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SECTION OF ENGLISH

ARAB WOMEN WRITINGS: BETWEEN REBELLION AND
CREATIVITY

(H. BARAKAT'S THE STONE OF LAUGHTER(حجر الضحك)
AND A. SOUEIF'S THE MAP OF LOVE.)

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Anglo-Saxon Languages in partial fulfilment of
the degree of magister in literature/civilisation

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I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the Department of Anglo-Saxon Languages, the University of Oran. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text.

This dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination either in Algeria or overseas.

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Abstract

There is a growing interest both in the Arab world and in the Western world. Such interest is due to the creativity and the genuine sense of rebellion we find in the writings of Arab women writers whether they write in Arabic or in a foreign language. “Arab women writers, are there any?” this question was a commonplace statement among people in the West and even in the Arab world, and it still is but to a less extent these days with the growth of interest in this category of literature in the Arab world. Arab woman writings are an interesting field of research that has grabbed the attention of critics, readers in the Arab world and surprisingly readers in the West. Thus, this work is nothing but one attempt among others to unearth the genuine originality of works produced by Arab women novelists and poets.

This dissertation attempts to unveil the literary creativity and the thematic rebellion of Arab women writings through the analysis of two novels by two representative Arab women writers: *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك) (1990) by Huda Barakat, and *The Map of Love* (1999) by Ahdaf Soueif. The two novels are written in two different languages; the former is written in Arabic and the latter is written in English. The choice of these two literary works goes back to the peculiarity and the originality of their writers. In fact, each novel needs a whole debate and a whole work of research, but in this reflection we have tried to shed light on the interesting literary creativeness of each novel whether the one of the Arabic expression or the other of the English expression.

This work is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is devoted to the presentation of the historical background of contemporary Arab women writings. Chapter Two will be devoted to the analysis of Huda Barakat’s *The Stone of Laughter* (2006). In this chapter, we will base our analysis on the English version of the novel as we intend to draw attention to the peculiarity of the characterization and the narrative technique in this novel. Chapter Three, therefore, is devoted to the analysis of Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999) and here again our focus is on the particularity of the narrative technique and the thematic in this novel. In Chapter Four, a thematic comparison of the two novels is developed to figure out the divergences that may exist among two novels written by two Arab women writers but in two different languages, and how each novelist represents her identity through her style. Writings by Arab women are of a specific literary creativity whether they write in Arabic (Huda Barakat) or in English (Ahdaf Soueif). This originality is the outcome of given sets of social, political, religious and even historical factors.

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Dedication

This work is but a word of thanking to my dear parents who were by my side to support me, to my fiancé, to my sisters and brothers.

Long days and lonely nights have gone away since he left us with his bright smile; dear Mr. Bouhend, I do dedicate to your soul this modest work of research that you once had been the supervisor of . You left this world of us with your dear wife to live there among the righteous and the angels.

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General Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Since the awarding of the Nobel Prize to the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz in 1988, literature by Arab writers has gained more importance and interest in the European countries as well as in the United States of America. Mahfouz's books have been translated into a lot of European languages, and this has given the opportunity to other Arab male writers to find their way to universality notably the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish, the Syrian Nizar Qabani, the Saudi Arabian Abdelrahim Munif, the Lebanese Ilyes Khouri, and other great figures of Literature in the Arab world.

Conversely, in the last few decades, literature in the Arab world has witnessed an amazing boom of literary productions by Arab women writers, productions that have also been translated into English, French and the main foreign languages. Thus, is this literature by Arab women a new trend of Arab literature? The answer requires a thorough and clever investigation because if it is new to non-Arab world, it has a sound tradition in the Arab world and it needs a careful exploration. Writings by Arab women go back to the Pre-Islamic¹ era and may be well before that. In fact, the number of women who have distinguished themselves in Arabic literature from the sixth century until today is immense despite all obstacles, whether social, cultural or political.

Al Khansa (575-664) is the most known name among thousands of great Arab women poets, and writers. She was not only a poet to whom men owed respect, but also a literary critic which was indeed significant that time. She used to evaluate and scrutinise the works of other male poets in the famous literary market known as Okaz market² in the present day Saudi Arabia. All through the next fourteen centuries, women in the Arab world have been writing masterpieces of literature, like the religious poet Shaymaa (the 6th century, a contemporary of the Prophet Mohamed) and later Rabia Aladawya (the Sufi poet: 718- 803). The other remarkable thing is that the first Arab novel was written by a woman and not a man, by Zayneb Fawaz³ published in 1899, and there were other talented Arab women writers in the nineteenth century remarkably A'isha al-Taymuriya, Warda al-Yaziji .

Arab women, as well as women all over the world, are known to be the storytellers of generations, and storytelling is one of the literary genres from which a genuine talent of writing

from the very early times up to this very moment when we
l at times prevailing next to male literary talents.

By the end of the Second World War, Arab Women writings had witnessed an important growth in production and in readership, and the reason behind this rise is that, as Joseph T. Zeiden tries to explain it, most Arab countries had achieved political independence by the end of the World War II (except for North African countries), and this new condition enabled them to have a more relaxed relationship with the West. Moreover, the drive of the newly independent states for national identity and the construction of a modern, and to a great extent secular, society led to a gradual improvement in the social and educational conditions of Arab women. (1994: 93).

Thus, the development of education gave women the opportunity to construct their own philosophy of individualism and a consciousness of a female identity which was somehow different from the trend of Feminism [see chapter I] in the world. The Arab women have revealed a great deal of literary creativity in writing: prose, poetry and playwriting, and they have revealed also a concern over important political, social and cultural issues. The Palestinian issue is one of these controversial, crucial issues that have overwhelmed the writings of women writers like the Palestinian Fadwa Touqan, Sahar Khalifah, Liana Badr, Salma Alkhadra Jeyoussi, Soraya Antonius ...; the poetry of Fadwa Touqan, for instance, has become part of the Palestinian national identity. Liana Badr, Huda Barakat, Zhour Lounissi, and others have also managed to illustrate through their novels and writings that the Arab woman, though deprived of her political rights, can be intensely involved in national political issues.

Besides this originality in reflecting important national, cultural and social issues in their works of fiction, Arab women writers have managed to come out with genuine masterpieces of literature, novels, short stories and poems, in foreign languages other than Arabic. This step in the literature by Arab women has brought universality to a lot of writers, like Ahdaf Soueif, Fadia Faqir, Assia Djebbar, Leila Aboulela, Betool Khedairi.... This is how the Arab Woman writer, nowadays, does compete with male writers whether Arabs or even Westerners, and what Ahdaf Soueif has achieved, i.e. being nominated for the famous literary competition the Booker prize in 1999 next to big names of native talented male, and female, writers, tells a lot about how talented Arab women are despite the Oriental Western

Internal Orientalism, i.e. the social belittlement, the saints put on them in the Arab world

Nawal Saadawi, the Egyptian writer, however, is known to be the first Arab woman to be widely read in Europe. Her first book of fiction 'الوجه العاري للمرأة العربية' (*The Hidden Face of Eve*), first published in Arabic in 1977 and later appeared in English in 1980, has become a classic. N. Saadawi's second novel *إمرأة عند نقطة الصفر* (1973) (English version: *Woman at Point Zero*, 1980) has opened the door to thirteen other books by Saadawi (all have been translated in English), and thus N. Saadawi has become the most read of all Arab women novelists in the West.

Nevertheless, a lot of critics in the Arab world have doubted this interest in N. Saadawi's productions, evaluated by some critics as being non-fiction books or of low literary merits. Alia Mamdouh, in an interview to the Arabic newspaper "Al Hayat", on May the 20th 1996, says: "Nawal el-Saadawi does not represent the true picture of the creativity of Arab women." Ahdaf Soueif, for the same newspaper, says: "*El-Saadawi writes scientific research which is good. But she writes bad novels and it is unfair that the West thinks that what she writes represents Arab women's creative writing.*" ("Al Hayat", May the 20th 1996). Some critics asserted that such Western interest in Saadawi's novels is not innocent and it just serves their views and re-presentations of the Arab woman as being oppressed, non-educated and sexually exploited. This portrait is omnipresent in N. Saadawi's novels, and some would think that this is what made Nawel Saadawi marketable in Europe as much as in the United States of America.

This viewpoint does not hide the fact that the Arab woman writer is perceived in the West, and novelists like Assia Djebbar, Hanane Sheikh, Emily Nasrallah, Fadia Faqir, Salma Alkhadraâ Jeyoussi, Ahdaf Soueif and others are the representatives of the Arab woman writer who have given birth to a new type of literary writings, writings that neither belong to the Arabic literature nor to the European, Western literature, writings that belong to both literatures; these writings are expressed through European languages but within the context of an Arabic culture. This new type of literary writings is what some critics would call Hybrid writings, or less common, a Euro-Arab literature. On the other hand, there have been great efforts to translate novels and poems by Arab women writers from the Arabic language to other foreign languages. One of these efforts is the Project for Translation from Arabic⁴ (**PROTA**),

Alma Alkhadraâ Jeyoussi, and the series of English novels launched by Garnet Publishing of London under the supervision of the Jordanian novelist Fadia Faqir.

Thus, Literature by Arab women writers now is facing a double challenge competition: on the one hand along Arab male writers and on the other hand against Western writers (of both genders). For this reason, this interesting field of investigation has grabbed our attention to undertake our research and question how creative and talented are Arab women writers whether they write in Arabic or in a foreign language. When you read about writers like Sahar khalifah from Palestine, or Ahlam Mousteghanmi from Algeria, or Hanane Sheikh from Lebanon, or Hoda Barakat from Lebanon, or Ahdaf Soueif from Egypt..., you are impressed by the genuine literary creativity found in their works of fiction. This literary creativity is unique and specific to Arab women writers, so where does it lie? In the narrative technique? In the characterization technique? In the thematic of their works? These questions lead us to think about the specificity of Arab women writings.

In fact, this work is nothing but an attempt to initiate a reflection on this huge field of investigation. The corpus on which we have worked in this research are two great novels by two representative Arab women: *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك) (1990) by Huda Barakat and *The Map of Love* (1999) by Ahdaf Soueif. Obviously, the two novels are written by two different authors, and each comes from a different Arab country: Barakat is a Lebanese writer, and Soueif is an Egyptian writer. Moreover, the former is originally written in Arabic and then translated into English and other foreign languages whereas the latter is written in English. Thus, the choice of these two novels as our corpus was not done at random, but because the two novels have had a great success in the Arab world as well as in the West. Besides, the two novels represent, each in its own, a revolutionary literary production and a specific form of creativity; and this is what we will try to argue all through this work.

From a methodological perspective, it seems inappropriate to analyse a corpus of two different novels, by two different authors and expressed in two different linguistic backgrounds. Indeed, such a choice is not innocent; having chosen to analyse Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter*, based on the English translated version, and Soueif's *The Map of Love* considered as a hybrid novel is an approach which will expose and argue the creativeness and

whether written in Arabic (then translated to European age.

In this work, we are not going to tackle the problems of translating literary works as it is so important and so complicated that we cannot devote much to this issue in this specific, limited space. However, as a future perspective, to analyse a translated novel by an Arab woman writer and to come to a finding that this translated novel is creative and innovative despite that it is reformulated by a writer other than the author herself, will allow us to propose such translated texts to be taught to English, LMD⁵ students. As for analysing a hybrid novel, this is also a standpoint towards a new way of 'teaching' literature to our students. Both novels do contain a cultural Arab essence through the setting (Cairo, Beirut), some expressions (see chapter III) and the characters themselves (Khalil, Naji... in *The Stone of Laughter*, and Amal, Sharif... in *The Map of Love*), and this is what can grab and attract our students' attention to appreciate and to love Literature as a subject.

This work follows a particular structure as it deals with two novels. In the First Chapter, we will present a brief historical background of the contemporary Arab Woman writings while the Second Chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the first novel *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك) by Huda Barakat. We will describe the novel (plot, characters, setting), and we will try to unveil the peculiarity of this novel, as a "novel of war". The Third chapter will be devoted to the second novel *The Map of Love* by Ahdaf Soueif. Besides the description of this novel, we will shed light on an important feature of this novel, *The Map of Love* as a hybrid work of fiction. In the Fourth Chapter, we will compare the two novels on the basis of a comparison grid. This grid will contain the most important elements of the novels, i.e. characterisation, narration and the narrative technique.

As a general conclusion, and after comparing two works by two different Arab women writers who write in two different languages, we will try to confirm our hypothesis that Arab women writings are not only creative but also rebellious, and thus it allows them to break down the boundaries that both the Arab male-dominated culture and the foreign Western culture impose on them.

This work is an attempt to argue that Arab women writers have remarkable literary talents and literary creativity. Yet in this modest work, we will try to focus on the narrative



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Stone of Laughter (حجر الضحك) to see to what extent the writers are specific and particular as compared to the literary productions by Arab male writers and Western writers.

1. The Pre-Islamic era, or the so-called “العصر الجاهلي” [Al-‘asr aljahili] is said to be the poetry era of 17 great poets: Al-A'sha , Al-Khansa , Al-Nabigha , Al-Rabi ibn, Abu al-Huqayq ,Al-Zeir Salim, 'Alqama ibn 'Ubadā, Hatim Tai, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr... .
2. Souk Okaz is a “souk”, i.e. a market, in Saudi Arabia known from the very early times of the Pre-Islamic era where people used to gather and listen to great poets coming from the different corners of the Arabian Peninsula.
3. Zayneb Fawaz (?-1914), a Lebanese writer and historian of the 19th century, is considered to be the first Arab writer ever to give birth to an Arab novel even before Houssein Haykal. One of her works is رسائل زينبية (Letters by Zeineb).
4. PROTA: It is the abbreviation *Project of Translation from Arabic* founded and directed by Salma Khadraâ al-Jayyûsî. Towards the end of the 1970s the Project for the Translation of Arabic (PROTA), began to take shape under the direction of the Palestinian poetess and critic, Dr. Salmâ Khadrâ al-Jayyûsî who was then invited by John Moore, the Director of Columbia University Press, to prepare a large anthology of modern Arabic literature.
5. LMD (Licence, Master, Doctorat) is a new organizational framework for university courses, which is currently being implemented in the Algerian University. Adopting the LMD system is expected to bring Algerian degrees up to European standards, through innovative teaching methods and curricula offered to teachers, researchers and students.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEMPORARY ARAB WOMAN WRITINGS

Literature in the Arab world was, for a so long time, the arena of creativity reserved to males although brilliant women writers and poets, along the history of Arabic literature, affirmed their capacity of being as original as men notably (Alkhansaa, Rabia Aladawya, and other female poets of the Classical times¹, poets who left for the Arabic literature a good repertoire though not fully preserved.

Indeed, women all over the world have long been lagging behind men throughout the history of *Belles Lettres*, and this is what V. Woolf complained about in her book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) where she disapproved the “shell” of the family guardian her society imposed on her. Thus, the oppression practised upon women in the world of literature was not only imposed on Arab women writers but also on female writers in the European countries but to a lesser extent.

Nevertheless, in the last two centuries, Arabic literature has witnessed a proliferation of literary productions by Arab women writers. The latter have played a salient role in the modern and the post modern literary renaissance of the Arab literature²; this role has manifested mostly in the rich stylistic as well as thematic diversity of the literary masterpieces produced by Arab female novelists and poets. Besides, what has brought more interest to this category of Arabic literature is the availability of Arab women writings' translations in the European languages (notably English, French, Turkish...) in the last few decades.

Moreover, the Western interest in Arab women has been growing in recent years; this growth may go back to a set of reasons or factors: to the western interest in Islam itself and how the West perceives women's status in Islam as inferior and oppressed, to the omnipresence of an orientalist³ fascination of what an Arab woman can do and can produce, and more importantly to a boom of literary productions by Arab women writers whether translated or originally written in European languages.

Hence, to know more about Arab women writings, and more precisely about contemporary Arab women writers, this chapter will be devoted to the presentation of a historical background of this category of Arab literature. This chapter will be divided into four sections; the first section entitled as ‘pioneers of Modern Arab women writings’, the second

writers', the third as 'Arab women writings and Wars', hybridity'.

1.2 Pioneers of modern Arab woman writings

Up to the beginnings of the Twentieth Century, Arab women had no established female poetic or narrative traditions unlike in the Western countries (with writers like Charlotte Bronte, Virginia Woolf, and Emily Dickinson...). However, there were some modest attempts by Arab female writers to publish literary books like Nazira Zeineddine⁴ (a Lebanese writer: 1908-1976), but these attempts were rather rejected by male writers, critics and the society as a whole.

As for Zeineddine, she published in 1928 a book entitled "الحجاب و السفور" (*Lifting the Veil; Wearing the Veil*) which was criticized by male critics and writers, and she was accused to be against Islamic Rules. As a reaction to this accusation, N. Zeineddine wrote another book entitled "الفتاة و الشيوخ" (The Girl and the Sheikhs) in 1929; the originality of this book led other writers and Sheikhs like Moustapha Elghilyini to deny that N. Zeineddine was the real writer of her book which was indeed nothing but an attempt to deny that an Arab woman could write as originally as her male fellows.

Zeineddine had proved, through her writings, to be the major Arab feminist writer to date in Lebanon and neighbouring Arab countries. In one of her letters to the French High Commissioner (April 3, 1928), she said:

"I am a Muslim Lebanese Oriental young woman. My father gave me the chance to study and to exercise my freedom of thought. I studied with an open minded... the civilization of the Orient and its social conditions, just as I studied Western civilization and its social phenomena."

In the above quotation, Zeineddine clearly stated the importance of education in freeing the Arab woman intellectually and socially. She also asserted that the Arab woman is able to think, to feel and reflect upon the world around her. On another hand, N. Zeineddine criticized the rigidity of mind of the Muslim scholars and their resistance to development, to change and

deserves as she represents the other half of the society. Scholars, who continually accused her to be heretic, she simply argued that Muslims in the early days of Islam took some of their religion from a woman, the Prophet's wife Aisha, i.e. in learning their religion they relied on what a woman had memorized. (Zeineddine, 1929: 10)

Zeineddine's arguments and reasoning received many favourable responses from a number of Arab writers (male and female) including Amin al-Rihani⁵. Such a reaction illustrates the liberal, moderate currents that started to blow over the Arab world at the end of the 1920s and reveals a readiness in the Arab societies to adopt new ideas about women and their status in society; then it proves also the capacity of Arabic culture at the time to embrace a liberal social address.

Mai Ziyada is another female figure who had pioneered in representing the Arab woman's talent of writing. She embodies through her originality in writing and personal achievements the capacity of Arab women to overcome their social inheritance and assert their own talents as well as personhood.

“For all her courage and self-confidence, Mai was circumspect in her assessment of women's situation in the Arab world. Her writings were marked by a careful handling of ideas, by tact, and by a respect for those traditions she felt to be deep-seated in Arab culture.” (Majaj, 2002 : 6)

Ziyada represented the spirit of Arab female individualism and personhood, i.e. the Arab woman's independence in all fields and at all levels. Mai Ziyada said: “*I read sometimes what makes me wonder whether this is the candour of an audacious writer or of an uncultivated one.*” (Ziyada, 1975:14). Ziyada stated in more than one occasion that women throughout history were assigned by the society to be servants, dolls or models.

She said that the woman began as a humiliated slave, then developed into a brainless child, then into a toy with which the masters played at their leisure, then into a statue bedecked with silken robes and precious jewels. She claimed that women's history is one of long and

f those Arab feminists pioneering in voicing the Arab
ood (individualism). Those pioneering women writers,
with the birth of the twentieth century, enlisted their pens in the cause of women's freedom.

Besides M. Ziyada, there were several other women in the Arab world earlier in the twentieth century who wrote on women, who edited journals on women's issues, and who loudly voiced a truly feminist consciousness. Those were the women writers who formed the background to contemporary Arab women writings; these early Arab female writers were mainly writers of discourse, i.e. women writing in realm of ideas. Their early works form the stronghold of the present day daring and independence seen in the new women writers of fiction in the Arab world.

Those women pioneering of Arab woman fiction writings not only voiced the Arab woman as an individual uniqueness but also voiced national, political issues of their societies. We are pointing here at the early Palestinian women writers and notably Palestinian woman poets like Fadwa Touqan, Salma al-Khadraa Jeyussi⁶...; as for Fadwa Touqan, she is said to be the first Palestinian woman writer to strongly express a tradition of resistance in her works. She is also considered as the "mother" of contemporary Palestinian poetry for the great success her early and even later works achieved.

Touqan started writing poetry as early as 1946. Among her publications, there were mainly collections of poetry like *Others-Alone with the Days* (1952), *Give us Love* (1960) and *Before the Closed Door* (1967). Her published poetry collections paralleled and marked the evolution of the Palestinian political consciousness since al-Nakba⁷. The Palestinian consciousness evolved from the paralyzing feelings of shock, despair and the sense of being victims into a strong resistance and transformed pride and political flamboyance; and so did the literary creativity of the Palestinian woman writer like F. Touqan.

"Call of the Land" (نداء الأرض) (1954) is one of Touqan's most famous poems in which through verses she portrays the sufferance of a refugee who feels pulled toward the sight of the former Palestinian city of Jafa, lit up at night, and is compelled to cross the border into Israel, aware that he will die if he does so.

anks the traditional classical poets with the
herself as a link in the chain of Palestinian
history [...] Touqan’s poetry became distinctly more nationalistic in the
wake of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, including her hometown
of Nablus in 1967.” (Farsoun, 2004: 91, quoted in Majaj, 2002)

Touqan’s poetry has become a tradition that several Palestinian poets picked up and elaborated. These poets included female and male writers like Samih Al Qassam, Tawfiq Zayyad , Salma al-Khadraa Jeyussi, Salem Jubran and especially Mahmoud Darwish⁸. In fact, Touqan is both a representative of the Palestinian Woman’s sufferance and rebellion and the Palestinian people’s challenge and resistance.

Women’s voices have echoed determinedly throughout the twentieth century, protesting women’s inherent needs for freedom and equality, arguing, disputing, challenging, defying, raising questions, demanding answers and asserting women’s personhood and dignity. The early Arab women writers of the twentieth century did pave the way for the contemporary Arab female writers to be what they are today, and without their genuine, unique experience contemporary Arab women writers would have had a different façade, and the Arab women’s literary history might have taken quite a different course.

1.3 Feminism by Arab women writers

It is difficult to proffer a category of “Middle Eastern” or Arab feminism⁹ as it is to offer a single definition of Western feminism. However, if generalizations are to be made, we may assert that Arab feminism is different from Western feminism because the nature of the feminist ideology in the Arab world is different in essence from that in the West. Arab feminism has been historically connected to nationalist and anti-imperialist movements in the ex-colonies of France, Britain and other colonialist powers.

It is true that the Arab world had witnessed revolutionary feminist ideologies and trends mostly by the 1940s and the 1950s, i.e. the period of liberation of many Arab countries like Egypt, Morocco, Libya and Algeria. Thus, the proliferation of feminist discourses, all over the Arab countries, in the first three decades of the twentieth century prompted the development of two distinct schools of feminism in the Arab world.

Egyptian feminism sought to emulate western
more marginal voices of Egyptian feminism
attempted to redefine women's social roles from within an indigenous
Islamic framework.” (L. Code, 2003: 342, quoted in Cohen, 2005)

On another hand, Arab women in other nations were equally militant in nationalist and feminist struggles in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. By 1944, they consolidated Arab feminist activism by forming the Arab Feminist Union. Pan-Arab feminism re-emerged in the mid-1980s under the sponsorship of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association¹ with Egyptian feminist Nawal Saadawi as president.

