

**The Diasporic Writer in the Post-colonial Context:
The Case of Ahdaf Soueif**

Yvette Katherine Lebœuf

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School of International Development and Global Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study of Anglo-Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif's two novels, *In the Eye of the Sun* (1999), first published in 1992, and *The Map of Love* (2000), first published in 1999, is to examine how they are arenas for hybrid politics in the post-colonial Egyptian context and the Arab diasporic context. This thesis examines how Soueif deals with residual colonial logics by using Post-colonial theories of transculturation. These theories reveal, through an analysis of Soueif's use of Pharaonicism and her depiction of social and religious divides, that Soueif sometimes legitimizes and sometimes contests the results of transculturation by *using* products of this very process of transculturation. In the diasporic context, Soueif's work deterritorializes these hybrid politics of legitimation and contestation by collapsing disparate temporalities and emphasizing continuity between them. To do this she deterritorializes and reterritorializes Pharaonicism, as well as Western literary tradition, the English language and political activism, to emphasize the cultural affinities between Egyptians/Arabs and Western culture. In this manner, she composes an integration strategy designed to facilitate her incorporation into her Western society of settlement, Great-Britain. This allows her to build a political platform from which she can contest and influence politics in her homeland, her society of settlement and the shape of Western cultural and political hegemony on a global scale. She is consequently able to transcend residual colonial logics through the very hybrid politics that they have created. Moreover, in the process, through the political agency that she exercises in her writing and activism, she builds a deterritorialized diasporic identity based on integration into many spheres of belonging that problematizes the victim model of diaspora in Diaspora studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
Literature Review	2
Approach and methodology.....	18
PHARAONICISM	23
Mobilizing the Pharaonic Past: the Discourse of Pharaonicism	25
Pharaonicism in <i>In the Eye of the Sun</i>	28
Pharaonicism in <i>The Map of Love</i>	30
Reversing the Terms of Cultural Exchange.....	36
SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVIDES	40
The Continuum of Transculturation in Soueif’s Novels.....	41
Love Stories and Western Hegemony	55
DETERRITORIALIZING IDENTITY: SOUEIF’S WORK FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIASPORA	62
Pharaonicism as a Myth of Return.....	63
Literature and Language.....	68
Political Activism	74
Overcoming the Colonial Past.....	79
The Victim Model of Diaspora vs. Political Agency.....	84
CONCLUSION	91
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	96
I- Corpus	96
II- References	96

INTRODUCTION

Ahdaf Soueif is a recognized Anglo-Egyptian writer of fiction, essays, articles and commentaries. In 1999, she was shortlisted for the Booker prize and in March 2010 she won the Mahmoud Darwish Award in recognition of her creative work in support of the Palestinian cause. In fact, Soueif is an activist interested in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well other human rights and other political issues.. Furthermore, her writing is representative of topics and themes connected to her position as an Arab diasporic writer in the post-colonial context. Indeed, Soueif's work presents an interesting case study because she is a well-known Anglo-Egyptian writer, writing from within the society of Egypt's former colonizer, Great Britain. Moreover, while critical of Britain's colonial legacy, she has become part of the former colonizer's society. Overall, the relationship that Soueif establishes with the former colonizer as a diasporic writer problematizes the usual power dynamics between colonized and colonizer and reveals new avenues of academic inquiry for Post-colonial studies.

The object of this research project is to investigate how politics of hybridity operate in Soueif's two novels, *In the Eye of the Sun* (1999), first published in 1992, and *The Map of Love* (2000), first published in 1999. These politics of hybridity arise from the (residual) colonial logics created through the processes of transculturation and the opportunities that they create for their own problematization. The resulting tensions will underpin the following analysis of Soueif's novels.

It is my goal to analyze how transculturation manifests itself in Soueif's negotiations of her identity as a Westernized Egyptian and how this identity informs her identity as Arab diasporic writer. First, I will examine how processes of transculturation have created hybrid identities that operate according to (residual) colonial logics in Egypt and how Soueif's work exhibits the maintenance and/or problematization of these logics. Then I will look at how these same logics shape the way in which Soueif forms her Arab diasporic identity and if this identity creates new platforms from which to challenge residual colonial logics.

Literature Review

To address Soueif's work as a diasporic writer in the post-colonial context, literature from various fields will be used. Articles about and interviews with Soueif will provide information about the author's life and work. What is more, this project will rely heavily on Post-colonialism and Diaspora studies, and will integrate texts dealing with Arab identity, globalization and Egyptian politics and history.

Post-colonial Theories

The post-colonial context is not a context that can be reduced to the historical period marked by the independence of former colonies in the mid-twentieth century. Although the shift caused by independence movements did allow for the context to arise and for its theorization to develop, as will be discussed below, this context can be defined as one in which a multitude of voices from disparate temporalities¹ are able to come together more readily, in the spirit of collaboration or confrontation, and in which their cultures mix,

¹ A temporality is here defined as the collective cultural and historical experience which provides cultural points of reference (symbols, signifiers, etc.) which those aware of that experience may use to solicit a response (emotional, psychological, intellectual, etc.) in someone with knowledge of the same temporality. The term *disparate temporalities* signifies two or more temporalities which have relatively exclusive collective cultural and historical experiences and whose points of cultural reference are not necessarily known or understood by each other.

willingly or not. In turn, this cultural mixture creates hybrid positionalities which can allow for nuanced critiques of systems of power, although they do not necessarily lead to such critiques.

From the era of decolonization until the fall of the Soviet Union, “post-colonial” usually served to designate the historical and political condition of those states (and people) which had gained formal independence from their former colonizers (Neil Lazarus, 2004). It did not designate a theoretical framework that contested colonial legacies and Eurocentrism, nor was it used as an adjective indicating a non-Western point of view.

With the decline of the Soviet Union, the academic atmosphere changed because the new economic and political environment led to the decline of communism, socialism and nationalism. That is to say that the rise of global capitalism undermined the political rationale of socialism and nationalism, as well as national development along Eurocentric lines. Indeed, Neil Lazarus (2004) says that the fall of the Soviet Union enabled the rise of Post-colonialism because, during the Cold-War, Post-colonialism “would have made no sense at all in the historico-ideological context of the 1970s” (p.7).

With academia less centered on necessarily Western paradigms, especially paradigms of development which held Western ideas of progress and modernity, theories were re-examined and found to be lacking. Researchers, especially those with knowledge of disparate temporalities, adopted post-structuralism and post-modernism and began to critique development theory and its biases against everything non-Western:

Indeed, despite their apparent divergences, these [Eurocentric development] paradigms rested on certain shared assumptions: a faith in the efficacy of scientific rationality, a particular conception of progress, a vision of emancipation based on the liberal concept of the autonomous individual – in short, the shared legacy of

Enlightenment ideas. It is this very set of shared assumptions that became the target of attack by post-structuralist and post-modernist critics. Central to this attack was the notion that the universalist claims of grand narratives of emancipation (in both their Marxist and bourgeois-liberal variants) foundered on the exclusion from subjecthood of the non-Western, the non-white, and women. Critics of modernity treated it as a powerful discursive construct whose dark underside became manifest in the practices of racism, colonialism, and sexism and argued that the very notion of the Western Self was predicated on the construction of the non-Western Other. (Deniz Kandiyoti, 2002, p.281)

Such critics of modernity were often individuals with knowledge of disparate temporalities. These critics, like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, came from non-Western cultural backgrounds, but had gained knowledge of the West through processes of cultural mixture instigated by the colonial encounter (like Western-style education) and/or by living and being educated in the West. This internalization of disparate temporalities allowed such academics to make meaningful critiques Eurocentric ideas and theories because it gave them the linguistic, symbolic and intellectual tools to confront the West by presenting non-Western temporalities in a palatable way to the Western mind. In a manner similar to how these academics used their knowledge of disparate temporalities to contest Eurocentrism in various theories, non-Western creative writers from former European colonies² have used their knowledge of disparate temporalities to critique colonization, as well as its lasting effects, stereotypes and prejudices by bringing stories of the (formerly)-colonized “Other” to Western audiences.

Soueif can be counted among these post-colonial authors for several reasons. First, Soueif, who was born in Egypt, raised and educated in both Egypt and England, and who now mainly resides in England, is a writer who embodies the coming together of disparate

² Among such writers are Chinua Achebe (born 1930), Tahar Ben Jelloun (born 1944), Assia Djebar (born 1936), Gabriel García Márquez (born 1928), Salman Rushdie (born 1947), and Ahdaf Soueif (born 1950).

temporalities. This is reflected in the content of her work, including her novels. This work includes non-Western voices, language, worldviews and perceptions of historical events, but presents them in a way that is accessible to the West. In fact, her narratives constantly bring the West and the Arab world into contact.

Second, Soueif's novels are a site of post-colonial politics of cultural mixture in their form because her novels can be considered a hybrid result of the post-colonial context. Before the colonial encounter, the novel was not part of the Arab literary tradition. Notwithstanding, through colonization and Western education, the novel was introduced and popularized in the Arab world. Arab novelists would make it their own and write both in Arabic and European languages, transforming the novel from a reflection of Western culture into a medium relating their non-Eurocentric experiences, and in many cases, to contest Western domination (Roger Allen, 2000). This is but one example of the way in which a once Western art form would be adopted, adapted and turned against its originator in a spectacular display of creative transcendence of the colonial experience via the hybrid condition of (former) colonial subjects.

Theories of cultural mixture stemming from colonization have gone under many names and have dealt with many different contexts. Many theories from which to examine the phenomenon of cultural mixture have concentrated on the Americas, especially Latin America, while a few others have dealt with Africa and Asia, and especially the Indian case. Among such theories are transculturation, creolization, mestizaje, syncretism, and hybridity. In the context of the Americas, these theorizations are very focused on the aspect of actual physical racial mixture in the colonial *mission civilizatrice* and its somewhat failed attempts to biologically and culturally “whitewash” indigenous peoples and people of African descent

in order to incorporate them into the colonial system. In Africa and India, although race does play a role, the role of *racial mixture* is less important. Instead, authors focus on the ineffectiveness of colonization in completely Westernizing the culture of colonized peoples and the space that this creates for resistance.

