity*” (O’Dea, 1995: 63). This definition explains the nature of any national collectivity and the perpetual reconstruction of boundaries that take place between them and within them via immigration or other similar processes. It also manifests the national identity as the main problem troubling individuals and excluding them from the majority of the host nation. Triandafyllidou argues that “*The notion of the Other is inherent in the nationalist doctrine itself: the very existence of a nation presupposes the existence of other nations as well.*” (2001:3). *The Translator’s* author, Leila Aboulela confirms this notion both in her personal life and in the life of her novel’s protagonist. Aboulela (2001) said in an interview in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* that the first question she is always asked in Scotland is “Where are you from Leila?” and she has always to answer “I am from Sudan”. In this sense, her national identity is an important feature that differentiates her from the members of the British society and attributes to her the image of the Other who comes from a different country. Her protagonist also has to face the same declaration of her nationality in each

, who is a Sudanese woman working as a translator at her Scottish people as the African Sudanese Other which will be probed in the next chapter. Thus national identity is an important factor that differentiates people and frames them as Others, but it is not the only reason that create exclusive barriers; ethnic differences also help in the creation of these barriers.

1.4.2. Ethnic Identity

Though national identity demarcates geographical boundaries, ethnicity contributes directly to the construction of cultural boundaries. It is defined as “*a normative process or as a form of culture*” which categorizes ethnic groups into distinct cultures (Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992:6). Generally societies share the same basic cultural patterns that manifest their unity and distinction from other groups. From this, culture can be defined as the social heritage of people. “*It is made of all of the ideas, beliefs, behaviours, and products common to, and defining, a group’s way of life...It shapes the way we see the world.*”(Stolley, 2005:41). However, cultural diversity which is a pivotal part of the human community, determines the way the in-group members interact with each other as well as their interaction with members of other groups or out-group. In this process of interaction, cultural differences manifest themselves as markers of the Other. People who share the cultural elements and norms with the group are perceived as “in-group” members, while those who lack them are viewed as “out-group” subjects. As a consequence, ethnicity determines the inclusion of individuals to a particular community and their exclusion from it. It defines the included individuals as members of the group and the excluded ones as outsiders or Others. In this case, individuals of a specific ethnic community are viewed as Others due to their different cultural patterns.

However, it is often claimed that ethnicity has become an alternative to national identity for “*There is no inherent difference between ethnic and national collectivities: they are both the Andersonian “imagined communities”*”¹ (Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992: 25). This means that the majority of ethnic groups are characterized by a notion of “community” which can lead to the creation of various cultural or ethnic groups within the

¹ Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to ethnic groups as “imagined communities since all those who belong to the group assume a sense of communality with others of the same group but not all members can interact correctly to from a real community (In Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992: 8)

Anderson, this imagined community is created and strong (1982) calls symbolic “border guards”¹ and they divide the world between “us” and “them” through identifying individuals as members and non-members of a specific community. Gellner (1983) also claimed that nationalism has developed due to the need by modern societies for cultural homogeneity in order to function. According to him, it provides individuals with social modes and cultural practices to create an identifiable unity based on shared cultural perspectives and social placement among other groups in society. This placement has sometimes a dominant nature that excludes other members of other groups and classifies them as Other. In the novel the protagonist Pakistani friend, Yasmin, seems to hold this vision of the Other through the use of “us” and “them” (11)² that continues to stress it through the first part of the novel. So people are identified on the basis of these border guards as members or Others of a specific ethnic group. Furthermore, these border guards reflect the shared cultural resources that distinguish an ethnic community from other communities, and consequently define these communities not only as “imagined communities” but as “communicative communities” as Deutch defined them:

Membership in a people consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders.

(1966:97)

This notion is depicted in the novel through the protagonist’s inability to communicate within the Western setting since she is not a member of community. She, herself, states that: “She could not understand the words ‘sixties’ scene’ or a Saturday afternoon in Edinburgh...How could she understand things like that, be connected to them?” (165). This idea also refers to the break of communicability between her and her family due to her long absence. Nevertheless, it is vital to mention that these border guards are the cultural signifiers that define a single ethnic group and enable it to practice certain hegemony³ over other members

¹ Armstrong’s border guards are closely linked to specific cultural codes of style of dress and behavior as well as to more elaborate bodies of customs, literary and artistic modes of production, and of course language (In Anthias and Yvael Davis, 1992 : 33)

² These numbers (11), (165)...ect. refer to the pages in the novel.

³ Hegemony: is defined as a form of domination whose legitimacy is based on a valued pattern of shared meanings. It can be established through the incorporation of oppositional ideas, the saturation of an ideology, or

groups. Consequently, different groups of the same identified by different cultural boundaries (Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992: 33). So human communities are different ethnic groups that involve different ethnic identities which are expressed through different cultural norms, distinguishing one group from the other.

The definition of ethnicity contributes to the emergence of the notion of ethnic identity. It touches both perspectives of this notion, either at the level of the personal sense of the individual's identification with a group or the collective distinction of the whole group. It can be achieved outside the group by the general material and non-material conditions and by the representational relationship with other groups. This means that being a member of a particular ethnic group and sharing its cultural norms implies that one cannot be a member of the other group and the result is being perceived as Other by that group members. Coll *et al* argues that "*ethnic identity has important implications for other behavioural, cognitive, and effective systems, such as social interactions and perceptions of self and others.*" (2009: 42). Thus ethnic identity provides individuals with a mode of creating a unity based on shared cultural perspectives and practices and a shared social positioning among other groups. This positioning has sometimes a dominant nature that excludes other members of other groups.

It follows from what has been put forward above that the cultural Other is the creation of ethnocentric beliefs. Ethnocentrism is known as a universal human phenomenon which refers to the belief of people that their culture is the norm and the other cultures have less or no value in comparison to theirs. Ethnocentrism occurs when one's culture is taken for granted as natural and as superior of all other ethnicities to a greater or lesser extent and thus puts into practice the visions of otherness and produces exclusive barriers. The result of ethnocentrism is the perception that "*'our culture' is 'natural', 'moral', and 'correct', while other cultures are 'unnatural', 'immoral', and 'incorrect'.*" (Wyer, 2009:190). Hence, due to ethnocentric judgments, people of different cultures are perceived as Others.

Ethnic identity, thus, is another reason that categorizes peoples as Others. Any individual who belongs to a different ethnic group is stereotyped according to the ethnic

the control of material production matched by control over the production and dissemination of cultural symbols. (Leonard, 2006: 420)

quently is perceived as different from another ethnic and perception of the other group affects its member's positions within other different ethnic group. Its consequence can stretch from accepting them within the society despite rejecting their cultures to total exclusion. "*Reactive ethnicity is seen as a cultural affirmation. This is regarded as a response to the individual sense of rejection that the members of ethnic groups face.*" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:7). Arabs, Asians and Muslims are seen as different ethnic groups within western societies and on the basis of this difference, they are viewed as Others. They, in their turn, react in the same way that leads to the perception of the other community members as Others. Aboulela's *The Translator* seems to insist on this view. The protagonist, Sammar, who is an Arab woman living in Scotland is perceived as Other in the British society that she herself perceives as Other. Throughout the novel, she keeps on describing the strangeness of the society and culture and how people find her different from them as well as the culture shocks she faces in this different society. In general, ethnic identity is defined as belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence, especially the religious norms.

1.4.3. Religious Identity

National and ethnic identities are not the only criteria that define peoples as Others, but the individuals' religious identities also contribute to their process of their otherness. Religion is often defined as merely cultural identity or a component of the national identity but its role is assigned to accentuate the difference of the individual within a different religious community. Religious identity is defined as the life style or religious views that provide a vantage point for critically evaluating societal assumptions and values, and thus helps individuals to live in accordance with religious principles. (Farney, 2007:119). Here, socio-cultural discourses provide a lens for understanding religious identities and their formation as discursive and ongoing processes of cultural negotiation with the Other. Therefore, Sammar's religion (Islam) that is an important constituent of her identity is also a vital factor in her stratification as Other in the host religious community.

The main problem troubling people who hold different religious beliefs and who find themselves in contact with a foreign culture is their religious identity. Different religions are endowed with negative stereotypes and representations which introduce their followers as different, strange, and dangerous human beings. Other religions are presented as 'violence-

es these representations. In the obvious differences individuals find themselves lost in between and it becomes difficult for them to find their place within the new society and sooth the differences between the two cultures. Whatever compromises the individuals make, they are unavodingly perceived as Other. Their religious identity and most importantly their religious practices have a great influence on manifesting their differentness that inevitably attributes to them the vision of the Other through which the individual willy-nilly is perceived.

Religion¹ is considered as an important cultural constituent of many individuals' identities such is the case of the novel's characters. It is a "non-negotiable" reason that differentiates people and shapes them as Others since "*Religious specificity has proved to be more durable and resistant to assimilation than many other parts of nationalist cultures.*" (Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992: 36). That is the direct reason for exploring this theme by postcolonial authors whose nations have been subjected to the domination and hegemony of the Other who, in his turn, tried to affect, alter or erase the original religions of these peoples. Moreover, religious identity has been generally written about in diasporic or migrant writing to discuss the otherisation² of immigrants who embrace a different religion and have different religious practices. Hence, religion can be considered as one of the primary reasons that determine the individuals' positioning as Others. This description confirms the portrait of the Muslim veiled protagonist in the novel.

Through human history, minority religious groups have been differentiated from the majority national religions. However, the twentieth-century witnessed distinctive events that contributed directly to the process of otherness that mainly identified Muslims within western communities. It has become visible that the western overwhelmingly Christian societies have been penetrated by other religious minorities from the East or other western countries. These immigrants have moved their cultural codes and religious practices into western national cultures and this immigration has paved the way to the process of their otherness and marginalization. Consequently, within western societies, Muslims have been endowed with

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the notion of religious identity has to do with the sense of belonging or not belonging to a religious or cultural community. Religion is discussed from the perspective of a cultural characteristic in the individuals' identity.

² Otherisation: is defined "as the process whereby the 'foreign' is reduced to a simplistic, easily digestible, exotic, or degrading stereotype. The 'foreign, thus, becomes a degraded or exotic 'them', or safely categorised 'other'." (Holliday in Davison, 2002: 142)

ed to be identified by their place of origin, or even as by their different Islamic religion as Peek puts it:

In recent years, markers and signifiers of Muslim identities have increasingly come to signify 'the Other'; resulting in many Muslims becoming 'the victims' of discrimination, harassment, racial and religious profiling, and verbal and physical assault.

(Peek in Aitchison *et al*, 2007:1)

A fertile topic for the Muslim author, Leila Aboulela, has been the perception of Muslim people, living in the British society, as Others. In *The Translator*, she writes about the Other Muslim and the exile of Muslim characters and their struggle to preserve their religious identities and practices within the British community. This vision is depicted through the protagonist's life in Scotland where she carefully practices her prayers and othered by virtue of the representation of her religion and Islamic dress that makes her the visible Other. Thus, the othering¹ of the Muslim character in the novel is mainly based on her religious identity.

The question of dressing is central to the definition of the cultural Other in the novel. It becomes clear that the dressing style that reflects the individuals' origin should be considered as another factor in categorizing them as the Other. Being visible, their dressing is an important marker that reinforces their difference and exclusive classification in every social interaction. This visible characteristic case becomes the focus for racist stereotyping. A good example is the view of the veiled Muslim woman in a western society. The Islamic dress which is imbued with negative stereotypes affects the host society vision towards her and leads to her alienation from its members for the choice of wearing an Islamic veil is not only a matter of personal choice or taste, but is an expression of her religious identity and her membership to her religious community (Farney, 2007:3). This portrait of the Other is ascribed, in *The Translator*, to the Muslim protagonist, a veiled woman living in exile away from the members of the British community which regards her as the Other. On the basis of these assumptions, the cultural Other has been a recurrent topic in literature by many Arab Muslim authors writing in English.

The cultural Other involves different concepts that are interwoven in the identification of the protagonist and her stratification as the Other. National identity, ethnic identity, and

¹ Othering: is the process of the more powerful group creating and naming another group as less worthy typically based on some single aspect of identity. It is through othering that the 'us' creates 'them'. (Jandt, 2004: 203)

ting to her status in the novel. Wherever a delineation
s of differentiation and categorization of the Other are

in operation. Immigrants from Asia, Africa, or the Middle East can be defined as ethnic, national or religious groups different from the western dominant community using the qualifiers Asian, African, Muslim or orientals. Consequently, individuals or homogeneous groups that have their specific national and cultural boundaries are categorized as Other in a different context. Though people sometimes can not overtly appear as different according to their apparently different culture, yet their racial representation as minorities singles them out.

1.5. The Racial Other

The second type of the Other that the novel portrays is the racial Other. The depiction of the characters, in the novel, as racially different is based on the racial representation of their ethnic minorities as well as being members of the coloured people minority within the British context. The concept of racial otherness is taken, here, to include all acts of differentiation and categorization based on racial representations. In other words, it refers to both the fact that people are endowed with a specific racial category of ‘race’ as a sociological and “socio-biological” stratification based on specific racial representations. This stratification leads to the creation and marginalization of racialized groups or minorities within the British society. Cohen states that the “*specialization of race in which popular understanding of Britain’s inner cities have become fixed around “blackness” and the marginal experience of various non-white groups*” (Cohen in Aitchison *et al*, 2007: 62). Consequently, among the number of theories that define and explain the “racial other”, the one which provides a clear understanding of the novel’s racial Other is the ethnic, “non-white” Other which is defined in the British context as the result of a racist discourse and practice of differentiating and excluding those who are racially different from the majority group. In this case, the racial Other is based on the notion of the undesirability of individuals in their nature of existence and representing them as different from the dominant white community depending on the notion that they are not white. Accordingly Lewis argues that:

It is important to realise that the white/Other divide is a historically and systematically imposed structure which cannot, yet, if ever, be superseded...Whiteness is the unmarked norm against which all “others” have to be specified in order to be represented.

(2003:198)

socially relevant connotations that distinguish other members.

There have been an enormous amount of literary works on the question of racial categorization at the beginning of this century and in the previous one. Many authors such as Toni Morrison and Nadin Gordimer have treated the issue of racial otherness as a part of the dynamism of stratification spread in the West. For example, both black American literature and migrant literature have taken the lead in portraying respectively African-Americans and people of colour as Other in different parts of the world. Africans and Arabs are also depicted as Others in other different communities in migrant African and Arab writings. Thus racial otherness is generally depicted as only the shaping of the different Other who does not belong to the group without any negative stereotypes; but in other particular cases racial otherness occurs when racial differences have negative connotations that cause discrimination. Defining the use of the term “racialization” in literature Miles argues:

There is minimal agreement that the concept be used to refer to represental process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological human features, on the basis of which those people possessing those characteristics are designated as a distinct collectivity.

(1989:74)

This view means that literature has treated the notion of racial otherness as the social exclusion of the characters whose exotic physical appearance identifies them as aliens and affects their position in a different community.

1.5.1. Race as a biological conception

One of the issues that have already been linked to the concept of ‘race’ is the diversity of discourses about race and how they are contextualized and situated within specific cultural and historical contexts. Historically, race was viewed as a biological category in which individuals are automatically categorized as members of a certain race on the basis of their different physical traits, mainly their skin colour. Chaisson argues that “[W]e have learned that the issue of race is often problematic and it incorrectly reinforces the belief that race is a natural and biological category”. (2004:351). From this, race is the concept that marks these biological differences as having social significance which creates a racial order or hierarchy

are superior to others and of more value than others

Appiah also claims that “*biological distinction has inevitably led to claims of racial inferiority and superiority*”. (Appiah in Lindsay, 2008: 49). This notion is reflected in the novel through the description of the characters’ different skin colour and through depicting the Sudanese characters’ dark skins. The narrator portrays, for example, the protagonist’s husband as: “There was Ethiopian blood in his family, in the copper hint to his skin, the shape of his nose.” (24). Hence, the racial other in the novel is the physically different character in a foreign context.

Additionally, there have been various theoretical approaches which have linked racial otherness mainly with blackness. It is generally understood that these different approaches identify the colour “black” as the main feature that the dominant groups use for racial exclusion. One of these approaches is the black Marxist approach which has analysed racism against blacks in contemporary Britain. Such approaches consider that the colour “Black” has stamped experiences of exclusion and discrimination. According to these theories, the colour “black” has been endowed with certain negative characteristics and stereotypes that assign to black people a vision of strangeness, inferiority and even fear. Kamali argues that “*In the United Kingdom, ‘Black’ is widely treated as a mark of immigrant status (Moor, 2000) and a matter of ‘otherisation’.*” (2008:91). Therefore, in the British communities, the racial Other is considered as the outcome of the “black Other” who is not only physically different but is also stamped by an experience of British colonization as Mama claimed:

In Britain, it is clear that black refers to Africans (Continental and of the Diaspora), and Asian (primarily of Indian subcontinent descent). All have a shared history of oppression by British colonialism and racism.

(1984:22)

In other words, this statement conveys the meaning that racial otherness in Britain has another dimension. The “black Other” is the one whose skin colour identifies him as the Other, but he is also the one who comes from the ex-colonized British countries. This means that sharing the same “black” cultural heritage or the same past of British colonialism are the distinctive elements that define the individual as the Other in Britain. So being a part of the old British Empire is the direct reason that makes the individual black or brown. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 147). Nevertheless, the concept of race as a biological category has been replaced by very real socially and psychologically concepts.

Other theoretical approaches (Fields 1982; Gould 1996; Lewontin 1982; Omi and Winant 1994) nullified the biological concept of race and linked racial otherness with social and psychological modes. Chaisson argues that “*The idea of race as a set of objective, scientific categories of human beings has been thoroughly debunked*” (2004:348) and new approaches were introduced. These social approaches concentrate on interpersonal and inter-groups prejudices and exclusion which is based not only on the defining colour, but on the individual’s membership in a racial minority group. Explaining the social construction of race and race privilege, Williams argues that “racism” is “*about relations of dominance and subordination which are rooted in the ‘othering’ of others as a social process of exclusion in which particular personal attributes are identified as the basis for a racialised ‘othering’ to occur.*” (1998:39). Thus the relations between social groups are built on the basis of the powerful dynamic racial stereotypes and belief systems which are primarily the result of the selective perception of prejudiced people.

Subsequently, race is also a socially constructed phenomenon from psychological perspectives. Many theorists (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Converse 1964; Edsall and Edsall 1992; Hirschfeld 1996; Massey and Denton 1993; Quadagno 1994) emphasize the notion that racial otherness is a kind of psychological defensive strategies used in certain social relations to subjugate and exclude people who are racially different. They argue that “*The psychological distinction between “us” and “them” plays an important role in making sense of the social world* (Chaisson, 2004:348). Siboni also claims that: “*The construction of the Other in racist discourses follows a route which is specific to its unconscious mode of functioning.*” (1983:8). These psychological characteristics are aspects that define the individual’s or group’s racial identity that is usually represented as ‘inferior’ by a dominant group which has the power to enforce its definitions of reality on others.

Another use of the concept of race is referred to the perception of ethnic minority members as the racial Other. In this sense, race is also used to describe a specific population from a geographical perspective as having different hereditary traits that distinguish it from other populations (Vandar Zanden, 1993: 2001). In this sense, ethnic minorities or immigrant communities often play the part of the subordinated, racialised Other. Simpson has recently suggested that “*in the contemporary British context, both ‘race’ and ‘ethnic group’ have*

ther confusing an already highly contested area.” (In some racial representations and “ethnic prejudice”¹

attributed to specific ethnic racial minorities, these latter are viewed as Other as Eid argues:

Racialized minorities tend to be unwittingly confined in pre-ascribed categories that not only depart them from their own self-representation but also place them socially and symbolically apart from the majority group.

(2008:47)

Accordingly, categorizations commonly employed by social scientists such as "the West," the "Third World," and "the underclass" continue to reinforce race as the focal point of identity and identification. Here, *“The West names the non-western Other as prehistoric and formless because the latter falls outside the orbit of Western historicism, and because its aesthetic tastes and principles are repulsively different.”* (Mc Gillis, 2000:6). Therefore, though Africa has proved its heterogeneity, it is identified as the Other in a duality with the West as San Juan states: what remains after rejecting the modernist binarism of self and Other is *‘a unitary Africa Over against a monolithic West.’* (2000: 276). The same notion can be applied to the distinction between the “Third World” and the West. Referring to the Third World, in the novel, implies a distinction from the Western world and hence from whiteness and civility. The narrator uses these distinctive terms to describe the difference between Scotland which is a city from the “First World” (145) and Sudan which is a part of the “Third World” (119).

1.5.3. Racial Representations:

In fact, “racial prejudice” and stereotypes are nothing but the unreasoning vision of otherness and hatred of one race for another and the attempt of the stronger and richer peoples for granting privileges to a specific group at the expense of those whom they consider different from themselves. *“Race is a man-made concept used to devalue certain groups and provides others with privilege. Race privilege deals with the ability of one social category to receive privilege over another simply because of skin color.”* (Chaisson, 2004: 351). As a consequence, racialised minorities are usually those whose members are stigmatized by virtue of their physical attributes that highlight their difference within the majority group as Eid claims: *“As far as racialized minorities are concerned, prejudice and discrimination deny them equal consideration-and sometimes treatment-on the basis of stigmatizing category*

¹“ethnic prejudice”: is an antipathy based upon a faulty and felt or expressed flexible generalization. It may be directed toward a group as a whole or toward an individual because he is a member of this group. Its effect is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage, not merited position. (Triandafyllidou, 2001: 3)

8:47). Hence, representation of the racial Other is ar culture and literature. In her film criticism, Hooks often observes that “[our] eyes grow accustomed to images that reflect nothing of ourselves” (1992: 125) and can only produce disaffection; and in her essay 'Eating the Other,' Hooks criticizes the recent fashion of representing dark ethnic bodies as the cannibalization of the other in mass media, especially in the field of advertising (hooks, 1992: 21-39). Moreover, the representation of racial minorities is based on negative stereotypes and prejudices as it is stated by Gandy: “*The history of minorities in media suggests that the use of negative stereotypes tends to dominate the portrayal of those groups*” (2001:602). These stereotypes and prejudices affect the perception and the position of racialized groups. Camill argues that “*Negative racial stereotypes capture two variants of prejudice: simple out-group hostility and a “sense of group position” that members of one group has about another group.*” (2006:205). Thus racial representations determine the process of Othering imposed on racial minorities and demarcate their racial identities.

Racial identities are constructed by people who usually categorize themselves as the ‘racial us’ and refer to other ethnic racial minorities as ‘them’ on the basis of their different racial membership. Outlaw argues that “*within societies that have emphasized race, racial identity is a central part of each person’s self-conception as well as determinative of life chances.*” (Outlaw in Stubblefield, 2005: 10). In the novel’s Scottish setting, the characters’ struggle with their definitions and representations of their racial identities is depicted through the protagonist and her Pakistani friend who insists on the distinctive line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. From this, racial identity can be defined as “*a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group.*” (Thompson *et al*, 1997: 2). Hence, the social construction of the racial identity also includes an ethno-cultural perspective that creates differences and contributes to the identification of the racial Other.

Another category that identifies the racial Other within the majority group in the novel is the “racial representation” of coloured people minorities which is based on the skin colour differences. Canon asserts that: “*the problem of the twentieth-first century is the problem of the color line, gender line, and the class line.*” (In Benn Michaels, 2006:11). Skin colour has been the first feature that projected individuals as different and contribute to their perception as Other, or even to their stigmatization and exclusion. Both protagonists’ dark skins ascribes to them the vision as the different and aliened Other into two different settings. The female

the white Scottish society, while the male protagonist
ity in Morocco. The narrator describes his look as “He
was dark enough” (6). Moreover, the protagonist’s name “Sammar” can be read as a metaphor
for people coming from hot areas and having a dark skin colour. Dougherty (1999) claims
that we look different and our appearances can be attributed to normal biological gene
mutations (heredity) as well as environmental adaptations. Therefore, “*Africans and people of
African descent developed dark skin in response to the very warm climate on the continent.
The dark skin helps to maintain appropriate body temperatures by serving as a barrier to the
heat.*”(Chaisson, 20004: 349). This notion is also reflected in the novel in the depiction of
Africa as the Dark Continent (155) and the description of the characters dark skins. This
reflects the perception of the “coloured characters” as Other in the novel.