In fact, Arab feminism has had a long and unsettled history. What is called “feminism” in the Arab world is a complex term that is often associated with a public discourse as a hybrid concept that somehow points at and implies foreign intervention. The important accusations from the dominant culture in the Arab world against feminism have been such ideas on feminism to be another example of the ‘West’ interfering and meddling in the affairs of the ‘East’. This position has had the unfortunate symptom of re-affirming the position of the East as naïve and easily taken by alluring Western ideas. Thus, as well as having to deal with the inherent obstructions to the setting up of groups and movements for the improvement of women's lives, secular liberal and even Islamist women's groups have had to defend themselves against the allegations from conservative groups that they are working within Western models unsuitable for the Arab Woman.

The generation of Arab women novelists who began the literary feminist career in the late 1950s not only were able to keep the female literary culture alive but also worked tirelessly and successfully to enrich it. They set out to explore the feminism psyche that had been “terra incognita” throughout the history of Arabic literature because that literature had been almost exclusively the product of male writers. Leila Baalabakki¹³ and those who followed her brought the discourse of a female point of view into the mainstream of Arab writing. Until then, the majority of the literature was written from distinctly male points of view.

¹ الجمعية العربية للتضامن مع المرأة العربية

ited to the changing of the contemporary Arab literature but also has used her pen in times of wars and conflicts as a kind of resistance. Nawal Saadawi says: “does anything more than danger stimulate our creativity? And does anything threaten our creativity more than danger?” (N. Saadawi, 1996: 157). In her article “Mapping Peace”, the literary critic Miriam Cooke claims that women have a stake in interpreting their war experiences.

In fact, writing during war time is an experience that is part of war itself, an experience that informs the socio-political roles that precede it. The Lebanese, the Palestinian, and most recently the Iraqi women writers are vivid, genuine representatives of what a woman can create during times of war, how she can re-shape her experience of war and which portrait she can give to this experience. Hanane Sheikh, Sahar Khalifah, Mai Ghousseub and Huda Barakat’s writings are instances of the Arab woman’s creativity in moments of conflicts, of wars and of danger.

Women’s war literature allows the *intolerable* to be written because women do not take part in wars with arms but rather with their pens, their voices and their intellects. This trend of Arab literature is viewed as an authoritative tool against the violence of war and as a passive resistance. Contemporary Arab women writers have shown a big interest of creativity in writing novels, poems and short stories that lucidly portray the transformations war brings.

The Lebanese and the Palestinian woman authors have managed to develop war writings that incorporate both writing as resistance and writing of methods of resistance, i.e. for these writers, though writing about the conditions of war may be viewed as an act of resistance itself, there is always another dimension of resistance, that of resisting against the internal oriental¹⁰ views and perceptions regarding the Arab woman. [See chapter II]

When reading novels by Lebanese women authors, we may perceive, instead of a depiction of war events, an embodiment of a struggle with the norms of gender uncovered through circumstances of war, and this is what we will try to argue later in chapter two through the analysis of Huda Barakat’s *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك),

“The experience of war, though it may initially seek to reaffirm established gender roles, ends up blurring and even annihilating the

les. War in this instance provides the arena from their supposedly feminine or masculine matrices and observed differently.” (A. Valassopoulos, 2007: 56)

Arab women writers, who have witnessed moments of wars and conflicts and who have decided to transmit their experience to their readers through their writings, may have felt an anxiety to express their own identity as being Arabs and women at the same time; this may seem more restrictive than liberating. Most of the contemporary Lebanese novelists’ writings, for example, reveal the need to consider not only what constitutes them as Lebanese but also how the war (the Civil War) refines their gendered position within their society. Hanane Sheikh’s *The Story of Zahra* (حكاية زهرة), Etel Adnan’s¹¹ *Sitt Marie Rose* (الست ماري روز) and Huda Barakat’s *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك) are instances of the creative literary productions a war can give birth with the ‘fingers’ of an Arab woman.

1.5 Arab women hybridity

The contemporary Arab women writers have shown a serious amount of rebellion against the male domination in the field of *Belles Lettres* in the Arab world. They also, on the other hand, have shown an amazing revolt in confronting another kind of domination overseas, that of male and female Western writers. Creative Arab women authors, like Ahdaf Soueif, Assia Djebbar¹², Soraya Antonius and others, have managed to give birth to a new trend of literature that is Arabic in its essence, but Foreign in its language; this is what we call ‘postcolonial hybrids’ (or *hybrid writings*).

The proliferation of hybridity theory in cultural studies dates back to the 1980s with the translation into English and French of the work of the Russian linguist and critic M Bakhtin, who drew attention to the power of linguistic hybridity both to expose the language of authority and to fuse another voice with it. To Bakhtin, hybridity was a "dialogic"¹³ structure, which, within one utterance, could undo authority and make room for the less powerful idiom. It was a structure comprising sameness as well as difference, and therefore it was one that kept up a "dialogic" relation with authority. More recently, the Anglo-American critic Homi Bhabha has linked hybridity to his own area of interest, i.e., postcolonial studies.

...n of languages fundamental ability to be simultaneously described this phenomenon of hybridity as an ‘intentional hybrid’ because it will always involve ‘directness’, encompassing the intended orientation of the word in any speech act towards an addressee. For Bakhtin, hybridity describes the process of the authorial unmasking of author’s speech, through a language that is ‘double-accented’ and ‘double-styled’.

Hybrid texts go back the early times because this phenomenon is innate in human beings, and it is nothing but fusing two styles of painting, of music, of dancing, of literary writing, of art in general. This is what Vladimir Krysinski explains in his definition of hybrid texts; he says:

“Hybridity inscribes in many discursive problematics. It is in itself a must [...] hybridity is one of the important aspects of the literary discourse. It is also one of the central questions of the cultural practices, the latter being part and parcel of the social life, of the artistic production of literature, and of language in general. Hybridity appears, then, under various labels. It covers up a zone inter-discursive at the meeting point of diverse disciplines.” (V. Krysinski, quoted in Budor and Walter, 2004: 27) [personal translation from French to English].¹³

Thus, hybrid texts represent a meeting point of two cultures, two representations, two ‘othernesses’, two identities and sometimes two ideologies. In the case of Arab hybrid writings, this meeting point is rather problematic for Arab writers and more problematic for Arab women writers because of the readers’ rejection of hybrid writings whether in the Arab world, for these productions are in the language of the ex-colonisers, or in the Western world, for these writings’ cultural background is that of the ex-colonised.

Hybrid writings were and still are analysed by critics as well as philosophers. In his essay “Discourse in the Novel”, Bakhtin cleverly articulated one of his original ideas about the double-voicedness of the linguistic hybrid. This double-voicedness and double-accentedness is explained by Bakhtin as following:

cial languages within the limits of a single
within the arena of an utterance, between two
different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an
epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.” (Bakhtin,
1934:358)

What Bakhtin stated decades ago is, indeed, what we can interpret with the writings of Arab women novelists like Ahdaf Soueif and Assia Djebbar. The literary productions by these novelists are of a particular nature; they are of an Arabic cultural belonging, and yet they are of a foreign linguistic background. The big challenge of such productions by these Arab women authors is a double-faced confrontation: a challenge against Arab male writers’ domination, and western writers of both sexes’ domination. Djebbar’s writings and Soueif’s are Algerian and Egyptian culturally, but they are also French and English linguistically; such a difficult equation and a risky choice taken by these, and other, Arab women authors is rather problematic in terms of gender criticism; the Arab women authors writing in foreign languages other than Arabic face three barriers: the linguistic, the cultural and the gender barriers.

1.6 Literary *time* and *space*

Time and space are the two most important elements of fiction that determine the narrative in any literary work, notably the novel. These two notions have been subject to redefining by the beginning of the twentieth century by two important figures of philosophy as well as literary criticism: the French Paul Ricoeur and the Russian Mikhail Bakhtin. To see how these two thinkers re-conceptualized *Time* and *Space*, the following two sections are devoted to the understanding of each scholar’s theory. The next two sections will pave the way for us to identify Barakat’s talent and creativity in re-conceptualizing these two concepts to fit the thematic and the stylistic when being a woman who writes about a civil war [see Chapter two]. Moreover, they will allow us perceive the originality of the narrative time in *The Map of Love* as we will expose the peculiarity of the narrative in the latter as being discontinuous [see Chapter three].

1.6.1 Paul Ricoeur’s theory

At the core of Ricoeur’s defence of narrative was the narrative’s capacity to represent the *human experience of time*. Such a capacity was a necessity for Ricoeur’s reflective philosophy.

time" in his famous book entitled *Time and Narrative*,
experience time in two different ways:

- We experience time as a linear *succession*;
- we experience the passing hours and days and the progression of our lives from birth to death.

This is cosmological time: time expressed in the metaphor of the "river" of time. The other is phenomenological time; time experienced in terms of the past, present and future. As self-aware embodied beings, we not only experience time as linear succession, but we are also oriented to the succession of time in terms of what has been, what is, and what will be. Ricoeur's concept of "human time" is expressive of a complex experience in which phenomenological time and cosmological time are integrated. For example, we understand the full meaning of "yesterday" or "today" by reference to their order in a succession of dated time. According to Ricoeur, to say "Today is my birthday" is to immediately invoke both orders of time: a chronological date to which is anchored the phenomenological concept of "birthday." Ricoeur describes this anchoring as the "inscription" of phenomenological time or cosmological time.

These two conceptions of time have traditionally been seen in opposition, but Ricoeur argues that they share a relation of mutual presupposition. The order of "past-present-future" within phenomenological time presupposes the succession characteristic of cosmological time. The past is always before the present which is always after the past and before the future. The order of succession is invariable, and this order is not part of the concepts of past, present or future considered merely as existential orientations. On another hand, within cosmological time, the identification of supposedly anonymous instants of time as "before" or "after" within the succession borrows from the phenomenological orientation to past and future. Ricoeur argues that any philosophical representation for understanding human existence must employ a composite temporal structure. The only suitable candidate here is the narrative model.

Ricoeur links narrative's temporal complexity to Aristotle's characterization of narrative as "the imitation of an action". Ricoeur's account of the way in which narrative represents the human world of acting (and, in its passive mode, suffering) turns around three stages of interpretation that he calls:

- mimesis1¹⁴ (prefiguration of the field of action),
- mimesis2 (configuration of the field of action),

e field of action).

Mimesis1 describes the way in which the field of human acting is always already prefigured with certain basic competencies, for example, competency in the conceptual network of the semantics of action (expressed in the ability to raise questions of who, how, why, with whom, against whom, etc.); in the use of symbols (being able to grasp one thing as standing for something else); and competency in the temporal structures governing the syntagmatic order of narration (the "followability" of a narrative).

Mimesis2 concerns the imaginative configuration of the elements given in the field of action at the level of mimesis1. Mimesis2 concerns narrative "emplotment." Ricoeur describes this level as "the kingdom of the *as if*" Narrative emplotment brings the diverse elements of a situation into an imaginative order, in just the same way as does the plot of a story. Emplotment here has a mediating function. It configures events, agents and objects and renders those individual elements meaningful as part of a larger whole in which each takes a place in the network that constitutes the narrative's response to why, how, who, where, when, etc. By bringing together heterogeneous factors into its syntactical order emplotment creates a "concordant discordance," a tensive unity which functions as a re-description of a situation in which the internal coherence of the constitutive elements endows them with an explanatory role.

A particularly useful feature of narrative which becomes apparent at the level mimesis2 is the way in which the linear chronology of emplotment is able to represent different experiences of time. What is depicted as the "past" and the "present" within the plot does not necessarily correspond to the "before" and "after" of its linear, episodic structure. For example, a narrative may begin with a culminating event, or it may devote long passages to events depicted as occurring within relatively short periods of time. Dates and times can be disconnected from their denotative function; grammatical tenses can be changed, and changes in the tempo and duration of scenes create a temporality that is "lived" in the story that does not coincide with neither the time of the world in which the story is read, nor the time that the unfolding events are said to depict. In Volume 2 of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur's analyses of *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Magic Mountain* and *Remembrance of Things Past* centre on the diverse variations of time produced by the interplay of three structures of time: the time of narrating;

ive experience of time produced through *the* *akes to narrate and narrated time* (Ricoeur, 1990: 77).

Narrative configuration has at hand a rich array of strategies for temporal signification.

Another key feature of mimesis² is the ability of the internal logic of the narrative unity (created by emplotment) to endow the connections between the elements of the narrative with necessity. In this way, emplotment forges a causal continuity from a temporal succession, and so creates the intelligibility and credibility of the narrative. Ricoeur argues that the temporal order of the events depicted in the narrative is simultaneous with the construction of the necessity that connects those elements into a conceptual unity: from the structure of one thing after another arises the conceptual relation of one thing because of another. It is this conversion that so well "imitates" the continuity demanded by a life, and makes it the ideal model for personal identity and self-understanding.

Mimesis³ concerns the integration of the imaginative or "fictive" perspective offered at the level of mimesis² into actual, lived experience. Ricoeur's model for this is a phenomenology of reading, which he describes as the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*. Not only are our life stories "written," they also must be "read," and when they are read they are taken as one's own and integrated into one's identity and self-understanding. Mimesis³ exposes the integration of the hypothetical to the real by anchoring the time depicted (or recollected or imputed) in a dated "now" and "then" of actual, lived time.

Mimesis is a cyclical interpretative process because it is inserted into the passage of cosmological time. As time passes, our circumstances give rise to new experiences and new opportunities for reflection. We can re-describe our past experiences, bringing to light unrealized connections between agents, actors, circumstances, motives or objects, by drawing connections between the events retold and events that have occurred since, or by bringing to light untold details of past events. Of course, narrative need not have a happy ending. The concern of narrative is coherence and structure, not the creation of a particular kind of experience. Nevertheless, the possibility of re-description of the past offers us the possibility of re-imagining and reconstructing a future inspired by hope. It is this potentially inexhaustible process that is the fuel for philosophy and literature.

Bakhtin's chronotope is all about the relations and implications of space/time fusion. For Bakhtin, the chronotope defines genreⁱ and generic distinctionsⁱⁱ. According to Bakhtin, the chronotope can be considered as a material of *assemblage* of images with a duration that contracts them into a volume. Analyzing the various forms of chronotope leads to producing a problematics of narrative types. Bakhtin begins by analyzing the Greek romance, which he argues "*utilized and fused together in its structure almost all genres of ancient literature*" (Bakhtin, 1981:89).

For Bakhtin, time is specifically significant in this genre because it never affects change for the hero: "*in it there is a sharp hiatus between two moments of biographical time, a hiatus that leaves no trace in the life of the heroes or in their personalities*" (Bakhtin, 1981:90). Bakhtin labels this "adventure-time," which is "highly intensified but undifferentiated".

In this form, events occurring a moment "earlier" or "later" is what serves to progress the action of the novel. With all of the "suddenlys" that pervade this literature, Bakhtin deepens the heart of matters when he writes: "*Moments of adventurous time occur when...the normal...sequence of life's events is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion of nonhuman forces*" (Bakhtin, 1981:95). There are superhuman and subhuman chronotopes that interact with our specifically human durations.

Bakhtin identified certain themes of the chronotope in "the motif of meeting" and parting, and also the motif of travel on the road (Bakhtin, 1981:98). He suggested that the nature of a given place does not figure as a component in the event. All adventures in the Greek romance are thus governed by interchangeability in space. The adventure chronotope is, thus, characterized by "*a technical, abstract connection between space and time, by the reversibility of moments in a temporal sequence, and by their interchangeability in space*"; this is why, the world of the heroes is alien to them, and thus "they can only experience random contingency" (Bakhtin, 1981:99). Because heroes neither change nor evolve during their adventures in this

ⁱ A **literary genre** is a category of literary composition. Genres may be determined by literary technique, tone, content, or even (as in the case of fiction) length. The most general genres in literature are epic, tragedy, comedy, novel, short story, and creative nonfiction. (Bakhtin, 1981)

ⁱⁱ The distinction and the categorization of the different literary genres and subgenres.

Greek romance reveals its strong ties with a *folklore that* is one of the essential elements in the folkloric concepts of a man, one that survives to the present in various aspects of folklore, especially in folktales (Bakhtin, 1981:105). This is an interesting assertion Bakhtin did, here, since he meant that because heroes do not change nor evolve during or after the narrative there is homogeneity in social relations. On another hand, because space and time are abstractly connected (reversibility in time plus interchangeability in space) there is no sense in which events occur at a local eventual site. Instead, they are surface effects which produce no illogical rupture.

The type of transformation that occurs in this genre “unfolds not so much in a straight line as spasmodically, a line with ‘knots’ in it, one that therefore constitutes a distinctive type of *temporal sequence*” (Bakhtin, 1981:113). Bakhtin continues: “Metamorphosis serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual’s life in its more important moments of *crisis*: for showing *how an individual becomes other than what he was* (Bakhtin, 1981:115).

This time is one that is full of the unusual moments of life and so it is not the same as biographical time. The difference in this genre and Greek romance is that, while the events of Greek romance occur by pure chance whose origins are beyond the hero’s power, the events that occur to the hero clearly indicate him as the source, and thus the weight is on him to change the present structure of things. Bakhtin describes this as a simple cycle: **guilt→punishment→redemption→blessedness** (Bakhtin, 1981: 118).

Thus, the temporal sequence is an integrated and *irreversible whole*, and as a consequence, the abstractness so characteristic of Greek adventure-time falls away. On the contrary, this new temporal sequence demands precisely concreteness of expression (Bakhtin, 1981:119). Space becomes meaningful as time becomes endowed with the power to bring change; prior to this, location had no figuration as a component in temporal events, meaning that the chronotope was still amorphous.

Because of Lucius’ transformation into an ass, he has the ability to spy on people, thus turning the private into the public. Bakhtin writes, “The *criminal act* is a moment of private life that becomes, as it were, *involuntarily public*” (Bakhtin, 1981:122). Also, “*A contradiction developed between the public nature of the literary form and the private nature of its content.*

...nres began” (Bakhtin, 1981:123), and the crisis of the
...figured publicly by the hierophants and their oracle
readings. Yet, on another hand, the folly or criminality of the individual has to be handled in
moderation in contrast with public virtue. The crisis as a turning point forms a torsion of space-
time that breaks with the possibilities of the past.

Bakhtin next moves to the biography and autobiography, most notably Plato’s works of
which he wrote that *this type, involving an individual’s autobiographical self-consciousness, is
related to the stricter forms of metamorphosis as found in mythology. At its heart lies the
chronotope of ‘the life course of one seeking true knowledge* (Bakhtin, 1981:130). The public
square and agora are the prime figures of this genre, and thus Bakhtin writes, “*An individual’s
unity and his self-consciousness were exclusively public. Man was completely on the surface, in
the most literal sense of the word*” (Bakhtin, 1981:131-133).

Dialogism functions in the biography as well, the point of view that ‘another’ takes
toward us, which we take into account, and by which we evaluate ourselves, functions as the
source of vanity, vain pride, or as the source of offense. It clouds our self-consciousness and
our powers of self-evaluation; we must free ourselves from it.

In the next section, Bakhtin again focuses on time: we might say that a thing that could
and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of
the *past*, a thing that is in no sense part of the past’s reality, but a thing that is in its essence a
purpose, an obligation. He continues, this ‘inversion’ of time typical of mythological and
artistic modes of thought in various eras of human development, is characterized by a special
concept of time, and in particular of future time. The present and even more the past are
enriched at the expense of the future.

Next, with the chivalric romance, Bakhtin wrote that in contrast to the heroes of Greek
romance, the heroes of chivalric romance are *individualized*, yet at the same time *symbolic*
(Bakhtin, 1981:153). Again, strictly speaking these are not heroes of individual novels...what
we get is *heroes of cycles*. Speaking of time and the fairy tale, he writes, hours are dragged out,
days are compressed into moments, and it becomes possible to bewitch time itself. Time begins
to be influenced by dreams; that is, we begin to see the peculiar distortion of temporal
perspectives characteristic of dreams.

ed time with great respect...and did not permit itself the liberty of any subjective playing around with time” (Bakhtin, 1981:155). Bakhtin next highlights the rogue because it “influenced the positioning of the author himself with the novel (and of his image, if he himself is somehow embedded in the novel), as well as the author’s point of view” (Bakhtin, 1981:160). Bakhtin elaborates, “The novelist stands in need of some essential formal and generic mask that could serve to define the position from which he views life, as well as the position from which he makes that life public” (Bakhtin, 1981:161).

The rogues are important, moreover, because they grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not ‘to be oneself’; the right to live a life in the chronotope of the entr’acte, the chronotope of theatrical space, the right to act life as a comedy and to treat others as actors, the right to rip off masks, the right to rage at others with a primeval (almost cultic) rage—and finally, the right to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and prurient little secrets (Bakhtin, 1981:163). Bakhtin moves to Rabelais, whose works present an interesting form of the chronotope:

“This special relationship we will designate as the adequacy, the direct proportionality, of degrees of quality (‘value’) to spatial and temporal quantities (dimension)...This means that everything of value, everything that is valorized positively, must achieve its full potential in temporal and spatial terms; it must spread out as far and as wide as possible, and it is necessary that everything of significant value be provided with the power to expand spatially and temporally” (Bakhtin, 1981:167).

Focusing on the “agricultural labor cycle,” Bakhtin wrote, in the oldest motifs and plots, a reflection of such a time consolidated in language for the first time, a reflection of the temporal relationships of growth to the *temporal contiguity* of phenomena having widely differing characteristics. Moreover, this is the time of *productive growth*. It is a time of growth, blossoming, fruit-bearing, ripening, fruitful increase, issue. The passage of time does not destroy or diminish but rather multiplies and increases the quantity of valuable things.

y about his present project, what interests us is the *form* is for possible narratives (and narrative matrices) in subsequent life. The folkloric form of time we have characterized above undergoes essential changes. For example, as a result of this severance from the producing *life of the whole and from the collective struggle with nature, their real links with the life of nature are weakened—if not severed altogether*. (Bakhtin, 1981:215).

Again, the motif of death undergoes a profound transformation in the temporally sealed-off sequence of an individual life. Here this motif takes on the meaning of an ultimate end, and the more sealed-off the individual life-sequence becomes, the more it is severed from the life of the social whole, the loftier and more ultimate becomes its significance.

Finally, metaphors, comparisons and in general tropes in the style of Homer have not yet utterly lost their unmediated meaning, they do not yet serve the purposes of sublimation. Thus an image selected for comparison is worth just as much as the other member of the comparison, it has its own independently viable significance and reality; thus a comparison becomes almost a dual episode, a digression.

We should emphasize the extraordinary concision and therefore compactness of this whole series of motifs. The elements of the ancient complex are present in one unmediated and tightly packed matrix; pressed up against one another so that they almost cover each other up—they are not separated by any side-plots or detours in the narrative, nor by any lengthy discourses, nor by lyrical digressions, nor by any metaphorical sublimations that might destroy the unity of the drily realistic surface of the story. (Bakhtin, 1981: 222).

The realistic image is structured here as a special type, one that could arise only on a folkloric base. It is difficult to find an adequate terminology for it. We are compelled to speak of something like a *realistic emblematic*. The total makeup of the image itself remains thoroughly realistic, but concentrated and compacted in it are so many essential and major aspects of life that its meaning far outstrips all spatial, temporal and socio-historical limits, outstrips them without, however, severing itself from the concrete socio-historical base from which it sprang .

reflection on time and space in fiction, the chronotope, materializing time in space, emerges as a center for **concretizing representation**, as a force giving body to the entire novel. This theory will allow us understand and investigate how time and space are conceptualized in *The Stone of Laughter* and *The Map of Love*. In fact, once we have grasped how the narrative time and the narrative space are weaved together to give birth to a chronotope, i.e. the co - ordinates of time and space invoked by a given narrative, or in other words, the setting considered as a spatio - temporal whole, we will provide the reader with a clear perception of how the narrative time and space are weaved to suit the thematic and the setting in *The Stone of Laughter*. In this novel, as we will see later in Chapter Two, *time* and *space* represent the impact of the civil war on the life of people, and symbolize at the same time deixis referring to the state of war. [See chapter two]

1.7 Conclusion

The history of Arab women literature is as old as the history of Arab women themselves. From early times of Alkhansaa, the Poet of the Classical Times, to the contemporary modern time, the Arab woman writer has shown an amazing capacity for rebellion against the male domination of Literature in the Arab world and the masculine domination over women nearly in all fields; this rebellion is crystal clear in the literary, fiction writings of contemporary Arab women authors.