Theories about cultural mixture in the (post-)colonial space emphasize different aspects of the process of cultural mixture depending on the context in which they evolved. For example, transculturation, mestizaje and syncretism may be seen as holding some positive traits in Latin America because cultural mixture helped in the post-independence nation building process. Because the agents of mixture in the Latin American context were also the product of this mixture, it could be seen as an internal impulse in some ways, even if Western cultural supremacy persists. However, in Africa, syncretism holds a more negative connotation because it is seen as imposed by the outside (Marwan Kraïdy, 2005; Charles Stewart, 1999).

In terms of nuanced differences between these theories, while transculturation originated as a theory focusing on the emergence of new cultures from the process of mixture and the ramifications for the creation of a post-independence national culture in Latin America, creolization concerns itself with the “Black experience” and is sometimes seen as glorifying “hybridity” and downplaying its negative aspects (Kraïdy, 2005; Stewart, 1999). For its part, syncretism focuses on the role of cultural-religious mixture in the incorporation of colonized peoples into the colonial system in the Americas, as well as in Africa and India (Stewart, 1999) and is often part of other theories, like in the work of Homi Bhabha (2004) on hybridity.

Bhabha's work focuses on the failure of colonial attempts to "whitewash" colonized peoples through both syncretism and transculturation and the unintentional creation of a "third space" through mimicry of Western culture. The fact that mimicry is unable to exactly re-produce the Western culture creates a new culture from which colonized people may resist and subvert Western domination. This is similar to transculturation theories which propose that there is the creation of a third culture when two cultures mix (Diana Taylor, 1991). But, while creolization, mestizaje and hybridity all carry a history of racism in their very names, transculturation and syncretism still carry this history without reflecting it in their names (Kraidy, 2005; Nikos Papastergiadis, 1997; Stewart, 1999; Taylor 1991).

All of the above demonstrates that the context in which the process of cultural mixture takes place plays a big role in what this process looks like, how it works, how its ever-changing products turn out and how it is theorized. In turn, this shows the importance of a Post-colonial approach which demands that the local context be understood, then placed in the global scheme of things (Timothy Brennan, 2004; Ania Loomba, 1998; Anne McClintock, 1994; Ella Shohat, 1992).

However divergent the theorizations and paradigms of cultural mixture, a common thread emerges: cultural mixture in a given colonial context has the goal of Westernizing the colonized people... *to a point*. To a point, because no matter how "civilized" or "whitewashed" the colonized people become, they will remain different from the colonizer: a non-Western, non-European, a non-White. This inability of the colonized to truly become Western will allow the colonizer to maintain a dominant position. But, in his mimicry of Western culture, the colonized inevitably gives the mimicked aspects of Western culture new meaning according to his own culture, thus producing a slippage, an "ambivalence" to use

Bhabha's (2004) language, "not quite/not white". It is here that emerges that which is hybrid, what theorists of transculturation would call a new third culture, since it is neither the culture of the colonizer nor the original culture of the colonized (Taylor, 1991). It is this new culture or third space that Bhabha says the colonized may use to resist the colonizer because it is a subversion of the colonizer's own culture.

Critiques of mestizaje, transculturation and other theories bring up the fact that some of these theories gloss over the uneven terms of cultural exchange, where Western culture remains a dominant force in post-colonial societies, what Kraidy (2005) calls a "residual colonial logic". After independence, through deliberate processes of transculturation, Western and indigenous (and depending on the country, displaced African) traditions were combined to create new national cultures enabling social cohesion and the functioning of these countries. While some aspects of indigenous or African culture are demonstrated to persist in the new Latin American national hybrid cultures, a "residual colonial logic" preserves the influence of Western culture and Western culture continues to dominate the new national culture, despite the end of colonization. However, Kraidy shows that transculturation's history as a political strategy used by the elite to maintain its position of privilege does not necessarily mean that it cannot now be used to reveal the inequalities within previously colonized societies.

Although the Egyptian context is not completely analogous to Latin American ones (especially in terms of race),³ the theoretical approach to cultural mixture in the colonial and post-colonial contexts offered by transculturation in the spirit in which it is discussed by

³ The racial element is not as important in the processes of cultural mixture in Egyptian society. While in the Latin American context, the European colonizer, the indigenous population, and displaced Africans mixed on a large scale, this did not happen in the Egyptian colonial context.

Taylor (1991) is the most appropriate to address *cultural* hybridity in the Egyptian context. Taylor explains that transculturation was originally conceived by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940 in opposition to theories of acculturation. Ortiz did not see cultural mixture as a process of transition from one culture to another (acculturation), but rather the loss of aspects of an original culture (disculturation) and the creation of a new culture incorporating aspects of the cultures which mixed to create it (neoculturation). Taylor goes on to say that:

One of the interesting features of Ortiz's paradigm, as Bronislaw Malinowski noted in his preface to Ortiz's work, is that it is not merely an uneasy fusion of two belief systems held simultaneously, a "mosaic." Rather, it accounts for the historic specificity and artistic originality of the new cultural phenomena. Hence, it goes beyond the syncretic model, so prevalent in current anthropological discussion, that emphasizes the co-existence of two cultural systems. The transcultural model simultaneously notes the co-existence of elements but, just as importantly, underlines the element of loss of the two systems in the creation of a third. (Taylor, 1991, pp.91-92)

Indeed, the recognition of the constant and unfinished process rising from the coexistence of two cultures and the creation of a third culture is one of the strengths of transculturation. By recognizing that two (or more cultures) are in constant interaction and production of a third and that the "original" cultures are forever changed and thus lost, transculturation allows one to move beyond discussions of cultural purity. Instead, one is able to question the terms of cultural exchange: Is one culture favoured, dominating at the expense of the other? Is there a "residual colonial logic" that reiterates and reinforces the dominance of Western culture?

In fact, Taylor (1991) states that although transculturation affects both the dominant/colonizing culture and the dominated/colonized culture,

it is clear that the interaction is neither *equal* in power or degree nor, strictly speaking, *reciprocal*. We must not minimize the very significant imbalances in the crossing of cultural borders: conquest, colonialism, imperialism, tourism, or scholarly interest all involve choice and require power, even if only buying power. (p.93)

This gives the possibility to move on from the trauma of colonization (Can the new culture provide a means to transcend the colonial past?), all while recognizing the “residual colonial logic” and the social inequalities and hierarchies it produces (like systems that privilege the most Westernized elements of society). Furthermore, because racial mixture is not as important of a component in the Egyptian context, as it is in some other contexts, the very name *transculturation* is more appropriate for this study of Soueif’s work than those that explicitly carry racial undertones, like hybridity.

Another problem that transculturation seems to avoid, which hybridity does not, is the maintenance of a certain distance from sentimentalism. This is a problem in the work of Bhabha (2004) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994) who portray the hybrid (Westernized) “native” as guilty of a cultural betrayal and that such is the regrettable price of gaining agency in the (post)colonial system. This arises from that fact that hybridity is an “emancipatory theory” that necessitates the existence of something to resist (Western cultural influence) (Taylor, 1991). This traps the hybrid.

In theories of hybridity, the hybrid is created through his attempt to mimic the colonizer’s culture. Because the native cannot accurately reproduce the colonizer’s culture (because of his cultural background, his location, etc.), the colonizer’s culture combines with the native’s culture, and creates a new hybrid culture. From this process, the native emerges a hybrid. The hybrid’s very existence challenges the colonizer’s power because his mimicry

subverts the colonizer's cultural hegemony by appropriating the colonizer's culture and transforming it. It is this subversion that allows the hybrid to resist. However, this means that by definition the hybrid is locked into a constant resistance of the colonizer. This paradigm does not allow the hybrid to break the cycle of colonization and transcend it in the post-colonial context because he must always dwell of on the trauma of colonization that created him. The hybrid is not allowed to accept his hybrid state and move on. He is condemned to relive the colonial encounter in his very identity as a hybrid.

Transculturation, which is a theory of cultural circulation instead of emancipation according to Taylor (1991), avoids projecting such a traumatic identity on the hybrid. While it acknowledges that the hybrid is the result of a new culture created from cultural mixture and mimicry, Taylor seems to allow that this theory could apply to all contexts. She is more preoccupied with using transculturation as a theory to analyze the modalities of cultural mixture and neoculturation in various contexts, regardless of whether they have felt the effects of Western colonization or not. In the end, the somewhat objective understanding of the cultural mixture embodied by that which is hybrid without the torture of constantly and cyclically reliving of the colonial trauma seems the more useful approach to Soueif's novels.

It is in the spirit of Taylor's conception of transculturation that the term "hybrid" will be used throughout this thesis in order to denote the unfinished result of processes of transculturation. The use of "transcultured" is not practical due to the widespread use of the term hybrid in Post-colonialism: hybrid politics and hybrid identity are more widely understood than transcultured politics and transcultured identity would be. The use of the term "hybrid" therefore assures some mutual comprehension that will foster ties with existing scholarship and future research. Furthermore, in using the term "hybrid" in the

sense of “transcultured”, it will possibly lose some of its negative connotations and gain more positive meaning.

Transculturation in the Egyptian Context

During the era of colonization, processes of social change provoked by the European presence, actively or passively instigated policies meant to “modernize” the Arab World. Such policies, based on Westernization, led to processes of transculturation that created hybrid elites. In Egypt, the encounter with Europe through Napoleon’s expedition and later through British colonization began a process of social change in Egyptian society. Indeed, Mohamed Ali Pasha, the self-imposed Khedive of Egypt (1805-1848), put into practice policies of agricultural, administrative and educational modernization inspired by the advanced militaries and economies of Europe in an effort to strengthen Egypt against European powers. Furthermore, print media, which flourished because of these Westernization/modernization policies and which propelled the modernization project in the Arab world, introduced ideas of secularism and nationalism, among others, to the Arab World.

These developments helped to create a new class of secular urban elites. These urban elites were educated according to Western standards and methods and read many of the Arabic language and European periodicals and would thereby internalize aspects of Western culture (Israel Gershoni, 1992; Albert Hourani, 1991; Sophie Pommier, 2008). The knowledge of the West and of Egypt held by such segments of Egyptian society put them in a position to use Western knowledge to challenge the British presence in Egypt and participate in the development of Arab and Egyptian nationalisms. Notwithstanding, their social position rested and still rests on the perceived superiority of Western culture and their

ability to maintain their social status and access opportunities in terms of education, politics and employment because of this perception.