The category of coloured people is the visible sign of the racial Other and its causes. It
reduces racial otherness to just how white people distance themselves from those people who
are not white and marginalize them because they have a different skin colour and how this
vision affects their self-perception. Throughout history, coloured peoples have been
categorized as Others within white majority groups and the result was their marginalization,
exclusion and sometimes their being victims of discrimination. This vision can be based on
discrimination as the ultimate reaction of exclusion and on otherness as the ultimate reaction
of marginalization. It can be directed against any “coloured” collectivity as Williams argues:
“*The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line. The relation of the
darker to the lighter races.*” (2007:36). It is not the case here to trace back the history of
black enslavement and discrimination, but the focus is on probing the view of the non-white
Other that still plays a focal role in the positioning of Blacks and people of colour within
white communities and how this perception affects their relations with others. Coloured
people who are defined as the physically different Other, are often socially invisible (Madrid
1998; Riggins 1997). In this case it is the dominant group that is not visible, and the other is
the group being revealed. “*This invisibility makes the other seem to be outside of the core of
social life, which may attribute to coloured people the perception that their own experiences
are not important and dominant group members Second,*” (Madrid, 1998). These notions
confirm the characters’ portrayal as the racial Others. In addition to their cultural differences,
their racial backgrounds contribute to their status as the Other within the dominant white
collectivities. The Sudanese female protagonist is racially othered in Scotland. Her status as

her life in this western country where she is perceived

This vision of otherness imposed by the dominant communities on racial minorities leads to a reactive response from them: their perception of the dominant white group as the Other as well as their self-perception as the Other. The dominant group's interaction which is based on prejudices and stereotypes affects the dominated individual's self-perception and leads to mutual reaction from them. This means that if not due to the vision of otherness imposed on the perceived person by the subject, the perceived person may react differently. Here, otherness can be portrayed as an oppositional racial distinction or reaction from the perceived person towards the subject. That is the reason why the racial Other does not exist only in the conscious or unconscious mind of the "white person", but in the mind of those who have experienced this racial stratification. Gallagher argues that racial identity "*may also be understood as a situational variable. Not only do people differ in the nature of their racial identity as a function of their developmental histories, but the salience of racial identity as an aspect of an individual's self-concept varies as a function of the situational cues that are present in a particular context, interaction, or relationship.*"(2003:603). The African-American author, Tony Morrison, also emphasizes this vision in her writing, *Playing in the Dark*, (1992) which analyses and presents the ways in which white selfhood in literary America is constituted by objectifying black difference. She argues that:

Race was and continues to be a physical and mental space: places set aside on the nation's physical terrain and within the black psyche, a constant reminder to African Americans of their difference and otherness.

(1992:20)

However, "non-white otherness" affects not only African Americans, but it stretches to include all people whose skin colour is different. In this sense, skin colour has become a mark of the Other.

The racial Other refers to those individuals or groups who are endowed with racial representations that attribute to them this vision of the Other. It includes a social and a socio-biological conceptions of race differences that differentiate, categorize and marginalize the characters at further extent. This categorization may lead to racist practices against these

members of the dominant community. The dark skin in the novel, the Other which is subjected to prejudices and stereotyped practices and this “non-white Other” is ascribed mainly to the identification of the female protagonist in Britain. Chaisson states that “*While there are laws today against overt discrimination and racial segregation, racial minorities are still confronted daily with sour looks, name calling, cold stares, police harassment, racial profiling, doors shut in their faces and avoidance of touching...*” (2004:352). So the racial Other includes the differentness of both male and female individuals, whereas the gender Other involves only the view of woman as the gender Other.

1.6. The Gender Other

The portrayal of the gender Other in the novel is presented through the perception of the female protagonist as the Other as well as her self-perception as the Other woman within two different contexts. Her gender positioning is manifested in various scenes throughout the narrative. Through her gender roles, her gendered self-perception and her relationship with the male characters, she is presented as the Other. The novel focus on the protagonist’s domesticity and household duties, her psychological problems resulting from the loss of the male support as well as her position in reference to the man also reflect her otherness as a woman. This portrait of her gender otherness will be probe in details in the following chapters for in this chapter; the probe of the concept of gender both socially, culturally and psychologically seems necessary for the comprehension of her status as the Other.

Gender is a multilevel system of difference with cultural and psychological rather than biological theoretical conceptualizations. It refers to the way in which cultures represent and organize sexual differences in a way that leads to social relations based on “masculine” and “feminine” perspectives. In this sense, “*Gender relates to the social organization of sexual difference and biological reproduction, and involves social constructions and representations of these.*” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992:18). Since gender is a system for constituting difference and organizing inequality on the basis of that difference, gender identities contribute to the construction of selves and others. Consequently, the men and women are categorized into two different categories by virtue of their specific distinguishable

that lead to the construction of their masculine and construction is the categorization of the woman as the different gender Other.

It is true that gender differentiation is pervasive in most cultures, but this differentiation is not monolithic across cultures or history. There are marked variations among cultures and throughout historical periods with respect to the specific spheres in which they occur and the degree of their accentuation. Arenas such as the nature of occupations (childcare, household duties, sport and so on) are examples of the cultural differences and historical change that manifest the diversity of gender differentiation. In addition, gender differentiation is not monolithic within those identified as male and female. This means that though the differences that characterize men are different from those identifying women, these variations exist also within the same sex. A good example is found in the domain of language acquisition and verbal and non-verbal communication. Therefore, gender has been subjected to various theories.

Distinct theories about gender have been generally developed in gender studies to define the dimensions of the gender system. Biological gender theories perceive biological sex differences as modes of differentiation and categorization within societies. Depending on this view, sexual differences have always existed at the core of the gender category as Anthias and Yuval-Davis put it:

There is always some retention of static and biologist categories as explanations of the development of admittedly historically contingent gender relations. The form of gender is always regarded as the outcome of a binary and dichotomous sexual difference.

(1993:107).

According to these theories, sexual differences determine gender roles and attribute a social position to each sex. In this case, gender is a set of social roles based on sexual differences that put each sex in a different function such as the woman's biological function in the bearing and rearing of children. Hoogensen *et al* argues along similar lines:

¹ Gender displays: "are culturally established sets of behaviours, appearances, mannerisms, and other cues that we have learned to associate with members of a particular gender... These displays cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures.'" (Pyke, 2003:35)

*...in connection with the continuation of the human
carrying, birthing, breast feeding the newest
citizens of the world, has largely relegated her to 'caring' role, of children,
husband, and home."*

(2006:3)

This description confirms to the novel's portrait of the protagonist's function as a woman. Her social roles are constructed around caring for her family and making her son the focus of her life as her aunt urges her to do. This gender portrait will be largely examined in the following chapter.

On the other hand, the feminist psychoanalytic theories maintain that gender is not biological but is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to perceive themselves masculine and women to perceive themselves feminine. This notion is emphasized by Mead who clarifies that:

Depending upon the degree to which male and female personality differences are emphasized and made distinct, the treatment given to boys and girls from infancy will strengthen the differences between the sexes.

(1970:78)

Thus, these psycho-sexual attributes lead to a social system that creates the binary male/female, which in turn influences the woman self-perception as a gendered human being. Generally, these gender psychological differences attribute certain behavioural qualities to each sex and results in gender stereotypes.

The other definition of gender is made on the basis of a socio-cultural meaning. In this sense, gender is understood as the product of social processes that embody cultural connotation of masculinity and femininity and thus distinguish the persons' gender from their sex. Many gender scholars (Lorber 1994, Ridgeway 19997, Risman 1998) have focused on the concept of gender as a social phenomenon. They argued that:

Gender is not primarily an identity or role that is taught in childhood and enacted in family relations. Instead, gender is an institutionalized system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organizing social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference.

(Ridgeway et al, 2004:510)

nden who claims that for most people “*There is a good gender identity. Boys generally come to behave in ways their culture labels “masculine”, and girls learn to be feminine.*”(1993: 224). Therefore, like other systems of difference and inequality such as those based on race or class, gender, involves cultural beliefs and social roles that determine the social level of perception and patterns of gender behaviours and gender roles that create the individuals’ identities. So these cultural beliefs, as the cultural rules for enacting gender, are important components of the definition of gender differences.

In addition, these widely held cultural beliefs about gender have a great impact in what Ridgeway calls “social relational contexts”¹. “*Widely held gender beliefs are in effect cultural rules or instructions for enacting the social structure of difference and inequality that we understand to be gender.*” (Ridgeway *et al*, 2004:511)). These cultural beliefs and social relational contexts, as the fields of their practice, have significant roles in the gender system in which they define the distinguishing characteristics of man and women and their expected behaviours. It is only through the development of such significant cultural beliefs that a system of difference such as gender or race becomes constructed as a defining organizing principle of social relations (Ridgeway 2000). Moreover, such cultural beliefs have long been studied as widely shared *gender stereotypes* (Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann 2000) as well as “*gender beliefs*” (Ibid: 513). These cultural beliefs are an important component that maintain and change the gender system. The implicit importance of these beliefs acts as a background frame that under specifiable circumstances biases the behaviour and evaluations of self and Others in gender-constituent directions. “*The process of defining self in relation to others evokes hegemonic cultural beliefs about gender*” (Ibid: 512). In *The Translator*, these gender beliefs manifest themselves in various characters and different settings. One of the protagonist’s gender beliefs is depicted through her expectations that her relationship with Rae must lead to marriage. In expecting so, she also asserts her gender identity as a woman in need for man. Moreover, these cultural beliefs also impose the gender differentiation and endow each sex with specific gender roles. These gender roles are understood in terms of social expectations and the different self-identity experienced, and sought, by women and men (Radden, 2002: 326). One of these gender roles is motherhood and caring for children. Elson argues that “*Traditionally, a ‘normal’ woman has been expected to fulfill the mothering*

¹ “Social relational contexts comprise any situation in which individuals define themselves in relation to others in order to act.” (Ridgeway *et al*, 2004:510)

before regarded as suspect.” (2004:90). Moreover, the
e of gender representations as a household woman.

Another theory that contributes to the definition of gender is feminist criticism. Feminist thinkers argue that discourses dominated by men merely see the concept of woman as the negation of the concept of man; woman is what man is not. They also argue that “*the place of women within western philosophy has invariably been that of exclusion and marginalization. Within the binary opposition masculine/feminine, the feminine is seen as essentially inferior to the masculine.*” (Boynton *et al*, 2005:30). Consequently, feminist literary criticism that is based on feminist theories and politics aims at analyzing literary works, investigating gender inequality and the representation of gender relations and women’s position and condition within literature. Baym argues that “*literature comprises an enormous reservoir of gender-focused and gender-determined texts through which feminist concerns may be made visible.*” (Baym in Macpherson, 2000:97). Many feminist literary critics view gender as a natural relationship of power relations. Women are generally depicted in the second position after man and as subordinate to his power. On the other hand, feminist literary criticism is also concerned with the deconstruction of these power relations, passive literary images through understanding the nature of inequality, providing a critique of social relations and roles, and promoting women’s rights, interests, and issues. Therefore, this type of criticism has an important role in the re-presentation of women.

The development of feminist theory has usually used the concept of patriarchy as an analytical and explanatory mode. This assumption is based on the specificity of the social relations between men and women and the universal existence of male domination over women. More precisely, the distinctive nature of patriarchy focuses on the relationship between men and women in a situation of female subordination. Patriarchy is defined by Walby as “*A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women.*” (Walby in Brazal, 2007: 140). In this respect, the woman question has always been related to the patriarchal question as the feminist question is directed at the causes of sexual inequality between women and men and of male dominance over women. In patriarchal societies the woman is a totally dependent creature that is unable to take care of herself or take decisions in her life unless under the supervision of a man. This definition of the woman in reference to man is not dominant in oriental patriarchal societies, but in western culture as well. O’Craday argues that “*Dominant western definitions of what it means to be a woman have been biased heavily towards male ideas, desires and prejudices and as such, are*

2005:1). However, “while patriarchal ideology seeks to alienation, not all women internalize oppressive structures to the same extent.”(Moi, 2008:192).Therefore, patriarchy is the outcome of women’s inequality and the male domination over them. These two complementary conceptions open the possibility of taking into consideration the historical and social factors that influence gender divisions. Hooks (1999) states that:

For contemporary critics to condemn the imperialism of the white colonizer without critiquing patriarchy is a tactic that seeks to minimize the particular ways gender determines the specific forms oppression may take within a specific group.

(Hooks in Lazarus, 2004: 202)

In this context, some approaches have employed historical perspectives linked with materialist assumptions to demonstrate the inevitable conflict of interests between men and women. They have tried to historicize the concept of patriarchy by exploring the relations between patriarchy and the different modes of production or economic processes. They have argued that patriarchy is not only a psychic process, but also a social and economic structure. Consequently the mere fact of being a man holds symbolic capital exercised over women.

1.6.1. The Other woman

Historically, women have encountered prejudice and categorization as Other different from man. The man has always been the center to her differences and vision as Other in all male dominant societies. Mc Cann uses de Beauvoir’s definition of the way women have been othered and perceived as deviant from the masculine norm.

She (woman) is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not him with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other.

(2003: 33)

Traditionally, women have been othered due to some stereotypes and representations endowed upon them as different from men. If one examines sexist stereotypes about women, it becomes evident that women have been portrayed as emotionally unbalanced, irresponsible and dependent. These descriptions confirm the protagonist’s emotional crisis after her husband’s death. This loss of her life’s balance which depends on man makes her abandon her

relationship with the male protagonist. Therefore, being a
age of a feminine nature that makes her always in need

for a man to fulfill her personality and to complete her identity. O'Crady claims that:

Historically, women have not been defined as beings in their own right but in terms of how they stand in relation to men... [Therefore, they have been perceived] as emotional rather than rational, as physically weaker, as domestically rather than publically oriented, and so on.

(2005:1)

Moreover, women have been endowed with specific representations that limit their space of existence as equal citizens and put them in the position of the Other. In short, the woman, when perceived as an Other is usually put in a lower positioning, a subordinate to the masculine Other.

The perception of the woman in most cultures has been based on certain gender stereotypes¹ that manifest her otherness. These gender stereotypes “are valid, in the limited sense that they reflect real differences in the current behaviours of men and women.” (Lippa, 2005:113). They provide a description which is socially and culturally recognizable for defining what it means to be masculine and feminine in a particular society. They are fairly consistent across cultures and endorsed by both women and men, (Ibid: 94) and affect the woman’s perception and position within various societies, mainly the patriarchal ones. Hence, although these stereotypes vary from one society to another and in the same society over time, an important consistency is remarked in a range of different societies as Lippa argues:

Despite dramatic changes in women’s roles over the past half-century, these stereotypes about men’s and women’s personalities have remained relatively unchanged over time.

(2005:112)

So the rationalization for women’s otherness has been justified by notions of gender stereotypes that define her roles and her self-perception.

1.6.2. The woman’s self-perception

¹Gender stereotypes: are “organized consensual beliefs and opinions about the characteristics of women and men about the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity.” (Worell, 2001:561)

the position of woman as the gender Other affects her women's reaction to their gender otherness confirms the heterogeneity of women, it manifests itself consciously or unconsciously into various women's behaviours as well as conceptions held about themselves, their roles in their families and societies and their image of their position in the world. From this, it is clear that man is still shaping the image of woman in different societies and women are still accepting this image even under the veiling conception that man's superiority is broken and woman's gendered view has become just a myth. Moi stresses this notion in her claim that:

A woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or in other words, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her.

(Moi, 2001:72)

Being members in a society that puts women in the position of the Other, women willy-nilly receive this reflection of the society mirror. Their self-perception is always affected by the vision imposed on them by the society. The microscopic picture of women reveals that they live between the image which the society mirrors to them and their real feelings of being women. Starting from this vision, women tend to either accept unwillingly this image or to revolt against it starting from challenging their self-perception.

In *The Translator*, the female protagonist's self-perception as Other is depicted in two different contexts. These two pictures do not only exist in the novel, but appear in a hybridized and utterly complex way in the characters of Leila Aboulela's work. Firstly, Aboulela's novel provides a picture of the woman's self-perception as the gender Other in reference to man through the relationship between her male and female characters in Scotland. It portrays how the man's view towards the woman, as the different Other different from him and thus under his domination, affects her self-perception. A good example to illustrate with is Sammar's self-perception as lonely and forlorn woman which will be probed in the following chapter. Another portrait of her self-perception as the gender Other is depicted in the African setting through her acceptance to marry Am Ahmed who has two wives after her husband's death. Her acceptance conveys the image of the female's

¹ Self-perception: determines that our knowledge of ourselves is exactly like our knowledge of others, and hence our knowledge of ourselves is subject to all the same problems of inattention, distraction, prejudice, and self-serving misinterpretations. (O'Crady, 2005:7)

the existence of a man in her life. Moreover, women role in their families, rather than addressing their personal achievements. Illustrating this vision, the female protagonist claims that she wants to be another Mahasen (her aunt and mother-in-law) when she grows up, have babies, get fat, sit with one leg crossed over the other and complain to life-long friends about the horrific rise in prices. (26). These are just a few illustrations to back up the portraits of the woman's self perception as the gender Other in the novel. These two portraits will be explored extensively in the coming chapters.

1.7. Conclusion

No one can deny that exclusions and subordinations are linked to produce diverse outcomes with regard to the differences of individuals and their stratification within the different major divisions that construct them. This principal induced the approach with the necessity to examine the intersection between the three processes of the protagonist's status as the Other. These three dimensions of her otherness: cultural, racial and gender are portrayed in the novel in two juxtaposed parts. In Scotland, these three criteria attribute to her the vision as the foreign Other, whereas back in her Sudanese community, she is perceived as an outsider. More particularly, it is primarily so important to examine her status from the point of view of being "the foreigner" in the Scottish community and her function in encountering the members of this different culture as well as to be encountered. Thus the intention of the second chapter is to probe into closer answers how the novel's Muslim protagonist is perceived as the Other in the Scottish society and their encounter.

Chapter Two

The Intercultural Other

2.1. Introduction.

2.2. “The foreigner” as the Other

2.2.1. Foreignness and Cultural Representations

2.2.2. Racial Representations

2.2.3. Gender Representations

2.3. The “foreigner” and intercultural encounter.

2.3.1. Recognizing the Other.

2.3.2. “Translating” the Other

2.4. Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

As it has been mentioned in the General Introduction, *The Translator* was described by Sudan's ambassador in London as "dialogue of civilizations" and it was considered by literary critics (Jaèn, 2004:69) as reconciliation between cultures. The novel is structurally divided in two important juxtaposed parts. This is a literary device used by authors to show that these two parts are opposed to each other to convey the differences between two opposed settings, different characters and even times. In the Scottish context, the novel's protagonist embodies the status of the Other as being a foreigner living in a European country. However, she challenges her status as the Other to build cross-cultural relations with the other characters.

The Translator is a genuine literary work that deals with the issue of the Other from various interwoven perspectives and dimensions. The intersection of the cultural, racial and gender representations of the Other is implicitly inserted in the novel. Such literary works can be seen as a mirror that reflects the daily life of migrant individuals criticizes the negative attitudes and behaviours of some people towards foreigners as well as revealing the state of mind of those who find themselves in a different setting, caught between two different cultures. Peyre insists on the fact that "*Literature has various purposes and one of them is to bring to light what we try to conceal or ignore in ourselves.*" (1963:318). Hence the Other who is the result of cultural, racial representations and gender differences between individuals is embodied in various characters of this literary work in a way that identifies who the Other is, portray them and suggest a mode of smoothing the differences when the encounter with them takes place.

From another angle, this literary work can itself be considered as the Other to the reader who encounters it while reading it and who encounters a different culture (the Islamic culture) through it. As soon as the reader is in contact with the text, he is involved in the context of the Other and consequently he encounters them through the process of the narrative. Attridge suggests in his book *The Singularity of Literature* that:

entive work is to find oneself subject to certain
rness, to respond to its singularity, to avoid

reducing it to the familiar.

(2004:130)

However, the Other encountered in a fictional work can be an imaginative Other, the author's self-consciousness as the Other or a reflection of the image of the Other who exists in the "real world". Therefore, *The Translator* is interpreted in this dissertation on the basis of the portraits of the fictional characters, mainly the protagonist who experiences the life in two different settings (Scotland/Sudan) and who initiates various modes of communication in her encounter with other characters that perceive her as the Other.

In this respect, the novel's first part depicts the foreignness of the characters and stresses the encounter of the two protagonists who belong to two totally different backgrounds and who are able to struggle against this vision of the different Other towards each other. The interaction between the Sudanese female protagonist and the Scottish male protagonist implies the possibility of interaction between the East and the West through erasing cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes. In other words, the novel romantic relationship that ends by marriage symbolizes the East-meets-West and the dialogue between two different cultures. Since the dialogue of cultures demands the negotiation of the differences, the acceptance of the Other and the recognition of the dichotomies built on the vision of self/other, the intercultural encounter in the novel can easily reach positive results through cultural translation and recognition of the Other. Hence, the novel's main function was for each protagonist to define its own cultural identity by the projection of its authentic image, not a constructed imaginary one and the re-presentation of one's self to meet and accept the Other.

2.2. The "foreigner" as the Other

Societies throughout the world contain peoples with different ethnicities, nationalities and religions. These differences, by providing high social visibility, serve as identifying symbols of group membership and categorize the foreign members as Other. Individuals are ascribed statuses as the Other in the foreign social structure based on the representation of the group to which they belong and the stereotypes held about them. Any difference that signifies the foreigners contribute to their categorization as Other and sometimes to their exclusion from different communities for "*one sort of difference in representations seems to attract*

erness.”(Hall, 1997: 231). Consequently, the characters
s and in different cultures by virtue of their different
national identity, religious and cultural background.

In the first part of *The Translator*, the female protagonist, Sammar, is depicted as a foreigner in Scotland. Through her life in this different society and her relationship with the Scottish male protagonist, “Rae Isles”, and other Scottish characters, the author describes her perception as the African, Muslim and female Other since she is a Sudanese Muslim veiled woman. When reading the text, the reader can easily find out that the novel portrays the cultural, social and geographical differences between the two settings: Scotland and Africa and emphasizes the encounter between Western and Eastern characters in a western context as she devoted the large part of the novel to this task¹. This part gives much more importance to the protagonist’s status as the cultural Other since she is an Arab Muslim subject living in the Scottish community as well as the “racial representation” of the protagonist which was introduced in the previous chapter. The Sudanese protagonist who is a member of a minority group and who is a coloured woman is viewed as the Other by the members of the British society. In addition, Sammar is pictured as the gender Other through her relationship with the male characters and her self-perception which clarifies the notion that the vision as the Other imposed on the female protagonist affects her self-perception and self-representation as the Other.

The presence of the foreigner in the novel is revealed through the presence of the African Muslim character in the secular Scottish community as expressed in twentieth century postcolonial discourse. In this context, the protagonist is perceived as different depending on her own diverse characteristics. She is seen as having a different nature that lacks some essential features such as cultural norms, religion or dressing that the host nation has. Her status as the Other is also stressed by the stereotypes formed about her being a member of a minority and as a coloured woman. All these factors lead to the Othering of the foreign protagonist who comes from a different national and cultural background. Otto Bower’s definition of a nation concentrates on “*a common culture and on what he called “common destiny”*. *This element of common destiny explains the commitment of people into*

¹ The first part includes fifteen chapters with 132 pages. This part is devoted to the protagonist’s life in Scotland. The second part involves eight chapters with 71 pages and describes the protagonist’s life in Sudan.

usually the marginalization of foreigners who have

Yuval Davis: 26-27). The narrator states that in better times the protagonist used to reinvent the beginnings of her life by saying that she was born in Sudan. (5). This means that in other times, being an African makes her in awkward situations such as her hesitations to speak about her African country before Rae (17). Thus for the Scottish host collectivity, the immigrant protagonist is usually perceived as a foreigner different in some fundamental characteristics from its majority members. Accordingly, she is treated as the Other by virtue of her foreignness.

A vivid portrayal of her status as a foreigner as well as her perception of this society as the Other is depicted through the weather differences and her struggle with the Scottish cold. The cold, rain, fog and snow reinforce the fact that she is out of place in the greyness of Scotland, this 'other' part of the world. Her state of displacement in this setting can be referred to as outsidership¹. Being out of her native African land is reflected in the narrator's claim that "colours made her [Sammar] sad .yellow as she knew it and green as she knew it were not here [in Scotland], not bright, not vivid as they should be" (44). Moreover, the novel portrays in detail her struggling with the British weather "as every inadequately dressed African suffers in the alien British cold" (65). Her unfitness in this land and even her rejection to it are expressed by Sammar who informs angrily Rae that "she does not want to live here [in Scotland] for the rest of her life with this stupid weather and stupid snow." (128); and her wish to have a car so that she could escape the weather (12). As a result, her struggling with the weather enforces her inner state of displacement and estrangement so that "She was afraid of rain, afraid of fog and the snow which came to this country, afraid of the wind even" (3). Sammar herself expresses her differentness from the Scottish people who endure this weather as: "young people strolled along Union Street as if they did not feel the cold....Saturday night, another world" (21). In general, Sammar summarizes the differences in this country: "She had stacked the differences; the weather, the culture, modernity, the language, the silence of the muezzin , then found that the colours of mud, sky and leaves, were different too." (44). So her foreignness is mirrored through her unfitness and estrangement in this country, as well as her vision of this society as the Other .