The contemporary Arab women literature has followed a multi-trend course as already explained in this chapter; this may go to the modern history of the Arab world itself. The modern, contemporary history of the ‘Arab’ world can be divided into three periods: the colonial, the post-colonial and the post-post-colonial period. Thus, the writings of Arab woman authors may have followed the same course as the history of their societies because they consider themselves not only militants to defend women rights but also militants to defend their people’s freedom.

The contemporary Arab women writers have tried to overcome a lot of obstacles of male domination, social segregation and western belittlement of the Arab women’s intellectual capacities. Indeed, they have managed to raise above all these hindrances, and yet they are still combating to gouge the place they deserve in their society in all fields, and particularly in the



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stinian, Algerian, Egyptian, Moroccan and other Arab
Arab women's rebellion to the Orient, and the Arab
women's creativity to the West.

The next chapter is devoted to the unveiling of the Arab woman writer's capacity of portraying the political and the war conditions her nation witnesses and also the female identity living in such conditions. It will be presented through the analysis of Huda Barakat's novel حجر الضحك (1990) (The Stone of Laughter, 2006). This novel embodies the genuine creativity of Arab women authors who witnessed the Lebanese Civil war (and other wars).

Chapter One Notes

- 1. Classical times:** It refers to two periods of the Arab literature: the pre-Islamic era, i.e. the period before the writing of Qur'an and the rise of Islam, and the post-Islamic era, i.e. the period that has followed the rise of Islam. The writings of the Classical Times were characterised by the male domination, and nearly no woman was allowed to write or publish literature except some names like Alkhansaa, Rabia Aladawya....
- 2. Arab/ Arabic literature:** (الأدب العربي) This is the appellation given to the writings produced, both prose and poetry, by speakers (not necessarily native speakers) of the Arabic language. The Arab literature emerged in the sixth century with only fragments of the written language appearing before then; it then flourished during the Islamic Golden Age (the Abbasid era) and continues to the present day with the proliferation of translated works by Arab writers all over the world.
- 3. Orientalism:** It is a concept that refers to the depiction of aspects of the Orient, i.e. the Middle east as well as the Far East. This concept was coined and adapted by the American Palestinian thinker Edward Said and was given other dimensions. In his book *Orientalism* (first published in 1978), E. Said used this concept to describe a tradition, both academic and artistic, of hostile and scornful views of the Orient by the West.
- 4. Nazirah Zeineddine (1908-1976):** She is a Lebanese Druze writer, the grandmother of the Lebanese politician Walid Djunblat. She is considered to be a pioneer in publishing books and novels in the Arab world; most of her writings dealt with women's rights with regard to the Islamic Shariâa (rules). She also related the oppression exercised upon women to slavery and she asserted that prohibiting Arab women from being intellectually creative was at the core of slavery.
- 5. Amine al- Rihani: (1876- 1940)** Ameen Rihani is the founding father of Arab-American literature. His early English writings mark the beginning of a body of literature that is Arab in its concern, culture and characteristic, English in language, and American in spirit and platform. He is the first Arab to write English essays, poetry,

ess, and travel chronicles. He published his works in the
ades of the twentieth century. In this sense, he is the
forerunner of American literature written by well known Middle Eastern writers.
KINGS OF THE ARABS (1924) is one of his most famous books.

6. **Salma al- Khadraa Jeyoussi: (1928-)** She is a Palestinian, Poet, literary critic and translator. She is the first Arab woman writer to think of a project of translating Arab women's literary productions, the PROTA. She is also the first Palestinian author to write an anthology of Palestinian women poetry.
7. **Annakbah: (also called the war of 1948)** It is the most important event in the modern history of the Arab world and particularly in Palestine's history. It is the war whence Palestine was divided in two States, Israel and Palestine (the West bank and Gaza strip). For the Israelis, this war is called the Liberation war.
8. **Mahmoud Darwish (1942-2008):** Darwish is considered to be the most important contemporary Arab poet working today. He was born in the village of Barweh in the Galilee, which was razed to the ground by the Israelis in 1948. As a result of his political activism he faced house arrest and imprisonment. Mahmoud Darwish is the winner of 2001 Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom. Darwish published his first book of poetry, *Leaves of Olives*, in 1964, at the age of 22. Since then, he has published more than twenty poetry books, including *The Adam of Two Edens*, *Mural*, *Why Have you Left the Horse Alone*, and *Eleven Planets*.
9. **Arab feminism:** The concept of feminism is used world wide, and yet it has different connotations in the Arab world. It is different in terms of the social structure of the Arab countries that still don't allow to go beyond the taboo issues related to women; it is different in terms of the long struggling against male domination and for more liberation of the Arab woman, an it is different in terms of the Arab woman herself and the way she thinks, reacts and defends her rights.
10. **Internal Orientalism:** The Oriental Western representation of the Arab Woman is nothing but a belittlement of what an Arab Woman is and can do. She is seen in the West as a sexual apparatus for her husband, a weak everlasting servant for her kids and

presentation exists in the Arab world, a kind of internal and intellectual Orientalism.

11. Etel Adnane: Etel Adnan was born in 1925 in Beirut, Lebanon. Her father was a Muslim Syrian and her mother was a Christian Greek. Adnan was raised speaking French, and her father taught her written Arabic. She learned English throughout her schooling. Being multi-lingual presented a dilemma for Adnan: she was unsure of what language to write in due to the political situation between France and Arab countries. She found an outlet for her poetic expression through painting. "Abstract art was the equivalent of poetic expression; I didn't need to use words, but colors and lines. I didn't need to belong to a language-oriented culture but to an open form of expression" (Etel Adnan, "To Write in a Foreign Language"). She published books and novels as *Sitt Marie Rose: A Novel* (1997), *To Write in a Foreign Language* (1996).

12. Assia Djebbar: Assia Djebbar is the pen-name of **Fatima-Zohra Imalayen** (born June 30, 1936), an Algerian novelist, translator and filmmaker. Most of her works deal with the obstacles faced by women, and she is noted for her feminist stance. Djebbar is considered to be one of North Africa's most famous and influential writers, and was elected to the Académie française on June 16, 2005, the first writer from the Maghreb to achieve such recognition. Djebbar has published novels in the French language like *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (*Women of Algiers in their apartments*) in 2002 and "Nulle part dans la maison de mon père" (Somewhere in my Father's house) in 2008.

13. Dialogism: It is the constant, endless state of intentional and value-laden dialogue into which every word enters.

14. "L'hybridité s'inscrit dans quelques problématiques discursives. Elle en est même un élément incontournable [...]. L'hybridité est un des aspects incontournables du discours littéraire. C'est aussi une des questions centrales des pratiques culturelles, celles-ci étant indissociables de la vie sociale, de la production artistique de la littérature, et de la langue au sens le plus large.



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is plusieurs étiquettes. Elle couvre une zone inter-
disciplines diverses.” (V. Krysiniski, quoted in Budor

and Walter, 2004: 27)

15. Mimesis: is a philosophical concept that carries a wide range of meanings, which include: imitation, representation, mimicry, the act of resembling, the act of expression, and the presentation of the self. Mimesis has been theorized by Plato, Aristotle, Freud, Paul Ricoeur and Homi Bhabha.

CHAPTER TWO

REBELLION AND CREATIVITY IN حجر الضحك (*The Stone of Laughter*)

In the previous chapter, we have shed light on the amazing capacity and genuineness of contemporary Arab women writers to voice their agonies as well as the agonies of their peoples. The Arab women novelists of the post-colonial¹ and the post-post colonial² era have shown a crucial interest in individual, gender and community consciousness, i.e. a consciousness of belonging to themselves through their style, belonging to the female gender through a feminist perception, and belonging to their societies through a national awareness. This complexity of being one and being many at a time, thus belonging to the one and to “all”, has given rise to original, innovative literary productions by Arab women writers chiefly those who witnessed conflicts, whether wars or civil wars, like the Palestinian and the Lebanese Women writers.

That an Arab woman writes about a war, a conflict or the suffering of her people is an important challenge and a risk Arab women novelists, like Huda Barakat, Hanane Sheikh, Sahar Khalifah and others, have taken ‘daringly’. Thus, the challenge is double-voiced³: on the one hand, writing an aesthetic work of fiction relying on the events of wars is a difficult task for any author, and on the other hand, being an Arab woman author restricts these novelists’ literary creativeness and freedom to voice their minds and emotions regarding these conflicts and wars.

Tackling the theme of war in works of fiction by any novelist arouses an important question, which is “how can literature, being an aesthetic expression, recount horrors and at the same time be an art?” Indeed, we might as well wonder how a novelist, who writes about wars and conflicts, can evoke the narrative art, and how can she/he evoke the aesthetic writing when the fiction relies on war with all its horrors and fears. The former may give birth to what is real and beautiful in fiction, yet the latter may delicately ‘shake’ the novelist’s subjectivity; because the novelist is not an objective, unbiased historian, she/he is strongly involved in the events of the war itself.

Hence, ‘fictionizing’ the events of wars by Arab women novelists seems to be not only challenging in terms of fiction, narration and the thematic, but also in terms of shaping and embodying the war events though they are not physically involved in these events with arms and weapons, and here lies the **creativity** of Arab women authors who wrote on wars, notably

Lebanese women writers who have questioned the norms, and voiced the suffering of their people. حجر الضحك

(*The Stone of Laughter*) is the first novel she has written during the Lebanese civil war in 1990. It is a vivid portrayal of the Lebanese civil war.

This second chapter is devoted to its analysis in which we will try to argue that literary productions by Arab women writers are not only creative aesthetically but also **rebellious** thematically. As for the former, we will illustrate that it is a specific work of fiction by analysing the narrative technique, narration and characterization in this novel, and for the latter, we will see how a Lebanese woman novelist has re-shaped the Lebanese civil war events and re-represented her multi-identity and multi-belonging (she belongs to the Lebanese nation, to the Arab world, to the Shiite community, and above all to the female gender) through this novel. Therefore, this chapter will be divided in three parts. The first part is about a presentation of the author as well as the novel; the second one is about a stylistic analysis, and the last part is about a thematic understanding. In our approach and argumentation, we will basically refer to the English version (*The Stone of Laughter*), and will refer also to the Arabic version of Hajarou Dahik whenever the English translation fails to provide us with a significant back up that we feel more expression in the original language.

2.2 *The Stone of Laughter*: A vivid representation of war

Huda Barakat is among those talented Arab women writers who have changed the cliché about weak and narrow-minded Arab women. Barakat is an admired Lebanese novelist who lived much of her life in Beirut and later moved to Paris, where she now resides. Her works, written in Arabic, have been translated into many languages, including English, French, Italian, Turkish, Dutch, Greek and German. This novel was a great success as much as her late novels أهل الهوى *Lovers* (1993), حارث المياه *The Tiller of Waters* (1998) and سيدي و حبيبي *My Master, My Lover* (2005). *The Stone of Laughter*, written in Lebanon under the striking echoes of the bombing and the explosions, has stimulated her literary talent.

2.2.1 The author

Huda Barakat is considered to be one of the most important contemporary Arab writers. She was born in Lebanon in 1952; she graduated in 1974 with a degree in French Literature from the Lebanese university in Beirut. In 1975, she left for Paris to work on a PhD, and then flew

civil war had broken out because she felt a deep
rd moments.

In 1985, under the bombings and explosions, she published her first book entitled زائرات (The *Visitors*), a collection of short stories and articles. In 1988, she helped creating a women's magazine, *Scheherazade*. In 1989, she moved to Paris where she completed the writing of her first novel. It received the prestigious literary award al-Naqid, and it was acclaimed as one of the best novels depicting the Lebanese civil war. Later on, it has been translated into many foreign languages.

2.2.2 The “war novel”

The Stone of Laughter is a novel of war, i.e. a genre of novels that relies on the events of a given war; a **war novel** is a literary production in which the primary action takes place in a field of armed combat or in a domestic setting where the characters are preoccupied with the preparations for, or recovery from, war. It recounts an original extraordinary experience that an Arab woman writes about war in a work of fiction the way Huda Barakat did in this novel. Huda Barakat says:

“I write of wars because I have no power; no arms or soldiers. I belong to the dark dampness and to the forgetfulness of those making history in the street...Under the boots stepping over my head, I still write as if I am an empress or a dictator.” (Faqir, 2005: V)

This novel was described by Edward Kharrat⁵ as “*the best novel written about the Lebanese civil war.*” حجر الضحك (Hajarou Dahik) deals with the struggle of Khalil, the protagonist who embodies the psychological and physical metamorphosis caused by the war, to resist taking part in the fighting and *to define his identity in alternative terms*. In a complex, but genuinely personal narrative, Barakat represents two figures that are marginal to the war: an androgynous male and heterodiegetic narrator [see later sections in this chapter] whose voice is often interwoven with Khalil's, but who shows up at the very end of the novel.

The story reveals the terrible effects and changes a civil war gives birth to. People in such circumstances submit to a metamorphosis at different levels: psychological, physical, social and spiritual. What the novel truly carries to the reader is nothing but the moaning and the yelling of people who died twice and thrice and more at times in one day out of bombings, fear and hatred.

2.2.3 The novel structure

The Stone of Laughter (translated by **Sophie Bennett**), as previously mentioned, is a novel of war, and some critics categorize it as a political novel, i.e. a novel that uses narrative to provide commentary on political events, systems and theories and often directly criticizes an existing society or present an alternative, sometimes a fantastic reality. It develops the contradictory, distressful history of Lebanon during the civil war squeezed down within the story of the protagonist Khalil whose identity and belonging to a particular community are hazy and confusing for the reader almost in all the episodes of his story, but clearer at the end of the novel.

This novel is unique and original in many ways. It sounds as a radical novel written by a mature Lebanese female intellectual, full of black humour⁷ and sceptical observations about the circumstances created by war. The whole story is woven around Khalil, the gentleman who undergoes an awful struggle with his society and the bloody war events that prevails the city of Beirut. Khalil kept struggling to keep himself away from war until he witnessed the death of his friend Naji, who represented the positive pattern of beauty and life for Khalil, and later the death of Yussuf, the other image of beauty in the novel. Thus, he realizes at this very moment that in a city of war no one can remain neutral and safe, so he metamorphoses into a harsh man who loves but himself, who satisfies but his needs and who loves life and laughter even at the very moment of death and murder.

The Stone of Laughter describes the city of Beirut under bombardments and explosions. It represents to what extent war can change the inward and the outward stability of people; this is represented in the process of metamorphosis Khalil goes through. By the end of the novel, the narrator puts an end to two confusions: one about herself when she manifests her identity to the reader, and the second when she explains how “her” Khalil has changed from how he was to "a man who laughs."

The novel exposes Khalil’s metamorphosis in two sections: a pre-hospital section and a post-hospital section. First, Khalil maintains his integrity as a subject, but undergoes as a result an increasing social isolation and a self-loathing that he faces due to an inward struggle between two ‘Khalils’: a Khalil who is socially a coward, anti-war man, and another Khalil

manized [it announces the concept of ‘androgyny’ that his struggle and constant confrontation threatens Khalil

to destroy him from inside. In the second section, Khalil submits to a surgery to cure a serious ulcer, and it is only in the hospital that Khalil perceives life and death. He describes the surgery room as “this little paradise”. It is only in hospital that Khalil knew what life is because he was about to die “*all these years that are called a life are nothing but nonsense, a folly, because they lack your dying for you to know*” (Barakat, 2006: 168). After the surgery, Khalil determines to survive no matter what. The following diagram recapitulates the two phases of Khalil’s metamorphosis:

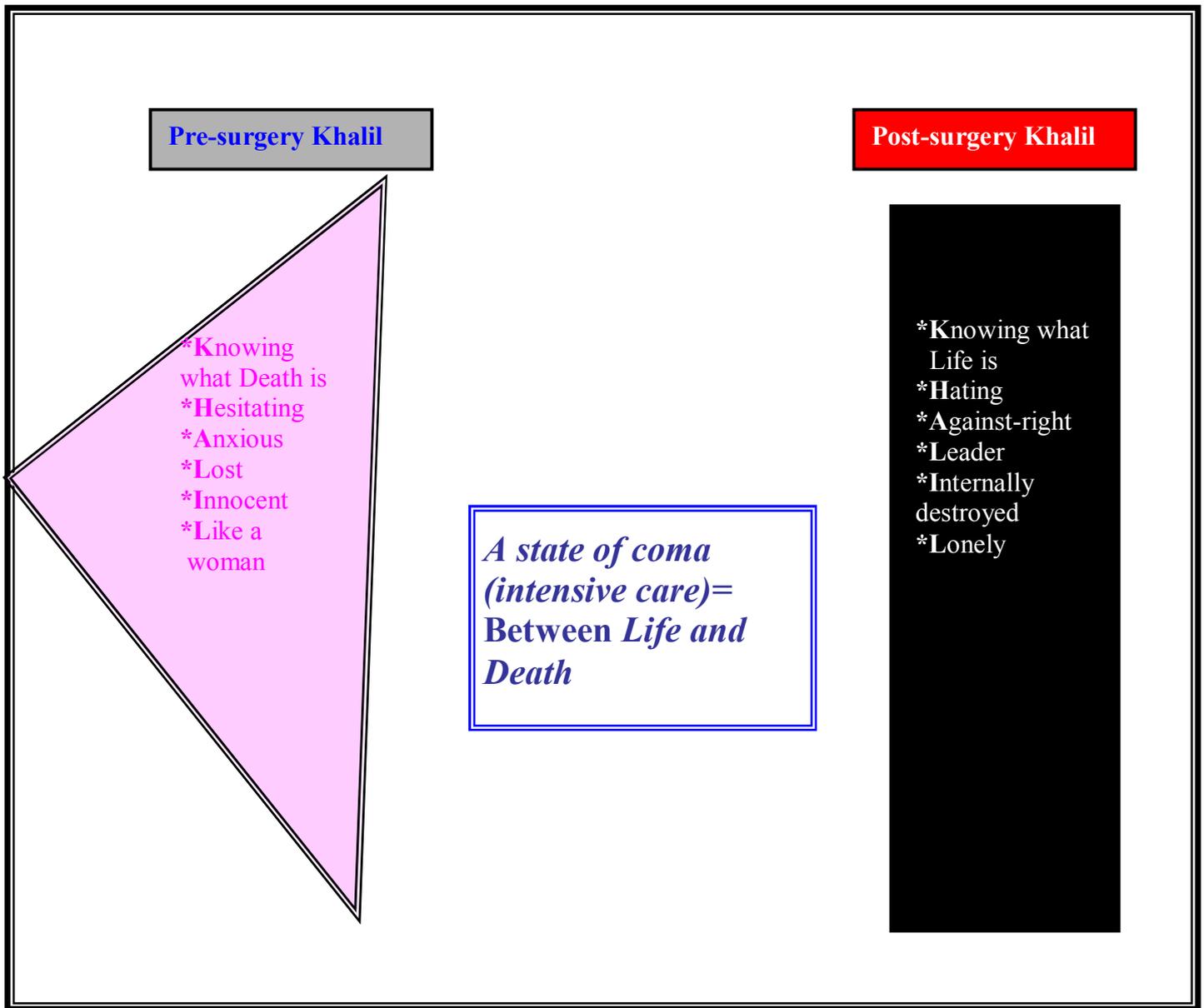


Figure 2.1: The two phases of Khalil’s metamorphosis

...ses the process of self-destruction and distortion that The ulcer surgery is a turning point in Khalil's life; by experiencing a state of coma (intensive care) and being saved from death, Khalil came to know what Life means. The colours used in the diagram are used deliberately to reflect each phase in Khalil's metamorphosis. As for the pre-surgery, the pink colour represents Khalil's state of being "womanized"; it is a nuance that pink is women's favourite colour, yet there is another colour that is grey: grey represents haziness. Khalil, in this stage, experiences a critical state of confusion. On the other hand, the post-surgery phase is represented by two colours: black and red. These two colours reflect the self-destruction Khalil submits to after getting rid of his feminine part. The black represents death and adversity, and red represents blood and suffering.

Furthermore, the geometric shapes used in this diagram also have shades of meanings. The triangle, used in the pre-surgery phase, represents the state of tidiness and well-organized Khalil lived in. In psychology, triangles reflect orderliness and "*self-centredness*." (<http://www.psychometricshapes.co.uk>). On the other hand, the rectangle, used in the post-surgery phase, represents incredible mess, inquisitiveness and courage during periods of change, and this is exactly what Khalil underwent after he had left the hospital.

For Khalil, knowing life means to know death, and this is exactly what people in moments of war (and civil wars particularly) experience. Khalil represents those thousands of Lebanese people who lived a war that was 'civil', a war in the streets of Beirut and other Lebanese cities, a war that killed and gave life. This absurdity in perceiving life and death was, and is, common to people living under daily explosions, bombing, car crashes and everyday death, so life and death incongruously are alike.

In the very final pages of the novel, Khalil is totally *masculinised* after he knew how to hate, how to end others' lives and how to identify himself as a 'brave' man who is no more against the horrors of the bloody war; all these self-achievements are at the price of destroying the peaceful feminized side of his psyche. Khalil violated the 'divine' femininity inside him in order to fully participate in the fighting, and became actively involved in smuggling weapons to the country and storing them in his building. Khalil is no more a 'womanized' man who cries, but rather a 'masculinised' male who laughs. The novel begins with the following sentence: "*Khalil's legs were not long enough*" (Barakat, 2006: 3) because he was a female

“Khalil is gone, he has become a man who laughs”
e a masculine portrait.

2.3 The narrative technique

The narrative order in *The Stone of Laughter* relies on the events of the Lebanese civil war. In fact, the narration in this novel does not follow a chronological order, but rather a repetitive rhythm which is the outcome of the rhythm of the war. The recurrent use of words like: bombing, explosions, death, bombardment, noise, and diacritics like the three dots of suspension “*As the bombing and counter-bombing grew more intense, the newspaper seemed more and more like a huge, buzzing hive. [...] The random bombing was not altogether random... everyone knows the newspaper will not be bombed for there are rules, there is a method in all mayhem...*” (Barakat, 2006: 36-37) unveil a fracture in the narration and create a disruption in the narrative.

The narrative in this novel is of a specific nature in the sense that it is not continuous but rather disrupted and interrupted. There are no shifters⁸ of time and place:

“Khalil’s room was as it had always been. Nothing had changed at all... perhaps it was the body living in it that had changed... it had become heavier, weightier, more firmly attached to what was behind the door... when he knew that Najji was coming, when he expected him to visit, Khalil’s joy was mingled with the sense of defeat.....” (Barakat, 2006: 22-23).

The shifters of time and place in this novel are replaced by either the three dots of suspension or moments like: “before the bombing”, “after the bombardment”, “during the explosion”..., so here again lies the impact of the Lebanese civil war on people’s life. It hashes the normal tense to have its own notion of time, and this is how events are constructed in a rhythm.

Besides, there is a weird extensive use of the expression “*as if*”: “... *it was as if he wanted to provoke her to talk to answer back [...] seeming at the same time unperturbed by his abusive words...or as if she understood and was encouraging his rapture.*” (Barakat, 2006: 76). The extensive use of this expression inspires the reader that things in moments of war and

ly *seem to be* what they are. In the coming sections, we
give technique and the chronotopes in the narration.