Theories of Diaspora

The roots of the word diaspora are found in the Greek word *diasperien*, which combines *dia-* meaning “across”, and *-sperien* meaning “to sow or scatter seeds”. Originally, diaspora referred to the exiled Jewish community in Alexandria in the 3rd century BC (Jana Evans Brazier & Anita Mannur, 2003; Robin Cohen, 1997). Most authors theorizing diaspora seem to agree that although the Jewish diaspora was the original diaspora. But, the term has expanded to encompass many groups of individuals who share a real or imagined attachment to a territory, but who have been dislocated from this geographical point of origin and have had to relocate new territories.

Some authors propose frameworks for studying diaspora. Robin Cohen (1997) tries to categorize diasporas in many ways, one of which consists of identifying them based on the motives of displacement: victim, imperial, labour, trade and cultural diasporas. He then associates these types with horticultural terms like weeding, sowing, transplanting, layering and cross-pollinating, respectively (p.178). Even if such categorization paints a neat theoretical picture, sorting diasporas in their entirety into such ideal types is too rigid and does not recognize the differences within diasporas due to the heterogeneous conditions in the homeland and the uneven impact of global capitalism on migration patterns. For instance one Lebanese may have migrated as a labourer to the Gulf while another may have migrated to North America as a victim of civil war; yet both can be members of the same Lebanese diaspora.

Cohen (1997) proposes certain characteristics of diasporas, saying that they are not all required for a diaspora to exist but the presence of more of these characteristics indicate a stronger diaspora. These characteristics are:

(1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; (2) alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; (3) a collective memory and myth about the homeland; (4) an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; (7) a troubled relationship with host societies; (8) a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; and (9) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries. (p.180)

As mentioned above, such characteristics do not present the definitive characteristics of a diaspora. Instead, they further confuse the analysis of diaspora by still emphasizing the classic examples of “victim” diasporas (Jewish, Armenian) in focusing on traumatic dispersal and alienation from the society of settlement (Cohen, 1997). Moreover, they mask the underlying structural characteristics of diaspora that have been uncovered by Kim Butler (2001) and Dalia Abdelhady (2006).

To avoid the shortcomings of Cohen’s work, Butler (2001) has proposed that diaspora should be studied as a “specific process of community formation” (p.194). She proposes that this be done by examining some commonalities between diasporas and the steps in the process of diasporization: 1) reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal; 2) relationship with the homeland; 3) relationship with hostlands; 4) interrelationships within communities of the diaspora, 5) comparative studies of different diasporas (p.195). Following Butler, in her study of the Lebanese diaspora, Abdelhady has demonstrated that

such an approach has many advantages, including avoiding the focus on alienation from the host society in the formation of diasporic identities, as Cohen's seventh characteristic does.

Cohen is preoccupied by the presence of diasporas and the possibility that they will undermine the sovereignty of their host-states. But, according to Abdelhady's (2006) research, Lebanese migrants do not feel that their sense of belonging must be exclusively to homeland or host-society, they can be loyal to the multiple societies to which they belong. Indeed, the author says that " 'diaspora' ... represents the multiple loyalties that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places: their connections to the space they currently occupy, or host country; their continuing involvement with the 'homeland'; and their involvement with the larger diaspora community" (p.433). Furthermore, it is this attachment or loyalty to the larger diaspora community that allows immigrants "to craft a deterritorialized understanding of belonging as well as a global sphere of interaction" (433). In fact, Abdelhady has demonstrated that the Lebanese diaspora is part of a larger Arab diaspora, as well, and that its members exhibit a sense of belonging to this sphere based on a common Arab identity.

Soueif as an Arab Diasporic Writer

Soueif can be characterized as a diasporic writer because her work as a novelist establishes connections with multiple spheres of belonging: the homeland (Egypt/the Arab world), the society of settlement (England/the West) and the Arab diaspora. "Diasporic" has been chosen to describe her writing above "exiled" or "immigrant" because the former implies a necessarily forced migration without personal choice (which is not the case for Soueif), while the latter implies a focus on the experience of living in the host society only. Soueif's work focuses on both experiences in the home and the host societies. Furthermore, her work establishes a global citizenship for Egyptians through the discourse of

Pharaonicism that argues that their ancient Egyptian ancestors created the civilization from which all other civilizations came. The term “Diasporic” is especially appropriate because it implies the continuous reiteration of these multiple attachments, which Soueif does in her work.

I use “diasporic” rather than transcultural/transnational because diasporic experiences can be part of transcultural/transnational phenomena but transcultural/transnational phenomena are not necessarily diasporic (i.e. taking place in multiple spheres of belonging). For example, Egyptians can have transcultural experiences without leaving Egypt, but to be diasporic involves migrancy and displacement. Diasporic literature is a transcultural practice which specifically maintains diasporic attachments to many spheres of belonging while building upon these attachments and the experience of migrancy to create a hybrid literature.

Soueif can further be categorized as an *Arab* diasporic writer based on the socio-historical, cultural and linguistic affinities expressed through her work which attach her to the Arab world and the Arab diaspora worldwide. A common Arab cultural identity can be established based on socio-linguistic, political and cultural affinities shared by the peoples of the Arab world. Despite differing historical, social and political trajectories of Arab states, Élizabeth Picard (2006) argues that Arab identity or *Arabness* is rooted in the Arabic language. This is demonstrated by common poetry, stories, heroes, complex social relations and worldviews which have Arabic as their basis. The Arabic language expresses rich schools of modern thought represented by intellectuals like Rashid Rida (1865-1935), the 19th century islamic reformer; Sati’ al-Husri (1879-1968), an important reformer of education in the Arab world; Qustantin Zurayq (1909-2000), a pioneer of Arab nationalism; and Michel ‘Aflaq (1910-1989), the main theoretician of the Baath party who integrated socialism into

Arab nationalism. Arabness has been a force for political mobilization, as shown by the development of several pan-Arabist parties, like the Baath, and currents, like Nasserism and various pro-Palestinian movements. Indeed, Arabness has been internalized by local societies and individuals because of its cultural and political value.

Although Soueif has chosen to write in English, the influence of Arabic language and culture can be felt in her work. In fact, Arabs abroad often demonstrate their Arab identity and reaffirm their “Arabness” in informal ways such as producing and consuming media and art that contain Arabic cultural subject matter and in formal ways, like engaging in political activism through organizations (Abdelhady, 2006; Sally Howell, 2000). In her work, Soueif affirms her attachment to the Arab world by talking about political issues that touch it like colonization, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the authoritarian state. She revisits Arabic and specifically Egyptian culture by including famous and widely respected cultural figures in her work. These include singers, like Om Kalthoum⁴ who is renowned throughout the Arab World and even outside of it; writers, like poet, politician and intellectual Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi,⁵ and artists, like Mahmud Mukhtar.⁶ Her novels also contain subject matter that is common in Arabic language Egyptian novels, like the “eternal fellah”, the fatalistic servant and Pharaonic symbolism (Halim Barakat, 1993). Islam, which has had a great impact on Arabic culture (and vice versa), is present in her work as a cultural and folkloric influence, in

⁴ Om Kalthoum (1898?-1975) is considered one of, if not the best female singer in the history of Arabic music and Soueif depicts her great popularity among all Egyptians in her novels.

⁵ Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi (1839-1904) plays the role of paternal uncle to the fictional character of Sharif Basha al-Baroudi in *The Map of Love*. In real life, despite his Turco-Kurdish roots, he was an important and famous Arabic poet who contributed to the Arabic literary renaissance. He was also the prime minister of Egypt in 1882, until he participated in the ‘Urabi revolt. For this he was exiled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) until 1901.

⁶ Mahmud Mukhtar (1891-1934) was a famous Egyptian sculptor who designed many statues that featured distinctly Egyptian subject matter, including the famous *Nahdat Misr* (Rebirth of Egypt) statue. He is mentioned in *The Map of Love* because he attends the school of art that the fictional character Sharif Basha al-Baroudi is helping to create, and his famous statue figures prominently in the novel.

terms of shrines to saints, and its influence on the Arabic language. These elements maintain an Arab identity in the diaspora by connecting Soueif to her homeland. However, despite the fixity of location that iterations of such connections seem to express, connections to the homeland are part of a diasporic strategy that she uses to deterritorialized identities (as will be examined in chapter 3).

Furthermore, the manifestations of hybridity and the establishment of deterritorialized identity in Soueif's work, as well as her manipulation of Orientalist discourses and her appropriation of the society of settlement's language, link her to other Arab diasporic writers. Jacqueline Bardolph (2002) talks about how North African francophone authors describe cultural mixture and hybridity in their work. Najib Radouane (2006) discusses the work of Tunisian writer Hédi Bouraoui who reaffirmed "his Arabic background while combining it with his 'Canadianity'" (p.76) and that he identified with Africa, Europe, North America and the multiculturalism he found in Toronto. Orit Bashkin (2006) looks at how Arab-American Jewish novelists have manipulated Orientalist discourse to challenge ideas about the Jewish diaspora and Israel as the homeland of Arab Jews. Zahia Smail Salhi (2006) talks about how the use of European languages by Arab diasporic writers, like Soueif and Assia Djebar have created a form of hybrid literature in which the language is not the language of their home country, but rather a subverted form of language in their host-society. It is somehow a combination of both and is therefore a result of being in between cultures.

Approach and methodology

The sample of Soueif's work that will be studied is composed of the author's two (and only) novels, *In the Eye of the Sun* and *The Map of Love*. Although the author writes

short stories and articles as well, this study will mainly consider her novels for several reasons. Soueif's novels themselves can be considered as a hybrid result of the post-colonial context, as has already been discussed. Soueif's novels are also hybrid because of her appropriation of the colonizer's language, English, to write her novels. Moreover, novels, as opposed to short stories, allow adequate space to develop a large and varied narrative structure involving the multiple temporalities (times and locations) that compose this hybridity. Indeed, in the two selected novels, she travels from colonial Egypt to modern England, as well as many points in between. This being said, I will also look at some of her interviews and articles in which her thoughts and positions are clearly expressed, because this creates a dialogue between her non-fiction work and her novels that will help to understand her positionality.

I use a Post-colonial approach to study Soueif's novels because my goal is to analyze them in terms of arenas of politics of hybridity both in the Egyptian and in the Arab diasporic context. I do not focus on a literary analysis of Soueif's work because my aim is not to judge the artistic merit of Soueif's work, though it certainly does have merit. Rather, I focus on a discourse analysis of her work in order to understand her positionalities as a post-colonial and diasporic Arab writer, and how these positionalities interact. I use Post-colonial theories of transculturation to understand Soueif's discursive strategies because these strategies are informed by her position on the continuum of transculturation in both the Egyptian and the Arab diasporic contexts.