¹ Outsidership: "is a mode of place experience through which a person has a sense of separation and alienation from place. Here people feel some sort of lived division or separation between themselves and the world such as the feeling of homesickness." (Hubbard *et al*, 2008:45)

2.2.1. Foreignness and Cultural Representations

In the novel, the cultural representations of the protagonist manifest her as the Other. She is the Arab Muslim subject who lives in the city of Aberdeen (Scotland) and works as a translator at the university of Aberdeen. She is introduced as being culturally different from the other members of the British community. In turn, Sammar seems to hold this vision of the Other towards this society to a given extent. Throughout the first part of the novel, her status as the Other is manifested in her loneliness and isolation in her “hospital room” (29) where she lives as an alienated foreigner, in the British peoples’ vision towards her as different from them, and in the various culture-shocks that she has to endure. The narrator describes her differentness that distances her from her neighbours when she addressed Lesley, her neighbour tenant, as Aunt out of politeness; the elderly woman had replied taken aback, ““I” m not your aunt, call me Lesley. “ (32). The narrator also ascertains the reality of her status as: “here was Scotland and the reality left her dulled, unsure of herself” (26). Moreover, her vision as the Other is reflected in the novel when the narrator reports that “In this country [Britain], when [Sammar] spoke to people, they seemed wary, on their guard as if any minute she would say something out of place, embarrassing” (6). This notion of cultural unfitness is also uttered by Sammar’s fear of Rae’s reaction towards her cultural differences: “How much of the truth could he take without a look of surprise crossing his eyes” (6). So Sammar’s cultural background affects her relations with the members of the Scottish community and leads to her estrangement.

The protagonist’s presentation as culturally different from the Scottish community is vividly depicted in the novel through the various culture-shocks¹ that she confronts in this European country. These culture-shocks manifest both her status as the Other within this society and her view of this society as the Other. Due to the differences between Sammar’s

¹ Culture-shock: “is the psychological reaction to a totally unfamiliar or alien environment, which often occurs with any major transnational experience...It is a generalized trauma one experiences in a new and different culture because of having to learn and cope with a vast array of new cultural cues and expectations, while discovering that the old ones probably do not fit or work.” (Bennett, 2000:272)

In one, culture-shocks are inevitable events in her life. When her husband moved to Scotland, she faced various culture-shocks as the narrator explains: “Culture-shocked they were alone together for the first time... No one in this city but them” (24). The narrator also describes her foreignness and how Sammar was surprised in Aberdeen: “Surprise was part of the city, the granite buildings, the buses that went down the narrowest of roads. There were shades of surprise: surprise-sneers, surprise-embarrassed, surprise-bemused, surprise-disapproving.” (45). Moreover, the differences between Sammar’s cultural traditions and the Scottish one are illustrated by her remark about Rae’s visit to his in-laws in Edinburgh. She states that “An old man in Edinburgh allowing his daughter’s ex-husband under his roof... Where she come from, the divorced spouse was one who ‘turned out to be a son of a dog’ or ‘she turned out to be mad’ and were treated as such.” (38). Another cultural difference is manifested in the narrator’s description that “Sammar watched reputation lose its muscle, its vigour, shrink and frizzle out in this remote corner of the world.” (57). Her perception of the members of the Scottish society as the Other is also expressed through her stress on their difference as she notes that: “Rae was not one of them, not modern like them, not impatient like them”; so that she had been tempted to ask “why are you different from everyone else” (34). In addition, Sammar’s perception of the Scottish social life as different can be illustrated by her perception of their different way of life. She explains that: “They [children] were superman , giants who could not let the elements stand in the way” (3), “even the postman still made his rounds unperturbed in the dark” (23). All these culture-shocks reveal her foreignness in this different context.

The picture of the protagonist as an Arab is another attribute of her status as the cultural Other. The novel depicts that the Arab Other as a result of East/West dichotomy leads to the reductionist categorization of Arab characters as the inferior Other. Based on popular stereotypes and misrepresentations, Arabs have been stereotyped as “*culturally backward, sexually depraved, and congenitally violent people*” (Said and Barsaman, 2003: 17). While in Morocco, young Rae who used to hold negative stereotypes about the Arabs, said to Amelia, his first wife, that the Arab waiters “had shifty eyes, pathetic giggles, why they went home everyday and beat their children” (61). He even claims that their covered women earned their living serving iced lemonade to pool-side beauties (61). This image of the Arab Other has been maintained by the orientalist discourse to confirm to the West its distinctive and irreconcilable identity and to formulate the image of the inferior and untrustworthy Other

stating that: “*The Arabs are uncivilized, uneducated,*” and that “*many of the studies stressed the undercivilized nature of the Arabs*”. (2007:49). All these misrepresentations and stereotypes of Arabs affect the perception of Arab characters and put them in the position of the Other within the Scottish setting.

The perception of the protagonist as the Other Arab leads to her exiled life in Scotland. Due to the stereotypes and misconceptions that shape the relationship between the Western communities and the Arab ones, Sammar has to endure the Scottish people’s views as the Other towards her. The narrator clarifies that “Once a man shouted at her in King Street, Saddam Hussein, Saddam Hussein.”(99). This event is shared between Aboulela and her protagonist who belongs to the same cultural background. Consequently, Sammar lives an alienated and lonely life from the majority group so that the only two people she knows in the city are Rae and her Pakistani friend Yasmin. Her alienation is also depicted by the narrator who describes her life of exile in this part of the world (67) as hibernation(56) where she hides from people and she is avoided by them: “She remembered having to hide in Aberdeen, being alone” (160). Sammar also utters this notion when she was urged by her family to come back with her son to Scotland. She states how her life there was desolate and how it would be, her and Amir alone in Aberdeen. (150). Another illustration of her loneliness is depicted by the narrator who lets her feelings out: “she wanted to leave Aberdeen, get away from where she had been ill and sleepy for so long” (113); and the reality that “no one will notice that she had gone” (132).

The portrait of the Arab foreigner as the Other in the novel is also illustrated by the male protagonist’s early life in Morocco. The narrator presents Rae as the Other in the eyes of the members of the European minority living in Morocco because he looks like an Arab. “In some shadows, according to the [European ladies], he looked exactly like an Arab.”(60). Therefore, he was more accepted by Moroccan youths rather than European minority (60). The narrator emphasizes that Rae “looked like he could easily pass for a Turk or a Persian. He was dark enough that he could walk as if disguised, none suspected he was Scottish as long as he did not speak and let his pronunciation give him away” (6). As a result, his first marriage from a half-Spanish woman in Morocco was totally refused by her family due to his Arab

he first thing that made his wife, Amelia, be attracted a loved Rae because “he spoke about strange things, because of smoking the hubble-bubble pipe. There was something Arab about this young Scottish man. Something Arab that Amelia had wanted for years.”(61). This vision of the Arab Other is also depicted through the distance between Amelia and the members of the Moroccan Arab society and her isolated life from them. She is presented as being “grown up in the splendid villa of her parents, secretly and guiltily eyeing the house-boys, fancying the gardener from fez” (61). So the vision of the Arab characters in the novel is one of “exoticism” and thus of otherness.

Representations of Sammar’s oriental Islamic culture also identify her as the Other on the basis of East/West dichotomy as well as orientalist misconceptions. Being an oriental subject living in a western community, the protagonist is viewed as the Other and treated according to the orientalist representations and stereotypes about the Orient. Since the middle ages, the orientalist discourse established the dichotomy “East/West” and attributed to it a European central perspective that glorifies the West and others the Orient. This perspective was based on various geographical, cultural, racial, and religious criteria. To give an identity to itself, through the orientalist discourse, the West has created the exotic and other Orient as a natural element for this identification as Said claimed. In his famous book, *Orientalism*, Said seeks to show that: “*European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.*” (In Ashcroft, 2006: 25). Said also argues that the West first constructs the Orient as its cultural Other and then makes this Other conform to the western image, proving the projection of this Other as an authentic reality (Said, 1993: 308). Sammar asserted that “Orientalists were bad people who distorted the image of the Arab and Islam” (21). Yasmin states that even “modern orientalists” “can study another culture and all sorts of sacred texts and be detached” (94). On the basis of this distorted image of the Orient, the protagonist has been treated as the Other.

The portrait of the oriental Other is also presented in the novel through the male protagonist’s positioning as the Other within his society. In addition to his physical features, his manners and views about the Middle East characterize him as the Other in his European community. Though he is not an oriental, the male protagonist is othered in his society due to

Rae Isles, whose name means in Arabic “opinion”, is a character who holds opinions about the Middle East and the oriental Islamic culture different from his community’s and these views make him receive harsh criticism. Sammar clarifies that Rae has lots of opinions (154) and as a result he has got enough critics: “who think that he is too liberal, those who would even accuse him of being a traitor just by telling the truth about another culture” (22). Yasmin also clarified to Sammar that he is even perceived as “A traitor to West” for “To the West, You Know, the idea that West is best” (22). So the vision of the oriental character in the novel is one of otherness and exclusion. This notion is illustrated by omitting Rae’s name as an expert from the anti-terrorist programme and taking someone else, “someone with palatable views”. (156)

Another attribute that characterizes the female protagonist as the cultural Other within the Scottish community is her religious identity. This vision is depicted on the basis of some stereotypical assumptions and misrepresentations about her Islamic religion. The perception of Islam as the Other is expressed in this claim: “*In the latest version of cultural colonialism, Islam is presented as the dark Other of European civilization.*” (Demant, 2006: 207). This clash between the West and the Islamic Middle East is explicitly uttered by Rae’s explanation that “for centuries there had been a tense relationship between the West and the Middle East. Since the seventh century when the church denounced Islam as a heresy” (109). This clash seems to continue even in this century according to Huntington. Hafez states that “*According to Huntington, one of the most important global fault lines in the twenty-first century will run between Islam and the West.*”(2000:3). Accordingly, since that time the mutual relationship of otherness has been accentuated between these two different cultural parts, classifying themselves into the binary position of self and Other. The novel provides this mutual vision of otherness through the stereotypical perception of Islam as a religion of terrorism as well as the view of the Western Other as too much liberal and capitalist by Islamic fundamentalists. The first perception is illustrated by the claim of Sammar’s Pakistani friend, Yasmin, who utters this notion about Rae’s possibility to convert to Islam. She snorted that “[his conversion to Islam] would be a professional suicide” because “no one will take him seriously after that. What would he be? Another ex-hippy gone off to join some weird cult. Worse than a weird cult, the religion of terrorists and fanatics. That’s how it would be seen” (21), while the second view is illustrated by one of the Islamic fundamentalists, interviewed by Sammar in Egypt, who claims that “Western men worship money and women. Some of them see the

...n see the world through the thighs of a woman” (156).
as Other due to pathological¹ views attributed to her
religion.

Moreover, the novel’s portrayal of the Muslim protagonist as Other is presented in contrast to the secularity of the Scottish society. A good description of this secular society is cited by Rae who informs Sammar that “in this secular society, the speculation is that God is out playing golf” (42). This different environment puts the Muslim protagonist in awkward situations while practicing her religion and conveys her vision as the Other in this Scottish setting. Praying, fasting, wearing a Muslim dress and eating Muslim (Halal) food are all religious practices that show the Muslim protagonist’s differentness and stress her struggle to preserve her religious norms. The first time Sammar came to Scotland, she was surprised by the reality of praying in hidden places, not in front of other people. The narrator clarifies that “It had seemed strange for her when she first came to live here, all that privacy that surrounded praying...She wondered how Rae would feel if he ever saw her praying. Would he feel alienated from her?”(75). Therefore, she has to be aware while practicing her prayers. The narrator explains that: “[Sammar] was aware now, after having lived in this city for many years she could understand, how surprised people would be were they to turn the corner of a building and find someone with forehead, nose and palms touching the ground.” (75). As a result, she prays secretly in places, such as in her office, where other people cannot see her: “On days when Dian was not in, Sammar prayed in the room, locking the door from inside” (75). Moreover, the narrator expresses the difficulties she faces in practicing her religion due to this vision of otherness through two scenes. The first one is Sammar’s sadness that there was nowhere to pray in the airport. “If she stood up and prayed in the corner, people would have a fit” (132). The second one is through her limited choices while buying her “halal food”. The narrator elucidates that “the grocer shop which sells halal meat was closed” (66) and thus she has to come back again for her choices are limited. These fundamental differences contribute to her portrayal as the Other within the Scottish society.

Additionally, this vision as the Other attributed to the protagonist as a Muslim is emphasized by the conversion of Rae’s uncle to Islam. His uncle David who went to Egypt

¹ Pathological views: maintain a rigid line of difference found in the stereotype since they lack the ability to distinguish the individual from the stereotyped group or class. (Logan, 1999:22)

converted to Islam was harshly rejected by his family and he informs Sammar that” when [his uncle] got there, he became interested in Sufism, converted to Islam, and left the army. You can imagine, he was considered a traitor, a defector” (17). This illustrates the rejection of Muslim Other even if they used to be members of the Scottish community. Rae also expresses that his grandmother used to lie on people by telling them that he was missing in action” (18) and his mother refused to answer her brother’s letters and she even used to send him bad words. Rae asserts “My mother never answered his letters, may be sent him nasty letters, in return, so he stopped writing.”(18). Moreover, Rae confesses that he was expelled from school because he wrote an essay entitled “Islam is better than Christianity”(17), and throughout his professional career as a specialist in Middle East politics and Islam: and his opinions after the Gulf War, he received harsh criticism due to his objective views about Islam and the Middle East. Yasmin told Sammar that “she would come to work the following morning and the department’s answering machine would be jammed with messages, angry voices...you are a disgrace to our universities.....you wog bastard, may I remind you that England is a Christian country. Since you bastards came to England this country has become the asshole of the West...” (101). These illustrations confirm the perception of the Muslim character as the Other.

Additionally, the protagonists’ vision as Other is strongly portrayed through her Islamic dress. Generally, migrant Muslim women’s veiling reflects her religious background and is considered as a visible claim of their Islamic identity. “*Among the most visible way a woman can confirm her identity with Islam is by wearing Islamic dress*” (Haddad, 2006: 9). Therefore, their image has been linked with the various stereotypes and representations of Muslim women that have held sway in the Western imagination. Niewkerk claims that: “*For the west, the Muslim woman is by definition downtrodden, and the symbol of her oppression is the hijab, the veil, which is forced to wear.*” (2006,120). So Sammar’s choice of the Islamic dress within the Scottish society can be considered as a self-conscious Islamic identity as well as a sign of the preservation of her cultural values because of the vision of the Other imposed on her. This view of the veiled Muslim character as the Other is depicted through a vivid scene in the novel when the veiled protagonist encountered one of the tenants with long hair tied up with an elastic band and this latter was sneering at her (94). The verb sneering conveys a meaning of an inferior vision towards the veiled protagonist. This vision reflects the negative attitudes toward the Islamic dress as Desai claims: “*The peculiar practices of Islam*

ned part of the western narrative of the quintessential

2005:319). This vision of the Other attributed to the protagonist by virtue of her Islamic dress is also conveyed through Sammar's head of the languages department, Jennifer, who once "talked away fresh and brisk, reassuring [Sammar] of how broad-minded and tolerant she was, not like so many people. "For example" Jennifer said "I have no problem at all with the way you dress" (100). Reassuring her that she is not like other people, Jennifer's discourse conveys the meaning that other people still hold this negative vision towards Sammar's Islamic dressing. In this case, the Islamic dress serves as a visible attribute that reveals her belongingness to Islam and ascribes to her the vision as Other.

On the other hand, since the protagonist's veiling Muslim dress serves as a visible characteristic that distinguishes her from the members of the British society, it consequently puts her in an "invisible" position from the majority of the society. This notion of invisibility is uttered by the male protagonist about the waiters' veiled wives in Morocco. The narrator explains that "their women were covered, seldom glimpsed." (61). Furthermore, When Sammar met Rae for the first time, the narrator describes her as "Her invisible mark shifted...It was hidden from Rae, like her hair and the skin on her arms, it could only be imagined" (4). So her veiling also reflects her status as the "invisible" Other, affects her life style to be hidden from others and affords her a degree of anonymity by not being completely observed by Scottish people who perceive her as the Other. The narrator explains that "when the day began to darken, she put the lights off so she could still look out of the window and not be seen" (32). This narration confirms the claim that "*The veil may provide both symbolic and practical protection, and a degree of camouflage through anonymity*" (Grace, 2004:204). Hence the protagonist's veiling dress that reflects her Islamic identity enforces her status as the Other.

As race has turned from a biological to a social construct, “racial representation” of the foreigner is portrayed in this narrative in the social categorization of the African protagonist as being a member of a “racial minority”. In this case, the categorization based on ethnic identity can also be considered as a racial one. However, “Racial representation” of the protagonist is also depicted implicitly in the novel as the racial differences that are based on the perception of the coloured people minority. In this sense, the novel seems to portray an intersection of a dual conception of the protagonist’s racial status: one is the concept of social race; the other is a biological conception of racial difference. On the one hand, to explain the use of the social concept of race, Denmark claims that: *‘Race, now is viewed as a social construction, takes on a cultural significance as a result of the social process that sustains majority/minority status’* (2008:55). On the other hand, the biological conception of race is supported by Appiah who argues that *“even more modern and implicit cultural conceptions of race rely at base on biological claims, and further, that biological distinction has inevitably led to claims of racial inferiority or superiority.”* (Appiah in Lindsay, 2008:49). From this, ‘racial representation’ of other different races or minorities has put them in the position of the Other in any different cultural and historical contexts. Thus the “racial representation” of the African protagonist holds a great power in her construction of being the Other.

Although the issue of race is not a central preoccupation of Aboulela’s narrative, various illustrations can be cited to describe the portrayal of the protagonist and other characters as the racial Other by virtue of their belonging to a “racial group”. Though not each character experiences the vision as the racial Other in the same manner or to the same degree, “racial” characters are labelled in the novel as the different Other from the Scottish majority group. They continually face institutionalized and socialized racial categorization as Other based solely on prejudices, stereotypes and representations attached to their racial tone since racial stereotypes are considered as the visible sensitive organ through which individuals come into contact with others and which are immediately affected by their look and actions. Denmark states that: *“The meaning assigned to racial categorization is determined by the dynamics of stratification and stereotyping.”*(2008:55). On this base, the perception of racial minorities is determined by these representations that usually reinforce their differences and categorize them as the Other. Chaisson argues that *“These narrow representations of (racial minorities) socialize us to what it means to belong to a particular racial group in society, who*

s our very identities are tied to these understandings.” insists on the fact that race is another difference that separates Sammar and Rae in addition to culture and religion: “They lived in worlds divided by simple facts-religion, country of origin, race-date that fills forms.”(34) Sammar, and her husband Tarig are also portrayed as the racial Other in the novel by virtue of their different “racial minority” that distinguishes them from the members of the Scottish society. When Tarig died in the hospital of Aberdeen, the doctors called “the Ethnic Minority ...worker or coordinator.”(8). This action reflects the dividing racial line within the Scottish community. Moreover, one of the protagonist’s colleagues stresses this notion when she seems to expect difficulties facing her as a member of a “racial minority” in Scotland. When Sammar narrates to her colleague, Dian, that she wants to bring her son from Sudan to Scotland, Dian directly thought of the difficulties that Sammar has surely to face as a member of a “racial minority”: “Diane had been expecting a hard-luck story about the injustice of the Home Office” (72). This view is also expressed by Sammar’s head of department who informs her about her boy friend who was Nigerian in a way that stresses their racial differences. Jennifer said, “My boyfriend is Nigerian and paused” (99) as if that statement had a deeper meaning she wanted Sammar to grasp. Racial differences are also stressed by Sammar’s friend, Yasmin who seems to stress this social construction of race by her use of “third world” in contrast to this rich Western country(11). Yasmin’s statements reflect her racial views that demarcate the difference of races for “*Paradoxically, categorizations such as "the West," the "Third World," and "the underclass" continue to reinforce race as the focal point of identity and identification*”.(Esposito et al, 2000:175). Hence, the depiction of the protagonist as the racial Other has primarily a social connotation of racial differences.

The protagonist’s portrayal as the socially racial Other is also reinforced by her being mainly an African woman from Sudan, a country which was one of the British ex-colonies. This racial vision is attributed to her due to the stereotypes and representations of African ethnic minority. Asante who attributes race to geographic characteristics states that “*the African race means the gene pool defined by the whole African continent including people in every geographical area of the land from Egypt to South Africa*” (In Lindsay, 2008:50). In this sense, the protagonist’s representations as an African attribute to her that visions of the racial Other within the Scottish society. One of these representations of Africa is mentioned by The *Translator*’s protagonist in an old map. She notices that “Africa was a massive elongated yellow, Britain a rosy insignificant” (16). According to her, this map pictures how

the world. She also informs the male protagonist that
try though it is not considered as such by people who
know the world better than her (51). This expression hints to the important influence of
representations over Africa and African characters. These representations affects her
perception as the racial Other in the eyes of the Scottish people.

Additionally, another characteristic that stigmatises the protagonist as the racial Other
in Scotland is “racial representations” attributed to her “visible minority”. Being a Sudanese
woman makes her a member of the coloured people category. This membership endows her
with the racial representations that draw boundaries between her and the Scottish people.
Prentice claims that *“all people of colour whether black, brown, or yellow, share the common
history of having been victims of prejudices and discrimination.”* (2001:70). In that sense,
racial stereotypes attributed to coloured people affect their positioning among different racial
groups in a different context. Aboulela’s portrayal of the protagonist as the different racial
Other among her Scottish colleagues seems to agree with Derrick Bell’s claim that *“colour
line” has been broken many times but has never been erased*” (Bell in Williams, 2007:37).
This colour line was born out of historical processes and representations as Esposito puts it:

*Whites-because of their cultural, institutional, and ideological foothold-
were able to fabricate social codes that sustained their dominance that has
been secured by defining nonwhites through presumably neutral categories
that designate them as undesirable "others.*

(2000:175)

Thus, in the novel, Sammar is depicted as different from her white women colleagues through
the description of their whiteness and the fairness of their hairs (11) as if the narrator wants to
stress Sammar’s different physical traits. Moreover, the narrator describes this difference in a
scene when her skin looks different from Rae’s: “She looked down at their fingers entwined
the difference between them and how smooth and cool her skin was” (114). Consequently, her
vision as the racial Other resulting from her coloured minority representations leads also to
her alienation from them for *“The subordinate status assigned to persons with given physical
traits and the projections made upon them are used to justify exclusion and inclusion within
the society”* (Denmark, 2008:55). The narrator clarifies that: “that was how Others spoke to
her, their words bouncing against her skin and ears, cascading, and she perfectly still,

nar, herself, states that “[Rae’s] world has different
left....He must know another woman...lighter. (172).

Therefore, her positioning as a coloured woman contributes to her perception as the Other.

“Racial representation” of the protagonist as the racial Other is also constructed on the basis of the look or the gaze of the Scottish people. The “normative gaze” has a pivotal role in the identification of the “racial differences” of the protagonist. This concept of the normative gaze is used by West in describing “*how a Eurocentric racial identity which is defined as a white-skinned-ethnic is an intellectual lens with which Europeans gaze at other races as social constructs (coloured-skin-ethnic), and not as persons equal to Europeans*”(2000: 78). Thus, through this “racial gaze” that objectifies the visible differences, coloured people are identified as Other. Moreover, the importance of the gaze in defining the Other is clearly explained by Hook’s critical view. For hooks, how we look, what we see, and how we are looked at is a central problematic, whether in her film, art or gender and race criticism. In her gender and race commentaries, she demonstrates that racial representations and sexist oppression is a function of how our identities are constructed in relation to being subjects and objects of gaze (hooks, 2002:101). Another argument of the importance of the “racial gaze” is stated by Wiegman. In her book *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender*, she argues that visibility is the central aspect of Western knowledge that has contributed to the articulation of race and, subsequently, to the emergence of racialized discourse (1995:42). As a result, the protagonist is gazed from the eye of Scottish people who hold racial stereotypes about her coloured people category. This picture of the “racial gaze” that defines the protagonist as the Other is reflected in the vision of the British nurse towards Sammar at the hospital where she was visiting Rae. The narrator cites the dialogue between the two females: when Sammar asked the nurse about Rae’s health, this latter answered with a surprise in her eyes “Oh, yes, he’s fine”, then she quickly answered her with an impatient smile “you will have to ask at the ward itself. They’ll tell you.”(81). Another illustration that visualizes her perception as the racial Other is her Pakistani friend Yasmin’s comment when she discovered about her intimate relationship with the Scottish Rae. Yasmin tells her “Go home and may be you’ll meet someone normal, someone Sudanese like yourself. Mixed couples just don’t look right, they irritate everyone.”(93). Moreover, through the literary technique known as the stream of consciousness, Sammar also expresses this notion about bringing her son to

ing to take him to a place that was all grey, its noises
re they might not like him much, look at him in a
surprised way.” (197).