2.3.1 The fractured narration

The Stone of Laughter responds to an elementary morphology, i.e. it goes from an initial state to a final state, from a rising action, to a climax and finally to a dénouement. It traces the life path of Khalil, the young intellectual Lebanese, and it embodies the deep, awkward influence war does have upon people's psyches, bodies and life.

The narrative in this novel relies on war. In fact, narration, whether of a chronological or a logical concatenation, follows a repetitive rhythm that suits the mood and the atmosphere of a bloody war. There is a regular use of expressions like “explosions”, “bombing”, “bombardments” and “car crashes”; these expressions are repeated all through the sections of the novel as if they are fixed landmarks. Every action, every shifter (of time or of place) and every evolution in the process of the protagonist's metamorphosis are systematically motivated and circumstanced by the war events.

There is a recurrence of a lexical field relying on war episodes; this recurrence helps create a fracture in the narration. The visual diacritics¹⁰, i.e. the three suspension dots are also there to reinforce the disruption of the narration; the extensive use and appearance of the three suspension dots may have two interpretations. They can be considered as recurrent moments of silence imposed on the narrator (or the writer herself) because of a sudden happening like a car crash or an explosion; they also can be considered as substituent of time shifters or place shifters as well. All in all, the exaggerated use of these diacritics neither disturb nor deteriorate the style of the writer; on the contrary, they burst two curiosities: the curiosity of the reader to decipher the shift from one situation, or one scene to another, and the curiosity of the critic to decode the meaning of these silences regarding the state of war and the state of writing.

The disruption and interruption of the narration might be considered as the outcome of the war circumstances. Whether done on purpose or being an unconscious reaction towards war events, the disrupted narration of *The Stone of Laughter* reflects the instability of the writer, and hence the instability of people living the same conditions as this novelist. As already mentioned, Barakat started writing this novel by 1990, i.e. on the eve of the Lebanese civil war;

the narrative flowing of this novel. However, we might be tempted with such a narrative technique to back up the main theme of the novel, i.e. the metamorphosis of Khalil, and to represent the dreary psychological, physical and social ruptures war can cause.

The fractured, disrupted narration woven around Khalil, the androgynous protagonist, responds to the disturbed, disrupted life the Lebanese people experienced during the civil war. It is indeed original and peculiar from the part of Barakat to represent such ambiguous moments through a disrupted, interrupted narration that has allowed her to voice her opinion against the war makers without saying a single word, or express it with an unsettled form of speech.

2.3.2 Homodiegetic or heterodiegetic narration?

In the previous section, we have tried to identify narration in *The Stone of Laughter* as a fractured, disrupted flowing of events woven together to support the process of metamorphosis and self-destruction of the protagonist. As for the nature of the narrator in this novel, it is once again innovated to back up Khalil's transmutation. The narrator is about a complex entity that fuses Khalil as a protagonist and an omniscient, invisible narrator who seems to put an end to this fusion in the very last lines.

By being omniscient, the narrator not only observes the characters and the protagonist acting but also dives in each character's thoughts; thus, the narrator is heterodiegetic. Yet he manifests three times: two times via the possessive pronoun "نا" (our) : "الشمس في السماء عندنا" (the sun in our city) (Barakat, 1990: 30) [the English version, 2006 : 32], "في مدينة كتلك التي لنا" (in a city like our city) (Barakat, 1990:161) [the English version, 2006: 160]; and a second time via the first person pronoun "أنا" (I) at the end of the novel:

"Khalil is gone, he has become a man who laughs. And I remain a woman who writes.

Khalil: my darling hero.

My darling hero ..." (Barakat, 2006[the English version]: 209).

Thus, we can identify the narrator in this novel as being between the homodiegetic and the heterodiegetic narrator. This mixing up may have been done on purpose by the author to confuse the reader all through the novel "who is the narrator?" and then reveal that the narrator, or the writer who is a woman, was hiding all the time behind her "femalised" character Khalil, and though Khalil becomes a man she remains a woman but a woman "who writes".

ied, weaves in and out sometimes becoming the “I” of Khalil, other times referring to Khalil as a third person. This back and forth shift between a heterodiegetic narrator and a homodiegetic narrator gives rise to a tricky confusion for the reader to tell who’s who and to draw a demarcation line between Khalil, the womanized then later masculinised protagonist, and the woman writer. This misleading is used by Barakat as a cunning way to voice her opinion regarding the civil war and its chaos hiding behind a voice of a male voice. Yet, to preserve her female identity, Barakat creates an androgynous, womanized character out of which she “draws”, “writes” and “speaks” her mind.

2.4 Time and Space in *The Stone of Laughter*

After having skimmed through the main theories of narrative time and space, i.e. Ricoeur’s conceptualization of time and Bakhtin’s chronotopes, in this section we will explore how time and space were functionalized by Barakat in a creative, original way to represent how wars slice the life of people with all its features. Indeed, the way Barakat has re-conceptualized *time* and *space* is the most important element of originality in her writings, notably in *The Stone of Laughter*. As we have already mentioned in Chapter One, Ricoeur’s conception of historical time unites two more elementary senses of time. There is *cosmological* time, i.e. the time of the world that unfolds as a sequence of uniform, qualitatively undifferentiated moments in which all change occurs, and there is lived time (phenomenological), i.e. the time of our lives; thus, for Ricoeur it’s only through the narrative that we can represent the human experience of time whether cosmological or phenomenological.

In *The Stone of Laughter*, Barakat realized Ricoeur’s theory by representing the war events through the narrative; nevertheless, Barakat innovated a new narrative time that is peculiar to the war itself, a time that is not counted in terms of moments, seconds, hours or days, but a time that is counted in terms of bombings and bombardments and this is what we will develop in the following section. In the next section, we will expose how space (as a chronotope) is represented in *The Stone of Laughter* to fit the state of war Khalil and the other characters live.

2.4.1 Time conception

The Stone of Laughter is distinct from different perspectives, and one of these angles is the notion of time. Nothing, in this novel, allows the reader to determine the time period separating

The temporal indications used escape the chronological framework (see Barthes and Bakhtin). There are some expressions and signs like: “*this season...*” (p 23), “*this morning...*” (p 50), “*one month later after the death of Najj...*” (p 76), “*after two days...*”... etc; such references to time do not draw a well-determined temporal framework. All they do is to inform the reader that the narrative stretches over several months, and that the story takes place while the country has been going through a bloody war for several years.

Therefore, there is a narrative anachronism that evokes past events; the latter helps instruct the psychological formation of the protagonist, Khalil. There are also flashback scenes that describe Khalil’s relationship with Najj, Nayef, Yusuf and the bride. All these scenes seem to be ordinary, but what mostly grabs our attention is the acting time that is modulated and identified by war events, and is contributing to the organization of the repetitive rhythm of the novel.

With space, time is the second concept that allows us organizes our perceptions into a representation of the world (Goldstein, 2003). Thus, it is impossible to imagine a shift of places or a mutation of characters outside time. The Lebanese war, in this work, has modified the common space known to all human beings to renovate its own spatial time: “it *hashes*” (تفرم) the chronological time to have its own as well. It is this time fabricated by war that prevails and rhythms the narrative in this novel. The shifters of time in this novel are replaced by either the three dots of suspension, moments like: “before the bombing”, “after the bombardment”, “during the explosion”..., so here again lies the impact of the Lebanese civil war on people’s life. It hashes the normal tense to produce its own notion of time, and this is how it is implemented in this novel.

The repetitive cycle of the war fragmentizes time into a succession of repetitive durations that deprives the time of its value of evolution; this is why, we notice the absence of chronological landmarks that indicate the evolution of fiction. Whether time or space, all stand under the one landmark that is *war* and all its signs. Time, in moments of war, is determined, not by hours or minutes and seconds, but by moments preceding the bombing, moments during the bombing and moments following the bombing. Such a peculiarity of perceiving *time* is specific to people living under violence and bombardments which are experienced as lulls of

anging between these two states, time is not felt as a
void of meaning.

2.4.2 Space conception

Akin to time, *space* is also hashed and altered by war events. Modelled by war, the space, described by the narrator of this novel, exceeds its ornamental role to function as a signifying agent. The actions and the events described in the novel take place in a region in Beirut, notably the Western area. There is no description of the settings or the landscapes of the city that appears in the fiction. About Beirut, there is a little passage in which the beautiful city is described as being hypertrophied under the bombing because it contrasts with such a violent war (2006: 20).

This allusion to Beirut has as an immediate objective to pave the way in the fiction to move to a more restraint space, that of the building where *Sitt Isabel's* apartment is situated as well as Khalil's room. These two spaces, i.e. the building and the city of Beirut, are opposed to one another: a building that is well-identified and described facing a city that is anonymous and strange; this confrontation is symbolic: the well-indentified building represents stability and strength ("توحي بالإقامة")ⁱ while the anonymous city represents the transition and the temporary ("توحي بالعبور")ⁱⁱ. The former symbolizes the shell in which Khalil was long isolated and protected to keep him safe and secure, whereas the latter symbolizes the outer space in which the whole process of Khalil's self-destruction takes place.

Khalil keeps moving in the space allowed to him in the novel moving to and fro: his room, *Sitt Isabel's* apartment, the lift shaft, his friend Nayf's apartment and the newspaper. The other important space that represents a salient setting in the novel is the hospital and the surgery room. This space represents the turning point in Khalil's life and his process of self-destruction. The outer space is reduced against the inner space, and this may refer to the inner state of Khalil regarding his outer state: Khalil as a biological creature and Khalil as a social individual.

Each space and every setting in *The Stone of Laughter* is described to be invested in the transformational operation and self-destruction process of the protagonist. In the pre-hospitable

ⁱ The English translation: "It reflects the stability (residence)"

ⁱⁱ The English translation: "It reflects the transit"

limited in Khalil's room is described as tidy, well-tate of Khalil who was happy with his world. However, in the post-hospitable phase, the same room is described as anarchical, untidy and "as if it were deserted for years" (p 72). The setting, in this novel, metaphorically refers to the physical and psychological mutations Khalil submits to, and it adheres to the rhythm of the narration.

War is not only utilized as a factor of destruction and distortion, but also as a re-determiner of the two elements of fiction: time and space. War determines its proper laws of time and space according to its circumstances of killing, murdering, bombing and death. This war turns life upside down and allows anarchy to prevail over the normal order of life. This anarchy and disorder contribute to the metamorphosis of Khalil, the protagonist, to his self-identification as being part of the war and to his gender-identification as being no more a womanized, peaceful guy. The following section is devoted to the analysis of Khalil as a androgynous character and why Barakat chose this technique to reinforce the thematic of her novel.

2.5 Characterization

In this novel, Khalil is presented sometimes explicitly, at other times implicitly, as an androgynous character, a biologically "womanized" man who is socially rejected. The omniscient invisible narrator describes Khalil as lying outside masculinity which consists of two types. The first "masculine" category is men who are younger than Khalil but *similar* physically, those "who had torn open the door of masculinity, had gone in through the wide entrance, the entrance of history, and were manufacturing, daily, the destiny of an important area on the world map." (Barakat, 2006: 17), i.e. those with brute strength. The second category consists of those who were the brains behind the formation of that "important area", through **leadership**, journalism, political thought and the general manipulation of power. In both cases, masculinity is defined through its relation to the area on the map (المنطقة). Barakat offers us these two categories of 'malehood' to 'construct' a discourse that determines these two masculinities as the only possibilities available to define masculinity.

Khalil, being androgynous, is confused and bewildered about his situation, and suffers all through the pre-hospitable phase from a state of delusion. Socially, he is regarded as a man (initially, a coward man), but biologically he finds himself burdened by his feminine hormones. This is typically what an androgynous person is. Androgyny is a technique that Barakat uses to

over not only the issue of gender identity, but also the war.

2.5.1 Androgyny as a device

One of the most baffling phenomena concerning human gender disorders is androgyny, which is defined as being physically both male and female. An androgyne is often mistakenly referred to as a hermaphrodite. Many have mistakenly confused androgyny with bisexuality, which is a psychological condition. Only in rare cases are humans born with both male and female sexes. Estimates reveal that approximately 1% of the population is born with these traits (Paterson: 1998: 208)

Many cultures view androgyny in a mythical sense when one of their offspring is born with this affliction, as something both to be obtained and dreaded. For example, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia*, the Dogon African tribe (in South-eastern Mali and Burkina Faso) has a myth of creation, which they believe that androgyny is a sign of perfection (Vol. 5: 240).

Throughout most cultures, the dominant view of gender is either male or female, not both. This is the interpretation, especially in the western cultures according to Judeo-Christian traditions, which is the arbiter of natural behaviour of humans. Now any possibility of human gender other than male or female in this mindset is considered abnormal. Thus, the birth of androgyny in these cultures was abnormal. A child that has both sexes faces many problems, growth and development are one problem, but the greater problem is facing and living in a society which has its own set of values and norms, where everyone is either male or female.

In most cultures this represents a great psychological shock to the parents of the child. In past western cultures, especially Europe, these children were usually given up to the Church. The irony of this situation is the profound ignorance that mankind, especially religions which are supposed to have some knowledge of the scriptures, have of this phenomenon. The rejection of androgyny shows that they have biased understanding of it. Had religions understood Adam with Eve in him (Gn. 1:27), then they would treat androgyny with love and explain their purpose for being created.

Science cannot explain why humans are born with both sexes, but science can explain what causes androgyny in terms of some abnormality in the male and female sex

that androgynes are freaks of nature. Yet, there are no
fact, how can the creature with his very limited
understanding of the creation say that the workings of His Creator (God) are flawed. Neither
science nor man will ever understand this phenomenon because they reject the existence of
Spirit and the principles within the Bible. Physical androgyny is a reflection of spiritual
androgyny or as the ancient saying called the "*Law of Correspondence*" goes "*as above so
below.*"

In some cultures androgynies were killed due to superstition about them, e.g. in June
Singer's book *Androgyny The Opposites Within*, it was quoted that "... *if the child showed at
birth any signs of hermaphroditism, it was killed by its own parents. In other words, the actual,
anatomical hermaphrodite was considered an aberration of Nature or a sign of gods' anger
and consequently destroyed out of hand...*" (June, 2007:14) In these cultures, androgyny did not
have to undergo the scorn and ostracizing of society, for they were killed. This also shows
people's ignorance and lack of understanding.

Many cultures throughout mankind's history understood androgyny in two forms-
physical and mythical. They saw the physical androgyny and took it as a bad omen from the
gods, but they also realized that mythic androgyny was an ideal model that man should strive to
attain. Eliade, in her book *Mephistophele and the Androgynes*, which June Singer quoted,
states: "...*the hermaphrodite "represented in antiquity an ideal condition which men
endeavoured to be achieved by spiritual means of imitative rites,..."*" (Singer, 2007: 13-1). This
ancient view was also confirmed in the European Renaissance. It is stated that:

"As these images might suggest, the Renaissance hermaphrodite was by no
means necessarily clinically androgynous. Androgyny, apparently, was as
much a figurative phenomenon as it was a literal or physical condition; it
was the union -- either perverse or divine -- of the two sexes"
(<http://parallel.park.uga.edu/~mkozusko/634/hermo.html>).

In reality, androgynes (hermaphrodites) are three-fold by the pattern, which consists of
physical androgyny, psychological androgyny, and spiritual androgyny. We must keep in mind
that physical androgyny is just a physical reflection of this spiritual principle. Many today
address psychological androgyny in their quest to integrate themselves as a whole. This is the
result of both sexes, male and female, realizing that they each have psychological

are not fully developed because society has defined the characteristics that each must manifest.

Androgyny has figured in works of fiction from earlier times, and it has been a core theme in many twentieth century authors' writings. For instance, In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the three weird sisters look like women but have beards, in accordance with their role as equivocatorⁱ. Macbeth's sisters are said to be androgyne because of their physical appearance, and yet we cannot assert that Shakespeare intended to introduce such androgyne creatures in his work for a given reason. Unlike Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf is known to be one of the pioneer woman authors who had, artistically, dealt with the concept of androgyny in her writings.

V. Woolf's Orlandoⁱⁱ is considered by critics to be the most famous androgynous character. Orlando begins the story in the 16th century as an androgynous boy, but over the course of more than 300 year life, becomes a woman. His life could mainly be divided into three stages: the womanly-man stage, the manly-woman stage, and the being stage. To pin down Orlando as a man or a woman is a futile endeavor, for he/she vacillates between two sexes. He may be a physical man but inside his mind could be the opposite of the surface, and vice versa. Orlando is simply a being, the union of man and woman, and is a symbolization of a modern literary and sexual revolution.

Khalil is typically what an androgynous character might be, and yet Barakat makes him different after a whole process of self-destruction that has allowed the androgynous Khalil to get out of his biological identity into an identity his society and war impose on him. In the following section, we will probe the personae of Khalil as being an androgynous character and his rapport with the omniscient narrator who weaves in and out as being sometimes Khalil himself and other times as a heterodiegetic narrator.

2.5.2 Khalil as an androgynous character

In the previous section, androgyny was defined as a kind of resistance of one's biological duality of sex, i.e. being male and female at a time, or a resistance of the social rejection of this divine phenomenon. Barakat uses androgyny as a strategy to approach gender identity as well as national identity. These two components are embodied in the protagonist's portrayal. Khalil,

represents the two types of resistance, but this time
stances.

The novel uses androgyny as a means of going beyond the binarism of feminine/masculine, i.e. the paradoxes that exist between the female gender and the male gender. By reducing the feminine/masculine binarism to the level of representations through the extraction of the protagonist and placing him outside representation, the status itself of representation comes into question. Khalil was extracted outside his 'beautiful womanly world', a world of tidiness and neatness, and 'seeded' into a world that is not his (the newspaper, the world of men), and this is what made the self-identification then self-representation easier and clearer for Khalil who long suffered gender and social confusions chiefly due to war events.

The primary aim of *The Stone of Laughter* is to strip the war of many of the illusions surrounding it. Although the war seems to imply a breakdown of social structures and control of identity, it in fact represents the opposite: the creation of the ideal citizen who is compelled to conform fully to the normative rules it (war) establishes. Khalil was first regarded as a coward citizen and a flabby man because he was, just like women, a peaceful serene guy. However, after he had integrated in men's discourse community, he became the ideal citizen society does respect.

By using the stone as a metaphor for Khalil's gradual transformation from a marginal figure to one who is fully integrated into his community, Barakat emphasizes the constructed nature of identity:

"The title, *The Stone of Laughter*, is a take on the philosopher's stone, the medieval alchemical stone believed to have the ability to transform iron ore into gold." (Majaj, 2002: 1965)

Therefore, like the vision of gold dreamt by the alchemists, the identity that is forged by the end of the novel is misleading. Moreover, the fact that Khalil enters a community whose discourse defines one's identity threatens his individualism, and then puts an end to his inward struggles. Being androgynous threatens Khalil's belonging to the community formed by war events, so the androgyny of Khalil is temporal. By using such a technique of characterization,

is a provisory androgynous, Barakat intelligently voices intellectual who is against war. Khalil is a dual character; he represents the female gender in the first phase of the novel, and he represents the male gender in the second phase of the novel. This is what the last few lines of the novel convey: “You’ve changed so much since I described you in the first page [...] And I remain a woman who writes. Khalil: my darling hero. My darling hero...” (Barakat, 2006: 209).

2.6 *The Stone of Laughter*: a Gender Query

Despite the fact that *war* represents the heart of matter in *The Stone of Laughter*, and Khalil’s self-destruction being nothing but an embodiment of war’s impact on people, re-constructing gender identity is Barakat’s second mission to fulfil through this novel. Thus, the core themes of this novel are about two types of resistance: resisting the circumstances of war, and resisting the gender identity, yet much of the resistance in the text lies in its rejection of gender stereotyping. Gender is problematized both by reinforcing constructed representatives of gender and by recording Khalil’s unwillingness until the end to abandon one type of gender identity in favour of another, and the triumphing of the male gender over the female gender.

The critic Lu’ay Abdullah (لوي عبد الله) says that *the male/ female polarity in the novel represents the conflict between a drive for death (masculine) and a drive for survival (feminine)* (L. Abdullah, 1991: 68-69). Within such a reading, Khalil’s resistance to the logic of death is nothing but a deep influence of his feminine side that has prevailed at this very point over his male side, yet Barakat’s criticism of war is more complex precisely because Khalil does not ‘inhabit’ one gender or the other. He rather enters a gendered world reluctantly, hiding in a pre-gendered self a refuge from having to make choices. In fact, Khalil submits to a moment of rupture when his voice breaks:

“When his voice fell and its high wave broke like the glass of a lantern, he was too taken by surprise to know what it was he had now lost, forever. **His voice became thick** like a thick wound.”
(Barakat, 2006: 167)

Khalil resists this gender change and his resistance lies in that he refuges in the past to forget. Unable to give himself up to a normative notion of identity, he adheres to his memory, and by doing so he hangs on to a self that is defined by language as feminine. He is completely

men and that once he lets go of his voice, he too will

“Every time, he spoke, his complaints would be afraid, would draw back in disgust and go outside, out of the kingdom that he knew; where the women would die. After that he did not speak with a voice but with a language, and he had to know whose language it was.” (Barakat, 2006: 168)

Khalil’s first urge, as he struggles to deny his loss, is to occupy the space of that feminine loss himself. Consequently, the text spends some time presenting Khalil as functioning within a code that would define him as so-called *feminine*. Nonetheless, this feminine Khalil comes to an end at the very moment it is rejected by Khalil himself for being rejected beforehand by his society. The complexity of Khalil’s gender represents the complexity of the male/female issue in the Arab world, and this is what Barakat aims at when giving birth to such a different provisory androgyne character.

2.7 Conclusion

All through this chapter, we have been trying to argue that Arab women writers, mainly those who have witnessed wars and conflicts, are capable of voicing not only their agonies but also the suffering of their people. Having analysed Barakat’s *The Stone of Laughter*, we have tried to expose the idea that Arab women writings are peculiar both in terms of their creativity and rebellion. *The Stone of Laughter* is about the first tool with which we have attempted to illustrate our hypothesis, i.e. to reveal the literary creativeness and the “pen revolt” of Arab women writers.

By analysing the novel from different angles, in terms of characterization, themes and narration, we allowed ourselves as well as the readers to spotlight the specificity of the literary productions by Arab women authors writing in Arabic. This specificity lies in the new techniques of narration, characterization and the thematic of their productions. In the case of H. Barakat, we have noticed such peculiarity when having exposed how she has re-conceptualized the two chronotopes of time and space, and how she has ‘fabricated’ an androgyne character who is different from those androgyne archetypes in the writings of Shakespeare, V. Woolf or of any other western writer.

ars because I have no power; no arms or soldiers. I
o the forgetfulness of those making history in the
street...Under the boots stepping over my head, I still write as if I am an empress or a
dictator.” (Faqr, 2005: V). This quotation reveals Barakat’s in any other Arab woman writer’s
intention in writing on war. Indeed, war represents the central character of Barakat’s writing
and this is what has given birth to both the creativeness and the rebellion of Barakat’s literary
style.

In the first chapter, we have shed light on another salient trend of contemporary Arab
women literature, i.e. **hybrid post-colonial writings**. Because of the significance and
importance of this trend in arguing that Arab women writers are as creative as, not only Arab
male authors, but also western writers. In this chapter, we have illustrated to what extent Arabic
literary productions by Arab women writers are rebellious and creative. The next chapter is
devoted to the analysis of Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love*. Soueif represents post-colonial
male and female writers, and her writings, categorized as hybrids, symbolize the complexity of
identity. Thus, in the next chapter, we will explore another dimension of creativeness regarding
Arab women writers: how to produce a fiction that is culturally Arab, yet linguistically English,
i.e. **how to convey one’s culture via the Other’s language**.