In the Egyptian context, Pharaonicism will be analyzed as a hybrid counter-discourse that Soueif uses to problematize Eurocentrism and Orientalism while maintaining the privileged position of the Westernized secular elite in Egypt by portraying and reinforcing

certain social and religious divisions in Egyptian society. Although there are important differences between the Egyptian context and the Latin American, sub-Saharan African and Indian contexts on which theories of transculturation are largely based, all of these contexts have in common a residual colonial logic that shapes identity politics/politics of hybridity within them. By examining how this logic operates in the Egyptian context through the use of theories of transculturation, Soueif's positionality will be more clearly understood.

In the Arab diasporic context, my study of Soueif's work in terms of that of an Arab diasporic writer will build upon recent research in Diaspora studies that has emphasized the agency of members of diasporas in creating diasporic identities. Such studies show that members of diasporas manipulate their multiple identities in order to elaborate effective integration strategies into their societies of settlement. This is in contrast to some earlier studies that have emphasized the role of feelings of alienation in creating diasporic identities. Soueif's work is more relatable to the integration-oriented studies of Diaspora and this will be demonstrated by drawing parallels between her novels, articles and political activism and these studies. This in turn will show how Soueif's novels are also arenas of diasporic hybrid politics.

Furthermore, I will examine how the hybrid politics of the diasporic arena and those of the Egyptian post-colonial arena are connected to each other, namely through the persisting influence of the processes of transculturation initiated in the homeland. This is evident in Soueif's varied use of Pharaonicism. From the perspective of the post-colonial Egyptian context, Soueif uses this discourse, a product of the processes of transculturation started during colonization, to maintain the Westernized elite's political position within Egyptian society while criticizing Western hegemony. But, at the same time, she also uses it

to become part of this Western hegemony. She uses Pharaonicism as a myth of return that emphasizes the common roots of Western and Egyptian civilization to construct a diasporic integration strategy that collapses disparate temporalities. The collapse of these temporalities onto each other allows her to form attachments to multiple spheres of belonging and therefore establish a deterritorialized diasporic identity. Ultimately, the diasporic identity she establishes by continuously reiterating these attachments through her writing and activism allows her to problematize relations between the West and the Arab World, between the (former-) colonizer and the (formerly-) colonized, producing a kind of dissonant feedback that infiltrates the circuit of transculturation.

This thesis is composed of three chapters. While the first two chapters will examine the processes of cultural mixture in the Egyptian context, the third will examine them in the diasporic context. The first and second chapters use Post-colonial theories of transculturation and other related theories to explore how the secular Westernized elite is a segment of Egyptian society created by processes of transculturation and how Soueif is part of this segment of Egyptian society. In these chapters, I will discuss how, depending on the perspective from which Soueif's work is examined, her position can be seen as one that preserves the influence of Western culture in Egyptian society or one that undermines it.

This contradiction arises from two aspects of Soueif's hybrid position. The first aspect can be seen in Soueif's novels when they are examined from an internal, intra-Egyptian perspective. From this perspective, her novels support Egyptian society's internal hierarchy which grants privileges to her as a member of the Westernized elite. The second aspect appears when Soueif's work is examined from an extra-Egyptian perspective. This perspective allows Soueif to nuance, challenge and subvert the terms of cultural exchange

between Egypt and the West. These two aspects are highlighted in Soueif's novels through her use of pharaonic symbolism, which is the subject of the first chapter, and the interaction of characters from different social classes, which is the subject of the second chapter.

The first chapter, "Pharaonicism", examines how processes of transculturation have built a hybrid counter-discourse called Pharaonicism, in reply to Eurocentrism and Orientalism, based on pharaonic symbolism. In this chapter, I will investigate how Soueif mobilizes this discourse in her work. In the second chapter, "Social and Religious Divides", I will analyze how transculturation has created and/or reinforced social and religious divisions in Egyptian society and how Soueif depicts and manipulates these divisions in her novels.

In the third chapter, "Deterritorializing identity: Analyzing Soueif's Work from the Perspective of Diaspora", I will discuss how Soueif constructs and mobilizes deterritorialized diasporic identities in order to create new platforms for politics of empowerment to negotiate the tensions arising from the hybrid nature of the post-colonial context. Soueif does this by collapsing disparate temporalities onto each other to establish multiple spheres of attachment. To do this, she uses Pharaonicism; manipulates the Orientalist literary tradition; abrogates and appropriates the English language; and engages in political activism. Furthermore, Soueif's political agency joins recent challenges to the classical conception of diasporas as victimized, based on "the" Jewish diasporic experience and even allows her to transcend colonization in some aspects.

CHAPTER ONE:

PHARAONICISM

In her novels *In the Eye of the Sun* and *The Map of Love*, Soueif tells the stories of upper-class Westernized Egyptian families which are the products of processes of transculturation and social change instigated by the colonial encounter. The knowledge of the West and of Egypt held by such segments of Egyptian society puts them in a position to use Western knowledge to challenge the British presence in Egypt and participate in the development of Arab and Egyptian nationalisms. Notwithstanding, their social position rests on the perceived superiority of Western culture and their ability to maintain their social status and access opportunities in terms of education, politics and employment due to this position. This segment of Egyptian society has negotiated its hybrid identity in concert with these interests and one way this has manifested itself is in the discourse of Pharaonicism. To construct this discourse the Egyptian Westernized secular elite reappropriated symbols of ancient Egypt in an effort to unite the Egyptian people through the promotion of secularism and to build a foundation for Egypt's modernization based on the European example. Pharaonicism is therefore a hybrid discourse incorporating both Arab and Western references.

In the Arab and especially in the Egyptian context, the success of modernization was seen as contingent upon the internalization of Western education and culture. This emphasis on Westernization created new groups of intellectuals, headed by Westernized elites whose education emphasized science and rationality. In the first part of the 20th

century, this created two main groups of intellectuals, secularists and Islamic modernists,⁷ which would become politically active and displace the traditional religious elite. While the secularists pushed for the creation of a cohesive national identity based on a common Egyptian culture shared by all Egyptians regardless of their religion, the Islamic modernists based their project on a partnership between technological and educational modernization and Islamic traditions. The influence of the secularists waned by the middle of the century due to the political atmosphere and many secularists and aspects of their thought would be incorporated into Islamic modernism (Gershoni, 1992; Hourani, 1991).

Soueif's work exhibits close ties with the secularist intellectual tradition. It is important to understand that Soueif is herself a member of the Westernized segment of Egyptian society. Her parents were academics in Cairo and from the age of 4 to 8, Soueif grew up in London while her mother pursued her doctorate and her father pursued postdoctoral work. After this, the family returned to Cairo, where Soueif earned her B.A. and M.A. in English language literature. Her mother would later become Head of the English department at Cairo University. Soueif had the opportunity to do her PhD at the University of Lancaster and she herself is a university professor, besides being a writer of fiction and non-fiction, who now resides primarily in England (Geoffrey Nash, 2003).

Soueif's family background, knowledge and use of the English language and culture, career path, movement between Egypt and England, as well as the content of her writing

⁷ Prominent secularist intellectuals, artists and writers include Qasim Amin, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Salama Musa, Mahmud Taymur, Tawfiq al-Hakim, Mahmud Mukhtar, Mahmud Sa'id, 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad, Yahya Haqqi, Taha Husayn, Ahmad Amin, Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi, and Najib Mahfuz. Prominent Islamic modernist intellectuals and writers include Mustafa Kamil, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib and Zaki Mubarak. It is important to note that some secularists later contributed to the Islamic modernist trend through their literature like Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Taha Husayn, Twafiq al-Hakim, and 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad. (Gershoni, 1992, pp.341-346)

point to her place at the Westernized end of the continuum of transculturation and her work is a reflection of this position in Egyptian society. Indeed, Soueif's novels incorporate aspects of the secularist tradition of the Westernized urban elite by using pharaonic symbolism to assert a historical/secular identity in opposition to religious conservatism. Soueif uses pharaonic symbolism as a strategy to preserve the place of the Westernized elite in the hierarchy established through transculturation. While Islam is present in her work, its role is minimal. She emphasizes the cultural and folkloric aspects of a specifically Egyptian Islam while distancing herself and even confessing her uneasiness with the rise of Islamic conservatism and political Islam, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

This chapter will first explain the development of Pharaonicism and its value as a political discourse. Then it will examine how Soueif adopts this discourse and uses it in her novels. This discourse serves to maintain the position of the Westernized elite in Egyptian society in Soueif's novels, when her use of this discourse is examined from an intra-Egyptian perspective. However, when her use of this discourse is examined from an extra-Egyptian perspective, it problematizes the terms of cultural change between the West and the Arab World.

Mobilizing the Pharaonic Past: the Discourse of Pharaonicism

Soueif is part of larger trend in Egyptian society in which pharaonic symbolism was used to political ends by a segment of the Westernized Egyptian elite at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. This trend was influenced by Napoleon Bonapart's military expedition to Egypt in 1798 brought with it a team of academics and intellectuals. This would trigger a chain of events that would lead to the foundation of Egyptology and foster a growing interest in rediscovering Ancient Egypt and the Pharaohs in the West. In

turn, some Egyptians sent on educational and cultural missions to Europe would take advantage of this opportunity to learn about Egypt's ancient past. Knowledge of Ancient Egyptian civilization would be combined with the Enlightenment ideas of nationalism and democracy that they learned about on these missions, and would lead to the creation of Pharaonicism as a hybrid discourse in support of anti-colonialism. This discourse revived, revitalized and mobilized the history (real and imagined) of the Pharaohs and ancient Egypt in order to build a common feeling of national belonging among Egyptians people. This feeling would serve as an impulse to the country's modernization (Westernization). Although this strategy would lose its power by the middle of the 20th century, due to the political climate, it helped to create a distinctly Egyptian sense of national culture that still exists, though greatly diluted by Arab and Islamic references (Amatzia Baram, 1990; Omnia El Shakry, 2007; Gershoni, 1992; Michael Wood, 1998).

Pharaonicism worked as a distinctly Egyptian nationalist strategy in two ways. First, by tracing the ancestry of Egyptians to ancient Egypt, Pharaonicism transcended religious divisions in Egyptian society by emphasizing the existence of a common Egyptian culture, regardless of religious affiliation. This undermined the importance of Islam and the ties to Arab and Ottoman culture it represented. In undermining the importance of religion in Egyptian society, Pharaonicism thus supported the Westernized elite's argument for a secular society, which they believed to be necessary for Egypt's modernization and social reform (El Shakry, 2007; Hourani, 1991; Gershoni, 1992).