2.2.3. Gender Representations

The central issue of the gender Other also appears in the novel in articulation with the protagonist's perception as a woman. In addition to her status as the cultural and racial Other, being a woman, the protagonist is viewed as the Other in both settings and mainly in reference to the male characters. She is perceived as the Other woman in the eyes of her aunt Mahasen, brother Waleed, Am Ahmed and more vividly the male protagonist Rae Isles. This gendered vision as the Other affects her self-representation as a woman. It was demonstrated in the first chapter that the woman has generally been perceived as the Other in reference to the man with taking into consideration the differences between cultures in defining her roles and status. She is perceived as different from the norm (man), weak and emotional. Mc Cann claims that *“women are defined and judged by men, the dominant group, in relationship to themselves, so that they become the Other who may have few or no legal rights, may be characterized as less intelligent or as immoral, and may even be regarded as sub-human.”* (2003: 45). From this, the status of the female protagonist as Other is based on the perception of the man and other women .

Her intimate relationship with the male protagonist, Rae, gives the portrayal of Sammar as the gender Other. The narrator stresses her gender differences by stating that ‘if they [Sammar and Rae] were not a man and a woman, if they were pure friends, if all that was between them was clear air, she would have been patient’ (175). This gendered vision of the protagonist as Other is mainly linked in this case to her status as an Arab immigrant woman in a western country. This vision is generally based on a traditional gender discourse of domesticity and her primary role at home. Nash argues that *“the traditional gender discourse still presents the ongoing definition of immigrant women from the perspective of domesticity. To the extent that,.. her family status and a traditional model of a married woman, dependent, passive and limited to the domestic space, stands out.”* (Nash, 2004: 58). Nash's quotation clarifies that the perception of immigrant women as Other is stereotypically evoked under the notion of family, maternity and caregivers. In the case of the novel's protagonist, her

ed even in the unconsciousness of the male protagonist
enters a room and finds her at a home, cooking (96).

The novel also focuses on the foreign woman's traditional role when the protagonist went with her friend Yasmin to visit Rae in his house. There, the first thing the protagonist was attracted to is the house that gives her the sense of domesticity so that she directly moves to the kitchen to do the dish washing(19). So the protagonist's perception as the gender Other in Scotland is stressed by her being an Arab immigrant woman in Scotland.

Consequently, apart from "race" and culture, the discourse of gender also becomes vital in the course of the protagonist's life in Scotland. If the power relations between men and women are clearly patriarchal, they soon become emphasized in the love relationship between Sammar and Rae which is more surprising as it contracts the stereotypes expectations of an intercultural relationship with an Arab Muslim woman. Rae with a patriarchal vision uses Sammar for the gratification of her exoticism and the self-confirmation of his objective views about the Orient, while Sammar clearly hopes for his conversion to marry her. Thus Rae draws Sammar's attention, invites her for a meeting in the winter garden, and initiates their first contacts. Sammar confesses that her attraction to him was due to his being the initiator in attracting her attention i.e. due to the male gaze towards her: "It was because the way you looked at me" (127). Of course, this has to do with their different economic and social positions, but traditional gender roles are clearly portrayed in this relationship. Even Sammar's reactions confirm her gender role by trying to express her feelings indirectly as to cook for him a soup and to visit him at the hospital. This confirms the patriarchal hierarchy that result of traditional power-structures. Rae, who is aware of his privileged status as well as her homesickness as a woman, appears as patronizing towards her. Therefore, he gives himself the right as a man to take the position of judging her and her status and taking decisions instead of her. Without caring for her personal needs, he suggests to her to be a translator in an anti-terrorist programme in Egypt. He tells her that "I thought you were homesick" (126) and that was the reason why he suggested to her to be a translator in that programme to go from there to Sudan. This patronizing relationship pictures the protagonist's position as the gender Other.

Additionally, through the novel Rae as a man seems to hold this patriarchal vision towards the woman. In his first marriage in Morocco, it was Rae who followed his interest in Oriental exoticism and as a man doing the honourable thing, he drew Amelia into an

gnant. The narrator confirms that: “He was in love, British, exotic. He had come all the way from Edinburgh especially for this” (61). This marriage mirrors his vision of otherness toward Amelia as a woman. Again, in his second marriage, he could not support the successful career of his wife and refused to move with her to Switzerland and thus a divorce ends patriarchal their marriage. Again, this patriarchal relation with the woman manifests itself at the end of the novel’s first chapter which is simultaneously the initial end of Sammar and Rae romantic relationship. The end of this relation is also determined by the male protagonist who not only initially refused to convert but shouted in a patriarchal voice at her at her “go away, get out from here” (129). This behaviour manifests a relationship of domination that affects the protagonist’s life as a woman in reference to man who determines not only her staying in Scotland but her departure from it.

This vision of the gender Other also faces Sammar when she is back home. The first time she returned to Sudan after the death of her husband, a friend of the family, Am Ahmed, who is much older than her and married to two wives, proposed to marry her. Her aunt describes him as “you want to get married again...and to whom? A semi-illiterate with two wives and children your age” (23). This proposal reflects a vision of otherness towards Sammar the woman. It is the vision of the weak widow woman who needs urgently the support of a man. Additionally, when Sammar is back home after her separation with Rae, she is othered as woman in her patriarchal family. Her brother, Waleed, told her from a patriarchal view that he is the only one left from their family and he can not receive her and Amir in his home (152). This confession is a confirmation of the vision of the Muslim patriarchal societies that consider the widow woman as a broken and helpless creature who must be under the care of her father or brother. Again her brother cautions her that staying with her in-laws as a widow woman means that she does not want to get married again (152), and this is another vision as the gender Other ascribed to her within her community though she has nowhere to go. Her status as the gender Other is also portrayed through the behaviours of her aunt as a woman brought up in a patriarchal society that, in its turn, puts the woman in the position of the silent Other and suppresses her acts and choices as Meyers states:

great woman as not a complete member and
patriarchal societies consider women inferior
beings and they severely constraint women's choosing and acting.

(2002: 3)

This view is reflected in her aunt's refusal for Sammar to marry again as well as in her decision for Sammar to go back to Scotland and to take her son with her without taking into consideration the loneliness that she suffers alone there. She told her in a decisive voice: "I'll never give permission for something like this [her marriage]" (23); and added: "You should go back to England, work there and send us things" (169). Moreover, Sammar's brother seems to agree with her aunt in deciding for her through arguing against her resignation (149). Hence both Sammar's brother and aunt participate into putting her in the position of the gender Other by deciding instead of her and this can be confirmed by Chin's notion that "*In many cultures ... Women's voices are frequently silenced, and their thoughts and opinions are not valued*" (2004:1). So this silent Other can be considered as the status of Sammar not only in Sudan, but in Scotland as well. In this setting, the narrator describes her as "she had to be silent. Use her teeth and lips to keep silent." (45)

The protagonist's position as the gender Other is also portrayed in the novel through her dependence on the presence of the man in her life. Without a man, Sammar feels her life empty and without the company of a man she is lonely. This need for the Other man attributes to her the feature of the subordinate gender Other. Generally this status of subordination is emphasized by Sammar's acceptance to marry Am Ahmad to fulfill her need for the company of a man after the death of her husband and reflects the woman's need for the protection of the man. Dwa claims that "*A woman has an identity if she is attractive enough to obtain a man, and thus, a home; for this allows her to set about her life's task of "joyful altruism and nurturance"*" (2006:53). The narrator also stresses this notion when Nahla' compliments on Sammar's looks hardened her. What was the use? (138). This conveys that her sense and view of herself have no importance if they were not appreciated by a man. Moreover, Sammar's desperate need for being with a man is inserted deeply inside her. The narrator presents Sammar from inside as: "Inside Sammar there was froth like that, froth that could rise if she started to speak. Then he [Rae] would see it and maybe go away, when all she wanted was for him to remove it so that she could be clear. It would be easy for him to make her clear, she thought, as easy as untying a ribbon." (7). This illustrates her inability to change her inner

in her life. The importance of the man's presence in feminine behaviour. After the death of her husband, Sammar neglected totally herself as a woman. She lives in a Spartan; she has not taken care of herself, nor has she bought any new clothing, since becoming a widow (37). The narrator states that: "Since Tarig died she had not bought anything new. She had not noticed time moving past..." (67). Yet as soon as she meets Rae and her feelings towards him started to blossom, she started to care for herself again and her life slowly returns. (67). Sammar's behaviour confirms the notion that *"for a woman, as soon as she can believe she is using herself with someone else and for someone else, her own self moves into action and seems satisfying and worthwhile."* (Radden, 2002:330). The novel also emphasizes the protagonist's gender portrait through her feelings that she is renewing herself with someone else (Rae Isles) and for someone else that makes her own self move into action: "She ran up the stairs that she had often taken a step at a time, dragging her grief. Now the staircase had a different aura, a different light" (41). So seeking affiliation with a man reveals her status as the gender Other in the novel.

On the other hand, her gender status is also manifested in the loss of the focus of her life as soon as her relationship with a man breaks. For the protagonist the disruption of an affiliation with a man means not just a loss of a relationship but something closer to a total loss of self. When her husband died in a car crash at a young age, she was not only suffering from the feeling that her purpose in life was smashed, but she felt devastated. The narrator describes her state of mind after her husband's death as: " [she] had come here and her focus became the hospital room, watching from the window people doing what she couldn't do. Four year's convalescing" (28). The only motivation that she believes to make her keep on going is to get married again. She told her aunt "I want to get married again, I need focus in my life" (28). This expresses her feeling like a half person, lacking total satisfaction and wanting another person to complete it though she is still able to get some satisfaction from her own half. This means that for her, being deprived of the company of a man is like being no person that matters. This feeling is manifested in Sammar resignation that reinforces her status as the gender Other because it translates that the loss of the man means for her the loss of the focus of her life and thus her life and work in Scotland have no meaning. She herself utters this notion: "living there wasn't a great success" (149) for the only reason of losing Rae as if she measures her life success by his presence. She even considers coming back to

painful experience that she is unable to take. She once
rocco and how he could come back and visit a place
that causes him such a pain” (64). Moreover, her status as the gender Other is manifested
through her fear as a woman to lose the attention of a man. The narrator explains that
“[Sammar] was afraid that he [Rae] would be angry with her, impatient, bored” (57) because
she cannot accept to go out with him.

Sammar’s status as the gender Other in the eyes of the other characters affects her self-
perception as the Other woman. Generally, the vision of the society toward woman as
different from man leads to her self-perception as being the Other. It can be said that a woman
finds herself either consciously or unconsciously reacting according to the image given to her
by her society. This notion is well explained by Chin who argues that: *“When women
encounter prejudice and discrimination, they may collude with the system and believe they
deserve it. Hence, women feel devalued by external sources and devalue themselves”* (2004:1-
2) Thus the female protagonist seems to hold this self-image that is mirrored from the man.
She asserts that “to him [Rae] I must have always looked helpless and forlorn” (127). She also
asserts her self-representation as a woman by thinking that “it is clear now, it is so clear, he
does not love me enough, I am not beautiful enough. I am not feminine enough coming here
to ask him to marry me when I should have waited to be asked” (28). Moreover, her self-
perception as the different gender Other is also reflected in her unconsciousness in some of
her dreams that fill the novel. Her unconsciousness gives the image given to her from the
society and from her position in reference to the man. In one of her dreams, Sammar saw
herself as a child among adults and Rae was one of them. As soon Rae puts her hand on her
shoulder, she became perfect and smooth (184). In another dream, Sammar was a small
woman in a room full with “people bigger than her, older than her...Rae came towards her
and then brushed past her, distracted, unaware of her because she was too young and too short
for him” (166). These dreams demonstrate the protagonist’s self-image as weak and holding a
low rank in reference to the man. Her self-image as the Other woman is also portrayed in her
fantasies. In one of them she thinks of his needs without mentioning her owns as a woman.
She thinks that: “She should make him happy; she could do so much for him” (118). The
narrator also describes in details her fantasy of marrying Rae and living with him as a happy
family. “She wanted to cook for him different things, and then stand in the kitchen and think,

ould come from school and live with them” (118). So
position as the gender Other and acts according to it.

On the other hand, Sammar’s self-image as the Other woman is also manifested in reference to other western women. Her gender identity that is co-defined by the Oriental Islamic culture and the experience of the contact with the Western Scottish culture accentuates her differences and her self-perception as the Other. In comparison to western women who privilege liberation and freedom, the female Sammar perceives herself as holding a limited space of freedom as a woman coming from a Muslim culture. From where she comes, “woman reputation is fragile as a match stick” (57) and “woman’s virginity is prized” (19). In addition to this view, belonging to an oriental culture is another criterion for her gendered self-image. When Dian informed Sammar about her too many late nights and parties with friends (71), Sammar’s self-consciousness of her differences move to the surface. “Eight years (Dian) is her junior and so independent in comparison to how she had been at that age.” (71) Moreover, despite being in a Western culture, Sammar’s behaviours are determined by her patriarchal culture. She states that “the following morning...will go to school...bruised eyes.” Consequently, her differentness is manifested in her fear of the gossip that may spread about her relation with Rae, “Gossip, tastier than average because they were unlikely couple” (116). This fear of smashing her reputation reveals her gender differences from the other women.

The overall picture of the novel shows a foreigner in the British society regarded as the Other. The three representations of the cultural, racial, and gender Other are attributed to the characters whose different culture, religion, “racial minority” and gender are the characteristics that make them appear different from the majority group. However the role of any given Other can change during various phases of the individual’s interaction and the particular status of the Other can be redeemed by the construction of intercultural relations. This is what the second part of this chapter will reconsider.

Social life is a continuing process of encounters. Sartre claims that “To exist is simply to be there, those who exist let themselves be encountered” (Singer, 2009: 286). However, these encounters can initiate cross-cultural relations within an intercultural context only by crossing the cultural and racial boundaries and tolerating the differences on the basis of which others are stigmatized. The novel’s characters are also put into a social net that leads to their meeting and consequently to the encounter of the Other and to the necessity of dealing with them. In Scotland the encounter with the Other is influenced by various factors that determine the dimensions of this meeting and its results. As the characters interact with each other, they generally alter their self-expression and self-representation so that to define themselves for others by generating cues that will lead others to accept them. So to accept the Other, the separating barriers have to be negotiated and struggled against. Stereotypes, misrepresentations and misconceptions, all have also to be questioned to alter that otherness relationship as Attridge claims:

I cherish the Other, not in spite of but because of its otherness, since its otherness is precisely what makes it valuable to me, and without any guarantees, I undertake to realize and sustain this otherness as fully and enduringly as possible-which means being prepared to start all over again with each fresh encounter

(2004: 124)

Attridge’s quotation means that the status of the Other is not a clear-cut boundary that separates them from interacting with other people, but their otherness is able to be dealt with in each encounter as a natural phenomenon.

Consequently, the intercultural encounter with the Other and their acceptance necessitates the ability to deal comprehensively with their differences and to accept them by way of bridging the gap or smoothing this relationship of otherness. In this sense intercultural encounters and contacts are discussed and illustrated from various perspectives based on the definition of the terms interculturalization or transculturalization¹. Transcultural encounters signify

¹Transculturalization: “The process whereby members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from material transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”(Pratt, 1991: 34)

ultural backgrounds come to meet and interact with each other. It is in these encounters that these encounters give rise to a corrected image of the Other that replaces the reconstructed and distorted one. Thus the novel plot that is mainly based on the encounter of Western and Eastern characters seems to reflect a worldview that Westerners and Easterners, more than ever before, are trying through their writings to explain themselves so that to understand each other. Consequently, trying to re-present themselves, Arab immigrant writers move between two worlds, infusing their Anglophone novels with the essence of their native languages, values and cultures. Thus Aboulela's novel serves as a translator of the Other and a mediator between Others. It shows that the existence of the Other imposes the necessity of dealing with them through various intercultural skills that help bridging the gap between the Other and those who attribute to them this vision of otherness.

As the title of this part implies, the protagonist's encounter as being the Other in a foreign country, her efforts in adapting herself to this different setting and her role in challenging stereotypes and creating a communicative bridge between two different cultures and worlds will be probed. Though the Other serves a purpose, which is to assure those who are different from them that they are nothing like them, this difference does not deny the possibility of encounter and convergence. Reality and experiences tend to confirm that nobody is pure Other and the Other is a lot less Other than most of people like to think. This reality is also emphasized by the novel's protagonist and her function as a mediator between two cultures.

2.3.1. Recognizing the Other

The sense of the Other experienced by the characters in *The Translator* is very apparent and culturally nuanced. Both protagonists' names evoke the internal sense of Otherness. "Sammar" is pronounced as "summer", an English word that reflects the African hot weather in contrast to Europe's cold weather that affects Sammar's Scottish life and that can be seen as a metaphor for her interior state. The Scottish scholar's name "Rae Isles" connotes both his perception as a different subject (Other) by Sammar and even by his native community since the word 'Rae' means opinion in Arabic and it is him who holds different opinions from the rest of his community about the Orient. Their relationship seems at first sight based on

that exist between them. From the beginning Sammar members of his community. She is also aware of his loneliness and need as well as his strong personality, sensitive nature and his physical collapses (he is an asthmatic). Sammar also suffers from these feelings of loneliness and need after the terrible period of emotional collapse following the death of her husband and the subsequent break with family and homeland. Rae also seems to have this feeling of empathy towards her. He told her that “I have never had so much empathy for anyone in my life.” Yet this empathy can not narrow the distances between them if not objective knowledge about the Other tests the negative stereotypes and representation and anticipate communication with them. Both protagonists have enough knowledge about their worlds (Scotland and Africa). Alred claims that it is not enough that interaction with the Other be handled with mere empathy or dealt with in a contrastive attitude; it should be constructed in the complex process of mediation and negotiation that place the individual between identities and cultures. In the view of Alred:

The locus of interaction is not in the centripetal reinforcement of the identity of one group and its members by contrast with others, but rather in the centrifugal action of each which creates a new centre of interaction on the borders and frontiers which join rather than divide them...Frontiers become less barriers and prohibitions and more gateways and invitations.

(Alred in Stevens *et al*, 2004:34)

So these two protagonists, whose eponymous identification is deeply meaningful, convey the meeting of the East and the West, of two cultures and two Others. Both Sammar who speaks the Other’s language and is accustomed to the rules of his world and Rae who possesses an objective knowledge about the Other and experiences the life in their world are the “bridge-building” characters in the novel. The narrator states that Rae “knew the letters of the Arabic alphabet, he had lived in her part of the world” (6). Yet the author seems to emphasize Sammar’s role in challenging her status as the Other by portraying the nuances of her sensibility to the cultural differences represented in the text and her ability to accept them. Here it can be said that Aboulela stresses the contribution of African civilization to the universal harmony as Senghor claimed it through the world wide known cultural movement of “Negritude” enhancing the values of African cultures in the “Civilization of the universal”

tremendous bloodshed and contribute to the world

It is through these virtues of negritude that decolonization has been accomplished without too much bloodshed or hatred and that a positive form of cooperation based on “dialogue and reciprocity” has been established between former colonizers and colonized.

(In Desai *et al*, 2005: 179-180)

So Aboulela engages with the discourse of the African female Other to open up new conversations and spaces for female agency and cross-cultural contacts. The analogies and differences between Sammar and Rae are summarized in this table:

Sammar/Rae	
Analogies	Differences
-Both Sammar and Rae endure a lonely life after the separation with or loss of their partners.	-Sammar is a female Sudanese devoted Muslim woman while Rae is a male Scottish Christian man.
-Both of them live separated from their children who are with their in-laws and with whom a relationship of otherness is set up.	-Unlike Sammar who suffers from psycho-emotional unbalances, Rae endures health asthmatic collapses that affect his life.
-Sammar and Rae share the same cross-cultural experience. They have lived in each other different parts of the world (Europe and Africa) and have certain knowledge about them (language and culture).	-Sammar is the re-presenter of the Islamic culture that she defends from personal interests, whereas Rae argues for this culture and religion from objective cultural perspectives.
-Both of them is able to question the representations, challenge the stereotypes about the Other and construct a dialogic bridge.	-Rae is able to tackle the misconceptions with patience and wisdom so that he respected Sammar’s cultural background such as her refusal of the western option of “living together”, while Sammar was unable to respect Rae’s refusal of the technical
-They also struggle against the vision of the	

<p>groups.</p> <p>-Like Sammar, Rae has an unwavering intellectual devotion to the Muslim world.</p>	<p>their ninant</p> <p>conversion to Islam.</p>
<p>-Like Sammar, Rae has an unwavering intellectual devotion to the Muslim world.</p>	<p>-Unlike Rae’s ‘masculinity’ that could not sustain a permanent relation with a woman, Sammar’s femininity served her in approaching him and changing his life.</p>

Table .2.1: Analogies and differences between Sammar and Rae.

The first meeting of the two protagonists at the beginning of the novel implies the transnational convergence of the two Others (Scotland and Africa). Though this meeting holds unconscious feelings of fear, it takes place in the symbolic setting of “Winter Gardens” which is a disguised place of the African continent. The narrator describes the normal fear of encountering the Other in Sammar’s dream “she dreamt that it rained and she could not go out to meet him as planned” (3). This obstacle is not realized in reality and the meeting between them takes place in a room of the extended greenhouse garden where they were surrounded by sand (5). In fact, this meeting takes place in Europe, but metaphorically it takes place within a glass-enclosed space evoking the climate and vegetation of Sammar’s homeland (Africa) as a contradiction to the cold weather of Scotland outside the Garden. The narrator describes the setting as: “They were sitting on a bench in a room full of cacti-the cacti were like rows of aliens in shades of green....They were surrounded by sand for the room was meant to give the impression of a desert.”(5). Hence the Garden describes a convergence between two cultures and introduces what Mary Pratt would call a “contact zone”¹. This “zone” is not a neutral area, but the location of a transcultural exchange of perception between one culture and another. So this place suggests that their meeting takes place in a hybridized setting of Scotland and Africa and thus hints to the possible meeting between these different parts.

This setting resembles the meeting of the two protagonists in Aboulela’s story “The Museum” with a basic difference concerning the female protagonist’s attitudes. Both Sammar and Shadia feel awkward with the male protagonists’ status as Others. Yet Sammar is the representative of her country, culture and religion and the mediator between the East and the West. She has the strength of confronting Rae’s Othering vision, whereas Shadia is a negative character, unable to confront the representation of her African continent in the Museum where

¹ Contact zone: social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other. They can also be the interactions between any culturally, linguistically, nationally, or educationally separated groups.(Pratt,1991:33)

thing belonged to her life at home, what she missed. About Africa : cold and old” (2001a: 115). Despite this representation, she is not strong enough to engage in a dialogue with the Other and challenge the museum’s construction of African identity. When the male protagonist, Bryan, invites her to speak, offering “Museums change, I can change...” (2001: 119), Shadia does not respond. Thus Aboulela reverses the situation in *The Translator* by introducing the protagonist as the initiator to change her position as the Other and engage in a dialogue with the Other.