- 1. Post-colonialism:** Post-colonialism refers to the period following the decline of colonialism, e.g., the end or lessening of domination by European empires. Postcolonial theory is one of the main frameworks for thinking about the world and acting to change the world. Arising in academia and reshaping humanities and social sciences disciplines, postcolonial theory argues that our ideas about foreigners, **‘the other’**, particularly our negative ideas about them, are determined not by a true will to understand, but rather by our desire to conquer, dominate, and exploit them. According to postcolonial theory, the cause of poverty, tyranny, and misery in the world, and of failed societies around the world, is **Euro-American imperialism and colonialism**.
- 2. Post-post colonialism:** Post-post colonial theory refers to the era following the independence of ex-colonies. Thinkers, critics and literary men of the post-post colonial era investigate the negative aspect of the post-independence stage and the Arab tyrannies: kingdoms, false democracies and false republics. The most representative figures of this era are the Sudanese Djamel Mahdjoub, the Algerian Yasmina Khadraa and the Jordanian Fadia Faqir.
- 3. Double-voicedness:** It is a philosophical as well as a literary concept coined by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel*. Bakhtin mentions that double-voiced discourse helps to speak indirectly, conditionally, in a refracted way, to introduce more expressive intentions and to develop idea of heteroglossia. He says that **double-voicedness** in prose is prefigured in language itself, in language as a social phenomenon that is becoming in history, socially stratified and weathered in this process of becoming.
- 4. The Lebanese Civil War:** It is a civil war that had lasted for 15 years beginning in 1975 and ending in 1990. Some historians would describe this war as a sectarian war between the main Lebanese militias: Sunni militias, Druze, Shi'a militias, Christian militias and non-religious groups. However, there is no consensus among scholars and researchers on what triggered the Lebanese Civil War, so The Lebanese Civil War was a multifaceted civil war whose antecedents can be traced back to the conflicts and

after the end of Lebanon's administration by the

5. **Edward Kharrat (1926-):** He is an Egyptian writer and critic known for being one of the modern pioneers of Arab short story and even novel writing. He published more than 50 books of literary criticism, novels and collections of short stories.

6. **Black humour:** It is a kind of drama in which disturbing or sinister subjects like death, disease, or warfare, are treated with bitter amusement, usually in a manner calculated to offend and shock. Prominent in the theatre of the absurd, black comedy is also a feature of Joe Orton's *Loot* (1965). A similar *black humour* is strongly evident in modern American fiction from Nathanael West's *A Cool Million* (1934) to Joseph Heller's *Catch - 22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse - Five* (1969).

7. **Shifters:** The shifters of time, of space and of person are elements of fiction that allow the shift (the move) from one setting to another, from moment to another and from one character to another. These shifters sometimes are made visible by the writer, i.e. the reader easily grasps the shifts, and other times mostly in modern writings the shifters are substituted by other diacritics (visual). They are also called deixis in literary criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

HYBRIDITY AND CREATIVITY

IN The Map of Love

... tried to argue that Arab women writings not only are creative but are also rebellious even when they rely on war events, in this third chapter we will explore other facets of creativity and rebellion in the writings of Arab woman authors. We have been arguing how creative Arab woman novelists writing in Arabic are, through the reading of Huda Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter*, in this chapter we will try to argue again that the Arab woman writer cannot only compete with her Arab male compatriots, but they can also compete writers from overseas, male and female. Women writers like Fadia Faqir, Salma Alkhadraa Jeyoussi, Emily Nasrallah, Assia Djebbar, Leila Abu Leila and other acknowledged writers have managed to voice their femininity and their Arab quest to the West through their original literary productions, literary productions that neither belong to the Arab literature nor to the Western literature, but belong to them both, and these are what the critics call “**hybrid writings**”.

Though it was and still is difficult for this category of Arab women writers to write novels or short stories in a foreign language conveying Arab cultural dimensions in their productions, they have succeeded to bring to light original writings that can compete with other writings in the Arab world and in the West. One may observe instances of such literary productions, like Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* 2007, Leila Abu Leila's *The Translator* 2002, Soraya Antonius' *The Lord* 1989, Assia Djebbar's *Vaste est la prison (So Vast the Prison)* 1995, and other great novels written by the very ‘refined’, stylistic forms of Arab women whom were said to be backward having never been to school.

Ahdaf Soueif is one of the most read writers who have been able to impose their writings in spite of being an Arab and a woman. Ahdaf Soueif is the author of the bestselling *The Map of Love* which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1999, and this has made her the first Arab writer ever to be nominated for such an important prize. Ahdaf Soueif is simply a genuine representation of what an Arab woman can be, not how an Arab woman is perceived in the Arab world or in the West.

The present chapter is devoted to the probing of A. Soueif's *The Map of Love* for the sake of exploring and discovering the other facets of **rebellion** and **creativity** in Arab women's hybrid writings. Rebellion lies in the themes Soueif tackles in her writings as sexuality, the status of the Arab woman and some other political issues. As for the feature of creativity in this

capacity of this author to fuse two cultural identities, two
s. Hence, this chapter is divided in two main parts; the
first part will be devoted to the analysis of *The Map of Love* as a hybrid masterpiece of
literature, and the second part will be devoted to the reading of the cultural and feminist
dimensions of this novel.

3.2 An intercultural, mosaic hybrid

Edward Said says that *Ahdaf Soueif is one of the real writers of gender politics* (quoted by Michael Silverblatt in an interview with Ahdaf Soueifⁱ). Indeed, Soueif represents a new trend of feminist writings, gender politics¹ writings, hybrid postcolonial writings and above all Arab women writings. Soueif is a writer of generations, a writer of history and a writer of cross-cultures. She is a writer of and about Arab women in particular, and Women in general. "*Ahdaf Soueif has a talent for blending the personal and political and getting under the skin of each one of her characters.*" (The Independent, London: 2004), and this is what we will explore all through the sections of this chapter while reading through her novel.

3.2.1 The author

Ahdaf Soueif was born in Egypt in 1950, but between the ages of four and eight she lived in England while her mother studied for her PhD at London University. She learned to read from *Little Grey Rabbit* and English comics. She has taught at Cairo University and the University of King Saoud, Saudi Arabia.

She is the author of two collections of short stories, *Aisha* (1983) and *Sandpiper* (1996), and two novels: *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992), about a young Egyptian woman's life in Egypt and England, where she goes to study as a postgraduate, set against key events in the history of modern Egypt; and *The Map of Love* (1999), the story of a love affair between an Englishwoman and an Egyptian nationalist set in Cairo in 1900, secrets uncovered by the woman's great-granddaughter, herself in love with an Egyptian musician living in New York.

Ahdaf Soueif moved between two worlds, infusing her Anglophone novels and short stories with the essence of her native linguistic and cultural identities. She has been described as a "hybrid"² writer, a tense and an intellectually difficult role to play. In the next section, we

ⁱ recorded for the Lannan Foundation, April 9 2003.

, the novel that has brought her fame and interest in the

3.2.2 The novel

Ahdaf Soueif novels and short stories generally explore the misconceptions that stem in the spaces between East and West. It reads as a genuine, original literary production that has been written by this original and creative Arab woman whether we consider it belongs to Arab literature, or to European literature or even Euro-Arab literature. It does not only explore these mis-conceptions but also puts forward so many questions about love, politics, the history of Egypt, life, and this is what Michael Silverblatt, a producer and a host of radio program Bookworm, says: “*The Map of Love brings to us the things that the novels are meant to bring not just politics but love, not just love but romance, not just romance but counter-romance; this is the real thing; this is **the bright book of life.***” (2003 April 9).

The Map of Love, about 529 pages, represents a new international literary phenomenon. Though it is a modern novel, this masterpiece gathers characteristics of other types of the novel, the historical, the political, the Saga..., but what is creative in this novel is that, unlike the post-modern novels, it also shares some of the features of the classical novel:

“The novel gives us news, and one of the amazing things about Ahdaf Soueif is that her books come to us **the way novels once did from afar with news** about another culture, about something we don’t know, about a world in which women are not treated the way women are here but **are thinking and feeling...**” (Silverblatt, 2003 April 9).

The Map of Love is a textual “tapestry” that weaves together several parallel stories: stories from the 19th century others from the 20th century, stories of romance others of politics, stories from the West others from the Orient; all in all stories about women, life and love. The novel’s four units (a beginning of about thirteen chapters, an end of a beginning of about five chapters, a beginning of an end of about nine chapters and an end) hint at the epic (classic) proportions and tremendous historic scope of the tale about to unknot. This novel is also divided in two time periods, each period with its own theme: Lady Anna’s love story with Sherif Bacha and Isabel’s love story with Amal’s brother Omar.

untold story of women, both colonizers and colonized, ability to transcend the differences of language, culture and religion. It is a truly **post-colonial** novel in that it re-shapes, re-thinks and re-evaluates the colonial period in the Middle East. Besides, it reconsiders the traits of **universal womanhood** by bringing together women from different time periods, different cultures and different belongings.

3.2.3 The novel construct

The Map of Love tells the story of an artistic and articulate Englishwoman, Anna, who visits Egypt as a balm for the wounds of widowhood. Egypt is a land she has heard much about and whose sights she has admired in museum paintings. Anna is too adventurous to be content with the staid tourism of the late 19th Century, and dresses in men's clothing to see the Pyramids and Mount Sinai. On the latter trip, allies of a political protester recently jailed kidnap her. The wife of the protester, Layla, and Layla's attorney brother, Sharif, to whose home Anna is taken, are indignant for her sake, befriend her, and Sharif vows to help Anna reach her original goal.

In the desert of Sinai, where Anna dresses as an Arab man, and particularly in the garden at St. Catherine's Monastery, where Anna tries to behave as an Arab woman, she and Sharif develop deep feelings for each other. He is silent upon their return, and Anna resolves to return to England. Layla points out her brother's mistake and he proposes marriage. They set aside the many problems this will create for each - Anna will be shunned by fellow Britons in Egypt, and Sharif will be suspected of British bias by his numerous political enemies - marry, and move into the old house with Sharif's mother Zeinab and hermitic father al-Baroudi, twenty years ago a rebel against the British.

Anna assimilates to Egyptian culture, learns Arabic, and is drawn into the nationalist movement as translator, intermediary with anti-colonialists in London, and finally spokesperson with foreign visitors. Sharif works hard to fight the British Occupation legally and legislatively. They have a daughter, Nur al-Hayyah - literally the light of their life - and, ten years after their marriage, Sharif begins thinking about retiring to private life. He is thinking of this when unknown assailants open fire on his carriage. Sharif dies and Anna keeps her promise to take Nur to England. Contact is lost with her Egyptian family in-laws.

h performed by Amal from a trunk load of journals and an American, Isabel Parkman. At a party she mentions the meeting with a prominent older musician, which is sent to his sister, Amal, in Cairo. Amal becomes engrossed in the characters, and Isabel falls in love with Amal's brother 'Omar. The anti-terrorist, anti-Islamist policies of Egypt's President Mubarak cause problems on the family lands, and revive Amal's late-1960s radicalism. 'Omar is deeply involved in Palestinian politics.

Part of the treasures in the trunk is one panel of a tapestry depicting Isis, Osiris, and Horus, ancient Egyptian deities. Anna finishes weaving the panels just before Sharif is assassinated. One panel goes to Anna and Nur, and thus into Isabel's trunk. A second goes to Layla and reaches 'Omar through his and Amal's father, Ahmad. A third panel is never accounted for. Isabel discovers it in her camera bag when she returns to Cairo after a long visit to the U.S. She claims it was put there by a mysterious woman, Umm Aya, whom she claims to have met in al-Baroudi's old cell. Conservators of the museum, that once was Anna and Sharif's old house, deny anyone could have gotten inside the cell and any knowledge of a person called Umm Aya. Amal cannot accept Isabel's explanation, but finds no other.

Though the novel is very thick, the flowing of the events and the veracity and the credibility of the characters draw your curiosity to go through the novel till the last pages which are a glossary of words, Egyptian words, Arabic words and names of historical figures, another facet of her literary creativity of A. Soueif. She not only challenges her western as well as Arab readers with her thick but interesting English novel, but she also challenges the critics by “**mingling**” cultures, generations and languages.

3.3 A hybrid postcolonial novel

Critics in the Western world, mainly in the Anglophone world, are getting more and more astounded and slightly anxious about the tremendous literary productions by non-native English writers. Andrew Marr¹ wrote in The Guardians in September 14th 1999 “*the superstars of contemporary English literature aren't English, and haven't been for years.*” Marr is referring, here, to the finalists for 1999 Booker Prize which included non-native English authors Scottish, Irish, South Asian and Egyptian. Marr also wrote: “*the English, who virtually created the novel, are now being ventriloquised by others*” (Marr, The Guardians, September 14th 1999). British and Anglophone critics are speaking nowadays of a literary crisis that is the

and the literary productions by non-native English writers; postcolonial brand of English through their writings.

3.3.1 The post-colonial theory and hybrids

Hybridity has never been a new phenomenon whether in literature, cultural fields or any other domain. Cultural hybridity is the outcome of the process of interculturality and a fusion of different cultures. Indeed, *hybridity* is one of the emblematic notions of our era that captures the spirit of times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion. It has proven a useful concept to describe postcolonial cultures.

The contemporary salience of hybridity should not obscure the long history of intercultural borrowing and fusion. In English speaking theory circles, Russian literary theorist M. Bakhtin (1981) and the Indian American postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha (1994) are often credited with dislocating the concept of hybridity from the biological domain of *miscegenation* to **the cultural field of power**. In the interdisciplinary social sciences, Bhabha's and Bakhtin's conceptions of hybridity in cultural politics stand on the shoulders of various European, Latin American and other thinkers.

The postcolonial theory took up hybridity as a central dimension of the literary and cultural productions of Africa, Latin America and Asia, and it re-popularized the term "hybridity" to elucidate cultural fusions. Bhabha (1994) explores hybridity in the context of the postcolonial novel and celebrates it as a **symptom of resistance by the colonized**, as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics and identity by natives striking back at **colonial domination**.

Bhabha emphasizes hybridity's ability to subvert dominant discourses and re-appropriate them to create what he called "**cultures of postcolonial contra-modernity**" (Bhabha, 1994: 6). This re-inscription is found in Bhabha's analysis of mimicry as a hybridizing process. According to Bhabha, mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of rejection. Thus, he asserted that mimicry appropriates **the Otherⁱ** as it visualizes power. (Bhabha, 1994: 86)⁵

ⁱ The "Other", in this context, refers to the imperial, colonizer.

on rather than representation, mimicry³ undermines the discourse because it brings to light the ambivalence of colonial discourse. Thus, mimicry opens up a space for alternative forms of agency by highlighting colonial culture's "insurgent counter-appeal" (Bhabha, 1994: 91). The cultural hybridity enacted in mimicry, best captured by Bhabha's notion of "third space" i.e. the in-between space where the 'cutting edge of translation and negotiation' occurs, is thus understood as a revolutionary practice of resistance.

The American Palestinian scholar Edward Said is also one of those thinkers who tried to re-conceptualize the notion of hybridity, yet he tried to conceptualize it differently. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) unfold an increasingly explicit recognition of hybridity as a fundamental dimension of intercultural relations, albeit a hybridity that is firmly grounded in imperial dynamics. Said, in his early writings particularly in *Orientalism*, drew on Michel Foucault's conception of discourse⁴ and Antonio Gramsci's view of hegemony⁵ to argue that political, military and economic drives of empire go together with a discursive regime that induces, supports, justifies and underscores the predictability of colonialism and imperialism. Such a discourse, which Said called *Orientalism*, can be encountered not only in the west's relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds but also, in any area touched by western conquests.

Drawing on an important abundance of fiction, scholarship and public discourse, Said was able to paint a discursive mechanism to making the non-West a subordinate *Other*. In early Said's views, the will to dominate the *Other*, perceived as uncivilized, that animates much of western narrative productions about the non-west is concretized in the dichotomy the West established between itself and the rest of the world. It is a binary opposition in which the former is granted the upper hand in all realms of life, and the latter granted the un-civilized wild world to be tamed.

Yet, Said's later logic vis-à-vis the West vs. the Rest of the world dichotomy is replete with endorsements of **interaction** and **exchange**. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said wrote that *all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, and all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinary differentiated and unmonolithic* (Said, 1994: XXV) and he continues saying: *"Far from being unitary and monolithic or autonomous things, cultures*

alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude.”

Said’s later logic of hybridity goes beyond the colonized resistance towards their former colonizer. Hybridity, according to Said and many other contemporary postcolonial thinkers, is in essence related to **cross-culturalism**. Hybrid literary productions, therefore, reflect a cultural, ideological and linguistic fusion that the hybrid postcolonial writer deciphers through her/his writings. Bhabaha describes hybridity as follows:

“The name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminating identities that secure the “pure” and original identity of authority)...” (Bhabha, 1994: 112)

In Bhabah’s view, postcolonial hybrid writers subvert the colonizer/ colonized hierarchy by presenting pictures of the imperial colonizer in the past and the present, and by re-establishing the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. This view is noticeable in the writings of Arab authors who write in languages other than Arabic, in Assia Djebbar’s French writings, in Leila Aboulela’s¹ English novels and notably in Ahdaf Soueif’s remarkable literary production.

3.3.2 Soueif as a hybrid writer

The question of “hybridity” and hybrid writings, thus, is not new. On the contrary, it has existed since the early times of the colonial era, and no one would deny those texts and manuscripts called as slave narratives, written by African slaves who had been deported from their homeland to the New World. However, such writings were considered of low literary merits. It is only by the spreading of the movements of liberations all over the world and the independence of former colonies of the British Empire, of France, and Germany, that writings in European languages by non-native speakers and writers of these languages gained some consideration: “*The new English literatures are essentially a linguistic legacy of the British colonial period*” (Kachru, 1989: 281).

¹ Leila Aboulela: (ليلي أبو العلاء) Aboulela is a Sudanese, postcolonial English writer and playwright. She is best known for her novel: *The Translator* (1999), and a collection of short stories *Coloured Lights* (2001). Aboulela is a pioneer Arab woman author in writing about Islam, veil and the status of Women in Islam in English.

olars who insisted on the importance of other varieties of English, and he devoted his reflection to the importance of other “Englishes” and even writings in English but by non-native speakers of this language. In his book, The Other Tongue, he sheds light on the literary creativity of the writings by non-native speakers of English, and he has given instances of Indian, gifted writers. For example, a dazzling and highly unusual Indian writer, G. V. Desani, has described his own stylistic experimentation as follows: “*I have chosen the craft of writing. And my entire linguistic creed... is simply to find a suitable medium. I find the English language is that kind of medium. It needs to be modified to suit my purpose.*” (Narasinhaiah, 1978: 406)” (Kachru, 1989: 284). These writings are what a lot of critics call **hybrid writings**; they are hybrid and they are cross-cultural writings too.

Soueif’s writings have long been questioned in terms of their cultural contextualization either to British, English literature or to Egyptian Arab literature. Indeed, Soueif’s literary productions are caught in the middle Orient-West face-off, yet Soueif has managed to create a hybrid identity that complements both her English and Egyptian roots. Truly to the meaning, Soueif’s hybrid works are postcolonial in nature; they subvert the colonizer/ colonized hierarchy by presenting England a picture of its colonial past and postcolonial present. Thus, it turns her Egyptian postcolonial gaze on England’s eye of power. Soueif’s works give the former colonized a voice not only to be heard, but also to influence the English/ Arab literary landscape as they describe Arab women exposed to British culture and influence and vice versa, who seek to find their own voices and take control of the narrative of their lives.

“As an Arab-Muslim woman who writes in English, Ahdaf Soueif connects with two currents in contemporary Arab and Muslim literatures: Muslim women from diverse parts of the world who write in English (writers such as Mena Abdullah from Australia, Attia Hosain from India, Zaynab Alkhali from Nigeria and Farhana Sheikh from England) and the feminist literature in Arabic presented by such writers as Nawal Saadawi, Hanane Sheikh, Ahlam Mostaghanemi, and Salwa Bakr.” (A. Malak, 2004: 127)

Ahdaf Soueif has once answered when asked why she writes in English that she simply feels at ease when writing in English because this is her professional language. Despite the fact that in Egypt, English is the language of colonial occupation though to a lesser degree

... fellow countrymen have had a contentious history, and aware of this attitude, Ahdaf Soueif keeps on writing in English because this is how she can change that portrait the West kept on weaving and drawing on the Orient.

Ahdaf Soueif seems to have no personal history of opposition to or rejection of English. She is simply more at ease with English, the language of her professional training, "*the first language [she] read in.*" As a woman of two worlds, she is very much "*the product of a wrenched history: an Egyptian living in England and writing about Egypt in English,*" yet she is aware of her paradoxical situation, "*conscious of the depth of Arabic, where a word can have certain nuances of which [she] is not aware*" (Trabelsi, 2003).

Ahdaf Soueif's hybridity seems to be as complex as the concept hybridity itself is. Soueif's recognition as hybrid writer is a tense and sometimes intellectually painful role to play. Yet, it is a suitable identification as Soueif shows a genuine capacity to blend Arabic rhythms and idioms into English. *The Map of Love* can be considered as the most postcolonial and the most hybrid of this Arab woman author's writings:

"England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs." (Soueif, 1999: 34)

The above quotation exposes the postcolonial discourse in Soueif's work, and it is clearly shown that there is a nuance of post-post-colonialism too in reading these two sentences: "England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government [...] foreign occupation therefore becomes 'the very basis' of contemporary Egyptian civilization". The following section aims at unfolding the two features of hybridity and post-colonialism in Soueif's mind.

3.3.3 Cultural and linguistic contexts

In the previous chapter, we have attempted to argue that Barakat's *The Stone of Laughter* is both a rebellious and a creative masterpiece of literature by analysing the novel from different angles. To expose the creativity and the rebellion of Soueif's *The Map of Love*, we are going to pursue the same steps regarding the analysis of this novel. *The Stone of Laughter* has been categorized as a novel of war, and here lies the rebellious feature of a literary production

an author. As for *The Map of Love*, written in English before of a different literary categorization than Barakat's.

The Map of Love is considered to be a historical novel, i.e. a novel that re-creates a period or an event in history and often uses historical figures as some of its characters, **historical figures such as Lord Cromer, Sheikh Mohamed Abdou, Mustafa Kamel, Mohamed Farid, and Qassim Amin**. Indeed, this masterpiece of literature is so steeped in the discourse of history that it would be instructive to probe in some detail its handling of the subject. This novel represents what Bakhtin labels as "the novelization of history" because it fictionalizes certain historical events in the destiny of Britain, the former colonizer, and Egypt the former colonized. In producing such an English "historical" novel, Soueif undertakes a *revisionist meta-history*¹ to articulate her nationalist version of modern Egypt's history. In the very first epigraph for the first chapter, Soueif writes:

"It is strange that this period [1900-1914] when the Colonialists and their collaborators thought everything was quiet -- was one of the most fertile in Egypt's history. A great examination of the self took place, and a great recharging of energy in preparation for a new Renaissance. Gamal 'Abd el-Nasser, *The Covenant 1962*" (Soueif, 1999)

The above quotation is remarkably significant. As already mentioned before, the novel weaves together two temporal strings: events set in the first two decades of this century with their heaving national turmoil, and those taking place in the late 1990s. But the epigraph is also revealing in terms of Soueif's own formation and the project that her fiction, which includes two collections of short-stories, has so far unravelled. *The Covenant*, or *The Charter*, a *manifesto of the revolution in its newfound socialist guise, widely distributed at the time and learned by rote in schools*, left a strong nationalist, if now nostalgically-tinged, mark on the generation whose consciousness was being formed in the 1960s.