Second, as explained in the second chapter "Anthropology's Indigenous Interlocutors: Race and Egyptian Nationalism" of Omnia El Shakry's book *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (2007),

Pharaonicism reinforced Egyptian nationalism (as opposed to Arab-Islamic nationalism), by emphasizing Egypt's culture as a Mediterranean culture and ancient Egypt as the origin of Western civilization. This changed how modernization could be perceived:

Thus, Europe could be viewed as an *affine* of ancient Egypt rather than as an alien and external entity, and the adaptation of its culture as a reclaiming of an ancient heritage rather than as a nationalist betrayal. (p.65)

Such a discourse justified and reinforced the high rank of the Westernized elite in the hierarchy of transculturation because it valued the Westernized more than the Arab-Islamic/traditionalist elements of society.

It is interesting to view Soueif's use of pharaonic symbolism as a re-awakening of Pharaonicism to critique current popular Egyptian politics and it is perhaps a proposal of a different "return to the roots". As Ella Shohat (1992) cautions in her essay "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'", it is important to question the way in which histories and identities are mobilized to political ends:

The question (...) is not whether there is such a thing as an originary homogeneous past, and if there is whether it would be possible to return to it, or even whether the past is unjustifiably idealized. Rather, the question is: who is mobilizing what in the articulation of the past, deploying what identities, identifications and representations, and in the name of what political vision and goals? (Shohat, 1992, p.110)

While the islamists are using the time of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs as an originary homogenous past to unite Muslims in Egyptian society for political ends,

Soueif mobilizes an alternative, perhaps less exclusionary, identity rooted in Egyptians' common (imagined or not) past in ancient Egypt. Although these identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, Soueif's use of specifically Egyptian and Pharaonic symbolism in her novels can be seen as an attempt to counter Islamist trends and to preserve the Westernized secular elite and the political and social vision that it stands for.

Pharaonicism in *In the Eye of the Sun*

Although Pharaonic symbolism is less present in Soueif's first novel, *In the Eye of the Sun*, than in her second novel *The Map of Love*, the epilogue of her first novel does use this symbolism. In this epilogue, Soueif's juxtaposition of modern-day Egypt with the pharaonic past, through the appearance of a pharaonic statue (most likely the one of queen Meryetamun discovered at Akhmeem in the 1980s), is a reference to the Pharaonicist intellectual tradition described above. The break in time created by the presence of this statue, serves to remind the reader of the constant common history of all Egyptians, regardless of current political and religious affiliations, which are ever-changing. In this way, this juxtaposition serves to challenge religion-based politics.

When the protagonist of *In the Eye of the Sun*, Asya, happens upon an archeological dig in the Upper Egyptian village of Akhmeem, she reflects upon the statue of a woman that has been unearthed there. In fact, Asya seems to identify more closely with this statue than her living and breathing Islamist students that are described earlier in the chapter. Asya sees herself in the statue because the statue has re-emerged after years of being neglected and buried, as Asya feels her failed marriage had done to her. Now that her marriage is over and she has returned to her home and family in Cairo, she feels the possibility of renewal for herself and the statue is a symbol of this:

But this woman who had in some way belonged to him [Ramses], and who now lies here in the sand – she has indeed found a gentle grave; for here she is, delivered back into the sunlight still is in complete possession of herself – of her pride, and of her small, subtle smile. (Soueif, 1999, p.785)

The amount of political content in the epilogue overall indicates that this statue is symbolic of an alternative to the growing influence of Islamist politics which are discussed earlier in the chapter. This alternative is presented as being more favourable to a renewal of Egypt. Soueif's description of the statue "delivered back into the sunlight still in complete possession of herself – of her pride, and of her small, subtle smile" can be interpreted as a call for Egyptians to overcome the differences and rifts in Egyptian society, to recognize their commonalities and take pride in Egypt once again and work for her renewal. It is perhaps the secular politics of Egyptianism (of which Pharaonicism is a component) that may allow this, instead of the divisive religion-based politics that are becoming more and more popular.

By bringing up the secular tradition and Egyptian identity attached to such pharaonic symbols (as opposed to Islamic conservatism and Islamism), Soueif's use of this statue challenges and laments how Egypt's past is being mobilized for political ends and challenges Islam's current prominence in the construction of Egyptian identity. Because of the history of the use of pharaonic symbolism in Egyptian politics, it can also be argued that Soueif's use of pharaonic symbolism is designed to "remind" Egypt of its ties to Western civilization. These ties are meant to show that Western cultural elements and the Westernized members of Egyptian society are not foreign to it, because both Western culture and modern Egyptian culture are partly produced by ancient Egyptian culture. So, the adoption of Western cultural elements is but the welcoming of long-lost elements of their

own civilization. This generates a rapprochement with Western culture and values, legitimizing the status of the Westernized Egyptian elite and establishing an important role for them in Egyptian politics. At the same time, it undercuts Islamist claims of protecting Egypt's culture and identity because Egyptian culture is not threatened by Western cultural influences, they have and do mutually influence each other.

Pharaonicism in *The Map of Love*

Soueif's second novel *The Map of Love* contains much more pharaonic symbolism and references to Pharaonicism, due to the subject matter and historical periods with which it deals. In terms of Pharaonic symbols, the most important are the *Nahdat Misr* (Rebirth of Egypt) statue and a tapestry featuring Isis, Osiris and Horus (and a coranic verse) weaved by Lady Anna Winterbourne, an English widow who comes to Egypt and marries the Egyptian notable, Sharif Basha al-Baroudi. Both of these symbols not only link modern Egypt to ancient Egypt and Western civilization. They link the branches of the al-Baroudi family that had been separated by tragedy.

In *The Map of Love*, the *Nahdat Misr* statue is linked to Sharif Basha's activities as a member of the Westernized Egyptian upper-class. He struggles to open the School of Fine Art in Cairo. When the school has finally opened, it is mentioned in passing that a promising young artist, "Mukhtar", has already graduated from the school: "The School of Fine Art already has one brilliant graduate: Rodin himself has agreed to take young Mukhtar into his studio" (Soueif, 2000, p.472). Here, Soueif has weaved a real-life character into her fiction. She is alluding to the famous Egyptian sculptor, Mahmud Mukhtar, who designed the *Nahdat Misr* statue (Baram, 1990; Gershoni, 1992). Amatzia Baram explains the significance of this statue for the Pharaonicist trend of Egyptian nationalism:

The statue, made of Egyptian granite quarried at Aswan to mirror the Pharaonic use of that stone, depicted a sphinx-like figure next to which stood a several-times-life-size figure of an Egyptian peasant woman. One of the woman's hands rested on the sphinx's head, symbolizing Egypt's ancient heritage. The other hand removed her veil as she gazed into the distance: this manifested the need for social and cultural modernity. The peasant woman herself was the embodiment of Egypt's authentic national character and deep-rootedness. Here, the message contained in the official address by PM Nahhas praised Mukhtar for his successful effort to embody 'eternal Egypt'. The statue, in his mind, was the symbol of:

the bond uniting different phases of Egyptian history ... the glory of the past, the earnestness of the present and the hope of the future ... Since ancient times [Egypt] has been the cradle of civilization and the source of human wisdom ... Civilization and wisdom spread from her to the Greeks, to Rome, to the radiant Arab state and to Europe. (Baram, 1990, p.430)

This statue, which still stands in Cairo, appears in *The Map of Love* in modern times. Amal al-Ghamrawi, Sharif Basha's great-niece, reflects upon this statue and for her it is still a symbol of a hybrid renaissance for the Egyptian people (Soueif, 2000, p.297). This hybrid renaissance incorporates pharaonic and Arab elements of Egyptian culture, while excluding Islamic elements. The statue inspires her to return to her family's land in Upper Egypt, in Tawasi and help the peasants there, to take care of this little piece of Egypt since she feels powerless to help on a larger scale. The character's identification with the imagery of the statue is contrasted with what Amal sees next: the bearded young men that the reader is left to assume are islamists and who are being taken away by the police. This once again juxtaposes the politics of Pharaonicism in opposition to Islamic references.

The other important pharaonic symbol in *The Map of Love* is a tapestry woven by Sharif Basha's wife, Lady Anna Winterbourne. The tapestry is an important part of Soueif's novel because it ties together different time periods and re-unites long-lost family members. The three panels of this tapestry had been divided upon Sharif Basha's death by the family's servant. One panel was given to his sister, Layla's side of the family, another given to

Anna's side of the family and the third mysteriously disappeared only to be inadvertently recovered by Sharif Basha's great grand-daughter, Isabel, during an improbable and mystical experience when she visits the old al-Baroudi house which has become a museum.

This tapestry brings together the two branches of the family from America and Egypt when Isabel has a chance meeting with an Egyptian orchestra conductor and intellectual 'Omar el-Ghamrawi, Sharif Basha's great-nephew and her long lost lost cousin. At the time of their first meeting, neither of them is aware that they are family. Isabel tells 'Omar about the trunk she found of her great-grandmother's (Lady Anna) things, including journals and family heirlooms. 'Omar suggests that she take the trunk to his sister, Amal, since she is soon going to Cairo, so that Amal can help Isabel go through it, especially the journals and papers in Arabic, which turn out to be written by 'Omar and Amal's grandmother, Layla.

Besides reuniting the al-Baroudi family, the trunk and specifically the tapestry has the power of bringing together the disparate temporalities of the West and Egypt. Lady Anna Winterbourne's tapestry features the ancient Egyptian gods Isis, Osiris and Horus and a verse from the Coran: "It is He who brings forth the living from the dead", linking ancient Egyptian religion and Islam. By featuring the myth of Osiris and Isis, Soueif's work is further linked to the trend of Pharaonicism because this establishes ties with the work of novelist Tawfik al-Hakim (1898/1902-1987) who was part of this trend. His novel *'Awdat ar-ruh (The Return of the Spirit)* (1933) uses this myth to signify a process of modern rebirth for Egypt (Jeff Shalan, 2002).