The protagonists’ personal characteristics have a crucial role in narrowing the distances between her as a foreigner and the members of the Scottish community. From the beginning, Sammar is presented as more comfortable at the intersection of cultures than her Pakistani friend, Yasmin, who works with her as a secretary at the same university. Though sharing the same Eastern Muslim background, Sammar is able to overcome the stereotypes and prejudices that hinder her contact with the members of this western community and thus performs the role of a cultural bridge-builder between the two sides of the binary; in contrast to Yasmin who seems to hold prejudices about the other members of this society as well as occidental views about the West. The first time, Sammar and Yasmin visit Rae at home, Sammar notices that he is different, “He’s sort of familiar, like people from back home” (21); whereas Yasmin describes him as an orientalist. Sammar did not like the word orientalist and asserts that “May be modern orientalist were different” (21). In this sense, Sammar seems able to accept the differences that exist between them and not enforce them. Moreover, Yasmin seems to emphasize the differences between the West and the East and attributes negative attitudes to the western culture. She is convinced of the superiority of the Eastern Muslim over the Westerner and nothing can persuade her otherwise. The narrator explains that Yasmin believes that: “we are not like them”, or “we have close family ties, not like them.”(11). Even her words are so harsh to express her feelings toward the weather of this land; ‘Loath’ is a word that Yasmin often uses to describe the British weather. She says “I loath this shitty British weather” (15) and informs Sammar that she is lucky because she is going to leave this country (121). As opposed to Yasmin’s assumptions about the West, Sammar seems able to accept and respect these differences without humiliating her identity or the Scottish culture. This notion is mirrored in her conciliation to engage into a romantic relationship with a Scottish man. This relationship was completely refused by Yasmin stood against Sammar and urges her to come back to Sudan and marry a man from there” (93)

with the Other. Again Sammar confirms her good (93). So the differences between Sammar and Yasmin’s visions towards the other members of the Scottish community stresses the importance of challenging the negative attitudes and assumptions about the Other in order to engage into dialectical relations with them. The general similarities and differences between these two characters are cited in this table:

Sammar/Yasmin	
Analogies	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Both Sammar and Yasmin share an Islamic cultural background. -They are both immigrant women in Scotland where they work at the University of Aberdeen. -Both of them follow their husbands to live in Scotland for academic or economic purposes. -Like Yasmin, Sammar is a transnational character. -Both Sammar and Yasmin live in exile in the Foreign western country and are perceived as the exotic Eastern Other. <p>Both Yasmin and Sammar’s jobs put them into a direct contact with the academic “orientalist discourse”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sammar is an African Sudanese woman/ Yasmin is an Asian Pakistani woman. -Sammar has no family or support in Scotland and this situation affects her life there, whereas Yasmin has her husband and his family -Sammar holds the belief that the affiliation with the man is necessary for her life, while Yasmin is self-liberated from this belief in the attachment to the man. -Unlike Sammar who is able to accept the Other and narrow the distances, Yasmin stresses the differences of the Other and their rejection. -Sammar’s openness to accept Rae’s love despite his secular western identity which she regards as changeable is contrasted by Yasmin’s refusal to relinquish the differences and the unchangeability of his religious identity.

	<p>Sammar’s departure from Aberdeen to Sudan is an exile made up of the solitude and uncertainties of an uncompleted love story whereas Yasmin’s departure to Qatar (An Arab Muslim country) is an ‘escape’ from the Scottish weather and culture.</p>
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Table 2.2. Analogies and differences between Sammar and Yasmin.

To meet the Other half way, Rae’s humane nature and his vision of kindness towards Sammar are other elements in bridging the gap with her. His austere factual manner, his integrity and particularly his wide knowledge as a non-Muslim of the Middle-East and the Oriental culture and his objective opinions about them, which he attempts to explain on British television, gathering hate mails and opposition in process (22,100), can be described as the medicines that release the pain of the tumour of otherness towards the Oriental Other. Rae, the expert, seems not to follow the orientalist stereotypes and misconceptions in dealing with both the oriental culture and people. Therefore, despite the criticism and attack that he faces in his society (100, 22), he seems to have specific views different from his society about the Other. He tells Sammar, “I believed the best I could do, what I owed a place and people who had deep meaning for me, was to be objective, detached. In the middle of all prejudice and hypocrisy, I wanted to be one of the few who was saying what was reasonable and right” (126). In addition to his professional views, his personal attitudes contribute to his acceptance of Sammar as well as being accepted by her. For example, far from his professional career that makes him approach objectively the Other, his personal characteristics such as [not drinking wine] “had been another thing which made him less threatening. Another thing which made him not so different from her” (34). Moreover, his interest and evident caring for her are more evident as do her feelings for him. Sammar describes him that “he has different manners. The same manners which made her able to talk to him.”(6) and she asserts the reality of his kindness by expressing that “he had been kind to her ” (175). She also explains that the first time she visited him with Yasmin she noticed a look of kindness in his eyes (17). On the other hand, Rae’s unprejudiced gaze encourages Sammar to meet him and talk with him about her country and culture for the first time with a western person. The narrator explains that “what was real was that she had been given permission to think and talk, and he would not be surprised by anything she said. As if he had given her promise, never to be taken aback” (45). Moreover his objective knowledge of the Eastern Other enables him to accept the

with her. Sammar admits that she has learnt from him country (108). So Rae's profession and humane nature allow him to recognize the differences existing between him and Sammar and lead to her acceptance. Thus both protagonists' unprejudiced gaze towards each other allows them to create a cross-cultural relationship taking into consideration their differences. Hence the characters in this part of the novel are trying to reconcile their origins with their present situation and desires for the future. This unprejudiced gaze towards each other is another element that narrows the distances between them which means that the first contact between the Other is totally dependent on the unprejudiced gaze.

The importance of the unprejudiced gaze in accepting the Other is also highlighted by the author's choice to start her second part of the text by an extract from her famous compatriot Tayeb Salih's novel to whom her own novel in some ways is a clear response. Salih's challenging and complex text, *Season of Migration to the North* first published in Arabic in 1966, tells the story of the Sudanese male protagonist's mission of postcolonial revenge. The Sudanese student, Mustapha Sa'eed, travels to London where he engages in the sexual conquest of several British women, leading them to commit suicide. Edward Said commented on the novel as narrating a reaction of revenge against western imperialism. (Said, 2001: 10-111). So if Tayeb Salih's novel as described by some scholars is writing back to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Aboulela's novel is also writing back to Salih's protagonist's attitudes which are based on revenge towards the Western Other. Instead, Aboulela insists on the importance of the unprejudiced gaze that may pave the way to interact with them. This notion confirms the role of morality in treating the Other. Yuval-Davis claims that: "*Morality emerges once the individual becomes conscious that an "Other" exists and a choice arises concerning the way in which that "Other" should be treated*" (1997:47). This claim clarifies that the Other is treated according to a particular culture and society that determines their treatment, but individual choices can arise and make a change in the way of dealing with them, hoping for a total social change as the novel attempts to contribute to it.

The intimate relationship in Aboulela's novel is an imaginative attempt to erase the current mutual hatred in the world at a moment when its presence in the "real world" causes true problems. This imagined progressive transnational community which is set up by

ts both the obsessive gender roles and the nationalism who helps Rae in his collapses and takes him out of his loneliness. In *The Translator*, lovers function to model the ease of national coalition while all conflicts must stem from external sources. For example, from the moment Rae converts and arrives to Sudan, he totally rejects the orientalist discourses and his conversion to Islam is considered as a cross boundary step. Though the boundary of ethnic groups is determined by only being born or married into the group, converting or assimilating the ethnic resources such as language, religion or culture, can shake laws of membership. Consequently, the boundary can become a space for struggle and negotiation. Another illustration of this cross boundary is manifested in the conversion of Muslims to Christianity where they find salvation and feel safe within their new social environment. Spellman argues that “*In some cases converts have introduced Christianity to their brothers, sisters, cousins and friends, who have also converted to Christianity.*” (2004: 184).

2.3.2. “Translating” the Other

Another element of the cultural convergence between the characters in the novel is the protagonists’ jobs that reflect the meaning of translatability. Translatability “*may refer to the translation of literary, cultural, referential or pragmatic texts, or the translation of entire life, worlds and cultures.*” (Baker, 2001: 273). In this sense, it is a key concept for understanding the interaction between Others and dialogues within cultures. Translatability in this context implies translation of otherness without subsuming it under preconceived notions. Hence, Rae Isles’ job is “a Middle East historian and a lecturer in Third World politics” (5). This job enables him to possess knowledge about the Other and to say the truth about them. His book “The illusion of an Islamic threat” (5) receives positive reviews. On the back of the book “Sammar read that it brings a new understanding to the turbulent situation in the Middle East... Isles sets out to prove that the threat of an Islamic take-over of the Middle-East is exaggerated ... his arguments are bold, his insights provocative...” (13). Sammar also remarks several times that Rae teaches her about Islam things that she does not know. This means that Rae has created for himself a “third space” that enables him to accept the Other as Kramersch puts it:

Experiencing otherness and its symbolic capital thus leads to a necessity of mediating languages and cultures through a process in which, without

*I meet the other, establishing a common
is made possible.*

(Kramersch, 1993:9)

So according to her, Rae's knowledge about the Other Orient and culture allows him to accept the protagonist and engage into cultural contact with her. The narrator explains that Rae knows this part (Africa) of the world (6). The concept of the "third space" is also introduced by one of the leading postcolonial scholars, Bhabha, who defines it as the hybridity that comes from being "in-betweenness". Those living in a third space are constantly negotiating across the differences in signification, translating their meanings into new hybrid forms (1990:211). On the Other hand, Sammar's job as a translator of Arabic texts into English is another cultural strategy of translatability of the Other. Rae needs a translator to help him make sense of the oriental culture and thus to help him read the Other. Sammar describes her job as a translator as "moulding Arabic into English, trying to be transparent like a pane of glass not obscuring the meaning of any word" (164). But though she strives for transparency, her presence is always mediating Rae's access to the texts he studies for she chooses the words he works with. This confirms Kramersch's notion that "*The capacity of the creation of an intersection in oneself of the discursive contexts of two distinct languages and cultures creates a third space of cultural definition, "a third culture in its right."*(1993:9). In the novel, Sammar's ability to use the other's language does not mean to assimilate the cultural norms of this society, but on the contrary to adjust to the new culture and at the same time be the re-representer of her community and the translator of her culture. Thus since translation involves interpretation, Sammar's function as intermediary between Arabic (Africa) and English (Scotland) begins in her interpretation of the texts she translates to Rae. Smyth defines her function as: "*Her practice of translation acknowledges that meanings are not static and fixed, but are contested and contingent upon specific social cultural and historical contexts.*" (Smyth, 2007: 182). So the involvement of the protagonists into functions that challenge the representation of the Other and translate them to each other leads to the narrowing of distances between them.

Moreover, the novel itself can be read as a work of translation. Not because it is translated from Arabic, the author's mother tongue, to English; but because it interprets and re-presents the Other as an African character in a Western setting from the point of view of an

ext, Aboulela translates to both the western and Arab and Muslim foreigner, and provides them with a loving and clear Islamic faith, especially at a time when representations of Arabs and Islam are deviated as violent and backward. Through her protagonist Rae, she conveys that the “difference between Western liberalism and Islam was that the centre of one was freedom and the other justice” (184). In this respect, translation can be defined as a dynamic term of cultural encounter and as a negotiation of differences as well as difficult process of transformation. (Bachmann-Medick, 2006:33-42). Therefore, this novel is really a valuable reconstruction of these misconceptions and a corrective form of the distorted images. The novel also tries to deconstruct the negative image of the Orient and the oriental culture in the orientalist discourse. To do so, it does not only correct the wrong assumptions about the Orient, but it proposes an alternative to the situation which is to include the two binaries into a cultural dialogue and understanding by engaging both of them into serene human relations based on respect and comprehension. This notion is conveyed in the novel through the delicate love commitment between a widowed Sudanese Muslim woman and a twice-divorced Scottish man. This love story itself is a brilliant work of translation for it demonstrates that love translates deep emotions and sentiments that erase prejudices and misconceptions. Sammar also confirms this strong role of love in narrowing the distances: “He does love me, good, he is not immune to me” (129). So the novel’s function as a translator provides an alternative to the existing discourses of tense relationships between Others and Huntington’s “clash of civilizations”; instead, it alternatively proposes a dialogue between them to lead to transnational convergence.

Additionally, the genuine portrait of Africa is another metaphorical translation in this novel. Africa which is depicted as a yellow continent on the map which symbolizes dryness is still a good place to live in. Though Africa was a place of suffering for Rae as his baby is buried there, it is for him a healthy place to live in. This means that though it is a place that provokes in him memories of harmful and painful experiences, it is the right place for his survival. When Sammar asked him how he can like a place, visit it again and study its culture and history when something horrible happened to him there; Rae answered “because it was healthy for me, like medicine. It made me less hard.”(64). This narration hints to the fact that the Other being a place or a person should not be judged from the first negative experience or encounter with them; and the other who is perceived from one angle as having negative attributes, may have positive features if they are viewed from an unprejudiced angle. So to

ge about Africa, Rae's asthma and coughing spells in Africa is a healthier environment for him and the dry weather reinforces the fact that the dryness of Africa is a right element for his life. So representing the Other place as being a good and healthy element for the Other's life can redeem this vision of the Other and facilitate their acceptance.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter covered the discourses of the perception of the foreigner as the Other as being a foreigner in the twentieth postcolonial context. The discussion of the status of the Other, Stereotyping, representation and their intercultural encounter into a foreign community come together to inform the interpretation of the novel. The representation of the Arab Muslim protagonist as the Other in the British society confirms these claims as well as the discourse of the Other prevailing in the late twentieth century. This portrayal of the Other will be examined in the status of the "Outsider" character in the second part of the novel. Who is the "outsider" in the text? Is this "outsider" able to overcome a separate status and regain its position? The third and last chapter will provide an attempt to try to answer these queries.

Intracultural Otherness

3.1 Introduction

3.2 The intra-cultural “Outsider”

3.2.1. “Inner-otherness”

3.2.1.1. Incommunicability

3.2.1.2. Stereotyping and Subjectivity

3.2.1.3 Misjudgments and misunderstandings

3.2.2. The outsider’s self-perception.

3.3. Intracultural interaction.

3.3.1. Initiative communicability

3.3.2 Dialoguing resistance

3.3.3. Self-retrospection

3.4. Conclusion.

The concept of the Other is used in this chapter to describe the protagonist's status within her family after her experience of migration in Scotland. This experience has an important impact on her perception as an "outsider"¹ within her native Sudanese community, mainly her family for "*in migrancy, the individual ends up alienating him/herself from both worlds, because it is an experience characterized by an existential feeling of outsidership, of social, cultural and existential estrangement.*" (Rocco, 2006:294). In addition to her migration experience, this vision as an outsider is attributed to her due to personal misjudgments and misunderstandings. To make a terminological distinction between her status as the Other in a foreign setting and the sense of apartness, distinctiveness and strangeness in her homeland, the latter status will be referred to as an outsider. In this case, the outsider is increasingly used in dealing with members of the same society who share the same geographical boundaries, language and religion. This outsider is not perceived as culturally and racially Other but as a distinct member who has some different characteristics from the rest of their native society, or who is judged on the basis of some personal misjudgments, misunderstandings and prejudices that alienate them from their native community. Therefore, the protagonist's status in this chapter is referred to as the outsider since it is not a total exclusion based on clear-cut cultural and racial differences, but her status is based on the lack of comprehensibility with her family, the break of communicability² as Kant (in Stone-Mediator, 2003:72) called it, subjectivity and her long absence. Accordingly, outsidership, here, can be defined as:

A problematic slip we make when we categorize and evaluate those whom we seek to understand, but on the basis of our own assumptions, biases, and mythologies about them.

(Van Pelt, 2000: 1)

This means that the existence of this significant outsider for any native individual is primarily endowed with subjective assumptions and misunderstandings that lead to the creation of the

¹ Outsider: "refers to both a marginalized community for which there exists a conceptual category-sometimes accompanied by a linguistic form- and to a personal identity." (Duszak, 2002: 88)

²Communicability: refers to the speech act in the word. "It promotes sociability with one's neighbours because it requires not only self-consistency but the ability to communicate one's view to others." (Stone-Mediator, 2003:71)

s may have many simultaneously existing outsiders more importantly, these outsiders need to be partially different.

3.2. The Intracultural “outsider”

The ability to quickly and systematically categorize people within the same group is a fundamental result of intracultural diversity. *“Diversity exists within any culture or ethnic group along the lines of generations, acculturation, education, ..., gender, age, temperament and past experience.”*(Wilson, 2007:138). Therefore, to distinguish people who are different from “us” within the same community helps societies to group other different people into categories based on specific characteristics and consequently define outsiders. This categorization is both the foundation and the outcome of stereotypes, prejudice and ultimately miscommunication since *“problems in communication may lead to evaluative judgments about the participants involved”* (Tzanne, 2000: 188) and on the basis of these judgments, the outsider is shaped. Thus the prejudged and stereotyped member is spontaneously put into the category of outsiders.

Conceptually, there is a difference between outsidership in the sense of non-belonging and otherness in the sense of unfamiliarity. In the former case, it refers to “inner otherness” or “intracultural outsidership”; in the latter to “intercultural otherness” that has been examined in the previous chapter. “Inner otherness” occurs whenever the attention is focused on the fact that someone who is a native member of a community is perceived as a stranger within this group due to the creation of social boundaries. Duszak claims that *“The sense of non-belongingness may occur even where a formally included person or group may feel excluded or kept at a distance by other members of the group”* (2002:403). So inter-group boundaries are constructed when this formally included person or group is perceived as not belonging or different from the rest of the society even though the attribution of non-belongingness is not generally based on a formal exclusion. From this, outsidership is defined as a status ascribed

¹ In-group: a social group which an individual perceives as belonging to and identify as one’s own. This refers to the feeling of ownness which most characteristic feature of in-group while others are felt out-group. (Mishra,2003:574)

use of their differentness and misjudged constructed different outsider to hatred and results into two important conclusions: the vision of the members of the community as Other in the eyes of the outsider as well as the outsider's self-perception of non-belongingness.

Hence, "inner otherness" refers to both the outsider's alienated status and his self-perception as alien. According to Lacan, his use of the term Other distinguishes between the 'little other' and the 'big Other'. 'The little other' is not the real other but a reflection and projection of the ego. He is the image or the reflection of one's body in the mirror. This notion is portrayed in the novel through the protagonist's self-perception as the outsider within her family: The narrator states that: "In the mirror over the sink, Sammar saw her face by candlelight. How long would it be before she started to look as she should look, a dried-out widow, a faded figure in the background" (148). The second type is the 'big Other' who designates a complete alterity. This big Other is the categorization of a person as the Other by other people who gain identity from the gaze of otherness. In the text, the big Other or the outsider is the protagonist who is cut off from the native community by circumstances that make her appear as a stranger or an eccentric. Consequently, the outsider, here, is the mother whose separation from her child locates her as the "big other"; it is the misconceived and misjudged widow woman; and it is also the unconsciousness itself that reflects the protagonist's self-perception as being an outsider.

3.2.1. "Inner-otherness"

The protagonist's long absence from her family in Scotland has the great influence on demarcating her status as an outsider in her homeland. The four year time spent in the "Wintery Kingdom" (45), in contact with a foreign culture, makes her experience the same feelings of self-estrangement and displacement in Sudan. In this case, her feeling of displacement can also be defined as outsidership. This link between outsidership and absence is described by Relph as: "*outsiderness and insiderness are an absolute dualism, much in the same way that absence and presence imply mutual exclusivity.*" (Relph in Mason, 2008: 43). The first scene in the novel's second part as the protagonist, Sammar, sets foot in her aunt's house is introduced in a metaphor that shows her unfitness in this sunny land: "She wore sun glasses now...[for] the sun was a spot of blue heat, still too piercing for eyes that had seen fog

ne spent in Scotland contributes to her unfitness and "potential outsidersness" is "a sense of strangeness and alienation, such as that often felt by newcomers to a place or by people who, having been away from their birth place, return to feel strangers because the place is no longer what it was when they knew it earlier." (Hubbard *et al*, 2008:45-46). This notion is uttered by Sammar's brother who addresses her: "Things change. You want to go away and come back and find everything the same" (147). Here time can also be considered as a crucial element in the manifestation of the protagonist's unfitness that affects her life on this land because it is associated with an "exteriority so absolute that cannot be reduced to the metaphysics of presence". (Protevi, 1994: 13). Thus the character's absence from her homeland leads to her feelings of displacement as well as estrangement within her family.

The status of the protagonist's dislocation is emphasized by her journey back home. This journey mirrors her feeling of apartness from her family and the fear and discontent resulting from thinking of their encounter. The protagonist's present journey harkens back to her journey four years ago when she quarrelled with her aunt who refused her marriage and set off to Scotland. Similarly, she is now returning for a visit to Africa for the first time in four years after Rae's hesitation to convert, smashing the focus of her life in a land where she starts to get used to. Her journey home is a tense one; it lacks the joy that one might expect such a journey to evoke. The narrator depicts Sammar's hesitation to return to her homeland: "There was no need to tell Yasmin that she did not want to go away." (121). "She did not want to go to Khartoum, and bring Amir, not yet, not now" (117). This lack of joy is also stressed by the snowy weather that reveals her inner struggle with the feelings of undesirability to leave Scotland and go back home: "snow filled the sky and poured down like it would never stop", "if the snow kept falling quickly, if it did not stop until morning, then the roads would be blocked" (117). Her intention of the weather as an obstacle means that while thinking of returning back home, she feels that she is moving to a "foreign place" where she has to encounter strangers.

On the other hand, the protagonist's absence from her family contributes to various changes that differentiate her from her community that she, in turn, comes to perceive as different. Her life of exile in Scotland had a great impact on her personality and thinking so that she becomes an intruder within her family. Generally, "*within most cultures, smaller*

...characteristics not shared by the culture at large” (Stone-
...characteristics lead to their categorization as outsiders. In the
novel, being a “westernized woman”, the protagonist is perceived as different from the
members of her family. Her differentness is reflected in her aunt’s statements: “It doesn’t
matter where you are, no one is seeing you there but when you come, it would better not to
wear so much colours, you know, how people get ideas.” (87). Moreover, the changes that the
protagonist endured in Scotland also contribute to her self-differentness. Ambrose argues that
“*Change is an ongoing and dynamic function of daily-life which may be “taken-for-granted
when the alterations are easily amalgamated. However, major or adverse changes create
disruption to a person’s sense of self”* (2006: 161). Sammar, herself, utters this notion when
she is in front of the photograph of Tarig, Sammar’s ex-husband, on the wall. She states that
“[Tarig] did not know her any more. The young man [Tarig] in the photograph did not know
the Sammar who had lived alone in Aberdeen” (139). The narrator also clarifies her
differentness as: “Her eyes had let her down; they were not as strong as they had been in the
past, not as strong as the eyes of those who had not travelled north” (136). Due to these
changes, the protagonist has to go through the same processes of culture-shocks and
adjustment within her society. kruempelmann argues that: “*Reverse culture shock happens
when you have to readjust to your own country, its people, and the mentality.*”(2002:55).
Now that she is back home, the protagonist finds out that she faces a society she thinks she
knows but this different society categorizes her as an outsider. She feels that she is in a
different place, among strangers: “Her future was here where she belonged. She belonged
with her son and strangers who smile when she came into a room” (157). Another example
that illustrates the impact of absence on the perception of the absent subject after coming back
to his native land is illustrated by Tarig’s journey to Germany to undergo medical treatment
for his broken leg. Sammar describes him after his return: “Tarig came different, like he was
suddenly older, even though he had been away only for a month... Things changed from the
time he broke his leg.”(25). Hence, this vision of outsidership, which defines the status of
otherness within the native community, is attributed to the protagonist due to her life in a
foreign country that endows her with certain changes. In this sense, outsidership is the
feelings of distinctiveness and apartness that invade the protagonist within the members of her
family and native community who perceive her as a stranger or an alien and who she also
views as different, whereas outsidership is the experience of estrangement and alienation from
her country (geographical location and weather) that the protagonist endures in her
‘homeland’.

Consequently, the strong presence of the outsider in the novel is described as a socially avoided character, performing a restricted social role and living in a limited space within the majority group. In her aunt's house, she is confined to "passive inclusion" which "indicates that others merely accept and allow our participation and entails being ignored" (Wawrytko, 2000:149). This "passive-inclusive" space is defined by the narrator as: "Sammar's clothes and belongings were in a separate room which had locked cupboards and crates of Miranda, sacks of sugar and rice, but she slept in this room with her aunt and Amir" (143). In her aunt's house, the protagonist is also depicted as being deliberately avoided or occupying an alienated social space from her family. This space allows her limited participation or function such as to care for the children and serve guests (157). In this respect, the outsider is a silenced and displaced figure, revealing the society's problematic definition of outsidership and outsidership. The protagonist claims that: "Here in this house, in this language and this place, were all the memories. All that had been taken away from her." (139). Thus the protagonist's status as an outsider is a poison imposed on her within her family.

This social avoidance is also manifested in the polarized communication between her and her family as well as in her brother's "outsider discourse". "*Polarized communication exists when groups or individuals look out for their interests and have little or no concern for others' interests.*" (Gudykunst, 2003: 1-2). In this sense, the protagonist's interests are totally neglected by the members of her family that seems to get profits from her life as a widow in Scotland without caring for her status there. In a letter sent to Sammar in Scotland, her aunt wrote to her a daunting list of things to bring on her return and informed her that: "I am so glad you seem to have got rid of this ridiculous idea of getting married again" (87). In addition, her family seems to be "morally exclusive" (ibid: 2) towards her. Her aunt saves no way of hurting her through her written discourse (87) or spoken one: "...now you've just become an idiot" (169). Gudykunst also argues along similar lines: "*Those who are morally excluded are perceived as nonentities, expendable, or underserving; consequently, harming them appears acceptable, appropriate or just.*" (ibid: 2). Her brother Waleed's discourse also reinforces her discursive exclusion. His question: "So what do you think of this dark county of ours?" (148) reveals an "outsider discourse" (Duszak, 2002) that disempowers the protagonist and separates her from the majority group. Hence, the dialogue between the protagonist and her family reveals an exclusive dimension in its tone.