Soueif, who now lives in England and returns regularly to speak at Cairene cultural forums, has more than once confided to the public her sense of outrage at the stereotypes that the Western media currently peddles about Egypt: fundamentalism, female genital mutilation,

¹Meta-history: It is a concept developed by Hayden White in his book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1974) to refer to the fictionalization of history.

repeatedly cited them. Soueif's novel, that is favouring
to have set itself the task of demystifying stereotypes
about the country and "promoting" what she sees as a more truthful image of Egypt.

The Map of Love connotes a 'gaze' from a domestic interior upon an idyllic, peaceful landscape and opens onto cross-cultural romance, the two 'mixed-cultured love stories: between the 19th century couple Anna and Sharif, and between the late 1990s couple Isabel and Omar, played out in exotic settings, a vision that confronts the orientalists' negative view regarding the exotic Orient, like the desert of Sinai and the pyramids. From the very beginning of the novel, Soueif engages in a politics of translation which engages the readers in domestic terms that have been de-familiarized to some extent, made fascinating by revisionary encounter in a foreign text (Moore, 2008:146). Using expressions from colloquial Egyptian Arabic and ending the novel with a glossary that provides the English readers with translation of Egyptian and Arabic words and expressions (Soueif, 1999: 519-529) aims at constructing a cross-cultural bridge between English readers and Arabic readers, not only by bringing together characters from two different cultures, but through a recurrent code switching (the shift from English to Arabic) in the novel.

"'Hello', says Isabel. 'Izzay el-sehha?'

Tahiyya's eyes widen as she turns to me: 'she speaks Arabic!'

'See the cleverness', I [Amal] say.

'Yakhti, brawa 'aleiha. She looks intelligent... Is she married?... Like the moon and not married? Why? Don't they have men in Amreeka?''

This passage cites English (Hello), elementary standard Arabic ('aleiha), idiomatic Egyptian Arabic (yakhti) and body language (Tahiyya's eyes widen...), all modulated through Amal's selectively translating, distinctively ironic perspective. This passage, and others in the novel, indicates Soueif's efforts to include non-middle (Tahiyya) and upper-class voices (Amal). This illustrates Amal travels to her village in upper Egypt with Isabel.

Soueif's novel can be perceived as an "East-West" romantic 'pot-boiler', and a cultural reconciliation between the West, Britain represented by Lady Anna, and America represented by Isabel, and the Orient. We also perceive Amal, the Cairene central narrator of the novel who stands at the very crossroad between two cultures and two generations, possessive about her English 'ancestor' Lady Anna's story:

s into my bedroom and read and reread and see her in the miniature in the locket:

the portrait of the mother she is so much resembled [...] and I am in an English autumn in 1897 and Anna’s troubled heart lies open before me...”

(Soueif, 1999: 11)

This possession can be seen as a feminine, peaceful cross-cultural meeting between three women (Lady Anna, Isabel and Amal) belonging to different cultures, different linguistic backgrounds and different generations. This meeting is about an interesting linguistic and cultural contexture (meeting). This contexture is also represented through the different relationships between the various characters. The following diagram portrays to what extent *The Map of Love* is a cross-cultural hybrid novel:

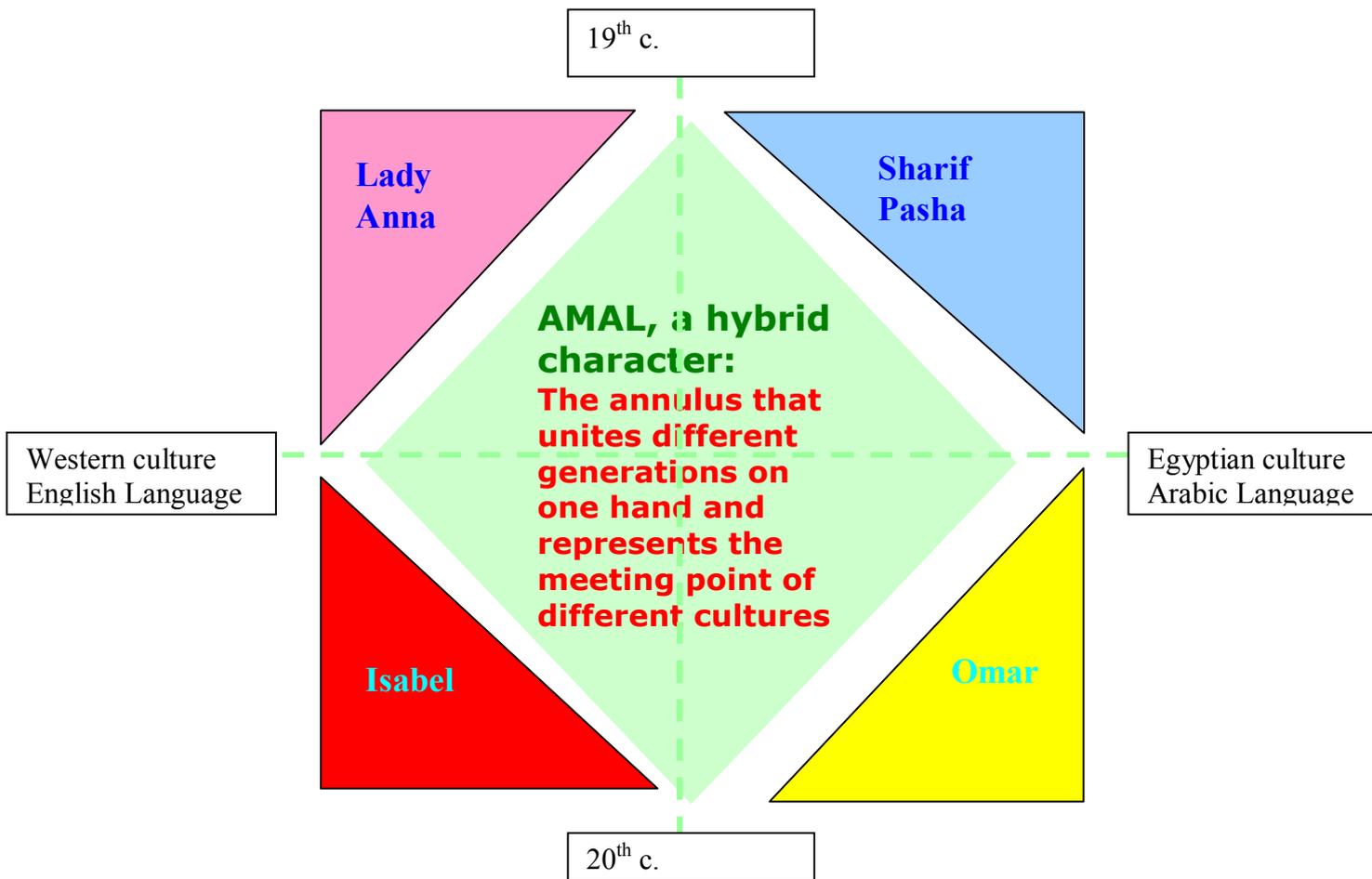


Figure 3.1: *The Map of Love*: a cross-cultural contexture

posit each protagonist, in *The Map of Love*, at a point clear to the reader. In fact, the five characters make up a

bridge at different levels: at the cultural level (the two love stories, the friendship between Amal and Isabel and Amal's relationship with Anna's journals), the linguistic level (Amal being a translator, Anna's attempt to learn Arabic) and at the level of the different generations (Lady Anna and Sharif Pasha who represent the 19th century generation vs. Amal, Omar and Isabel who represent the late 1990s generation).

3.4 The narrative technique

The narrative in *The Map of Love* is of a particular nature. Despite the thickness of this novel, the narration goes backwards and forwards. Soueif made the narration peculiar and original by distributing the role of narrating and recounting events to three characters: Amal, Lady Anna and Isabel. Yet, the narration is mostly shared by Amal and Lady Anna:

*“In this story, you have two stories, **two narratives**, and in some things they equal each other and in some things they're divergent, so they are both love stories, and in both stories both romances take place **across cultures** ...”* (Soueif, 2003)

So this quotation by the novelist, Ahdaf Soueif unveils that there are **two narratives** in this novel, and to relate the two narratives, Soueif uses Amal as a central narrator to be the device with which these two narratives are driven together, and to establish a relationship between the two love stories, the two generations, the two cultures and the four women.

3.4.1 A “swing of the Pendulum” narration

As we have already mentioned previously, we are following the same methodology in exploring our corpus, i.e. we intend to analyse *The Map of Love* the same way we have done with *The Stone of Laughter*. This parallelism in analysing the two novels, in spite of their divergence, is a deliberate choice so that we come out with conclusions that either confirm or infirm our hypothesis which states that writings by Arab women authors are both creative and bear rebellious characteristics whether they write in Arabic or in a language other than Arabic.

In this section, we will see the narrative technique in *The Map of Love* the same way we did with Barakat's in the previous chapter, i.e. we will attempt to explore and expose in what sense the narration in this novel is peculiar. In fact, the quotation mentioned a few lines before

and the originality of the narration in this novel. Besides more than one narrator, in *The Map of Love* we hear the voices of each protagonist in a permanent way.

In the first pages of the story, this permanent and regular change of voices, and more precisely women voices, appears. The story starts with Amal's voice, then we hear Lady Anna's voice and some lines further we hear Isabel's voice:

“Anna must have put aside her pen, Amal thinks [...] *I have tried, as well as I could, to tell her. But she cannot-or will not- understand, and give up hope* (Anna) [...] ‘Oh, I hope not,’ Isabel cried [...] *My name is Anna Winterbourne. I do hold (much) with those who talk of the Stars governing our fate.* (Soueif, 1999: 4-7)

All through the coming pages of the novel, there is a permanent exchange of the narrative role between the main female characters of the story, i.e. Amal, Anna and Isabel, yet the biggest part of narration is shared by Anna and Amal.

“Today is the first day of the Eid and there are festivities all round. We have just come back from seeing the wonderful new bridge at Bulaq (Anna) [...] I wait till after sunset prayers, then I walk along the edges between field and field, across the mud bridges over the canals and into the village (Amal[...]) It's OK, Honey. Honey, Honey,’ Isabel croons as she opens the door.” (Soueif, 1999: 447-459)

This technique of having an alternation of the narration may be labelled as a “**swing of Pendulum**” narration. In fact, we have tried to coin this term that can be used in further researches and papers to describe such a narrative phenomenon. The symbolism that such a term refers to is that the role of narrating and recounting, i.e. storytelling is a typical feminine role that only women, wherever they come from and whatever they may belong to, can play. In *The Map of Love*, Anna narrates her story that is a 19th century cross-cultural love story, and Isabel also narrates hers that is a late 1990s cross-cultural love story. As for Amal, she is the annulus that relates the two narratives, but she also narrates about herself and her suffering. This technique may reflect that women have the same “Fate” and the same destiny whether they are Western or Arab, and here lies the feminist trend of this novel, but a feminism that is

each which sees in women common suffering, common
ons.

3.4.2 Amal, a central character and a meta-narrator

In the previous section, we identified the narration in *The Map of Love* as divided in two narratives, and the two narratives are intertwined together by having one central narrator who is Amal. All through the novel, we hear Amal's voice re-reading Anna's journals and letters; we also hear Amal recounting Isabel's love story with her brother Omar. We also hear from time to time Amal's voice reading back some events in her life as flashbacks as in:

“When I was a child- before I had children of my own- I did it by thinking about death. Now, I think about the stars. I look at the stars and imagine the universe [...] And there was the latticed terrace of the haramlek...”
(Soueif, 1999:10)

What is special about this central narrator is that at times the narrator she narrates about Lady Anna or sometimes about Isabel as in: “...I can sit down at the table in my room, free once more to join Anna Winterbourne and Sharif al-Baroudi as, dressed in the flowing white of the Bedouin, they ride together into Sinai Desert.” (Soueif, 1999: 206) (then she starts reading Anna's journal), or in “Isabel gives me bits of her story ...as I get to know her, as I get to be able to imagine her...” (Soueif, 1999:16).

Amal does not only narrate, she is also narrated and this is what makes the narrative technique special and creative. Amal comments on the narration too in the sense that she rereads Anna's journals and then narrates them in her own style. Here is one instance of Amal's comments on Anna's journals; we read Anna's letter that starts this way:

“Dear Sir Charles,
I have just received yours of the 8th, in which you write that the Duke of Cornwall has promised to intercede for Urabi Pasha...” (Soueif, 1999:308)

Then, we read Amal's comments on Anna's letter, and her suggestions:

“Anna breaks off. She feels too false writing glibly to her beloved Sir Charles [...] And yet, the truth is that for the last two months, as her (Anna's) life in Cairo became more and more real to her, **it has seemed**

Amal and Caroline and her home in London
(Soueif, 1999:309)

Amal, the central narrator, represents a ‘**hyper-consciousness**’. The term ‘hyper-consciousness’ describes Amal’s capacity, as a central narrator, to recount events about other characters: about Anna, Isabel, Sharif Pasha and Omar. Her comments on Anna’s journals can be considered as personal interpretations of texts and letters by a lady who lived in the 19th century, and yet the way Amal re-arranges and puts together Anna’s journals, and the way she re-constructs Anna’s story provides her with the ability to re-weave Anna’s story and to re-narrate the events that happened a century before: “*And Amal who has known the ending all along, yet has loved him like his mother, like his sister; like his wife, mourns him with fresh grief...*” (Soueif, 1999:510)

Amal is not only a central narrator who recounts events about other characters, she is also a character who is narrated by a homo-diegetic narrator like in:

“-and there, on the table under her bedroom window, lies the voice that has set her dreaming again [...] Amal reads and reads deep into the night. She reads and lets Anna’s words flow into her...” (Soueif, 1999: 4) and in: “*And Amal who has known the ending all along, yet has loved him like his mother, like his sister; like his wife, mourns him with fresh grief...*” (Soueif, 1999:510)

Being both a central narrator and a character who is narrated by an omniscient heterodiegetic narrator is very peculiar to Soueif’s *The Map of Love*, and for this type of narrator we have coined a term that may fit all the features of this “**hyper-consciousness**” which *a meta-narrator*, i.e. a narrator that narrates on the narration and that is narrated too. The concept of meta-narratives has been used in various disciplines, but mainly in theology: in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In critical theory, and particularly postmodernism, a **metanarrative** (from meta-narrative, sometimes also known as a **master-** or **grand narrative**) is an abstract idea that is thought to be a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge. According to John Stephens, meta-narrative “*is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience*” (Stephens, 1998: 52). The prefix “meta-” means “beyond” and is here used to mean “about”, and a narrative is a

a story about a story, encompassing and explaining
chemes.

In religion for instance, many Christians believe that human nature, since the Fall (Genesis 3), is characteristically sinful, but has the possibility of redemption and experiencing eternal life in heaven - thus representing a belief in a universal rule and a telos for humankind. The Enlightenment theorists believed that rational thought, allied to scientific reasoning, would lead inevitably toward moral, social and ethical progress. Muslims view human history as the story of divine contact through prophets like David, Abraham, or Jesus demonstrating rationally impossible feats for human beings (miracles) as proof of authenticity and sent to every people over time to teach purity of heart so that people may receive the guidance of the one true creator or God.

On the basis of such an explanation, we thought of coining the term meta-narrative to describe Amal's role in the novel. Thus, we can identify Amal as a **meta-narrator**, i.e. a narrator who comments on the narration; Amal does narrate Anna's narrating of her own story, and Amal too does narrate Isabel's narrating of her own story. Such a term is but a personal attempt to shed some light on the embedded levels of narration. The following diagram summarizes how narration works in *The Map of Love*, and posits Amal's role as a meta-narrator. Amal says: "*and I piece a story (that of Anna) together*" (Soueif, 1999:26), and says: "*Isabel gives me bits of her story...*" (Soueif, 1999:16).

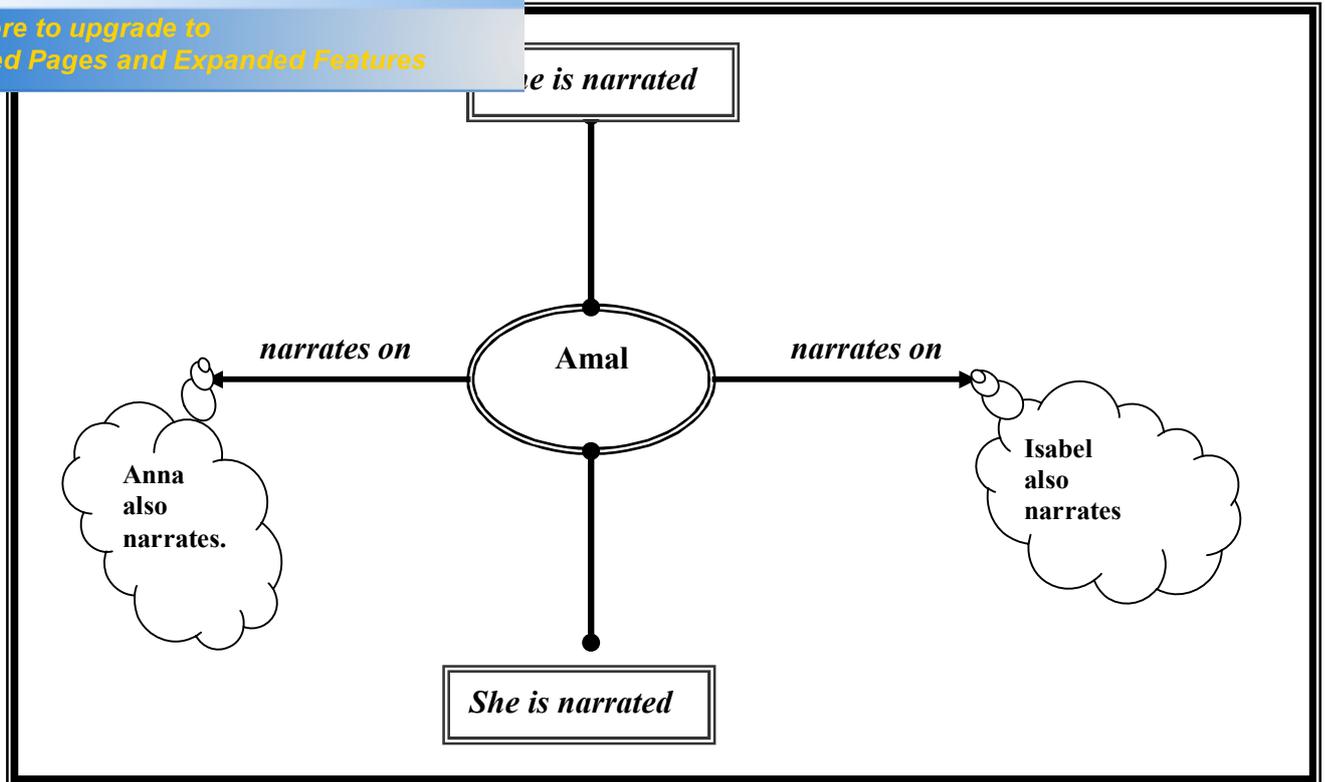


Figure 3.2: Amal as a central narrator.

As a central narrator, Amal is at the crossroad of mutual narrations. She sees and is seen by another character, and the two of them see how they are mirrored in the Other’s eyes. It is a ceaseless process that explodes the unity of the character and disintegrates it in a myriad of identity items that draw a puzzle extremely flexible and difficult at once to reconstruct. Hybridity lies in the range of possibilities that extends from what you think you are to what others think you are across languages, religions, cultures, geographical distance and physical portraits, what is seen with the eyes, and what is seen with the intellect or the heart.

3.5 *The Map of Love*: a “universalization” of *Womanhood*

Besides being a postcolonial hybrid, *The Map of Love* can also be considered as a feminist literary production, but the way feminism is utilized in this novel seems to be quite different from both Arab feminism and Western feminism. This novel not only brings closer different cultures and different generations, but it also represents a communion shared between women coming from different countries and different generations. In the previous section, we mentioned that narration in this novel is distributed over the three women protagonists: Anna,

tarting point of a reflection on how Soueif perceives

In fact, this novel represents a universalization of features, ambitions and agonies of womanhood. In her essay ‘Geographies of Pain’ Lionnet writes: “Literature encode as well as recreates ideology...to create new mythologies that allow the writer and the reader to engage in a constructive rewriting of their social contexts” (Lionnet , 1997: 132). Through this statement, we can identify *The Map of Love* as a novel that enacts just such a **recreation** of ideology, a constructive **rewriting** of the social context, in its treatment of its female protagonists: Anna, Amal and Isabel. Starting with Anna’s husband behaviour towards her before he died, we read through Anna’s journals:

“He (Edward) is not himself. I have heard this phrase before, and now it falls to me to use it. Edward, my husband, is not himself [...] And now he is back I hardly know him.” (Soueif, 1999:14)

Amal, on the other hand, lives a situation of solitude, a vacuum and an inward loneliness, after the departure of her sons. In this context, she says: “*There are no children to be comforted, no memoirs or letters to be sorted and wept over, no heartening story to be told.*” (Soueif, 1999:38). As for Isabel, she also lives a state of grieving: “ ‘*My mother is dying, I think,*’ says Isabel [...] *I was closer to my father. My mother was so intense. You could never just relax around her.* ’” (Soueif, 1999:43). Thus, what we may infer from these extracts is that the three women have in common the need of care, love and affection like any woman in the world.

While reading the novel, we encounter that Soueif’s protagonists discuss women in the context of the Arabic language on two separate occasions in the text. The word “woman” is found to resemble the word “mirror”: “ ‘*Al- Mar’ah al-Jadidah, “The New Woman?”*’ (says Anna)[...] ‘*what if, instead of having this- changing two diacritics on the cover of the book-* (says Layla) [...] ‘*Mir’aah*’? (says Anna)” (374-375), then Layla explains why are Mar’ah (woman) and Mi’raah (mirror) alike saying:

“Well, “mirror” must be from “ra’a”: to see. But I don’t know where “woman” comes in- oh, wait- mar’ is “person” so mar’ah is the feminine. Can it be that mar’ has to do with being visible?” (Soueif, 1999: 375)

ology of the word “mother” is described as closely correlating to concepts pertaining to “nation” and “religion”ⁱ. These considerations, along with Isabel’s wish that she had listened to her mother’s stories before Alzheimer’s disease ravaged her memory and Amal’s desire for a letter from her own mother “ *I loved my mother, and I lived with her for twenty-two years [...] I wished she had left me something; a letter, perhaps...*” (Soueif, 1999:119) are intended to touch upon one of the central themes of the novel—the **regenerative** effects of women’s narrative for both the individual and society.

The **resemblance** of the women’s ‘thirst’ and yearning for traces of their past confounds the binary opposition of “western self” and “eastern other”, and the above discussions as well as the intimate relationships between Layla and Anna on the one hand and Amal and Isabel on the other is nothing but a nuance, a shade of meaning that *womanhood* is universal and it overcomes all kinds of value judgements. Thus, we can infer that the feminist predisposition in *The Map of Love* aims at ‘constructing’ bridges of friendship, of understanding and of reconciliation between the Western woman and the Arab woman regardless of the linguistic, the cultural and the ideological obstacles.