The evocation of rebirth entailed by the pairing of the myth of Isis and Osiris and the coranic verse in *The Map of Love*, is reinforced by other elements in the novel. Such

elements link both pharaonic and Islamic symbols with Christianity and the West. One of these elements is the hieroglyph for water that Isabel and Amal find in the Baptismal font at the Mu'allaqah church, linking the idea of rebirth in Christianity to ancient Egyptian religion (Soueif, 2000, p.120). Anna too remarks upon the connections between Christianity and ancient Egypt: "She [Mrs Butcher, Lady Anna's friend] spoke to me with much interest and sympathy of the religion of the ancient Egyptians and its similarities – in its most developed stage – with our own Christianity, saying that the Ancient Egyptian, like the modern Christian, knew that he lived in the sight of God, and under the shadow of the Eternal Wings" (Soueif, 2000, p.89).

Furthermore, the use of the tapestry as a mechanism to reunite the al-Baroudi family, as well as Egypt and the West, links Islam, Christianity and ancient Egypt by evoking the Coptic textile tradition. The Copts are Egyptian Christians and are often considered to be the descendants of the ancient Egyptians. They have practiced textile making for centuries, often featuring mythology and religious icons. Their textiles have included Arabic text and have been important for Islamic culture as well, as it has been said that their textiles were used to make the *kiswa*, the cover of the Qaaba in Mecca (Christian Cannuyer, 2001). Because the tapestry woven by Anna in *The Map of Love* features pharaonic imagery with Arabic script, and calls to mind the textile tradition of Egypt's indigenous Christian culture, it links Islam, Christianity and ancient Egyptian religion. In the process, it highlights the fact that Egypt has been home to Christianity and a center of Christian culture longer than the West has, therefore echoing Pharaonicism's claims of Egypt as the origin of Western civilization.

A more obvious link is established with Christianity when Isabel visits the shrine of the tomb of Sheikh Haroun. In this shrine that was once part of the al-Baroudi's house, she has a mystical encounter linking the tapestry and its imagery with Christianity. Isabel and Amal had tried to visit the shrine on an earlier occasion but had been told that it was closed and that there had been no sheikh in attendance for a long time. This time, visiting the museum that was once the al-Baroudi house on her own, Isabel happens upon the shrine and is invited in by a woman wearing blue and white robes that she finds familiar. Inside, Isabel is greeted by an old sheikh named 'Isa and she sees a loom in the corner, which connects this place to another time when Anna had weaved just outside the shrine. Another woman, 'Um Aya, who takes care of the sheikh comes in and offers them drinks, which she then goes to get.

Meanwhile, the sheikh explains that he weaves, but that his hands hurt him sometimes. He shows Isabel his hands which have marks through them. The woman in blue kneels before him and kisses them. 'Um Aya returns and greets the woman in blue calling her "Our Lady". After conversing a bit with the sheikh, Isabel leaves and 'Um Aya gives her her bag. It is on this occasion that Isabel supposes, and Amal later skeptically and begrudgingly accepts, at least partially, that 'Um Aya had slipped the third, lost panel of the tapestry into Isabel's bag (Soueif, 2000, pp.292-297).

In this scene, Soueif conjures up Christian images with Sheikh 'Isa, with his wounded hands and whose name is the name for Jesus in Islam, and the lady in blue called "Our Lady" whose blue and white robes connect her to Western images of the virgin Mary. The tapestry connects the Christian Holy Family to the ancient Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, whose son, Horus, is said to be the incarnation of Osiris after his death. Furthermore, it connects

Islam with Christianity by depicting the shrine's sheikh as Jesus. It also connects Islam with Christianity and ancient Egyptian religion through the verse on the tapestry "It is He who brings forth the living from the dead", using a coranic verse to narrate both rebirth mythologies.

By locating this confluence of symbols in the shrine of a Muslim holy man, Sheikh Haroun, and connecting all of this religious meaning to ancient Egyptian religion through the reappearance of the tapestry, Soueif suggests the cyclical nature of history and evokes continuous rebirths. The tapestry connects many mirroring love stories: that of Isabel and 'Omar, that of Anna and Sharif, and that of Isis and Osiris, complete with the assassination of Sharif and Osiris, and the consequent implied assassination of 'Omar at the end of the novel. Furthermore, it is in Egypt's ancient past that Soueif's narrative looks for hope and the rebirth of Egypt: from the pharaonic imagery of the *Nahdat Misr* statue, to Sharif Basha's discussion with his friends about teaching about the Pharaohs in schools (Soueif, 2000, pp.496-497), to the pharaonic tapestry that links together disparate times and places. This tapestry reunites long lost families and cultures derived from the same ancient Egyptian civilization. It shows how elements of Christianity and Western civilization have evolved from ancient Egyptian religion and tradition, binding the modern West and modern Egypt together through their connection with ancient Egypt.

In so connecting Christianity to ancient Egypt, Soueif's narrative points to how ancient Egypt passed monotheism to modern Western civilization (though the Greeks). It is therefore following the Pharaonicist tradition of celebrating Egypt as the mother of civilizations, as opposed to celebrating Arab/Islamic and Ottoman contributions to civilization. The inclusion of the coranic verse "It is He who brings forth the living from the

dead” in the tapestry, can be argued to mythologize Islam by depicting it in the context of the story of Isis and Osiris. This is an instance of ideological one-upmanship where Pharaonicism uses Islamic symbolism to supersede the importance of the Arab-Islamic identity of Egypt and absorb it into its own imagery.

Further undermining the political role of Islam is how Sharif Basha’s father uses religion as a refuge from his political life. He takes refuge in the shrine of Sheikh Haroun after his participation in the failed uprising under Ahmad ‘Urabi.⁸ Although the real life characters of Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi, Sharif Basha’s paternal uncle, and Ahmad ‘Urabi were exiled, Sharif Basha’s father took sanctuary in the shrine, to avoid exile or death, and never leaves it. By taking refuge in the shrine and renouncing temporal concerns (like his wife, family and career), Sharif Basha’s father’s actions run counter Islamist appeals to burden Islam with temporal concerns like politics. By devoting himself to spiritual life after the failure of his political life, the character of Sharif Basha’s father reinforces a strictly spiritual interpretation of Islam that seeks to separate it from worldly matters. This in turn supports the goals of secularism.

Reversing the Terms of Cultural Exchange

Notwithstanding Pharaonicism’s embrace of the West, Soueif’s use of pharaonic symbolism reverses the terms of cultural exchange with the West and establishes close ties with the West. In turn, this levels the playing field with the West. Pharaonicism is a product of processes of transculturation. In mimicking Western-style nationalism which mobilizes a

⁸ Ahmad ‘Urabi (1841-1911) was an Egyptian general who led the uprising against the Khedive Tewfik, between 1879-1882, because the Khedive would not allow peasants to become officers and because of the foreign influence he favoured in Egypt. This revolt would result in the British Occupation of Egypt and ‘Urabi’s exile to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) until 1901. Because of this uprising and his peasant origins, he is seen as an Egyptian national hero to this day.

common cultural past, Pharaonicism constructed a distinctly Egyptian identity to challenge the colonizer. Soueif's use of pharaonic symbolism, much like how it was used by Pharaonicist trends, challenges Western cultural and political hegemony, as well as Western perceptions of Egypt.

Pharaonicism, as stated earlier, puts Egypt at the origin of both modern Western civilization and modern Egyptian civilization. This challenges perceptions that cultural exchange between the West and Egypt is a one-way process. In fact, Pharaonicism is a discursive maneuver which undermines the West's cultural hegemony over Egypt and even argues that Egypt has cultural hegemony over the West. This supports the argument that the hybrid is not doomed to relive the trauma of colonization. Rather, Pharaonicism allows the hybrid to transcend the colonial experience.

The unearthing of the statue in *In the Eye of the Sun* points towards the common past which reconciles the two disparate temporalities of Egypt and the West that Asya and Egypt are part of and contests the power of transculturation over them. The statue changes the logic of cultural dominance: it no longer matters that the processes of transculturation resulting from the colonial encounter have been the means by which Western culture has become part of Asya and Egypt's identity. This is because Western culture is reduced to an offshoot of Egypt's proud and ancient heritage. Soueif's use of pharaonic symbolism thereby redirects the flow of cultural exchange between the two temporalities. The tapestry woven by Anna in *The Map of Love*, is another example of this. The imagery of Osiris, Isis and Horus can be argued to be a predecessor to the Holy Family in Christianity. This furthers the argument for ancient Egypt's influence in European culture.

Moreover, the story of these ancient gods is a metaphor for Egypt's history. Indeed, in *The Map of Love*, this tapestry represents Egypt's transformation, resilience and renewal through the incorporation and appropriation of cultures. From Pharaonic times, Egypt has had cultural exchanges with the Mediterranean and other surrounding areas. It has endured periods of Greek, Roman and Arab invasion, processes of Arabisation and islamization, the Ottoman Empire, Western colonization, and now Globalization. Not only has Egypt persisted through these cycles, from them Egypt has been reborn, like Osiris had been reborn in the form of Horus.

Indeed, the tapestry is a metaphor for Egypt and its ability to weave together many different cultures. It incorporates symbols of Pharaonic culture at the source of later Christian ones, and connects these to Arab-Islamic culture. These symbols are chosen by an English woman, with the help of her Egyptian husband of Turkish origin. It brings together lost family members from disparate temporalities, like Amal, 'Omar and Isabel. Furthermore, the way in which the story of 'Omar and Isabel echoes that of Sharif Basha and Anna, as well as that of Isis and Osiris alludes to the cycles of transculturation that Egypt has endured, from ancient times to the present. Finally the love stories of 'Omar and Isabel and of Sharif Basha and Anna, challenge the idea of cultural hegemony by depicting a reversal of transculturation. Both love stories focus on Westerners undergoing and Egyptianization, as well as Egyptians that have undergone some Westernization.

The author's use of pharaonic symbolism in *In the Eye of the Sun* and in *The Map of Love* serves to reinforce the position of the Westernized elite by celebrating an Egyptian nationality, as opposed to greater Arab/Islamic/Ottoman affiliations, and establishing strong cultural links between Egypt and the West. Therefore pharaonic symbolism is used as a

strategy to undermine the rise of islamism which is challenging the Westernized elite's place. Notwithstanding, when examined from an extra-Egyptian (Western) perspective, Soueif's work and her use of pharaonic symbolism does challenge ideas about Egyptian society and Western cultural hegemony.