The social avoidance of the protagonist within her family leads to her isolation that signals her status as the outsider. Since her arrival to her homeland and precisely to her aunt's house, Sammar is nearly withdrawn from the real social life of her family. She feels that her life and needs are totally isolated from theirs and most of the time her companions are her dreams about Rae and her souvenirs and memories in Scotland. Exile in her homeland has another meaning from exile in Scotland. Here, she expresses that exile means being far from him. (173). She tries at second time to recover from loss, living in a part of a world away from him. Loneliness stems from the hurting words and gazes of her aunt: "She would meet [her aunt] eyes, see the expression on them. Something like disappointment or disapproval, a kind of contempt." (142). These gazes make her resort to solitude : "she wanted to sleep like she used to sleep in Aberdeen, everything muffled up and grey, curling up, covering her face with the blanket, her breath warming the cocoon she had made for herself" (171). For the protagonist, isolation is a sign that translates her status as an outsider within her family after a long absence in a western country as well as the break of communication with them.

The protagonist's outsidership is clearly presented through her relationship with her aunt. This relationship which is based on misjudgements can be described as one of domination and subordination. In human groups, some members usually have more influence than others and are known as leaders. In the novel, aunt Mahasen is described as a "strong woman, a leader really" (7). "She was a woman who had an opinion in all things" (5). Thus she is the dominant character, while the protagonist is the subordinate one. This dominant character defines nearly all the acceptable roles for the subordinate such as providing services that the dominant person cannot perform for itself, caring for others and taking decisions instead of her. O'crady states that "*Within the context of relations of domination and subordination, an elaboration of the notion of care for others is necessary.*" (2005:88). Consequently, her aunt manipulates Sammar's life by including her in a process of internalization¹. In this process, the female protagonist is unconsciously acting the role of the outsider, imposed on her by her surroundings. This domination relationship is also the result

¹ Internalization: The process by which individuals incorporate within their personalities the standards of behaviour prevalent within the larger society. (Vander Zanden, 1993: 161)

and strangeness. Sammar claims that: “My aunt thinks hate it when I go back to Khartoum. She thinks I will see everything as ugly and backward” (88). On the other hand, her aunt’s domination is enforced by Sammar’s gender subordination. As a woman, the protagonist chooses to resort to silence and initially accepts this domination for “*Many women develop an exaggerated inner equation: the effective use of their own power means that they are wrong, even destructive.*” (Miller, B., 1976: 120). Therefore, Sammar has developed an inner sense to perform the roles given to her by her aunt so that her meetings with Mahasen are described as: “if it had been only [her aunt] and Sammar, she would have been silent and withdrawn” (179). So in general, the subordinate protagonist is encouraged to develop personal psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the dominant aunt. These characteristics such as passivity and dependency are adopted by the protagonist to show her outsidership relationship.

Another portrait of the protagonist’s status as an outsider is depicted through her relationship with her son. According to Levinas, it is usually the mother who first occupies the position of the big Other for the child. It is she who receives all the child’s needs and responds to them as a particular message. For the child, this Other who is usually an important person in his life, especially a parent, is also called a “significant Other”. (Vander Zander, 1993 : 77). Thus the most complex form of this big or significant Other in the novel is when the child discovers that this stranger is his mother who has not met him for many years. Accordingly, *The Translator’s* protagonist is perceived as the outsider by her son whom she left in Sudan with her aunt at the age of two. With regard to family outsidership the novel again follows the mutual structural model as each protagonist has a child who lives far from them with their in-laws and who perceives them as outsiders. Rae notes that only after few days after his visit to his in-laws, her daughter starts to speak with him beyond yes and no (39). Sammar also has left her son in Sudan with her aunt because she felt that he would not let her sink in grief as she wants to, after the death of her husband and “the part of her that did the mothering had disappeared” (7). Hence her first meeting with her son portrays his alienated status from her: “the excitement of seeing Amir again and he, so cool, accepting her hugs and kisses as he would from the many visitors and relations who crossed his life” (139). Furthermore, the narrator adds that “[Amir] had lived quite content without his mother” (159). Her feeling of apartness from her son is reinforced by her feeling of guilt since she had given the child to Mahasen as if he meant nothing to her; leaving him for four years as if she was

at: “There was something unendearing about her son; nothing about, shut out by guilt and her years away”.

(159). This feeling of outsidership and guilt with her son confirms the notion of the break of communicability or ‘incommunicability’ between her and the family.

3.2.1.1. Incommunicability

Being the outsider in the novel, the protagonist’s status is reinforced by the process of incommunicability. In the context of the narrative, incommunicability refers to the limitations on the level of authentic communication that two characters from different backgrounds can meaningfully achieve. Although Sammar shares the same cultural and social backgrounds with her family, that background does not allow communicability after her return. Sammar has experienced life in a western country and has adjusted to its culture, while her family members have never left Sudan. Now both of them come from a different background with different attributes. Their differences are manifested in their different perception of life in a Western country in reference to Africa. Her family is convinced of the superiority of the West over Africa and nothing can persuade them otherwise. Her aunt and brother mention several times this belief. Her aunt confirms this notion by stating that: “Foreigners don’t stand for nonsense, I know. Their countries wouldn’t be so advanced if they did” (170). Waleed also asserts that: “How couldn’t it be? You’re so fortunate. A good job, a civilised place. None of there power cuts and strikes...” (149). Therefore, they think that it is unreasonable for Sammar to leave her job there and stay in this poor country. In contrast, Sammar is quite satisfied with her situation in Sudan in comparison to her lonely life there. She informs them that they do not know what exile means and “being exiled isn’t very nice” (150). These illustrations underline the incommunicability between them and show that Sammar’s family is unable to understand why she would rather live this apartness within her family than live alone in a hospital room in Scotland. The narrator describes this break of communication as: “She could see the irony of situation. She had the option of life abroad and wanted to stay, while he was keen to leave and couldn’t” (150). The second sense of incommunicability is more philosophical and relates to the notion that some individuals cannot change what they truly are although they may change some of their attributes to fit the new conditions. Sammar is still haunted by the idea of getting married again and this also contributes to the issue of

to fit circumstances, her resolutions are still fixed one. away from what her aunt wants her to be. The child was not the focus of her life” (112) i.e. far from erasing this idea of getting married again. So this incommunicability demonstrates her status as an outsider.

Additionally, the issue of incommunicability is reflected in the protagonist’s sway between two worlds. From the beginning, Sammar’s “new world” is contrasted with her “old world” both in reference to her own experience in two different countries and her aunt’s world. The first “in-between” struggle is described as living in a real place while having another one in her memory. Rocco argues that: *“The necessary flexibilization of identity produced by the experience of migrancy is not adequately explained by the de-territorialization metaphore, since it involves an inevitable re-territorialization in memory”* (2006: 294). This state of living in between is depicted in a metaphorical scene when the protagonist opened the fridge: “The sudden chill when she opened the fridge door on a day that was too hot; the blue cold, frost and it was Aberdeen where he was” (182). This inability to mentally settle in her homeland contributes to the disruption of communication between her and the others. Moreover, the incommunicability between her new world and her aunt’s “old” one (“old” is used here to describe her aunt’s world as a fact that she is a person from the protagonist’s past in reference to her present new world after her immigration) is the result of misjudgements and generational gap. This time separating them is described in this metaphor: “Another time, before the lines of defeat on Mahasen’s face, her faded eyes” (141). However, despite this time, her aunt still clings to the past in contrast to Sammar’s new life. This gap is illustrated by their disagreement about taking down a wedding photograph of her and Tarig from the “sallow” (living-room) (141). Sammar wants to move this photograph from the room as an unconscious way of articulating her changes or new life; while her aunt holds it as sacred memory from the past. So when Sammar suggests moving it, her aunt addresses her with a fierce look for she could not discuss the matter with her (an issue of incommunicability). And her daughter, Hanan, was the messenger between them. Thus Sammar’s intertwined worlds are different from that of her aunt and this leads to the break of communicability between them.

3.2.1.2. Stereotyping and Subjectivity

Stereotyping is one of the strongest symbols that mark the protagonist as an outsider in the novel and affect the issue of incommunicability. It is all based upon some visual attributes and mental assumptions which are construed together and condemn Sammar to be a stranger. Depending on her behaviour with her family members, Sammar is stereotyped as casual, weak, useless and inefficient. Unger states that “*stereotypes are not simply labels, but are assumptions about traits and behaviours that people in the labelled categories are thought to possess.*” (2001:206). In other words, what happens in any stereotypical representation is not only that someone stands in for someone else, but that a certain “portrait” is painted and then acts as a fixed essential proxy for the represented. Unlike the cultural and racial stereotypes that affect her life in Scotland, her representation within her family is based on personal misjudgements and stereotypical images. The narrator states that: “[Her family members] were used to her as being a ghost, walking about doing chores, her mind else where, listless, not particularly driven.” (189). Another representation that stands for Sammar as inefficient is stated in comparison to her cousin: “Hanan was still at work. She worked longer hours than Sammar, she was more productive, more efficient” (167). These stereotypes contribute to Sammar’s status as an outsider within her family.

Consequently, these stereotypes hinder the process of communication between the protagonist and her family adding to her perception as an outsider. Gudykunst claims that: “*Our stereotypes affect our communication with people from our own group and our communication with strangers*” (2003:4). Thus the family members’ assumption of her as submissive leads to her exploitation. Sammar’s submissive image is described as: “she had torn herself from her family and let herself to Mahasen, an obedient niece, letting Mahasen decided how she should dress, how she should fix her hair, a child to be moulded (7). Her submissiveness is even revealed in her voice while answering her aunt: “Her voice was sullen as a child” (173). Sammar’s submissiveness, in this case, is generally related to her gender role as a woman looking for affiliation. Radden argues along the similar line: “*the only forms of affiliation that have been available to women are subservient affiliations*” (2002:329). Therefore, communication between her and the family is mainly based on orders:

braids], last time you made them too loose and they
is useless affects her communication with her aunt who
shouted at her: “All this is because you are useless” (169) for the only reason that Sammar
failed to keep the children calm. Moreover, these stereotyped images are stressed by her being
a woman in a patriarchal society. Heitlinger argues that “*The woman as outsider has long
served as a powerful metaphor for woman’s exclusion from society and the subversive
potential of their exile.*” (1999: 1). This patriarchal notion is uttered by her brother who
describes her as: “You have no idea, do you? You’re blank” (148). Accordingly, these
stereotypes imprison her in a specific status that limits her communication with others.

The protagonist’s status as an outsider within her family is also emphasized by this
process of “subjectivity” that disrupts incommunicability. Subjectivity, here, refers to the
“subjectivity of experience” i.e. the same event has different meanings for different
characters; and to the character’s belief that she or he has the power to be the autonomous
“subject” of her or his actions.” (Henry, 2004: 23). The first meaning is reflected in both the
event of Tarig’s death as well as the protagonist’s life in Scotland. For Sammar, Tarig’s death
was not her responsibility, and her life in Scotland was really miserable. Yet for her family
and her aunt, she is the responsible for Tarig’s death, and according to them, she has to go
back to Scotland to continue her life there. Moreover, Sammar’s intention to marry again is a
self-choice to be settled, not to be alone, while her aunt stands against it and addresses her:
“from what sort of clay have you been made of?” (23). Even her child’s life is a point of
subjectivity between Sammar and her aunt. The latter has written to her “you must come and
take him back, it would be better for him” (23); while Sammar is convinced that he would feel
lonely in that alienated part of the world. Again, living with her in-laws gives the signal that
she does not want to get married again, while for sammar, this event has a different meaning
since she has nowhere to go to and she does not care what people thinks. (152). These events
illustrates the impact of subjectivity in the process communication between them as well as
her perception as an outsider.

The relationship between Sammar and her aunt, Mahasen, also illustrates the issues of
incommunicability and subjectivity. At the beginning, each character feels apart from the
other in attitude and purpose. Sammar as a widowed woman feels that she is the subjective

She is the only one who decides to get married again. She and describes her as a low person. She tells her: “It shows how low you are, with no manners, no respect for his memory” (169). So these two characters have not truly communicated with each other because of Sammar’s departure to Scotland, and neither character tries to meet the “other” half way. This cut in communication led to the accumulation of misjudgements and contempt. Sammar could see the contempt in her aunt’s eyes each time they meet with hers. (142). So Sammar’s aunt stick to her subjectivities in her mind: the first one is that she considers Sammar responsible for her only son’s death and the second that she does not respect his memory by her desire to marry again. These subjectivities affect the process of their communication.

3.2.1.3. Misjudgements and misunderstandings

The protagonist’s status as an outsider within her family is also portrayed as being the result of misjudgements and misunderstandings. These misunderstandings have a great impact in accentuating the perception of Sammar as a stranger and in disturbing her relationship with her aunt. “*All misunderstandings which occur in either cross-or intracultural encounters have social meaning, in that they can sometimes be very face-threatening for all parties involved.*” (Tazann, 2000: 189). These misjudgements and misunderstandings are reflected in the accusations that the protagonist’s aunt, Mahasen, directs at her. She eventually spews out her anguish-at the loss of her son- and accuses her of being the responsible for her only son’s death. Mahasen said: “you are a liar and you killed my son” (170). This accusation puts her in an alienated status and leads to her treatment as the rejected outsider. These misjudgements also result in the breaking of their old intimate relationship so that her aunt cannot even utter her name that once she chose (5) and calls her just “an idiot”. The narrator introduces her aunt as: “This was the Mahasen who now frowned when mentioning Sammar’s name. That idiot girl” (10).The refusal to use her name evokes the internal sense of otherness that her aunt carries around within herself. To follow the trend of misunderstanding, her aunt seems to believe that Sammar will not like her life in her homeland after her return: “she wrote her a torrent of complaints about life in Khartoum and how awful Sammar would find it after being away for so long. (87). Another misjudgement that stems from misunderstanding resides in her relationship with her brother, Waleed, whose statement: “at last you’ve gone mad” (149)

ny Sammar considers Sudan as more beautiful than
ve here. These misjudgements and misunderstandings
narrow her relationships with the members of her family.

The protagonist's long absence and misunderstandings also picture her society as the outsider in her eyes. Sammar's position as the outsider is unconsciously reversed by her vision of her society and her homeland as the Other. The house that once she belonged to is no longer hers and the people whom she used to see appreciation in their eyes have become strangers. This view of her country as different is manifested in various scenes through the novel such as "the playthings of children who lived on the streets....They were in torn stained clothes, bare feet covered with dust up to their ankles"(145). Moreover, Coming from a rich country makes her stick the differences easily: "Poverty and sunshine, poverty and jewels in the sky. Drought and the gushing Nile. Disease and clean hearts. Stories from neighbours, relations." (161). On the other hand, the differentness of her society is also expressed as: "Different people, classes held in different locations" (159). She even perceives the members of her family as different from her. She claims that: "she the one who was carrying failure, her life ripped, totally changed, losing aim, losing focus, while Mahasen and Hanan went on as before and Amir could not miss the father he could not remember" (141). This vision towards her family is not based only on difference but also on misunderstandings that creates a feeling of contempt towards her aunt: "She had come smarting and feverish from Khartoum, without Tarig, without Amir, only the grudge against her aunt." (32). Thus the protagonist also holds this vision of otherness toward the members of her family due to incommunicability and misunderstandings between them.

In the case of her relationship with her son, the stems of the process of otherness are reversed. She is the one who distances her son from her and alienates herself from him leading to his perception of her as an outsider. Losing self-control after the loss of her man makes her son the first victim of her misjudgment. After the death of her husband, the protagonist's vision of her son is one of apartness and rejection. When her husband died in a car accident, she wished that her son would take over her husband's place. She said to him: "I wish it was you instead. I hate you. I hate you" (7). This highlights the conception that "*Contemporary parents appear to have a less romantic and more realistic view of the probable effects of children on their lives than did earlier generations of parents*". (Zanden, 1993: 290). This difference between contemporary and earlier generations of parents in the

s of her son. This loss that she still can't get over it
behaviours with her son in the hospital and the plane
show this feeling of misjudgement and alienation from him. In the plane "she pinched him
hard when no one was looking" (7). Thus when she comes back to Khartoum, she left him
there because "he would not let her sink as she wanted to sink, bent double with pain" (8), and
came back to Scotland to work as a translator. When she comes back to her family home, she
is forcefully put into the outsider position by her son who got used to her absence and
established alternative relationships with the members of his family since "*Children begin to
form attachments to their own group and develop negative attitudes about other "out-group."*
(ibid: 9). Consequently, misjudgements and misunderstandings affect both parts' lives and
puts them in the status as outsiders. These relationships of outsidersness affect, in their turn,
the protagonist's self-perception.

3.2.2. The outsider's self-perception

The protagonist's status as an outsider mirrors itself in her self-perception as being
outside the lives of her family members. On the basis of their vision, she acts and reacts,
transmitting to them a self-representation of "outsiderness". Cooley states that:

*Human consciousness is social in that we spend much of our life
"living in the minds of others" without realizing it. Self-monitoring
from the view point of others gives rise to self-regarding sentiments.*

(Cooley in Scheff, 2001: 8)

Thus the protagonist does not only arrive at acknowledging her position as being withdrawn
and avoided from their lives , but she initially reaches a self-definition as an outsider since it
is contended that the individual's consciousness arises in a social context. This notion is
stressed by Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self¹. The protagonist states that: "she was
the one who had become too sensitive. She was the one who had been away for too long."

¹ Looking-glass self: is a process by which we imaginatively assume the stance of other people and view ourselves as we believe they see us. It consists of three phases. First, we imagine how we appear to others. Second, we imagine how others judge our appearance. And third, we develop some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification on the basis of what we perceive other's judgments of us to be. (Zanden, 1993: 95)

is also clarified by her claim: “She must shield [her
n to forget like her bones had forgotten and her skin”
(136). So the protagonist acknowledges her status as an outsider and unconsciously manifests
it in some behaviours such as serving others.

Serving Others is a basic principle around which the protagonist’s life in Sudan is organized. It introduces her self-perception as being an outsider and emphasizes that the protagonist reflects the mirror image of her family by staying at the margin through her focus on traditional gender role of doing the housework, caring for the children and serving the family. O’Craday argues that: “*Caring for others often has been at the expense of women’s own needs, desires and goals.*” (2005:1). Thus the protagonist has unconsciously developed the sense that she had to attune herself to the needs, wishes, and desires of others (the members of her family) as if “*The others are the important ones and the guides to action*”. (Baker Miller, 1976: 61). Sammar performs all the housework, even taking care of their cousin’s children. Once, her brother expresses to her this notion: “Here you are holding Amir and Hanan’s children. Didn’t aunt Mahasen fire the maid as soon as you come back?” (150). It seems even that the protagonist unconsciously clings to this role as “she wanted to escape into cleaning the room, sweeping up the rice that was scattered on the table and the floor” (169). Hence, this role of serving others stem from her self-perception as an outsider within her family.

The theme of the second part of the novel seems to provide the portrait of the “outsider” within an intracultural context and to initiate ways of communication and self-conception within the in-group members. It is totally devoted to the protagonist’s life in her native land, Sudan, with some fantasies of her life in Scotland and her anticipated participation in erasing conflicts and gaining acceptance. The absence of this character from her country and her family for a long time, her adjustment to a different society (western culture) in addition to the accumulation of misjudgements resulting from personal conflicts with the members of her family, put her in the position of the alienated or not accepted Other. In this context, though she is a native member of the Sudanese community, she finds herself again in the position of the alienated outsider and the struggle against it to enter into intracultural interactions with others.

3.3. Intracultural Interaction

Social life is a net of intertwined encounters between individuals. These encounters pose various trends of interaction through which people both transmit and receive information about each other. It involves every member of the society in a complex process of self communication. In one way or another, everyone provides the other with a self-presentation attempting to influence how other perceive them and find out how others present themselves. When an individual enters the life of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about them or to use just the preconceptions or images already possessed about them. These possessed preconceptions and images that are based on biases, misunderstandings and personal judgements lead to the definition of this individual as the outsider who appear different in comparison to the rest of the society; and consequently disrupt the process of interaction with them. However, having “enlarged thought” (Stone-Mediator, 2003: 71) and the challenge of the break of communicability between the outsider and his surroundings can narrow the distances separating them. In this sense “*Identification by marginalized individuals alternates between marginality and normativity, in such a way that one seems to step inside and outside of group boundariers*” (Duszak, 2002:87). So by sharing empathy and comprehensibility with the Other, initiative communicability, and self-retrospection, the outsider can regain their social position within the members of their group. Informed in this way, the novel’s protagonist learned how to challenge the vision of the outsider imposed on her and how best to act and to re-present herself to call forth a positive response from her family so that it becomes a dual process of recognition and learning in her life. She stops setting herself and her point of view as the victim; She decides that she must start a new life, stop being sentimental, stop feeling sorry for herself” (165). She empowers herself by her awareness and takes full advantage of her situation.

From this, the status of the protagonist who is perceived as an outsider in the eyes of her native community is not a stagnant unchangeable situation. As it has been exposed earlier, the protagonist of the novel lives a status of separation and estrangement from her family and this status affects her self-vision as an outsider. When she comes back to her aunt’s house, she claims that: “Somewhere in this vast yellow, near the blue that marked the flow of the Nile,

(16). She finds herself forced to be the outsider within a situation imposed on her. She, herself, acknowledges the status of her separation: “she could feel her aunt watching how inefficient she was, clumsy in her movements, slow” (171). Yet, she engages in a process of self-retrospection to re-define herself and create a new position within her family. Despite all these disadvantages, she is able to challenge her isolated and rejected status from her son and her aunt; and though she cannot get complete recognition into the family’s social circle, she perfectly fulfils the role of the social harmoniser that might have been expected of a “local” woman. Thus to achieve communal acceptance, she tries to combine her self-retrospection with a strong sense of communicability, comprehensibility and empathy.

3.3.1. Initiative Communicability

In the context of the novel, communicability is used to refer to the true communication that characters from different backgrounds, to a given extent, can achieve through erasing misunderstandings, expressing their thoughts and feelings and changing some of their attitudes and self attributes. In this sense, communicability is defined as:

A measure of the ease with which the results and advantages of an innovation can be transmitted or diffused to others. [These] advantages and operations of some innovations are fairly easy to communicate within a social group.

(Greco, 2000: 72)

Therefore, the novel provides a turning point in the relationship of the protagonist with her family since the day her aunt expresses her feelings. The narrator clarifies: since that bad day when Mahasen had said “you killed my son”, the relationship between them had strangely improved mellowed.” (179). Communicability is also used in the sense that the protagonist is able to create a communicative bridge with her family through bringing the two worlds into communicative contact. Both for her and the family, it seems that she is a stranger coming from a different part of the world and she has to fuse both her traditional female solidarity in the Arabic patriarchal family and her western sense of self-determination to get acceptance. That is to say, the “new society” can only be so new in so far as one is forced to bring the old

or not, she brings into the “new society” her personal from the “old society” and acquired from the “new one” and in that way it can be said that she is able to change her “attributes” and influence the others’ attitudes. This notion is portrayed in Sammar’s decision to work in the “Erasing Illiteracy” programme (149) and contribute to her aunt’s house though this was not her status before her migrancy experience. So the protagonist’s initiative communicability is a way of integration into her family.

Additionally, the protagonist’s comprehensibility of the differences between her and her aunt smoothes the differences between them and contributes to the process of communicability. Sammar does not appear to hold her aunt’s differences against her like her aunt Mahasen does with respect to Sammar; rather, Sammar seems to accept them as the natural result of their different ages and lives over the years. Though their relationship had seriously been affected, Sammar can still see the positive side in her aunt and this means that she is aware of their differences and able to accept them; in contrast with her aunt who sees nothing positive in Sammar’s way of thinking and life. Sammar claims that: “despite of the grief that had aged her aunt’s face, there was still elegance about her” (141) In this case, Sammar seems to hold the belief that “*When I introject you as a necessary part of communicating with you, I have to introject your sense of the good as well. Without such understanding, we cannot deal with each other.*” (Duszak, 2002:12). Hence, when Sammar and her aunt went to visit Tarig’s tomb, she was the one who made the first step forward to meet her aunt half way. “She sat next to her aunt, put her arms around her, kissed her cheek” (185). Moreover, Sammar’s comprehensibility of her status in reference to her aunt makes her be aware in dealing with her. So she chooses her aunt’s daughter and her brother as facilitators to inform her about her marriage with Rae. This shows that Sammar recognizes that her aunt’s hearing this news from someone from her “world” (as opposed to Sammar’s world) would disrupt the serene new-reached relationship between them. This description foreshadows Sammar’s attitudes and confirms the possibility that she comes to understand her position with her aunt and thus reminding us of her role as a bridge-builder. Consequently, Sammar’s attempts to soothe things over and to understand the two worlds represented by her and her aunt can be described as successful since she initiates a communicative bridge with her aunt, and manages to narrow the gap between them. So Sammar is able to challenge the incommunicability separating her from her aunt as well as her separate status from her son.