Soueif’s narrative implodes and breaks apart the separation of the spheres. As women, Isabel and Anna (significantly, both are members of the “first world”) and Amal and Layla are marginalized within their respective societies. Such positions seem to grant them a freedom of (ideological) movement which is often denied by men of the same class. While Sharif Pasha and ‘Omar are hemmed in by the political exigencies of their day, forced to play roles not of their own choosing—Sharif as the political reactionary, ‘Omar as the Kalashnikov Conductor—the women in their lives enjoy a relative freedom to transcend the social circumscriptions of their time. Anna’s and Layla’s blossoming friendship is not the social bombshell that is Anna’s and Sharif’s marriage. Isabel’s and Amal’s closeness does not carry with it the political connotations that an American woman conceiving a child with a Palestinian activist does. Thus, the relative isolation in which women conduct their relationships affords a greater opportunity for transgressing the social code. In her journal describing her first meeting with Anna, Layla writes:

ⁱ In the Arabic language, the word أمة [Oummah] refers not only to the ‘nation’ but also to the ‘religion’. By saying الأمة [Al Oummah], you either mean the nation الوطن [Al Watan], or الأمة الإسلامية [Al Oummah Alislamyiah], the Islamic World.

hat she (Anna) was a stranger. And what a stranger: the British Army of Occupation was in the streets and in the Qasr el-Nil Barracks, and the Lord was breakfasting in Qasr el-Dubara. ... And here I sat with one of their women, dressed in the clothes of a man, snatched in the night by my husband's friends and imprisoned in my father's house—and we sat in my mother's reception room and felt our way towards each other as though our ignorance, one of the other, were the one thing in the world that stood between us and **friendship**.” (Soueif, 1999:136)

The assimilation of fragments of western historical texts into a novel authored by an Egyptian woman and narrated by various women from diverse social backgrounds allows the universal feminist discourse to prevail. Thus, through an interesting intermingling of speech (code switching⁸), Soueif transforms the language of the text into something entirely new and highly suited to the complex lands and peoples each endeavours to define: multifaceted, fluid, free. Bakhtin describes this as the process of *appropriating language*. He writes: “*(The word) exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from this that one must take the word and make it one's own*” (Bakhtin, 1990:294).

From the beginning, the reader encounters a meeting of the three women: Amal, Anna and Isabel:

“-and there, on the table under her (Amal's) bedroom, **lies the voice that has set her dreaming again**. Fragments of a life lived a long, long time ago. Across, a hundred years the woman's voice (Anna's) speaks to her—so clearly that she cannot believe it is not possible **to pick up her pen and answer** [...] The American (Isabel) had come to Amal's house. Her name was Isabel Parkman [...] Amal could not pretend she was not wary. Wary and weary in advance: An American woman—a journalist...” (Soueif, 1999: 4-6)

In the above extract, we can perceive a communion of the three women though each one comes from different temporal, cultural and ideological spheres. In fact, this communion goes all through the novel as if the three of them share a common fate, and what brings

Writing: Anna wrote her journals, letters and diaries to be read and re-told by Amal. The friendship that is born between Layla (Sharif Pasha's sister) and Anna on the one hand, and between Isabel and Amal on the other, has allowed all kinds of barriers to fade away. The linguistic obstacle was overcome by Anna and Isabel when they tried to learn Arabic with the help of Layla and Amal. The cultural obstacle was put aside when both Anna and Isabel tried to integrate in the Egyptian life and assimilate into the new culture without losing their belongings (Anna, for instance, kept writing to Sir Charles), i.e. both women (Anna and Isabel) are not portrayed as blank pages: ready, even eager, to be written upon.

Amal's relationship with Anna is also of a particular nature and it carries a beautiful intention within it. Amal says: "*I am obsessed with Anna Winterbourne's brown journals.*" (Soueif, 1999: 26); this obsession is not an obsession of an oriental woman towards a blue-eyed British Edwardian lady, but it is a transcending obsession. We, then, hear Amal saying: "*I got to know Anna as though she were my best friend- or better; for I heard the worst and the best of her thoughts...*" (Soueif, 1999: 43) *The Map of Love* represents a room for womanhood to voice its agonies regardless of its belonging, and it represents a communion, a common fate and a real friendship a western woman can establish with an Arab woman in a world that relies on clashes of civilizations¹⁰, of cultures and of interests.

3.6 Conclusion:

The Map of Love, our second novel to be analysed in this work, is a genuine tool of argumentation with which we tried to reinforce our hypothesis. All through this chapter, we intended to expose the rebellious characteristic and the creative side of this novel, being a hybrid literary production written by a contemporary Arab woman, Ahdaf Soueif.

The rebellion of this novel lies in its hybridity. As we have mentioned before, being a hybrid writer is a complex and complicated role to play. Thus, as a hybrid novel, *The Map of Love* plays an important role in conveying the Arabic culture via an English linguistic background to Western readers as well as Arab readers. The other element of rebellion this novel bears is the re-representation of the relationship between the former colonizer (Britain and United States) and the former colonized (Egypt). This re-representation was embodied in the relationship between the four female protagonists of the novel: Anna, Layla, Isabel and Amal.



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s in the narrative technique used in this novel and the characterization; all are peculiar and original. As we saw in the previous sections, the narrative role is distributed between the female protagonists: Anna, Amal and Isabel. Yet, there is a new literary phenomenon in this novel, i.e. having a central narrator that is also narrated, and we described it as ‘meta-narrator’, Amal.

With the analysis of another novel written in English by an Arab woman, we have aimed at backing up our main hypothesis that considers writings by Arab women authors rebellious and creative. Our corpus, consisting of two novels, is complex as each novel represents a different repertoire (linguistic and cultural); thus, from a methodological perspective, in the next chapter we will compare the two novels, and by comparing the two works, we seek to expose to what extent an Arab woman, writing in Arabic or in a foreign language, is able to voice her ideology, her nation and her womanhood.

r Three Notes

1. **Gender politics:** This concept refers to the contributions of feminists and feminist movements to politics. Indeed, there was a series of contributions by feminists in the field of politics and political theory that has focused on the ways in which women's issues, concerns, and participation are excluded from the public **political arena** because of the division between the private and public spheres, on the one hand, and the language and politics of universal political rights, on the other.
2. **Hybrid:** It is the **combination** of two or more different things, aimed at achieving a particular objective or goal. This concept is used in different contexts: in **mythology** and **iconography** (Mythological hybrid: a creature combining body parts of two or more species), in **biology** (Hybrid: the offspring resulting from cross-breeding of different plants or animals), in **etymology** (Hybrid word, a word with mixed etymologies), in **culture** (Hybrid metal band: a Spanish extreme metal band), and in literature (Hybrid writings).
3. **Mimicry:** The use of the word mimicry dates back to 1637. It is derived from the Greek term *mimetikos*, "**imitative**," in turn from *mimetos*, the verbal adjective of *mimeisthai*, "**to imitate**." We find this concept in biology to describe insects' behavior in imitating other insects, stones, green leaves... as a defensive behavior and sometimes as an aggressive behavior. We also find this concept in literary criticism, particularly in **post-colonial studies**. Lacan explains mimicry as: "***Mimicry** reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is **camouflage**.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but **against** a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.*" (Iversen, 2007 : 127)
4. **Discourse:** The notion of 'discourse' is the subject of controversial debates. It has become one of the key **critical terms** in the vocabulary of the humanities and the social sciences. Discourse encompasses the use of spoken, written and sign language and multimodal/multimedia forms of communication, and is not restricted to 'non-fictional' (eg. **stylistics**) nor non-verbal (eg. **gesture** and **visual**) materials. Although early linguistic approaches judged the unit of discourse to be larger than the sentence,

from silence, to a single utterance, to a novel, a set of
tion.

(<http://diskurs.hum.aau.dk/english/discourse.htm>)

5. **Hegemony:** Hegemony tends to refer to the **power** of a single group in a society to essentially lead and dictate the other groups of the society. This may be done through communications, through influence of voters or of government leaders. **Cultural hegemony** is the philosophical and sociological concept, originated by the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, denoting that a culturally-diverse society can be dominated by one of its social classes. It is this dominance of one social group over another, i.e. the ruling class over all other classes that Gramsci calls hegemony. The ideas of the ruling class come to be seen as the **norm (common sense)**. A single country may also be considered a hegemony if it has enough power to influence the way other countries behave. States that are hegemonies, like the British Empire in the mid-19th century and USA nowadays, have extraordinary influence on many other countries.
6. **Postmodernism:** Postmodernism is related to the term “modernism”. In other words, postmodern thought is that which comes after or develops from modernistic thought. As a concept, Postmodernism is difficult to define as it covers a wide range of disciplines and general areas of thought. These include art, architecture, **literature** and technology. In literature, postmodernism consists of the period following high modernism and includes the many theories that date from that time: structuralism, semiotics, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and so forth. For Jean Baudrillard, postmodernism marks a culture composed of disparate fragmentary experiences and images that constantly bombard the individual in music, video, television, advertising and other forms of electronic media (Bertens, 2002:384). The speed and ease of reproduction of these images mean that they exist only as image, **devoid of depth, coherence, or originality**.
7. **Arab feminism:** Though ‘Feminism’ is a universal concept, it differs from one sphere to another, from one country to another and from one culture to another. As for, feminism in the Arab world, it is of a quite different nature. It is related to a set of important factors: religion, politics and traditions (culture). Indeed, feminist writings may date back to centuries ago, but by the beginning of the 20th century and with the

st Arab countries, feminist movements were brought to Amin, Zayneb Fawaz, Nazik Almalika... Feminist movements in the Arab world called at the beginning mainly for the Arab women's right in education, in social liberation and gender equality, and nowadays we hear calls for more political contributions and more social gender equality.

8. **“Al- Mar’ah al-jadidah”**: In his *Tahrir al-Mar’ah* (تحرير المرأة) (*The Liberation of Woman*, 1899), followed a year later by **“Al- Mar’ah al-jadidah”** (*The New Woman*, 1900), Amin rejected the notion of woman as inferior, and called for measures to realize gender equality. But, in direct contrast to Al-Shidyaq, he was a puritan concerning relations between the sexes. Although he attacked polygamy as an impediment to the progress of women and society, he nevertheless rejected sexual pleasure, and approved of the veil (the head cover) though opposing the Niqab and the Burqu’. The anonymity imposed by the two latter forms of veiling, he argued, would encourage licentious behaviour.
9. **Appropriating language**: Appropriation, for Bakhtin, is an integral component of dialogue: in order to engage in dialogue, one must be able to apprehend, internalize, and recreate the utterances of others (which is the same "intertextual" activity that Kristeva argues occurs in the context of reading). Bakhtin did not use the term appropriation to be indicative of an absorption and subsequent conformity to the dominant discourse in a given discourse community; rather, appropriation is the theft of language (either that of the dominant discourse or of the "other) which is then reinterpreted and used to further the discourse of the self. (<http://english.ttu.edu/>)

Chapter Four

The Map of Love and The Stone of Laughter:
TWO STYLES, ONE NATURE

ried to argue to what extent Arab women writers can be at the same time creative and rebellious. Whether they write in Arabic or in a foreign language other than Arabic, Arab woman writers have managed to grab the attention of a ‘big’ readership in the Arab world as well as in the Western world, and they have managed to prove how talented they are and how literary creative they can be through a boost of masterpieces of literature. Side by side with their Arab compatriot male writers and their Western opponents of both sexes, Arab woman writers have found a space for their original literary writings and for their specificity as being Arabs, women and writers. By analyzing *The Stone of Laughter* in one chapter and *The Map of Love* in another separate chapter, we have been able to identify each novel’s specificity and each writer’s literary creativeness.

In this chapter, we will compare and contrast the two works; this exercise will not be of an evaluative nature, but it will rather be an exercise of re-arguing that the Arab woman writer is of great artistic and mental capacities as much as any writer of the other gender or of the culture can be. It is obvious that comparing two novels by two different authors and written in two different languages is a difficult exercise, yet when the comparison is targeted to find common points of originality and creativity for the two authors and divergences in terms of representation, this will help more to back up our hypothesis and to well-illustrate that Arab women’s literary writings are of a specific creativity and rebellion, specific regarding their feminine nature, and their Arab cultural identity. In fact, we decided to compare and contrast, Barakat’s حجر الضحك (*The Stone of Laughter*) and Soueif’s *The Map of Love* in order to explore the divergences, at the linguistic, the thematic and the narrative level, to unveil the importance of the two trends of Arab woman literature, that is to say Arabic language literary writingsⁱ and hybrid literary writingsⁱⁱ.

To compare the two novels, we had to go back to Propp’s theories and how he could compare hundreds of fairy tales to come out with these two concepts “Constantes” (constants) and “Variantes” (variants); yet because our comparison is limited to two novels only we would rather use the terms “similarities” and “differences”. By the end of this chapter, we will have seen how Arab women novelists writing in Arabic and Arab women novelists writing in

ⁱ This refers to the Arabic concept الأدب العربي النسائي.

ⁱⁱ This refers the Arabic concept الأدب العربي النسائي الهجين

h divergent, are convergent in the sense that they are
gh the comparison of the two novels.

4.2 Propp's Morphology of the Folk Tale

Russian Vladimir Propp (1895-1970) analyzed many of his country's folk tales and identified **common** themes within them. He broke down the stories into *morphemes*¹ (analyzable chunks) and identified 31 *narratemes*² (narrative units) that comprised the structure of many of the stories. Folk stories around the world form a web of connections and the same or similar stories can be found in many places. These old stories have also formed the basis of many more stories since and hence Propp's morphology is useful not only in understanding Russian folk tales but any other story.

Propp has been both lauded for his structural approach and criticized for his lack of sensitivity to subtle story elements such as mood and deeper context. Nevertheless, his analysis provides a useful tool in understanding stories ancient and modern and, after early influence on such luminaries as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, has become a classic of folklore and structuralist analysis.

He identified that five categories of elements define not only the construction of a tale, but the tale as a whole:

1. Functions of dramatis personae
2. Conjunctive elements (ex machina, announcement of misfortune, chance disclosure – mother calls hero loudly, etc.)
3. Motivations (reasons and aims of personages)
4. Forms of appearance of dramatis personae (the flying arrival of dragon, chance meeting with donor)
5. Attributive elements or accessories (witch's hut or her clay leg)

Whilst not all stories contain all Propp's narratemes, it is surprising to find stories that contain none, and many modern books and movies fit nicely into his categories. This is why Propp's theory can be reliable in contemporary comparative literature, and in comparing different works of fiction by different authors.

theory will allow us to explain how we could compare is originally written in Arabic, and for which we relied on the English translated version, while the other is an English, hybrid novel. From a methodological perspective, it might sound inappropriate to compare two novels where each one represents a different repertoire; moreover, in our investigation we did refer to the translated version of *Hajarou Dhahik* that itself embodies both the repertoire of the writer (Huda Barakat) and that of the translator (Sophie Bennett).

As a matter of fact, the most difficult exercise for us was to decide which version of Barakat's novel (1990) is to be compared to Soueif's novel (1999), but because we have relied mostly on the English version of حجر الضحك (*The Stone of Laughter*, 2006) in the second chapter devoted to Barakat's, it would have not been rational to shift to the Arabic version. Yet, to explore to what extent the two trends of Arab woman literature are different in representing the Arab woman to the west and to the Arab world, i.e. how can a literary Arabic work by An Arab woman be different from a literary hybrid work by an Arab woman too in terms of representation and self-mirroring, we will refer the original version of Barakat's in the last section of this work.

4.3 Comparison Grid

Following the method held by Vladimir Propp, we had to prepare the following grid of comparison, but we have relied most on elements of fiction like the characterization, the narration, the narrative technique..., besides some other elements like the readership, and this will help to indentify whether translated Arab women writings (originally written in Arabic) have the same audience and readership as Arab women writing in a foreign language, i.e. English:

حجر الابدحجر الابد
The Stone of Laughter
Iuda Barakat (1990)

The Map of Love by Ahdaf Soueif (1999)

<p>The Target Readership</p>	<p>The Lebanese/ The Arab world It can also be the international community because the work was translated into more than two foreign languages.</p>	<p>The Western world It can also be the Arab world because the work was translated into Arabic.</p>
<p>The type of the novel</p>	<p>A novel of war (and some critics would categorise it as a novel of politics), and it also belongs to post-modern novel.</p>	<p>A novel that gathers the characteristics of a classical novel on the one hand and the characteristics of a post-modern novel on the other hand.</p>
<p>Characterisation</p>	<p>The protagonist, Khalil, is a female-like man who submits to self-destruction and distortion that is physical (he overcomes his feminine hormones to become a man) and psychological (he overcomes his fear of Death and ‘falls in love’ with Life.</p>	<p>The characters are all peripheral and central at the same time, but Amal, being a central character, can be considered as a central character (she is at the centre of a circle of across-generations and across-cultures).</p>
<p>Narration</p>	<p>A disrupted, interrupted, fractured narration (through linguistic devices): -the recurrence of the three dots of suspension, -the recurrence of words like “bombardment, explosion, death, as if...” . (and this is because “l’ordre narratif qui régit les épisodes dans</p>	<p>Narration in <i>The Map of Love</i> is not disrupted; it flows from one generation to another and from one culture to another, from Anna to Amal and from Amal to Isabel and then from Anna to Isabel, but it can also be considered as interrupted as long as there</p>

	<p>rcours de Khalil repose sur la e.” (Boustani, 2002:111)</p>	<p>is a ‘break’ in the narration each time Amal reads the journals of lady Anna or comments on the journals, or when Isabel starts narrating her story with Omar...</p>
<p>The Thematic</p>	<p>“Hajarou Dhahik” is a novel of war that represents how a civil war distorts and fractures people’s life, bodies and psyches. This novel also represents feminism from another perspective in the sense that it deals with feminism through the characterization itself, and through the phenomenon of temporal androgyny: Khalil starts as <i>womanized</i> and ends as a man who knows how to laugh.</p>	<p><i>The Map of Love</i> is a hybrid novel that represents a bridge of reconciliation between the West and the Orient. This reconciliation is shaped in the relationship between the four female protagonists. <i>The Map of Love</i> is also a new reading of universal <i>womanhood</i>. What this novel unveils is that womanhood (feminism) is about a universal communion that women world wide do share. Women all over the world share a common fate.</p>

4.4 Translating Arabic literary works

As having mentioned in the first chapter, the growth of interest in the writings by Arab women authors may be due to the increasing translations of these works. In this dissertation, we have

and of Arab women writings, i.e. translated literary works a translated version of a bestselling Arabic novel حجر الضحك (Hajarou Dhahik), and contrasting it to a hybrid novel (*The Map of Love*). So, one may question to what extent is an English translation of a literary work (written by an Arab woman) divergent and different from an English hybrid work (also written by an Arab woman).

At first, we have to point out that translating Arabic masterpieces of literature by Arab male writers has never been new as there were a lot of works by Naguib Mahfouz, Nizar Qabani, Mahmoud Darwish and others that were translated a short time after their publication in the Arabic language for the great success and the fame of these writers. What is relatively new is the boosting of translations of works by Arab women writers like Nawal Saadawi, Ahlam Mosteghanemi, Hanane Sheikh and other significant Arab women writers. However, one may put forward this question: “Is a translated work worth reading?” and if the original work was a success, “Will the translation be as innovative and creative as the original version?”. Such questions were proposed by the theorist, Umberto Eco in more than a work of his. In his book, *Mouse or Rat? (Translation as Negotiation)*, Eco dealt with many facets of the translation. He says:

“ [...]the concept of faithfulness depends on the belief that translation is **a form of interpretation** and that translators must aim at rendering, not necessarily the intention of the author (...) but the intention of the text – the intention of the text being the outcome of an interpretative effort on the part of the reader, the critic or the translator.” (Eco, 2004: 5)

According to Eco, translation is a *form of interpretation* from the part of the translator. He believed that translators do not change the intention of the author but rather that of the text because, for him, the text’s intention itself is the product of the reader’s, the critic’s and the translator’s the interpretation. Therefore, we may sum up Eco’s words by saying that translation is the outcome of not only the interpretation of the translator but also the interpretation of the reader and the critic.

Moreover, translation is the meeting point of more than two subjectivities, two repertoires, and two interpretations, that of the author, of the translator, of the reader and of the critic. Translating literary works from Arabic to English is one of the most complicated procedures of translations because of the divergence of the two languages.

are very different languages with different literary traditions that are near universal only in the last generation. Much literary expression has been produced within a more **oral tradition**³. The outstanding literary forms have been poetry and the short story, both of which appeal to the ear as much as the eye. English literature has been far more *bookish*, and reading a private, rather than a collective, habit. There are shifts in this generalisation with the emergence of performance poetry, audio-books and public readings. But English tends, in general, to be terser than Arabic. This is a challenge to the translator, who is translating not just words but shifting a work from one literary tradition to another.

Translation theorists talk of the issue of whether to take the reader to the book or the book to the reader. Vladimir Nabokov, in the Foreword to his 1958 English translation from the Russian of Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1839), argued for the reader to be taken to the book, by saying that '*we should dismiss, once and for all the conventional notion that a translation 'should read smoothly'* (p3), and '*should not sound like a translation*' (to quote would-be compliments, addressed to vague versions, by genteel reviewers who never have and never will read the original texts). The whole point about literary translation is that the potential reader, especially of an Arabic text in translation, is not likely to read the original. That is why he/she is reading it in translation.

It is a critical procedure when we are trying to capture a new readership for Arabic literature in translation. Translation theorists also talk of '**authoritative**' texts⁴ where the creative flexibility may be more restricted. There are limited Arabic texts that can be seen as authoritative in this way. There have been 30 or 40 English renderings of the Holy Koran, a smaller number of translations of the Hadith. There have been in the last 300 years far more versions of *A Thousand and One Nights*⁵ (ألف ليلة و ليلة). Of post-1945 literature, there have been many English translations of some poetry – especially of Mahmud Darwish. Some of the plays of Tawfiq al-Hakim and one play by the Syrian Sa'dallah Wannus have been translated and published in more than one version, but nearly no novel or short story has been translated more than once. (www.literarytranslations.com)

It is enlightening to compare different translations of the same work, and it can be argued that a classic, an authoritative text, should be translated by every generation. The target language is always changing, and the reader with it. But the spread of Arabic literature in

ge. There are still lots of first translations to undertake. Arabic productions, حجر الضحك [Hajarou Dhahik]ⁱ and حارث المياه [Harith Al-myiah]ⁱⁱ have only one English, French and Turkish translated versions.¹⁰

There are special problems in translating Arabic literature (as there are for any other language). The written word is nearly always formal. There has been a big debate about the use of colloquial Arabic, especially in dialogue. Naguib Mahfouz always made his unlettered working-class characters use an Arabic that was not far distant from the language of an Islamic preacher. Most writers nowadays use the colloquial language of the country where their characters are located. This runs the risk of a character in Baghdad not being understood by someone in Morocco (and vice versa). The use of local *Arabics* in dialogue indicates to the reader the level of education or sophistication of the character and adds a touch of authenticity. But how does the translator cope with such a problem? In fact, it seems to be easy for the translator to introduce a more informal register (linguistic field) in translating dialogues, but it may be still impossible for the translator to get across a particular dialect. The use of a particular regional accent is not a convincing way of resolving the dilemma, and this is one of the problems of translation encountered by translators, critics, foreign readers and researchers who want to analyse an English (or Foreign) translated work of an Arabic writer.

Thus, translating literary works from Arabic to English or any other foreign language risks not to provide the Western readership with all the features of beauty, aesthetics and creativity the original text carries, but it is not always the case. If the original work is genuinely a creative masterpiece of literature, albeit being translated to a foreign language, it will 'safeguard' its originality and creativity whether through characterization, through the narrative technique and why not through the figures of speech. What it may not be translated, to our mind, is the cultural aspect of a given literary work. For instance, when reading the English version of Barakat's Hajarou Dhahik (*The Stone of Laughter*), the reader, if she/he does not know a lot about the Lebanese civil war, so many scenes, dialogues and words, will sound absurd to him/ her, but as an Arab woman reader, mastering the two languages, we could perceive the originality of such a work even when reading the English version. Therefore, translated works can be appreciated by both a foreign readership and a readership who shares the cultural and linguistic background with the original writer.