In conclusion, Soueif's use of pharaonic symbolism channels a residual colonial logic because it upholds the importance of the secular, Westernized urban elite at a time when this group's role in Egyptian politics is threatened by the rise of islamism. However, it also reverses the terms of cultural exchange with the West. Her use of pharaonic symbolism brings together the disparate temporalities of Egypt and the West through its evocation of modern Egyptian and modern Western cultures' common heritage in ancient Egypt. Even though the colonial encounter created the processes of transculturation from which Pharaonicism arose, Pharaonicism has undermined this colonial legacy.

CHAPTER TWO:

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS DIVIDES

Both of Soueif's novels allude to the heterogeneity of Egyptian society and culture and nuance Western perceptions of a monolithic Egyptian society or identity, and of the Arab Other, as well as challenging the Arab-Islamic perceptions of Egypt as an Islamic country. In Soueif's books many religions and many ethnicities are present, including Muslims, Jews, Copts and other Eastern Christians; and Arabs, Africans, Turco-Circassians, Greeks and Armenians. Furthermore, she includes divergent political trends, like islamism, Egyptian nationalism and socialism.

Indeed, her work challenges the idea of what Egypt is by reproducing an insider's view that exhibits the differences and divisions in Egyptian society. Although this viewpoint is from an upper-class perspective, it is accessible to Egyptian and non-Egyptian readers, alike. From an Egyptian point of view, because of her interests as a member of this elite segment of society, her work maintains the status quo of social organization in Egyptian society. Furthermore, her work betrays her wariness of other segments of Egyptian society and in the process reveals the unevenness of the process of transculturation. However, from an extra-Egyptian point of view, her novels challenge Western cultural hegemony through their manipulation of these divides. This is done in a way similar to Soueif's use of Pharaonicism, as seen in the previous chapter.

The Continuum of Transculturation in Soueif's Novels

Soueif is able to show how the Egyptian upper(middle) class has internalized Western (especially British and French) cultures through processes of Westernization beginning during colonization, through education, acculturation, etc., in her novel *In the Eye of the Sun*. In this novel, she recounts the upbringing and coming-of-age of Asya al-Ulama, the main character that has already been discussed. Asya is a young Egyptian woman born in 1950 to a privileged, Westernized family. In fact, in this novel, the author is pulling from her personal experience as an upper-class Egyptian educated abroad and this novel contains many auto-biographical elements. Both Asya and Soueif were born in 1950 in Cairo. They both spent part of their childhood in England while their parents were pursuing degrees. Like Soueif, Asya studied in England as a young woman and works as a professor.

Through the generations of Asya's family, Soueif demonstrates how the colonization of Egypt created a process of transculturation in Egyptian society which formed an elite of which Asya is emblematic. Asya's grandfather, Ismail Mursi, came from a landholding village family in Upper Egypt to the capital of Cairo by himself at the age of 10 to join other displaced Sa'idis.⁹ There he was successful in starting a furniture business. As Asya's grandfather joined these Sa'idis in the urban center, he encountered a different world from that of rural Upper Egypt; a world in which European culture and its mixture into Egyptian society had much more importance and could be felt much more strongly. In the city, his children had access to Westernized education because of his successful furniture business. By giving his children a Western education, Ismail Mursi would be giving his children the tools necessary to cope with the hybrid world of Cairo.

⁹ A Sa'idi is someone from Upper Egypt, usually from a peasant background.

Lateefa, his daughter and Asya's mother, attended a missionary school and went on to university, eventually earning a PhD. Through Western-style education, Lateefa would become familiar with Western culture and become part of the intellectual upper-middle class and have access to opportunities to travel abroad (to London and later to Kuwait). Asya's father, from a similar background, also became a university professor and minister of culture and would have opportunities to travel abroad. It is also her social class and education that give Asya opportunities to study in Italy and England. It is the education that she is privileged to as part of this social class that allows her to succeed abroad, in her studies.

However, transculturation has not been experienced equally by all segments of the Egyptian population. Other characters in the novel show that while Asya's family has managed to adapt to the hybrid context in which the importance of knowledge of Western culture is great, other parts of society did not. Indeed, Soueif displays many different states of hybridity existing in Egyptian society. Some segments of society were too far away from urban centers and/or did not have the economic means and social connections to access education which would allow them to be exposed to Western culture, like servants and peasants. Indeed, being a member of the Westernized elite grants Asya educational and travel opportunities that would otherwise be difficult, if at all possible, to access for other Egyptians.

In *In the Eye of the Sun*, Soueif explores divisions in terms of systems of social organization and in terms of class. These divisions are discussed in the work of scholar, novelist and literary critic, Halim Barakat (1993). Barakat writes that Arab societies are divided into urban, village and tribal systems of social organization. He goes on to explain how the integration of Arab countries into the world capitalist system has privileged cities by

mechanizing agriculture and manufacturing. This has made cities the centers of investment and capital, as well as centers of political power and of education granting access to these resources. This has established cities as closer to the West on the scale of transculturation and has allowed cities to dominate villages and tribes.

The domination of rural milieus by more Westernized urban milieus is reflected in their different value systems. On one hand, in the Arab world in general, the value system of peasants is marked by a strong attachment to the land, the community and the village, as well as a deep-felt religiousness. Furthermore, this religiousness intensifies when adversity and domination weigh more heavily upon peasants than usual (like in the context of repressive regimes and disappointment in terms of opportunities upon migration to the cities) because it provides solace in the face of powerlessness. On the other hand, the urban value system, in countries like Egypt, places importance on nationalism, socialism, education and professionalism. Furthermore, certain segments of this system (like those to which Asya in *In the Eye of the Sun* and Amal in *The Map of Love* belong) value Westernization, liberalism and personal achievement (Barakat, 1993).

In his work, Barakat discusses class divides in Arab societies and establishes three broad classes: “(1) the dominant class, or big bourgeoisie and notables; (2) the intermediate classes, or petite bourgeoisie, old and new; and (3) the working classes, made up of workers, peasants, and outcasts” (Barakat, 1993, p.87). In Egypt, Barakat describes the first group as being composed of, among others, landed aristocrats before 1952, like the al-Baroudi family in *The Map of Love*, as well as wealthy merchants, rural intellectuals and industrialists, of which Asya’s grandfather in *In the Eye of the Sun* could be argued to be a part. The second group of the old and new bourgeoisie is an intermediate group that contains white collar

professionals, small landowners and small businessmen. This group can be argued to not really exist because part of it tends more towards the dominant class and part of it tends towards the working classes. Although Asya's family may be part of this intermediate class, her family would be situated at the upper end of this group and would have many affinities with the dominant class. The working classes are the dominated, disinherited and subaltern classes of Egyptian society. Barakat states that "This class is divided into subclasses, including workers, peasants, soldiers, the lumpenproletariat, servants, street vendors and peddlers, porters, the unemployed, outcasts, and others" (p.91). Often, in Egyptian society, those from the working classes are peasants or have peasant origins. This is the case in *In the Eye of the Sun* and *The Map of Love*, as will later be discussed.

In fact, the urban/rural divide in Egyptian society, as well as its class divisions, are most evident in *In the Eye of the Sun* through the contrasting characters of Asya and Mahrous. The character Mahrous, one of Asya's university peers who studied at the same Cairene and English universities as Asya, embodies the lower-classes through his struggles in English class and later as a student at the same English university as Asya.

Mahrous who comes from a rural, peasant, village form of social organization and who is of a poorer social class than Asya, reinforces the identity of Asya as a member of the urban elite by highlighting her belonging to the urban system of social organization and her high status within this system. This has afforded Asya with the tools necessary to succeed in the academic world and in the West, whereas Mahrous' background has not provided him with these tools. His struggles to succeed are in great contrast to Asya's adaptability.

When in University in Cairo, Asya, showing off to her friends, recounts an anecdote about Mahrous in English class when he attempts to participate but is first slighted by the professor, who seems to pretend not to understand his “peasant” accent in English, and then gets punched in the face by the professor when he insinuates that perhaps Aristotle was wrong. A fight almost breaks out between the two, but they are separated from each other. Asya’s retelling of this event ridicules Mahrous by portraying him as a peasant, out of place, and not belonging in the University, as she and her friends belong (Soueif, 1999, p.157).

The divisions between peasants and upper-class urbanites are further emphasized later in the book when Mahrous has made it to the same English university as Asya. His professor, Dr. Heatherington and his wife, who met him in Egypt, have taken him under their wing. When his difficulties in adjusting to life in Britain get him into serious trouble, the Heatheringtons bring him to talk to Asya.

When they arrive, Mahrous immediately asks Asya if he can pray. She takes him downstairs to pray in solitude and is taken off-guard when he asks which direction is the direction of prayer. She is not sure. This shows how their different backgrounds affect their religiousness. Asya has never prayed in this house and has never even thought about it, during all her time there. Islam is not important to her life as a secularized, urban Egyptian. However, religion tends to be much more important for peasants and as such, for Mahrous, maintaining his faith is the most urgent need.

Mahrous’s position on the continuum of transculturation, as a young man from a poor, rural background, is far from Asya’s Westernized and secular elite position. This has made his adjustment to life in Britain much more difficult than Asya’s. While Mahrous

prays, the Heatheringtons explain that Mahrous has been arrested twice since his arrival. First, he is arrested for shoplifting because he thought the shopping center shops were all one big shop. Because of this he walked out of a store without paying. Then, when a girl smiles at him, he misunderstands this as her sexual interest in him, follows her and asks her if she wants sex. Both times he is arrested, but Dr. Heatherington manages to get the charges dropped.

Mrs. Heatherington tried to comfort Mahrous and told him that he shouldn't be so upset with himself for having thoughts about this other girl when he is married and his wife is pregnant in Egypt. She says that all people, even her and all women have such thoughts. This confuses and alarms Mahrous who starts worrying about his wife's thoughts back home. The Heatheringtons are worried that Mahrous will return home and lose his chances of getting a PhD which would not only be personally devastating for him, but it would be a blow to his impoverished family, too. Asya tells Mahrous that to make things right, he should bring his wife, Maha, to live with him in England until he completes his PhD and he reassures him that Mrs. Heatherington cannot know what all women think.

This whole episode is in great contrast to Asya's experience in Britain. In fact, Asya has adjusted fairly easily after her first year, which was lonely, but not as confusing as Mahrous'. In fact, she finds the English university town quite provincial, while in some ways it seems "big city" from Mahrous' perspective. In fact, while Mahrous is agonizing over an affair that never happened, Asya is cheating on her husband with an Englishman, Gerald Stone. Through the introduction of Mahrous into various points of the narrative, Soueif underlines divisions in Egyptian society in terms of systems of social organization and in terms of class divides.