The protagonist's role as a social harmonizer includes also her relationship with her son. Sammar does not appreciate the part her child plays in her life until she is separated from him. After her return from Scotland, She admits the feeling of guilt of parting her son from her: "There was something unendearing about her son: a strength, an inner privacy she knew nothing about, shut out by the guilt and her years away" (159). When she discovers from her first contact with him that she is othered in his eyes, having a normal relationship with him has become extremely important for the structure of her new life in Sudan and her humanity as a mother. Since "*Life places us in a complex web of relationships with other people and our humanness arises out of these relationships in the course of social interaction.*" (Zanden, 1993: 107), her status as an outsider in the eyes of her son makes her act intentionally and unintentionally to express her motherhood so that he may be impressed in some way by her and thus accepts her as a member of the family. She confirms that "she would not escape from him again" (29) and she insists on playing the role of the mother with her son to break this vision of the outsider between them through trying to recapture the years of absence from his life, not observing him growing up: "she carried him around the house, like Hanan carried her baby. They played a game, they pretended Amir was a baby again and she had to carry him", "Only in this game could he be sweet and clinging" (159). Thus Sammar succeeds in constructing again the mother relationship with her son for "*Mothering can occur only within the context of a relationship between a mother and a child*" (Bornstein, 2002: 18). The narrator describes her new relationship with her son as falling in love with him again. (159). Hence, the acceptance of the outsider by her son is an aim that the protagonist has to fulfil to reach the desired harmony with her family.

The protagonist's cognition of her position and her recognition of the distances separating her from her family enables her to change this situation and regain her presupposed position as a member of the family. Through enlarged thought, that opens new spaces of sociability, the protagonist is convinced of being patient in dealing with her new situation within her family. "*Enlarged thought affirms a sociability within us that does not require us to think like everyone else but only to leave our familiar location and situate ourselves, temporarily, in the place of Others.*" (Stone-Mediator, 2003:71). Through dispassion, she tries to synthesize her situation to have a positive social role within her family and to build intimate social relationships with them. So when, at last, her aunt spoke her mind, this

to defend herself and to erase this misunderstanding for
to participants' face and the way it is repaired relate
to the particular context of interaction in which the misunderstanding occurs" (Tzann,
2000:189). Sammar believes that "Allah gives life and takes it... She was not to blame" (172)
and knows how to make her aunt believe that she is not responsible for it. Moreover, this
ability of enlarged thought with her family and "knowing what was in their minds." (164)
enable her to deal with them by providing convincing answers to their questions. This ability
helps her to start a new life and maintain a dialectical relationship with her family.

Transgression of the boundaries of incommunicability and overcoming the status of the
outsider is also achieved through empathy with her family. Empathy that means the ability to
recognize how the other feels has a pivotal role in melting the ice of outsidersness and
improving the protagonist's relationships with her surroundings. Lazarus argues that
*"emotions are our effective responses to changing relationships between ourselves and our
environment."* (1991:13). This important role of empathy is described by the narrator as:
"Only after they [The members of the family] had cried together did the awkwardness of their
meeting begin to break, the years she was away. Only then was it as if reaffirmed that she was
who she was, Amir's mother, Tarig's widow coming home" (139). Sammar's relationship
with her aunt also seems to enhance through her empathizing with her aunt's loss of her son:
"...waiting for the day you would take her only son away from her...And you brought him
back to her shrouded in the belly of an airplane" (70). Sammar also seems able to deal with
the tense relationship between her and her aunt with a measure of awareness and empathy by
realizing that her aunt is not that bad and that she told her those harsh words due to the loss of
her son. Even her empathy with her son is reflected in her acknowledging that "she had given
the child to Mahasen and it had not meant anything, nothing, as if he had not been once a
piece of her, with her wherever she walked" (7). As a result, these feelings of empathy smash
the feelings of resentment and rejection.

On the other hand, the protagonist tries to overcome her status and gain acceptance into her family through affiliation. For her, this aim can be reached through taking control of her life and theirs through serving them. This notion of serving their needs can be considered as both a double-mirrored picture of both her status as an outsider and a way of struggling against it. It translates both her inner-sense as an outsider and her reaction against this status. By serving others, the protagonist puts herself at the centre of her family as being a person that supports them. Since human development proceeds by means of affiliation, Sammar believes that she has to start a new life in her native society and establish human relations with its members through devoting all her time and energy to serve their needs and to take care of them. Radden argues that “*Women’s great desire for affiliation is both a fundamental strength and essential for social advance*” (2002:329). The narrator states that “she wanted to pick up life here again” (136) and her aunt emphasizes the importance of this function in a conversation with her: “Amir fills the house and you serve me...” (173). Through this function, she manages to construct dialogical relationships with her family and gain their acceptance and approval. While serving her aunt, she opens the dialogue with her by explaining “I didn’t lose my job, they didn’t dismiss me, I left of my own accord” (173). Hence, through serving others, the protagonist readapts to her environment and constructs ongoing relations with people around her.

On the other hand, the protagonist’s status as an outsider in her aunt’s house is soothed by her intimate relationship with a friend and self-attachment to friendship. Her friendship with the neighbour’s daughter, Nahla, is a vital element in developing a sense of herself and creating both a warm acceptance among all the other initial rejections in her family. O’ Green argues that:

Understanding the self; this is achieved, in part through the honest self-disclosure in the context of close friendship. In addition to fostering a sense of self-worth and belonging, best friendship also provides a context in which certain traits and competencies develop.

(2003:651)

Therefore, among all the people around the protagonist, her friend Nahla seems to be the first one to accept Sammar as a member of the family as if the novel emphasizes the role of

and opening an intimate space. Her friend is the one
er presence. The narrator explains that: “It occurred to
[Nahla] was a beautiful name. And it was beautiful that she lived next door...” (195).
Moreover, For Derrida, a model of a non-violent relationship that violates the parameters of
otherness is found in friendship or “a certain experience of friendship”. He states that:

*.... This is ...a certain experience of friendship... This is a friendship, what I
sometimes call an amiance that excludes violence; a non-appropriative
relation to the other that occurs without violence and on the basis of which
all violence detaches itself and is determined.*

(1996:83)

This quotation conveys Derrida’s close agreement with the novel’s insistence on the role of
friendship as a relationship of ethical response to and a responsibility for the other person.
This important role is revealed by making Nahla the first person who encounters Sammar in
her aunt’s house after her return.

As a result, dialoguing with others enables the protagonist to acquire those norms
essential for social interaction with the other and for effective integration into her family.
Bakhtin explored how the other matters in dialectical constructions. He claims :

*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 nature is dialogic. To live means to
participate in dialogue...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.*

(1984: 293)

So Bakhtin’s interest in the quality and productivity of dialogue depends on many aspects of
the Other and the relationship between the utterance and the Other, that is what explains the
dialogues between Sammar and her aunt. Being an interlocutor who knows in advance the
“Other’s ideas about her, she avoids the disruption of the dialogue by answering how
Mahasen wanted her to answer. (169). Even her non-behavioural reaction towards her aunt’s
speech confirms this notion: “politeness required that she looked up. She lowered her eyes

the way for the protagonist's acceptance that manifests (80). Hence, Sammar's life as well as the life of the members of her family have to interact with each other under whatever circumstances of misjudgements and hatred that exist between them for despite the differences and misjudgements that exist between them, there is still a meeting point where their separate ways meet. It might be said that one of the major issues before any human community is the question of how to create a way of life that includes all the members of the community without marginalizing other members as outsiders.

Moreover, dialogues between the protagonist and others have an important role in erasing the misjudgements and integrating into the community. The protagonist has to confront the stereotypes and images that the others hold about her to overcome her avoided status and get acceptance. Stereotypes resist change but they can be altered when evidence stops to support them or points to the contrary, or when a dialogue with the Other allows to challenge them even if people usually embrace notions that reinforce their biases and disregard the experience that contradicts them. According to Kearney,

Including qualified notions of "hospitality" (Derrida, 1997) and hermeneutics of memory (Ricoeur, 2000) advances a way of "de-pathologising" the alien or "de-alienating" the other so that it never becomes too estranged or exiled. This "ethical contact" that aims at making the alien that less alien implies that own interpretation and capacity to judge the alien might be improved.

(2002:81)

This notion is confirmed by Sammar's desire to regain her old relationships with her aunt and her son. The narrator states that Sammar "missed her aunt, suddenly and painfully, wished that they were together, that she could hug her again, that they could be close again, friends, like in the years before Tarig died" (68). She also starts to alter the preconceived image of her aunt by identifying that "Mahasen could be surprisingly tactful when it suited her." (179). Even her aunt utters her unconscious intention to regain her positive perception of Sammar: "in the past you were lively and strong" (169). This reflects a hidden need for their old intimate relationship. Moreover, Sammar's new job and self-determination serve as a rejection of those gender stereotypes and representations for "*Automatic gender stereotyping does not equate with inevitable gender stereotyping. It is possible to break the stereotype habits, either by developing cues for control or by formulating chronic egalitarian goals.*"

the misjudgements and challenging stereotypes, the outsider.

3.3.3 Self-retrospection

Another vital element that enables the protagonist to interact with her family and be accepted is self-introspection that leads to her new sense of self. She realizes that the most basic social advance can be achieved through positive self-vision and self-re-presentation. Thus she brings forward certain qualities as compassion with others by taking into consideration her own needs. Myles argues that *“Self-introspection and self- discovery help the women characters to realize their veiled inner strength.”* (2006: 2). It is now that Sammar emerges as the ultimate redeemer for her differences and negative stereotypes as a mother, a sister and a daughter; she develops the power of sustaining the family. She claims that *“I must start a new life, stop being sentimental, stop feeling sorry for myself”* (165). Malouf also claims that *“human lives find their value in transformation specifically in instances of self-overcoming that encounters with difference or otherness provoke”* (Malouf in Gort, 1992: 117). Moreover, the protagonist’s self strength is revealed in her decision of resignation from her job in Aberdeen and her resolution to stay with her in-laws in Sudan. So once the protagonist is aware of her outsidersness position, the process of her self-discovery helps her to alter, adopt, and remake her behaviours and roles to fit the new condition.

The very nature of the protagonist’s ties with her community is linked both to her self-re-presentation and to the others’ vision that frames her as an outsider. The greatest part of these ties comes via her family for the outsider’s structuring of the relationship to relatives is basically different from what it is for other people. She is viewed as different from the rest of the big family and this view makes her present herself in the image of the stranger. Consequently, if she is to change this status, she has to alter her self-image presented to other people. Goffman (1959) points out that:

Only by influencing other people’s ideas of us can we hope to predict or control what happens to us, we have a stake in presenting ourselves to others in ways that will lead them to view us in a favourable light.

(In Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992: 78)

be said that the protagonist's changing roles contribute to her self-discovery. Sammar states that: "She must not delude herself and with time she would forget...Her life was here. Starting a new job, getting used to teaching, linking faces to names." (157). So self-re-presentation is an important element in the protagonist's relations as well as other people's vision.

Consequently, the protagonist self-discovery is also achieved in social and spiritual communion with others. Again, the bridges of compassion and communicability can enable one to define oneself through a committed, compassionate, and reciprocal understanding of the Other. This concept is movingly developed in Sammar's contact with her family. She comes to understand herself through the recognition of her aunt's anguish, her son's needs and Rae's loneliness and suffering. By understanding her aunt's pain and Rae's internal struggle and accepting their humanity, Sammar understands and accepts herself and the Other. She claims that she wants Rae to convert just to marry her not for himself; "now she rises above that and she would clean her intentions to pray only for his sake. She would do it now from far way without him ever knowing." (175). This idea of conquering the void of otherness through self-discovery and recognition and acceptance of another's humanity is examined on a broader scale in the novel. The protagonist attempts to understand herself through gaining an understanding of Rae's anguished life is a good illustration: "he had been kind to her and she had given nothing in return." (175). In addition, She gains that self-knowledge largely because she examines her aunt's and her son's lives with compassion and loving commitment. She succeeds to achieve a valid sense of self or span the chasm of otherness mostly because of two major flaws: First, she succeeds to forge her human identity through an acceptance of herself and the suffering it entails; second, she has the capacity for communion with and commitment to another individual, which, according to Aboulela, is the core element of genuine love. Sammar's ability to face herself and the existential void within her inevitably leads to moral and spiritual openness. Sammar achieves, at the end at least, a semblance of stability in her relationship with the members of her family as well as Rae. That stability, though precarious, is reached only after their bitter but open and honest confrontation with herself and with her family.

Self-retrospection in the novel, however, is not an entirely private battle, based on personal anguish and loving commitment to another individual, but it is also dependent on identification of the individual self with group experience and tradition. Tradition, or heritage, which is what one carries from his past involuntarily; is indispensable to achieve self-

oneself as part of an historical process, as entrusted
re”, (Standley, 1988: 123), and to have an identity.

Hence community plays a central role in the characters’ lives and their encounters. The characters’ quests for identity reveal their need for communal identification. This implies that for an individual to accept himself and develop an ability to commune with another, he must come to terms with his self within a community. For the novel’s female protagonist, her pasts in Sudan and Africa shape the traits of her self as “the past intruded when she wanted only the present” (101). Moreover, her experiences in two different societies contribute to her self-discovery as human and as a woman in relation with other members of the community. Yasmin’s life, Lesley and Dian as well as her aunt’s life, Hanan, Nahla and her life constitute a microscopic but complex picture of the woman experience within the net of humanity. And Aboulela suggests that for her protagonist, to forge her identity, she must examine, understand, and accept her collective position as a woman. Sammar, not only does she have to come to terms with alienation and loneliness that are part of her past, but she must also recognize herself and her family’s communal life. Aboulela’s implication is clear: one ought to establish one’s individual identity and find one’s centre within oneself, not in opposition to but in harmony with one’s communal identity. From such self-identification comes strength for the individual as well as the community. In other words, the individual, while strengthening the community, draws strength from it in return. So through the process of self-discovery, the protagonist achieves a self-identification with her community as Mead argues:

The basic shape of our personalities is derived from the social groupings in which we live. Note, too, that even the qualities that distinguish each of us from others emerge only within a social community.

(Mead in Zanden, 1993:75)

A similar concept of the relationship between self and community emerges in the male protagonist’s life. Rae’s narrating his life to Sammar chronicles his developing sense of self. In the beginning, Rae’s first contact with Eastern culture was through his uncle who converted to Islam and who receives the humiliation of his family. However, Rae is able to recognize that this event is not a sign of weakness and tries to define himself in that collective experience by studying Eastern culture and becoming an expert on Islam. As the novel moves along, he becomes increasingly sensitive to the East/West relationship so that he becomes the link between the two communities through his job and later through his conversion. The

Individual's quest for selfhood is further stressed by his that land contributes to a greater sense of self after the death of his baby that gives him roots in Africa. However, the precarious self sense discovered in this community brought him back to his European roots. This means that the male protagonist has again to engage into a process of self-discovery within his community though he has forged one in Africa and this entails the commitment of self to the community. Thus Rae's quest for identity and meaning in his life ultimately involves a return to identification with and commitment to his community, his group tradition. Such an idea, however, is not a call for ethnocentrism. On the contrary, since Aboulela intends the Muslim Arab experience as a metaphor for human experience in general, she implies that one can bridge the void of otherness and achieve a genuine sense of self only through one's identification with the humanity within all men and women. This notion is conveyed through the move of her protagonists between the two worlds: Scotland and Africa, and through Rae's conversion and his return to Africa to marry Sammar who, in her turn, comes back to Scotland. So in a real sense, all of Aboulela's works constitute a magnificent assertion of the oneness of the human spirit that unites the family of mankind.

3.4. Conclusion

Outsiderhood is an ambivalent phenomenon that combines both beneficial and negative elements, the threat of strangeness and the fascination of the familiar, the danger of exclusion and the possibility of integration. This ambivalent situation is embodied in the status of the protagonist in the novel. The protagonist is viewed as the other in her Sudanese native community. This attitude of the other is the attitude of the whole community especially her family that possesses pre-conceptions and misjudgements about her. These preconceptions stem from incommunicability, stereotyping and subjectivity that, in general, extended to involve all characters within similar situations, like the status of the male protagonist within his British community.

Outsiderhood in *The Translator*, then, is also the way of describing the fundamental form in which the family's vision to the protagonist is structured. It is argued in the first part of the chapter, that the protagonist's status as an outsider within her family has different

ural patterns that indicate experiences or constructions

These investigations are accompanied, in the second part of the chapter, by a structural analysis of the means of her integration into her family. This part aimed to interconnect her status as an outsider with her role in recognizing this situation and overcoming it, resulting in a fundamental attempt to get acceptance among others and re-establish dialogic relationships with them.

Consequently, one may state that different categories of outsiders seem to have gained from their communities an admission and acceptance of their humanity. Although the outsider in the novel is influenced by a socially constructed society, it is argued that she has the power to challenge the conscious attitudes and beliefs and the hidden misjudgements and misunderstandings that provoke outsidership. As the protagonist's experiences prove that one person, acting from conscience and love is able to neutralize bigotry and get acceptance within the community. Dudiak notes that for the "*Neutral third to do its job, for mediation to be effective, the other must surrender, must cease to be genuinely other.*" (1997: 161). Therefore Sammar has managed to position herself on the two sides of the fence that splits the self from the other. She manages to be herself when estranged by the Other, and to a certain extent be the Other when the self overpowered her.

Aboulela's novel suggests that one can achieve a genuine and liberating integration into the community through complete acceptance of one's self, through loving commitment to another, and through identification with one's community. Her novel presents her vision of the vital relationships between the self, the Other, and the community. That vision, no doubt, has been substantially shaped by her private experience as a Sudanese woman who lives the life of exile in Scotland and whose experience there led her to self-identification as an Arab Muslim author. Her vision is a product of her own struggle to define the chaos of her experience to achieve an orderly sense of self. In the depths of her exile she has forged her own identity, and through her works she has helped us shape our own as humans.



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GENERAL
CONCLUSION

The twentieth-century literature is a rich field in which concepts of otherness and outsidership are explored from different perspectives and for various aims. An important part of this field is New English literatures or postcolonial literatures whose literary works depict their authors' status as the Other as well as their characters. The Other as a concept has been a major preoccupation of Western and Eastern thoughts. It is a term which has been used in human and social sciences to understand the process by which societies, individuals and groups exclude others who are different from them. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the question of a duality that of the self and the Other. This duality was neither originally attached to the division of sexes; nor dependent upon any empirical facts. Yet according to the performance of otherness in the late 20th century, the representation and perception of the Other has cultural and racial roots. Any ethnic minority, foreigners, coloured people and even women have been traditionally defined as the Other as a way for the dominant cultural group, or the native, or the dominant white , or man to be depicted as that hero and set themselves as the norms. These Others are depicted as so by what makes them different from the presupposed status quo which includes culture, race and gender or other criteria. In this depiction and stratification, those who possess this vision of otherness toward the Other are subsequently building their self identities as well as the Other's self identity. Through the construction of their identities, they take priority to represent different people as exotic or alien and to put them in the position of the silent Other. Yet in recent years, the figure of the Other has taken the turn to speak and mainly to speak back, disrupting the old dominant ideas in radical ways. Thus women, "natives", minorities, subalterns, coloured people, now claim to speak as Others and re-represent themselves to the Other. Therefore, epistemologically, the Other is central to all contemporary concerns in various countries as well as the larger world.

History has often recorded that the need to achieve an identity leads to the exploitation of peoples differences and thus to their perception as the Other. Differences are natural characteristics that distinguish individuals and human groups. Yet when they are constructed as barriers of separation and exclusion, then the process of otherness is at work. These differences, being cultural, racial, biological or religious are human constructions to confirm one's identity and superiority over the Other. The group which is defining the Other may be

ial class within a society or even a family. Cultural, with a complex natural relation. In a different context, collectivities or individuals may face the three of them at the same time as in the case of the novel's protagonist in Scotland. In gender, specific social effects are posited to sexual representation and biological differences. In the racial Other there exist assumptions concerning the natural exclusion of peoples who are also underpinned by gender difference. In addition to these biological and physical differences, the national identity and ethnicity participate in drawing the boundaries between the individuals and putting them into the category of the cultural Other. So this practice of depicting peoples as Others is the result of the differences between "us" and "them", of comparing ourselves to them and at distancing ourselves from "them".

The general recognition of human diversity based on comparison and ethnocentric thinking leads to a tendency to exclude exotic individuals. This practice of comparing ourselves to other people, considering ourselves as the norm and distancing ourselves from them is called otherness. Here, the Other includes that humans and societies whose life and historical experiences vary from our own and perceived as different and not understandable due to ignorance, representation and stereotypes. Natives, non-whites, women are categorically, culturally and racially alienated from the majority and dominant group since they appear different in a different context or in reference to another "opposite" group. At the same time, these same groups perceive the dominant group as the different Other. In that difference lays the potential for stereotypical categorization i.e. all Africans are the same, all westerners are the same or all women are the same. So otherness can be defined as the use of differences and misconceptions to exclude the Other and confirm one's own identity.

Otherness is a fundamental category in human thought. We are all familiar with the stratification of people in human societies. Wherever we look, there are those who are defined as existing outside society's mainstream or moral norms because of different attributes, or because of their different cultures. This labelling can readily have the effect of encouraging prejudice and discrimination and can certainly impact how people are able to view themselves and Others. Because categorization of the Other occurs in every society and to so many different groups, it is clear that it serves some social function. Apparently, the categorization of the Other is used in societies in order to achieve better definition of unity among members

gh the designation of some behaviours or qualities as identity is established. Thus, exploring what groups a society perceives as different and why can reveal a great deal about how that society tries to define itself. In essence, a clear definition of what society tries to declare as "alien" and "deviant" also provides a clearer definition of what that society wishes to declare as "true" and "good" on the basis of specific representations and stereotypes. Consequently, some categories are based upon inherent characteristics which people cannot change - for example race. These are referred to as "existential" stratifications which is reflected in the protagonist's status as the Other. Other categories are acquired by people based upon their conduct: they are, somehow either, wholly responsible for it or perceived as responsible for it. These are called "achieved" stratifications and this is the category of the protagonist as an outsider within her family.

Otherness, then, is depicted in most postcolonial literary works such as in the Sudanese author's novel *The Translator*. Being an Arab African author who writes in English, Aboulela has already developed an original and distinctive voice. She is known for making a previously "ununderstandable" Muslim culture "understandable" and for providing insights into Islamic culture through her writing, she insists upon the portrayal of Arab Muslim characters in the Western context and the productive connections between this world and the "Arab Muslim world". Through these connections, she seems to focus on a quest for a renewed cultural and historical self-image. Therefore, she writes about Muslim expatriates and about her home country Sudan without focusing on the western secular modes of living. She is only concerned to probe the ethical dilemmas faced by Muslims and mainly Muslim women in foreign contexts and provides particularly nuanced descriptions of the differences between their lives in the West and their homelands.

For Leila Aboulela, The Cain Prize winning Sudanese author, the complexities of the Other have always been at the centre of her interest. Having grown up in a postcolonial Sudan and moved to Britain when she was in her thirties make her a "hybridised writer" who writes in English about the life of the Arab Muslim immigrants in Britain. She always made it one of her tasks to portray the exile of Muslim characters in the West and to analyse what the process of "othering" did to the characters and their cultures in foreign contexts and in their native communities. Nearly both her published novels and most of her short stories deal with that topic; and although she distances herself from any sort of propaganda or ideology in her

Someone like a defender of Islamic culture and religion. For this theme throughout her writing career, Aboulela's depiction of the struggle of Arab Muslim characters in the West was emphasized by the September 11th events and their results on the perception of the Arabs and Muslims as the dangerous Other. In this case, Aboulela's trend resembles Edward Said's debuted book "Orientalism" which had a great influence on her writing, backing up her depiction of the Orient as the Other and the dichotomy East/West and providing her with a contemporary theme lived as her personal experience. Aboulela's first novel, *The Translator* shows that she is able to depict an authentic image of the Orient to the West, to question the occidentalist views about the West and to challenge the western narratives that defend the superiority of the male West over the otherness of the female East.