ⁱ The English translation is entitled as : *The Stone of Laughter* (2006, translated by Sophie Bennett)

ⁱⁱ The English Translation is entitled as: *The Tiller of Waters* (2001, translated by Marilyn Booth)

“*dhik*”: two different expressions

In the previous section, we have explored the specificity of translating literary works from Arabic to English, and in this section, as the title may reveal, we will explore the divergence that may exist between *Hajarou Dhahik* and *The Map of Love* in terms of the linguistic and the cultural background. Obviously, the difference lies in the language in which each novel was **initially** written, i.e. the former written in Arabic and the latter written in English, but the difference is not only in terms of the linguistic aspect and the language itself as we have also referred to the English version of حجر الضحك (*Hajarou Dhahik*), but it rather lies in the way each language was used to vehicles to the reader what he/she wants to reach not what the novelist wants him/her to reach.

In this section, we are not trying to contrast the two novels in terms of difference of expression, but we are trying to reflect on how each novelist has used words as a medium through which she could convey her thoughts and feelings. The language itself is not important for these two Arab women writers, but what is more important and influencing is the way how words are written by each novelist and how words are told by the characters of each novel. Because these two writers belong to the same speech community, i.e. the Arabic speech community, both share in common the **cultural background**, and this shows even in *The Map of Love*, that is written in English, as it contains Arabic words and Arabic expressions, sometimes in the Egyptian dialect. The cultural referencing is an important element in the two novels.

In حجر الضحك (*The Stone of Laughter*), the Lebanese civil war represents the ground on which the events of this novel rely. The process of Khalil’s internal distortion, also, relies on the events of the civil war: the explosions, the car crashes, the bombardments..., so Huda Barakat has made use of her Lebanese, and Arab cultural belonging as well as personal experience of the civil war in the weaving of the story .

In *The Map of Love*, the matter is different, not divergent. Ahdaf Soueif does not write English novels, but rather English language novels, i.e. she writes about her own culture in the English language though a lot of people (critics and readers) would question to which culture Ahdaf Soueif belongs, yet Soueif’s novels answer such questioning. The recurrence of Arabic and Egyptian expressions like “yakhti”, “awy”, “sitti Isa”... and a whole glossary, for instance

readership where Ahdaf Soueif cleverly explains in a Western readers (example: *misa' al-khairat*: Oh evening of many good things!, *ma`alesh*: never mind, *afandiyyah* (also *effendis*): plural of *afandi* (*effendi* or *effendi*): an urban (Western-) educated man, *Safar*: the second month of the Arab year....) [see Glossary, *The Map of Love*, 1999: 519-528]. Thus, it is very clear that Ahdaf Soueif does not write English novels but rather novels about her own culture, be it Egyptian, or Arab in general) and about that meeting between the Western culture and the Arab culture in the English language.

From a linguistic perspective, *The Map of Love* (by Ahdaf Soueif) and *حجر الضحك* (*The Stone of Laughter*) by Huda Barakat are two different literary productions, but they converge at a given point which is the cultural belonging to the Arab world. Arab women's being attached to their identity, both to the Arab culture and the female gender is amazing and we have here two creative, representative novelists with their two original works proving that the Arab woman is what she wants herself to be, but with regard to her belongings.

4.6 Creativity and Rebellion in *The Map of Love* and *The Stone of Laughter* (حجر الضحك)

In the second and the third chapter, we have dealt with the literary creativity in the two novels, and our focus was to reveal that this creativity and the specificity lie mostly in the narrative technique in both *The Stone of Laughter* and *The Map of Love* respectively. We have seen that in the former, the narration is **fractured** and **disrupted** because it relies on the fractured moments and the rhythm of the Lebanese civil war; and in the latter, the narration is not disrupted but interrupted in the sense that there is a back and forth from past to present, from 19th century love story to 20th century love story, i.e. from one generation to another, and from one female protagonist to another.

Thus, in both novels the narration is **interrupted** whether because of events of the Lebanese civil war or because of the shift from past to present. This resemblance in two novels by two different Arab women authors writing in two different languages does not come out of the blue, but we may describe this resemblance as a common and shared destiny to all Arab women, and even women all over the world. This common fate is represented in an interrupted way to success and creativity, a fractured path towards freedom and ruptured dream of liberty. The interrupted or disrupted narrative is nothing but an unconscious reaction towards cultural, social, political, ideological and even literary restraint exercised upon Arab women writers.

are aware that it may sound controversial to different
the debate.

However, we can also argue that the interrupted narration is a common feature among a lot of post-modern novels whether western productions or even Arab productions. In the postmodern novel, the chronological progression of the narrative, in a lot of works, is interrupted. As it is known the concept **postmodernism** implies a movement **away** from and perhaps a reaction **against** modernism, and both concepts are often used to describe a broad spectrum of attitudes and broad approaches to the novel. In *Modernist Fiction* Randall Stevenson says: “*Postmodernism extends modernist uncertainty, often by assuming that reality, if it exists at all, is unknowable or inaccessible through a language grown detached from it.*” (Stevenson, 1992: 196). Thus, Postmodernist fiction is generally marked by one or more of the following characteristics:

- The playfulness with language

-Experimentation in the form of the novel:

1. **less reliance on traditional narrative form**

2. less reliance on traditional character development

3. experimentation with point of view

-experimentation with the way time is conveyed in the novel

1. Mixture of "high art" and popular culture

2. Interest in **metafiction**, that is, fiction about the nature of fiction

Thus, according to Stevenson (1992), the post-modern novel is characterized by the non-reliance on the traditional chronological narrative form, i.e. the narration is discontinuous, and this is what both *Hajarou Dhahik* and *The Map of Love* are about.

Therefore, there are two suggestions we can rely on to explain the reason behind the interruption of narration in both novels. Yet, whether the first supposition is more reliable or the second one, what is more important is that such an interrupted, fractured narration represents a genuine creativity that reflects the two novelists' literary maturity.

Besides the literary creativity that each novel conveys, we have perceived an interesting ‘retouch’ of rebellion and revolt in terms of the narrative technique innovated in each novel as

of *Laughter* (حجر الضحك), Barakat has broken the norms of vil war, but also by creating an androgyne character and passing through his androgyny her criticism over the male-made war and how being female can protect the woman from being distorted by the bloody events of war. As an Arab woman novelist, by dealing with androgyny and having a gay man as a protagonist of her novel, Barakat is breaking redlines established by the oriental societies, and this is a rebellious confrontation for which she has been criticized; nonetheless, she did voice her femininity through the voice of her androgyne protagonist Khalil. Hiding behind Khalil's voice is nothing but a tricky technique Barakat may have used to bring the reader to some questionings and suspense, but at the end of the story, so audaciously she confesses that her androgyne protagonist changed to the point that she, herself, can no more know him, but she remains a woman who writes.

The Map of Love, as a hybrid novel, represents a rebellious experience and a 'risk' Soueif has daringly taken. Being an Egyptian, i.e. belonging to a former colony of the former colonial Britain, Soueif 'plays' a dangerous, yet rebellious game by producing literary works in the English language, being the language of the 'enemy' whether Britain or the United States of America. Indeed, writing in English increases Soueif's international readership, but it does so by putting her reception in Egypt at risk as English is the language of colonial occupation. Soueif is certainly aware of this attitude: the high-profile nationalist, Sharif Pasha Al-Baroudi, (*The Map of Love*, 1999) refuses to speak, or even learn English, resorting to French (to him, French may be a neutral language) to speak with his English wife. His linguistic anti-colonialism is ironically demeaned by the fact that Egypt has also had a vexed relation with France, as Napoleon's invasion and the Suez Canal disputes⁶ attest.

Ahdaf Soueif seems to have no personal rejection of English; on the contrary, she seems to be more at ease with English, the language of her professional training, "*the first language [she] read in.*" As a woman of two worlds, and as a hybrid writer, Soueif is very much "*the product of a wrenched history: an Egyptian living in England and writing about Egypt in English,*" yet she is aware of her paradoxical situation, "*conscious of the depth of Arabic, where a word can have certain nuances of which [she] is not aware*" (Wassef, April 1998). She does see the specific danger of being at present the only Egyptian woman writing in English. Still worse, as her detractors often argued, the reason why she writes in English is to deal with themes about sex: her first novel, *In the Eye of the Sun*, was originally banned in the Arab

However, Soueif tried to explain why she writes in English
held at the Africa Centre in November 1999, saying: "*It
is very difficult to explain that this was not a choice, that you work with the tools that are best
for you . . . I don't know why, but the fact is that I write better in English than I do in Arabic*".

4.7 Right-left writing vs. left-right writing

Knowing that Barakat's "*Hajarou Dhahik*" (حجر الضحك) is an Arabic language novel while *The Map of Love* is an English language novel, and that both have been written by Arab women authors, one may quest whether writing from right to left and writing from left to right does make a difference in terms of recognizing, perceiving and representing oneself, i.e. whether Barakat's mental capacity to represent herself through writing in Arabic is different from Soueif's who writes in English. To investigate this crucial point, we had to read and analyze recent researches in the field of graphology, psychology and psycholinguistics. In fact, these researches have proved that writing directions do influence our spatial, temporal and self representations.

Because the world's languages make use of different writing system orientations, running from left to right, from right to left or from top to bottom, interacting with writing system is an important component of how literate humans gain and convey information, i.e. recognize and represent themselves within an environment, or the environment within themselves. As such the spatial routines we engage in while reading and writing may well have an impact on the spatial organization of other cognitive functions, like memory, visual attention, expectations about the orientations of processes, and so on.

In fact, we are living in a world replete with information and for many literate people, reading and writing is one of the main channels by which it is accessed and conveyed. Writing systems vary across languages, in particular through the direction in which the text is written. For instance, while English runs from left to right, Arabic unrolls from right to left, and Japanese goes from top to bottom. Knowing how to read and write a particular language entails mastery of perceptual and motor routines whose spatial characteristics are determined by the conventional orientation of the writing system. To write in English, one starts on the left and moves rightward, while **performing the same task** in Arabic entails the reverse action. Similarly, reading in the two languages requires readers to begin collecting visual information (the letters, words and sentences) in different parts of the visual field.

orientation may influence our spatial representation of sequences of events and other aspects of cognition. The hypothesis that writing system direction can influence many aspects of cognition was called into question by the graphologist, Tversky (1991), who examined the relationship between the direction of different writing systems and people's mental representation of temporal, spatial, quantitative and preference relations in English, Hebrew and Arabic speakers. In his experiment, Tversky asked his subjects to perform a sticker-placing task under various conditions, and their responses were deemed to reflect spatial representations of time, quantity, and preference. The results of this experiment showed a significant influence of writing system direction on spatial representation of temporal concepts, but not on the quantity of preference.

Chatterjee (2001), another graphologist, claimed that normal right-handed subjects tend to process information from their left to right hand side due not to their writing system but to the differential properties of right and left brain hemisphere processing. He argued that the left cerebral hemisphere, **where language is predominantly processed by right-handers**, selectively directs attention with a left to right vector. Thus, normal right-handed subjects tend to pay attention to the left side of their visual field, which may influence their expectations about where events start (Chatterjee, 2001). He, Chatterjee, further argued that this may lead to a similar preference for left to right actions as well.

Griffin says: "*eye movements are tied to our organization of information.*" (2004: 9); this means the direction of our writing seeps out beyond the borders of language itself, and that there are non-linguistic cognitive processes which take place while writing. Applying this to our corpus, we may think of the difference of the mental and cognitive procedures each writer processed while writing her novel.

Barakat wrote her novel in Arabic, so the writing direction was from right to left. Soueif, though her 'langue' / 'competence'⁷ consists of three languages- Arabic, English and French-, wrote her novel in English, so the writing direction was from left to right. Thus, each novelist's cognition of space and time around her may be different because of the writing system direction. Then, we can deduce that due to the different writing direction, each novelist would represent her thoughts differently not only in terms of aesthetics and style but also in terms of recognizing herself within her world. This may lead each writer to be creatively and

On the one hand, we have the readers who experience the same as Hajarou Dhahik or the others who read *The Map of Love*. Consequently, the writing system direction also influences the readership (providing that we exclude the translations).

If we take, for example, the last part of each novel, we will perceive a certain difference:

* حجر الضحك [Hajarou Dhahik]: “ و خليل صار ذكرا يضحك و أنا بقيت امرأة تكتب خليل يا بطلي العزيز يا بطلي العزيز..” (1990: 250)

* *The Map of Love*: “She holds him close, patting his Back. Whispering. ‘Hush, my precious,’ she whispers, ‘hush...’” (1999: 516)

Indeed, our reader may have some difficulty in moving from the first quotation to the second one, and this is what we were pointing at: the writer’s and the reader’s cognition changes with the change of the writing system. Hybrid writers, when writing in a foreign language like English and French, they are consciously or unconsciously submitting to the Western readership’s spatial cognition as well as representation. As for authors who write in Arabic and want to have a western readership, the same process can take place but only if we are talking about the translated versions.

4.8 Conclusion

Having compared the two selected novels, *The Stone of Laughter* and *The Map of Love*, and after having come across divergences as well as convergences regarding this comparison, we assume that whether they write in Arabic or in English (or any other foreign language), Arab women writers are of specific literary creativity and rebellion that allow them to overcome male domination, and yet every Arab woman writer has her own fictional and fictitious world and power of ingenuity. Huda Barakat and Ahdaf Soueif are but two genuine examples of two Arab women novelists writing in two different languages but fighting and struggling and focusing on the same point, that is the re-representation of the ‘portrait’ of the Arab woman, in the Arab world as much as in the Western world.

ⁱ “Khalil has become a man, a man who laughs. And I remain a woman who writes. Khalil: my darling hero. My darling hero...” (*The Stone of Laughter* [the English version], 2006: 209)

not to compare rather than contrast the two novels. Our purpose is not to compare the two novels, but it aims at revealing the specificity of each trend, i.e. the peculiarity of literature by Arab women in the Arabic language and that of literature by Arab women in a foreign language. *Hajarou Dhahik (The Stone of Laughter)* represents the literary masterpieces produced by Arab women writers that have been translated to European languages like English, French and Turkish. Despite the fact that the translations can never convey the essence, the beauty and the aesthetic the original version carries, translated works by Arab women writers have had an interesting success overseas, and have gained much a wide readership that a lot of critics doubted that such an interest is nothing but an oriental perception of these women. However, the growing attention drawn to these productions both in the Arab world and (thanks to the translations) in the Western world, shows that art and aesthetics are appreciated regardless of gender, cultural, social and political factors.

The Map of Love represents, on the other hand, the big challenge the Arab woman faces when thinking of conveying her Arabic culture and her 'womanhood' through a foreign linguistic vehicle, be it English or any language other than Arabic. The challenge, in this case, is dual; writing in English (or another foreign language) about the Arab culture and/or the Arab woman disturbs the Western reader, and writing on the Arab culture and/or the Arab woman disturbs the Arab reader as well. Thus, the risk hybrid Arab women writers confront is double. It is a risk of being conceived by the Arab reader as pro-Western culture, and it is also a risk of being perceived by the Western reader as anti-Western culture. What is special about *The Map of Love* is its re-representation of such ambivalence through the relationship established between the four female protagonists who come from two geographical and temporal spheres.

Chapter Four Notes

1. **Morphemes:** In the Formalist approach, sentence structures had been broken down into analysable elements called morphemes, and Propp did use this method by analogy to analyse folk tales.
2. **Narratemes:** By breaking down a large number of Russian folk tales into their smallest narrative units, called narratemes, Propp was able to arrive at a typology of narrative structures.
3. **Oral tradition:** The Arabic literature, like many African and Asian literatures, has long relied on the oral tradition of transmitting the beauty of literary texts like poetry and stories. In the Djahili era (the era preceding the coming of Islam, 5th century ad), there were many markets Arab tribes would call poetry markets like Souq Oukaz (سوق عكاظ) to which poets from all over the Arabian Peninsula would come to read their poems for large audiences. Even nowadays, we still have people like Al-Barrah (البراح) in Morocco and Algeria, and Al-hakawati (الحكواتي) in Syria and Egypt, around whom gather an audience and start reading their stories and poems.
4. **Authoritative texts:** These are the texts written in Arabic that ‘do not allow’ much freedom for translations. We are pointing here at, mostly, religious texts like Qur’an, and the Hadiths (the sayings of Prophet Mohamed). Although there are English, French, German... translations of these texts, but the translated versions go through a very strict censorship for fear to change the meanings of words of sentences because of their holiness.
5. **A Thousand and One Nights:** (Arabic: كتاب ألف ليلة وليلة *Kitāb 'alf layla wa-layla*; Persian: هزار و یک شب *Hezār-o yek šab*), is a collection of folk tales and other stories. The original concept is most likely derived from a pre-Islamic Persian prototype that probably relied partly on Indian elements, but the work as we have it was collected over

ors, translators and scholars across the Middle East and
elves trace their roots back to ancient and medieval

Arabic, Persian, Indian, Egyptian and Mesopotamian folk-lore and literature.

- 6. The Suez Canal disputes:** The **Suez Canal** is a canal in Egypt. Opened in November 1869, it allows water transportation between Europe and Asia without navigating around Africa or carrying goods overland between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the canal in 1956, intending to finance the dam project using revenue from the canal, while at the same time closing the Gulf of Aqaba to all Israeli shipping by closure of the Straits of Tiran. This provoked the Suez Crisis, in which the UK, France and Israel colluded to invade Egypt. The intention was for Israel to invade on the ground, and for the Anglo-French partnership to give air and other support, later to intervene to resolve the crisis and control the canal. (source: www.wikipedia.org)
- 7. Langue/ Competence:** *La langue*, according to the structuralist linguist De Saussure, is the whole system of language that precedes and makes speech possible. A sign is a basic unit of langue. Learning a language, we master the system of grammar, spelling, syntax and punctuation. These are all elements of langue. Langue is a system in that it has a large number of elements whereby meaning is created in the arrangements of its elements and the consequent relationships between these arranged elements. Whereas competence, according to Chomsky, refers to a speaker's knowledge of his language as manifest in his ability to produce and to understand a theoretically infinite number of sentences most of which he may have never seen or heard before.



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GENERAL CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

The Arab Woman has struggled and fought over long years the social degradation, cultural regression and political belittlement, but over the last few decades, *She* has managed to overcome most of the obstacles, restraints and constraints and defeat most of the difficulties to modify the 'old-fashioned portrait' shaped and moulded for her as being a minor and a marginalised gender. The Arab women have recently found for their creativity, originality and rebellion a place in their societies as well as in the Western world in many fields: science, politics, art and nearly all domains. In literature, the domain that has been for so long dominated by Arab male writers, the Arab world has witnessed a boost of creative original masterpieces of literature (novels, poems, short stories...) produced by Arab women in the last few decades. With the development of education and the emergence of Feminist movements all over the Arab countries, the Arab Woman writer has 'glazed' her original talents to achieve success that even the Arab Male writer has not achieved.

Actually, we need to stress that we do not believe in the distinction that some people or critics make between the literary creativity of women and that of men, but rather we do believe that literary creativity is a feature and a gift talented people share regardless of their gender. Feminism, to our mind, should not be a concept with which critics and women writers may use to defend the good quality of their writings. Feminism is but a tool to identify and distinguish women's writings from men's writings without evaluating the one to be minor/ major to the other.

Fatiha Morshid, a Moroccan poetess novelist and doctor, said in an episode of a programme devoted to Arab literature, on Dubai TV (نلتقي مع بروين حبيب)ⁱ diffused on Saturday, April 25th, 2009:

"أنا أكتب بصيغة المذكر و ذلك تحد مني للرجل فكيف للرجل أن يكتب بصيغة المؤنث
ليتحدث باسمي أعني هنا نزار قباني و ليس لي أن أفعل ذلك. في الحقيقة أنا أرى أن الإبداع
الفني و الشعري لا جنس له"ⁱⁱ

ⁱ Naltaqi ma'a Barwin Habib [A Meeting with Barwin Habib]

ⁱⁱ "I do write using the masculine 'I', and this is a challenge to male writers. How come that a male writer uses the feminine 'I' in his writings, and here I mean Nizar Qabbani, and I am not allowed to do so. Indeed, I claim that artistic and poetic creativity are genderless." (a personal translation)

pt to recall that we have to confess that Arab women
s, but rather it is an attempt to expose the creative
peculiarity and the unusual rebellion we perceive in the literary productions by Arab women
authors regardless the language they write in.

The two selected examples focused upon in this work, Huda Barakat and Ahdaf Soueif are one of the most representative Arab women authors who have reached an amazing success and have gained wide readerships, in the Arab world and in the West. The choice of حجر الضحك (*The Stone of Laughter*) and *The Map of Love* was not done at random, but simply because these two novels represent a very strong tool of argumentation to back up our hypothesis, i.e. that the Arab Woman writer has a specific literary creativity and a peculiar rebellion that conserve her belonging both to the Arab culture and to the female gender.

As for literature by Arab women writers, arguing that such a literature is of a specific literary creativity and a peculiar rebellion does not connote any belittlement or disparagement of its literary value. However, because we are still facing traces of inconsideration towards writings by Arab women authors though to a less extent in the last decades, and because some segregating social norms are still there to impose some ‘taboo’ boundaries upon women, more academic researches and theses are needed to uncover the importance of Arab women writings not only in the field of literature but also in constructing the social awareness of individuals because no one but the woman can make use of her capacity to narrate and recount tales to convey social ethics and morals from one generation to the other, and *A Thousand and One Nights (The Arabian Nights)* by Scheherazade does exemplify this capacity.

All through the four chapters, there was a recurrence of words like: “literary creativity” and “rebellion”; in fact, we have concentrated on the narrative technique each writer has created in her novel. Thus, this dissertation is nothing but a starting point of a long, complex research dealing with a complex and complicated field of investigation that is *Literature by Arab Women Writers*. This field does not stop at the Arabic language but steps over to other foreign languages, like English, French and Spanish. Both Huda Barakat and Ahdaf Soueif are a pride for Arab women for the great challenge they have carried upon their pens to defend the genuine re-presentation of the Arab Woman.



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ed novel and English, hybrid novel by two important think of further researches and further expectations regarding this trend of Arab literature. In fact, for further investigations, such works may be interesting to be included in the curriculum of Literature for LMD students because of two main reasons. First, the cultural background of both novels (and novels alike) will grab the students' sense of belonging, and this will motivate them to appreciate rather than swallow literature seminars. Then, because the authors are Arab women, this may attract the students' sense of curiosity to read for a woman who is Arab. Such suggestions are speculative and reflective at the same time, but they can offer us, as future lecturers, the opportunity to bring new methods and curricula for the sake of helping students appreciate Literature as an art and as a discipline at the same time.



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Ce présent travail n'est qu'une tentative d'étudier les différents aspects des écrits littéraires par les romancières Arabes contemporaines. Notre recherche a été basée sur l'analyse de deux romans publiés par deux différentes auteurs Arabes : le premier intitulé The Stone of Laughter (en Arabe : Hadjarou Adhahik) par Huda Barakat, et le deuxième intitulé The Map of Love (produit en langue Anglaise) par Ahdaf Soueif. Notre hypothèse répond à une question aussi problématique : « à quel point sont les écrits littéraires produits par des femmes écrivaines Arabes rebelles et créatives? ». Le travail suit une structure bien défini à cause de sa spécificité qui revient à l'étude de deux différents romans (distinctes en termes des auteurs et de langues). Il contient quatre chapitres : le 1^{er} est une introduction à l'histoire des écrits littéraires par les femmes Arabes contemporaines, le 2^{ème} est une analyse du 1^{er} roman The Stone of Laughter (en Arabe : Hadjarou Adhahik) par Huda Barakat, le 3^{ème} est une analyse de The Map of Love (un roman hybride) par Ahdaf Soueif, et le 4^{ème} est une comparaison entre les deux romans.

Les mots clés : rebelle et créativité, littérature de guerre, féminisme, hybridité, androgynie, technique narrative.