The work of fiction probed in this dissertation depicts characters, in different times and places, which are perceived as Others and confronted with the need to adapt to a very different culture than their own. Through their interesting emotional journeys, they discover the new culture and learn about themselves. Aboulela's characters, as they travel across the intersection of East and West, attempt to reclaim symbolically that narrative of dialogue of civilizations and the East-meets-West. They have new challenges, such as neo-colonialism, fundamentalism and patriarchy within African and British societies. Nevertheless they continue to strive to portray themselves and to resist being portrayed (this is certainly true for Sammar and Rae). Aboulela also tackles through her narrative's female protagonist the issue of women and patriarchy and how they are perceived as second members and marginalized as Others. She is able to illustrate these layered tensions by utilizing her hybrid knowledge of Sudan and Scotland (East and West), a face-off of which the Arab Muslim woman is the occasional victim as her two-part novel shows.

The intersection of ethnicity, race and gender othernesses is crucial for the provocative discussions and portraits in the fictional work of Leila Aboulela. Her writing aims at shedding light on the fact of what the language of misunderstanding, stereotypes, prejudices and ignorance has done to our world view leading to the categorisation of the "different" as the Other. Her text, *The Translator*, is a transparent medium through which the experience of Sudanese Muslim immigrants could be captured. It can be read as a reference that explains the

a different part of the world and are in contact with a individuals face the same vision as outsiders within their native geographical boundaries and among the members of their communities. More importantly, it depicts their humane journeys and how they feel for whatever the differences that characterise the Other, this Other is a human being.

In fact, her works depict not only the status of her characters as Others but portrays their personal and spiritual features that enable them to break the boundaries of exclusion and marginalization. For her, the journey is about learning compassion for those who refuse to relinquish their stereotypes and prejudices, to recognize and “translate” the Other and to open new spaces for dialoguing and self-retrospection. In her novel, she emphasizes the protagonist’s ability to look beyond her own wishes and the separating barriers for both her sake and the sake of other people though she is the victim and the reactor to the gaze of otherness. Through her novel’s plotting which is based on the reconstruction of an East/West interracial marriage, she demonstrates both the possibility of East-West dialogic encounter and the role of the Arab woman whose identity is stamped by Islam and the postcolonial conditions, in manipulating complex personal relationships that affect her position within a specific community and alter other people’s vision and judgments. When the novel was published in 1999, it was described as a conciliatory work for the status of the Muslim Arab characters as Others in it has a universal message. It adopts nearly an openly didactic approach that highlights the importance of a dialogue between the characters who do not share the same cultural and racial backgrounds as if to hint to the necessity of a dialogue between nations and individuals. Thus *The Translator* contributes to the universal dialogue of civilizations and cultures that has now been brought to Europe and the West in general and is being conducted by writers in western languages as well as in Arabic.

Taking the contemporary Britain as its point of departure, *The Translator*, continues to deal with problems of otherness, identity, culture, and the connection between the private life and the social milieu. It lifts these problems from a local or national to a global level, with the story’s setting changing from the western secular Scotland to the African country (Sudan). This movement between the two worlds and the interracial love story between Sammar and Rae thus picks up Aboulela’s theme of self and Other (on a cultural, racial and gender

the racial opposition “white” and “non-white”, the and the cultural chasms “East” and “West”. With this thematic choice, *The Translator*, like several other fictional narratives of the end of the twentieth century has lent topicality to the happening of September 11th that have put the relationship between Western and Eastern Islamic cultures on the agenda of political debates and TV talk shows all over the world. These events also coincide with the publication of her collection of short stories entitled “Coloured Lights”. While these particular coincidences were certainly unforeseeable to translate the theme of Arabic-Islamic cultures, they came probably quite naturally to a writer that has always been labelled under what is called “World literatures in English” or “dialogic writings” (Kent, 1993: 49).

The novel’s protagonist is a Sudanese Arab Muslim woman who is a recurrent figure in Aboulela’s writing. This author presents two portraits of the protagonist’s otherness. First, she represents her novel’s protagonist, Sammar, as the foreign Other in a different society and culture. Being an Arab Muslim woman, the character is racially, culturally and ‘generically’ perceived as Other different from the members of the dominant culture which she, herself, perceives as the Other. Through the protagonist’s position, the author depicts the differences between the East and the West but at the same time she opens a space for the encounter of these two divides. Another dimension of otherness that Aboulela highlights in her novel is the otherness that is the result of neither racial nor national differences but prejudgments and misunderstandings between individuals of the same regional and national area. Though these factors are included in her first concept of otherness, the second concept of outsidership is clearly explained in a distinct way through her protagonist’s life in her homeland country, Sudan, where she is viewed as an outsider.

The axis to the protagonist’s cultural otherness is not only confined to the arena of national identity, but ethnicity including religious identity is broadly conceived as a building block or raw material. This beautifully composed text engages with depicting these interwoven elements to draw the portrait of the protagonist as the cultural Other in Scotland. It mirrors the anguish and the exile of a transplanted subject geographically, spiritually and emotionally with a great respect for both protagonists and the crucial differences between settings. In it, the “dark” and hot North Africa opposes the ‘wintery’ Scotland in a smooth yet critical way that narrows the cultural distances between them and makes an “honourable

In addition, the protagonist's gender otherness is also an irresistible element in depicting the romance relationship between the male and the female protagonists as well as this latter self-perception as the gender Other. Hence, the portrait of the woman as the Other in two different settings and her image in her own eyes are important dimensions of the concept of the Other in the novel.

Besides her gender, racial and cultural status as the Other, the protagonist has to face her "inner otherness" in the Sudanese society and mainly in her family. After her long absence in Scotland and adjusting to a given extent to the western culture, the protagonist has a feeling of distinctiveness and apartness within her native society and family that conceives her as an outsider. This reality deepens her strangeness in her aunt's house and stirs her feelings of unfitness and alienation from them. She feels that she is in an exiled status as she was in Scotland. Nevertheless, her capacity to challenge the discourse of the Other in this context, misconceptions and misunderstandings enables her to break the exclusive barriers that separate her from her family and to regain her position as a member within her family. From this, it might be conceived that the novel focuses on the role of the outsider to resist her separated status through initiative communicability, dialoging resistance and self-retrospection so that to integrate into her family.

Additionally, the clash of personal judgments and personal conflicts over some issues between the characters is the direct reasons of the Otherness relationships. The novel seems to reinforce this notion through its chapters and its two main parts. On the one hand, the protagonist's departure to Scotland, where she has to face her destiny as the Other, is the result of her quarrel with her aunt over her son's death and her willingness to marry again. On the other hand, her return to her homeland is again the outcome of her dispute with the Scottish male protagonist over his initial refusal to convert in order to marry her. So if the quarrel with her aunt did not occur, there would be no journey of otherness and alienation in a foreign country, and if the second dispute did not happen, her feelings of strangeness and outsidership would not be deepened by her return to her homeland. In this sense, the novel argues that the conflicts and disputes between the characters are the primary and direct reasons that lead to their strangeness and otherness though other reasons may intrude in the construction of this status. And by highlighting this reality, the novel opens an alternative

In contemporary history, the encounter of the Other being cultural, racial or gender Other has become a necessity for the evolution of societies and humankind in general. The protagonists' narrative of their lives and their encounter seems, thus, to be one of an intercultural experience as previously conceptually defined. Concepts, values, beliefs and behaviours are relativised through encounter with otherness and this becomes a process of self-discovery that ultimately enriches life. Communication and interaction take place in a 'third space' where the edge identities do not merge, but constantly redefine themselves in a relationship characterized by compromise and negotiation, self-assertiveness and openness to Other's existence. Their journeys have been that of many challenges, exploring their otherness starting from their differences that separate them and meeting each other half way. This particular fictional work allows us to explore not only the intercultural relationship between Rae and Sammar, but also to observe the structure of social relations from the point of view of two people who have placed themselves in the border-zone between cultures and identities and to question our common-sense assumptions about how cultures and identities are formed. Accordingly, the novel demonstrates smoothly how we mostly agree and how we come to the same conclusion by different ways, out of our uniqueness. It also argues that the encounter with otherness and re-negotiation of identities must be repositioned as a natural and enriching experience, and that by working according to these principles we may contribute to the construction of a better world, a world where mutual understanding and communicative intercultural and intracultural relationships may be possible.

The challenge of the discourse of the Other in this literary text has a deep and a far-reaching prospective. In contexts, the Western and the African one, misrepresentation, misconceptions and misunderstandings are at the core of the process of otherness since they structure all the categorization and marginalization of all the three status of the Other presented in this paper. The depiction of the cultural, racial and gender other is used both for the manifestation of the individuals' differences and their stratification as well for the struggle against them. Being the Other and the outsider in the novel prospective, the protagonist owns certain characteristics and enough power to face her othering position and to break this

individuals and the Western and Eastern societies. This ar strategies used by the othered characters to include themselves into the community and establish relationships with its members. In this sense, Aboulela's "translates" between two cultures by means of both cultural and spiritual modes as well as material objects, around which cultural meanings crystallizes. Respectively, the protagonists' jobs and languages, their love relationship and lives in their different mutual parts, and objects like the "Henna coloured" coat are means of transition between the two worlds.

The fundamental theme of the novel is the encounter with the Other. The focus is mainly the structure and process of the encounter itself as well as the significance and meaning of such encounters for human life, thought and progress. Therefore, the novel seems to insist on the role of the Other in the encounter, the nature of the experiences of initial contact between peoples of utterly different worlds and their results as well as the impact of the factors of social structure, cultural perception, and racial representation. The novel shows that observance and involvement are not the main components of the story; rather the test of any successful encounter is the greater understanding, compassion and communal self-discovery. Both protagonists' journeys, either to Scotland or to Africa, are journeys into self-discovery and faith, but beyond that, they are journeys into compassion and accepting the Other. The female protagonist's life in Scotland demarcates her identities to negotiate the differences and to understand their importance in the encounter with the Other; and her return to her homeland makes her enter a process of self-discovery that enables her to communicate with the members of her family. On the other hand, the male protagonist also learns that the Other deserves a step forward and changing in attitudes and beliefs to meet with this Other who, through dialectical relations, their perception as the Other is redeemed. In this sense, Aboulela's voice is a quiet one, but a clear and sharp one to convey a global message of accepting the Other despite their differences that distinguish "them" from "us".

It is at the core of the matter to consider not only the Other's actual image which is depicted in the novel, or the way it presents them, but also to reconsider the actual role that the protagonist occupies in resisting her perception as the Other in both societies. What the novel conveys is not only the image of the Muslim Arab individuals in the West, but even more significant is the degree of attention being paid to this minority and thus the way to bring the Western and the Eastern divides into contact to understand one another and explain

In the novel, the contact between languages and cultures in which the local, the national, and the global as well as the individuals and their social identities and their formulation in each one of these spheres, determine the need for critical cultural awareness and intercultural and intracultural communication. Therefore, a recurrent topic for Anglophone Muslim Arab writers has been the pressures and otherness of Muslim and Arab immigrants living in western societies. For this reason, *The Translator* emphasizes the importance of the self-representation of the Other, being a foreigner or a member of the same community, and the way this representation influences how others perceive them. Basing on this, both the foreigner and the native outsider can bridge the gap between them and other people.

In both parts of the novel, the protagonist is trying to reconcile her origin and differences with her present situation and her desires for the future. Each part in its own way poses the questions of whether one can totally give up one's past, differences and their original roots, and whether there is a limit to the common ground achievable by those with seemingly incommensurable attitudes such as otherness and subjectivity. This fact makes Aboulela's depictions of the Other, subjectivity, and incommunicability in this way all the more compelling for the reader, since one can readily identify with the experiences portrayed in her writings regardless of ethnic background or immigrant experience or cultural heritage. This is what appears at the heart of the issue of the Other in this novel. To understand our identities, the others' identities, recognize what has formed our and their biases, stereotypes, prejudices and judgments, necessitate the will to question those beliefs and images and to learn how to engage in daily life with self and Other. In addition to the dialogic atmosphere of the novel that introduces a vision of commitment of this literary work in reflecting the image of the Other, it proposes the different ways of bridging the gap and narrowing the distance between the Other and those who perceive as different from them. *The Translator* convinces the reader that there are always new means of dealing with the otherness situation and altering the perception of the Other. It discusses these ideas for it is written in the belief that only as the Other succeeds in understanding their past and present to re-present themselves, there is future for them to build a communicative bridge with others and integrate into human relations with them.

a contact across geographical boundaries, between
as the intracultural encounter is a contact with
individuals who share different cultural backgrounds within the same country. Therefore, the novel aims to promote respect for diversity both nationally and across borders. In the first part of the novel, the author focuses on the existing differences in a western country, while in the second part, she stresses the internal conflicts within the national borders. Nevertheless, these differences are not translated into eternal struggle and permanent contempt and exclusion, instead they are pictured as “positive elements” for self-discovery and achieving a dialogue of civilizations and cultures. *The Translator* explicitly embodied the job of the protagonist, but its connotative or implicit meaning is the translation of the Eastern Muslim culture to the western reader. Through this actual translation, Aboulela hopes to create an intercultural bridge between the East and the Other (West) and the West and the Other (East). Moreover, she puts focus on breaking the barriers of “inner-conflicts” and erasing the intracultural misunderstandings between the members of the same community by means of comprehensibility and love.

In the novel, for the characters and mainly for both protagonists, love means erasing the boundaries of language, nation, culture and religion. It translates “us” to “them” and “them” to “us” and creates a communicative bridge between the East and the West as well as between individuals of the same society. Although the contrasts between the two cities (Scotland and Khartoum) symbolize the contrasts in religion and culture between the two protagonists, the novel emphasizes the possibility of overcoming the differences and meeting each other halfway through a “love ethics” (Hooks, 2002:101). Through the depiction of the cross-cultural relationship between the two protagonists, Aboulela calls for cultural hybridity, and a dialogue between the western and Islamic civilizations. Moreover, through this “love ethic”, the protagonist succeeds in gaining acceptance within her family. In this respect, the novel symbolizes love as a means of communication and comprehension.

It may have become clear that the idea of New English literature as a contribution to world-wide communication has to be regarded today under the conditions of cultural dialogue and dialogue of civilizations. The discussion on the communicative function attributed to such literary works has to part with the idea that the great diversity of literatures can be regarded as

n. It has to confront the dynamism of the Other and world-wide cultural interaction. Since the encounter with the Other is inevitable and leads to the multiplicity of interactions, diverse discursive communities are constituted and culture and communication are placed at the center of a fundamental process of representation of individuals and redefinition of social identities in the twentieth-century context. The novel, for example, probes deeply into notions of national, cultural and religious identities and their relation with the categorization of the Other, deconstructing orientalist and occidental representations and appearances of otherness and deliberately subverting those perceptions and images which some western and Eastern novelists hold sacred. From this condition of a world-wide network of interrelations it follows that each literature is embedded in a complex connection in which it has always been already translated either in Western or Eastern terminology. In this view, New English literature is not regarded as a product of internalization but rather as a critical dimension where the different cultures and cultural conflicts can be represented in their complexity by means of the self-expression of their subjects and where the latter are influenced by the notion of “writing back” or “translating themselves”.

The aim of this dissertation has been at first interest a literary research that explores the interpretation of a fictional novel. But at further extent, it seems that it reaches to the edge of humanity to which the fictitious novel hints. The fictional characters are presented in the novel to enforce the possibility of encountering any human Other and the necessity of dealing with them. It is true that a work of literature is revealed in the differentiated unity of the culture of the epoch in which it was created, but it cannot be closed off in this epoch: its fullness is revealed only in “great time”. In other words, a literary work extends beyond the limits of the time of its production to reach further to other cultural and historical periods. In this sense, every novelist is a historical novelist. This historical novelist is a historian to whom a talent for imaginative fiction has been fastened.(Burgess, 1967:139).Consequently, Literature inevitably arises from a milieu of conflicting discourses and, thus, cannot be discussed separately from historical and political events as it cannot be disassociated from the social and cultural milieu and interests of its writer. These events integrate into and shape the literary work without which its content cannot be fully understood. Any author is endowed with an inherited archive that shapes his/her narratives. In this light, *The Translator* can be read as a

Nevertheless, overcoming the differences and accepting the Other is Aboulela's aim behind her novel. Nourished by comprehension and acceptance, *The Translator* creates an atmosphere of hope to initiate a constructive view that may contrast with the statement of the unacceptable Other. It negotiates the possibility of intercultural encounter and dialogue of cultures. For Leila Aboulela, the Other who is victimized by such a label by virtue of the different skin colour, gender differences or the ignorance of its culture and religion; and worse than this, endowed with negative stereotypes, images and representations, can be accepted by the dominant collectivity and integrate into it despite his differences if only a bridge of cultural communication is created between individuals and barriers of exclusion are eradicated through translatability and comprehensibility. It also requires mutual respect of the Other's differences through cultural exchanging and possessing an objective knowledge for the first step toward accepting the Other begins with understanding our own culture and biases, becoming sensitive to the cultures of others, and appreciating the differences. The next step involves acquiring knowledge and understanding of other cultures, especially their values and beliefs."(Galanti, 2008:2). Thus, if this Other is treated as a human being far from any ideological classifications, economic interests, or political judgements, then the Other can be accepted. If we accept the individuals as in their nature of existence without the need to make them look like ourselves or the fear of meeting them, then the word "brother" may replace the word "Other" even if this latter is a foreigner.

To explain the concepts of the Other and the outsider depicted in the novel, the works of a number of theorists and experts in their fields are evoked to assert whether the simple fact of writing about otherness includes its three dimensions: Cultural, racial and gender othernesses. These three portrayals of the Other are defined to probe the status of the protagonist as a foreigner in a different culture where she is totally perceived as the Other who has different background and culture. Consequently, being a Sudanese Muslim woman, she perceives the western society as the Other. However, the novel's aim is not only to portray the Other, but to attribute certain qualities to this Other that make "him" able to enter a dialogue with others. In the third chapter, the status of the protagonist who is viewed as an



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and her role in integrating into her community is at this dissertation probes the portrait of the Other in one of the twentieth century literary works. The Sudanese Author's novel *The Translator* is described as a significant illustration of the concept of otherness into two different contexts. It also proposes a dialogue between the Other and those who put "him" in the category of otherness to bridge the gap between the Other and other people. Thanks to works of fiction, this may become a new trend to literatures to develop in order to shorted distances and to open spaces that allow dialogic interaction between the communities of the world.

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Annex

Summary of the novel

First published in 1999, *The Translator* tells the story of the life of exile of the female protagonist, Sammar, the daughter of Sudanese immigrant parents in the twentieth-century Scotland. She is a young Sudanese woman, who at age of seven, moved with her parents and her brother Waleed to live in Sudan till she got married with her cousin, Tarig, and came back with him to Scotland to study medicine. Here they have to face the cultural differences and the vision of otherness together. When her husband died after a car accident, Sammar took his body back to Sudan where she is accused by her mother-in-law as the responsible for his death. This accusation pushed her to leave her four-year's son and came back to Scotland. Finding her self alone and distanced from the Western society, she starts to work as a translator of Arabic texts at the University of Aberdeen where she meets the male Scottish protagonist, Rae Isles, (an academic who teaches Middle Eastern history and postcolonial politics at the university) and starts a romantic relationship with him. Over the course of the novel and despite the differences between them that implies their otherness, the two protagonists manage to overcome them and all other barriers separating them except religion because a Muslim woman is not allowed to marry only a Muslim man. So Rae's conversion to Islam is the only possibility for them to be together. Yet Rae's initial hesitation to convert to Islam after Sammar's proposal for him to convert in order to marry leads to their separation and to her return to her homeland. Again in this part of the world, Sammar finds her self othered and rejected by her family and she has to start another process of adjustment to this community after her long absence in Scotland. After spending one year with her family, Sammar receives a letter that informs her about Rae's conversion to Islam. At the end of the novel, Rae travels to Sudan to marry Sammar and to bring her with her son to Scotland where they will live as a family.

من خلال روايتها المترجمة، تتعرض الكاتبة السودانية ليلي أبو العلا إلى تجسيد صورة الآخر و نظراته للآخرين و كذلك نظراته لنفسه كآخر. ويتم تقديم هذه النظرة من خلال شخصيات الرواية، خاصة البطلة "سمر" التي تتفاعل مع الأحداث في مكانين مختلفين (اسكتلندا و السودان)، حيث تتم رؤية "سمر" كآخر يختلف ثقافيا، عرقيا و جنسيا عن الآخرين (المجتمع الغربي و السوداني و الرجل في حد ذاته). من خلال هذا الأدبي أيضا تتجلى إمكانية التغلب على هذه النظرة و تقليص الهوية بين الآخر و الآخرين و مشاركتها في علاقات حوارية. وعليه تقترح هذه الأطروحة مجموعة من الأسئلة:

- 1- ما هي صورة الآخر التي تقدمها الرواية؟ أو من هو الآخر في الرواية؟
- 2- كيف ينظر للبطلة كآخر ضمن المجتمع الغربي؟
- 3- كيف تحولت البطلة كآخر في نظرة مجتمعها خاصة عائلتها؟
- 4- كيف أثرت هذه النظرة على رؤية البطلة لنفسها ضمن المجتمعين؟
- 5- كيف تستطيع البطلة التغلب على وضعيتها كآخر وإقامة علاقات حوارية مع أفراد المجتمعين؟

الفرضيات الممكنة هي:

- 1- تتضمن صورة الآخر في تصور الكاتبة له كنظرة مسبقة لكل من هو مختلف ثقافيا و عرقيا و جنسيا عن الآخرين و كذلك كعلاقات قائمة على أحكام مسبقة قابلة للتغيير .
- 2- تقوم الرواية بتقديم الآخر من خلال زوايا مختلفة أهمها: رؤية البطلة كالأخر المختلف تماما عن السكان الأصليين، رؤية المرأة كآخر بالنسبة للرجل و كذلك رؤيتها كالأخر المختلف عن مجتمعها الأصلي بالأخص عائلتها.
- 3- تركز الكاتبة أيضا على مدى تأثير هذه النظرة على رؤية الآخر لنفسه و كيفية تجلي هذا التأثير في سلوك هذا الآخر.
- 4- من جهة أخرى، الرواية لا تكتفي بعرض صورة الآخر فقط و إنما تفتح فضاء لحوار الآخر مع الآخرين و بناء علاقات إنسانية من خلال إثبات الهوية و إزالة الأحكام المسبقة.

يعد هذا العمل الأدبي أيضا كبصمة تدل على مشاركة كتاب من أصل عربي و مسلم كأبو العلا في الحوار بين الشرق و الغرب أو بين الثقافات.

Aboulela incarne l'image d'Autre et sa vision envers les autres et même envers lui-même. Cette vision est présentée à travers les personnages du roman « La Traductrice », surtout l'héroïne « Sammar » qui vit les événements dans des lieux différents (L'Afrique, L'Europe) où elle est considérée comme Autre qui est totalement différent aux yeux de la société occidentale, la société soudanaise et L'homme lui-même. Ce travail littéraire présente aussi la possibilité de vaincre cette vision et approche L'autre des autres et leur partager les dialogues. Cette thèse présente la problématique sous forme des questions suivantes:

- 1- Comment le roman présente l'image d'autre ?
- 2- Comment la société occidentale voit l'héroïne comme autre?
- 3- Comment l'héroïne devient autre aux yeux de sa propre société et surtout aux yeux de sa famille ?
- 4- Comment cette vision a influencé l'héroïne ?
- 5- Comment l'héroïne pourra surmonter sa situation comme autre et faire des relations avec les autres membres des sociétés ?

Les hypothèses possibles sont :

- 1- D'après l'écrivaine, L'autre est totalement différent de vue intellectuelle, raciale et générique des autres, comme il est différent dans ses relations basées sur des préjugés qui peuvent être variés.
- 2- Le roman présente L'autre sous différents angles. Le plus important est la vision de l'héroïne comme autre totalement différent des habitants originaux, la vision de la femme comme autre par rapport à l'homme.
- 3- Le roman aussi présente la vision de l'héroïne comme autre différent de sa propre société surtout sa famille.
- 4- L'écrivaine base aussi sur l'effet de la vision de l'autre sur lui-même, et même son influence sur le comportement d'autre.
- 5- D'un autre côté, le roman ouvre un espace pour faire communiquer l'autre avec les autres et créer des relations humaines en prouvant l'identité et dissiper les préjugés.

Ce travail littéraire est considéré comme une empreinte qui indique la participation des écrivains d'origine arabe et musulmans comme Aboulela dans les dialogues entre l'occident et l'orient ou entre les cultures.



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