Soueif also highlights class divisions within the same urban system of social organization. She does this through other characters that demonstrate the uneven process of transculturation in Egyptian society through their interactions with Asya. Among such characters are islamists, the family's servants and some peasants.

In the epilogue, the author describes the polarization of Egyptian society and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, as well as the resulting discomfort of secularists segments of society with these trends. The following passage not only illustrates this discomfort on the part of the character of Asya. It blurs the line between the point of view of this character and the author's point of view. At the beginning of the passage, the reader is lead to believe it is Asya who is reflecting on her students, but by the end of the paragraph there is discontinuity with this perception when Asya is referred to in the third person:

... the girls who wear those horrible long pastel-coloured gowns, the gloves and the angled veil; they've screened themselves off entirely, held on to their privacy. They're preferable anyway to the halfway ones, the ones who wear the long gown but leave their made-up faces bare and deck out their *tarhas* with bits of ribbon and coloured braids – and yet how dismal it would be to think that it is for them and only for them that there will be forgiveness and great rewards. But that is what they think. They are certain of it. And there are so many of them in the university now. Of them and of the young bearded men in short white *thobs*. And on the other hand there are girls in short skirts and tight trousers and amounts of make-up that no one would have dreamed of wearing ten years ago when Asya was a student. (Soueif, 1999, p.753)

This sudden reference to Asya in the third person, along with the similarities between the lives of Asya and the author, indicate that the author has constructed this character to represent her own perceptions and opinions.

Further touching on the subject of islamism, Asya then recounts a conversation with her sister, Deena, in which they discuss the islamization of Egyptian society and especially

of the youth. The two sisters who work as professors talk about their discomfort with the spread of Islamic dress and strict interpretations of Islam among the students. Though they both disapprove, Asya does recognize that islamism is giving the youth a strong sense of identity with which they might cope with poverty, displacement, as well as Western influence and hegemony in Egyptian society and politics.

In *In the Eye of the Sun*, the unevenness of processes of transculturation is further conveyed through the portrayal of servants and peasants. Members of the working classes are depicted as paragons of tradition, but as such, are depicted as obstacles to modernization. These confrontations between modernity and tradition through class relations in Egyptian society joins Soueif's novels to that of previous notable Egyptians writers of Arabic novels, like Muhammad Husayn Haykal (1888-1956), Tawfik al-Hakim, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi (1920-1978), Fathi Ghanim (1924-1999) and Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006) (Roger Allen, 1982; M. M. Badawi, 1988; Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, 1989; Charles D. Smith, 1980; Heidi Toelle & Katia Zakharia, 2009).

In *In the Eye of the Sun*, Hasna, the family's old, almost blind, washerwoman is an example of how the working classes confront modernity. Although Hasna is part of the urban system of social organization, she is a subaltern within this system, dominated and disenhereted by it. As such, this character shows class divides within one system of social organization as well as the overlap between (urban and rural) systems of social organization because she is a servant of peasant origins. Hasna demonstrates how transculturation has had varying degrees of influence depending on class. A good example of this is how Hasna wept when Asya bought a washing machine:

‘So it’s finished, Sett Asya? My washing isn’t good enough for you any more?’

‘Dada Hasna, your washing is like flowers – but are you in love with sitting in front of the tub?’

‘It’s finished – it’s finished – my day is over –’

‘It isn’t, it isn’t. Listen. You’ll come on washing-day like always. I’ll just put the washing in the machine and you take it out and hang it out to dry –’

‘And these machines ruin everything anyway. It’s a sin to put precious things in them -’

‘All right. I’ll just use it for sheets and towels. You do my own things by hand. Agreed?’ (Soueif, 1999, p.776)

This scene shows how technology is changing Egyptian society. While Asya has the ability to keep up with modernization and the means to buy a washing machine, Hasna, as a subaltern, does not have the ability to cope with these changes. She is wary of modernization and is at the mercy of her employer’s will to keep her on or not, since her employment is informal. And if she were to lose her employment, the washing machine represents direct competition with her prospects of employment. Hasna is therefore emblematic of those that have been marginalized and skipped over by processes of transculturation.

Another example of servants promoting tradition is when Dada Zeina, Asya’s childhood nanny and family servant who still works for the family, convinces her to follow through on some wedding traditions and chides her when she neglects others. When Asya is debating whether or not she should have the hair removed from her private parts in preparation for her wedding night, as is tradition, both her best friend and Dada Zeina push her to do it. While her friend, Chrissie, and her mother imply that ultimately the choice is hers, Dada Zeina scolds her into doing it:

And Dada Zeina had said, ‘What do you mean you’re thinking this and thinking that? You want to get married with hair on your underneath? What a scandal! What a shame! You want to put a hex on your bridegroom? What would he say of you?’

‘But, Dada, he knows –’

‘Never mind what he knows. You’re his bride now. You want to embarrass him? You want to insult him?’

‘Is it going to hurt very much?’

‘Everything hurts the first time. You’ll get used to it. Be grateful you’ve got sugar and lemon¹⁰ and don’t have to make do with the grit from the oven.’ (Soueif, 1999, p.248)

Here, when Chrissie and Latifa’s reactions are contrasted with Dada Zeina’s, the more modern and Westernized characters are depicted as able to accept that there may be other ways to do something than according to tradition. For her part, Dada Zeina not only promotes tradition but is resigned to accept the painful aspects of it: “You’ll get used to it.” Dada Zeina’s attachment to tradition is further displayed when she discusses the wedding with Asya, stating her disappointment and disapproval that there would not be a Zaffa. The Zaffa is a traditional wedding procession with musicians and dancers, and Seif, Asya’s fiancé, would not allow it stating that it is embarrassing.

When Asya speaks to Dada Sayyida, another family servant, about how the peasant women in her village take off their black outer garments, reveal their hair and shout outside the police station to shock the police into releasing their men when they are unjustly rounded up by government demand, the two women’s perceptions of this are different. While Asya sees the women as agents of their own fate, Dada Sayyida sees the men’s release as the will of God:

‘It’s the *government*, Sett Asya. Will anyone stand in the face of the government?’

¹⁰ The sugar and lemon are cooked together to make a depilatory paste.

‘But you stood in its face. You and the other women. Didn’t you go along to the police station and make them set the men free?’

‘We’re only poor women. Can we do anything?’

‘But you did: *you made them let the men go.*’

‘That was by God’s command.’ (Soueif, 1999, p.759)

Here, Soueif contrasts the modern, individualistic perspective of Asya with the traditional, fatalistic perspective of Dada Sayyida. The peasant women are ignorant of their own agency and attribute the outcome to God’s will. Asya further reflects upon the peasants’ attitude in relation to her work promoting birth control, pointing out that it is of no use to challenge the peasant’s fatalism because its rejection will not help them in the end:

The lot of that particular peasant woman is not going to be bettered through having two children instead of nine. She might feel less worn out by the time she is thirty but she’s stacking the odds against herself – it’s no good telling her about exponential growth, about the economy of the country, about the per capita income – since when has a piaster of the per capita income come her way? And what are the alternatives: to turn them into regiments of blue-suited Maoists or into the degraded lowest rank of a capitalist society forever hankering after refrigerators and washing-machines? No. Money and children are the ornaments of this world; so, since they can’t have money, let them at least have children. Children to fill their lives, to look after each other and sleep in a warm, breathing heap next to the oven, to look after them when they are old, and weep over them and visit their graves when their day – which has already been written down and determined – finally comes – (Soueif, 1999, p.759)

Consequently, in saying this, Asya is arguing for the maintenance of the status quo of social organization. In fact, the use of the image of the resigned, fatalistic peasant is common in Egyptian culture and literature and is often used to justify their domination by upper classes. This can be seen in the work of scholars, like Henry Ayrout (1907-1969) as well as writers like Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Tawfik al-Hakim, mentioned above (Barakat, 1993).

This similarity between the work of Soueif and other Arab novelists serves as further evidence that Soueif is writing from an upper-class perspective. Soueif's novels easily fit into the categorization of Arabic novels developed by Barakat (1993). Of the categories he has identified, Soueif's work belongs to those that seek to maintain the current class divisions in Egyptian society, though this coexists with a desire for modernization and the acknowledgement of social problems.

Barakat has identified three major categories of Arabic novels: novels of reconciliation, novels of exposure and novels of revolutionary change. Novels of reconciliation seek to maintain the current organization of society and resists social change. Novels of exposure reveal problems in society, but do not propose any solutions and often insinuate that there are no solutions. They highlight the powerlessness of the alienated individual. Novels of exposure are further subdivided into novels of compliance, novels of nonconfrontation and novels of individual rebellion. These types of novels respectively propose resignation to the current social order, escapism or futile individual rebellion, as ways to deal with social reality. Novels of revolutionary change propose to change the existing order of things by transforming consciousness. Barakat says that novels do not necessarily fit neatly into these categories. In fact, depending on the aspect being examined, *In the Eye of the Sun* oscillates between being a novel of reconciliation and being a novel of exposure/of compliance.

In the example discussed above, Soueif adopts the peasants' fatalistic attitude ("when their day – which has already been written down and determined – finally comes –") in order to justify the current social order. In this instance, *In the Eye of the Sun* is a novel of reconciliation. In fact, Soueif's portrayal of peasants is congruent with the portrayal of

peasants in the Arabic literary tradition of novels of reconciliation, like in the work of Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Tawfik al-Hakim (Badawi, 1988; Barakat, 1993).

In fact, Charles D. Smith (1980) argues that Haykal, as part of the Westernized, secularist trend and a member of the elite, embodied the struggle between wanting to modernize society but also wanting to maintain the social status quo in order to preserve his privileges and position in society. Barakat (1993) makes a very similar argument for the work of Tawfik al-Hakim, saying that his work supports Egyptian nationalism and solidarity in the face of the British, but does not promote working class solidarity of the peasants in the face of the dominant landowners. The similarities between Soueif's work and these authors' work further points to her class affinities that motivate her desire to maintain the current social order and that prevent her from proposing change for Egyptian society.

In the Eye of the Sun can alternatively be considered a novel of exposure because Soueif occasionally points out social problems in Egyptian society. In fact, in another scene Soueif emphasizes the difficulty of affecting social change in the Egyptian context. This is demonstrated when Asya reflects upon what her British ex-Lover would have said about her family bringing food, candy and money for the children who live in the City of the Dead when they visit the family mausoleum. Asya wonders at what would happen if they brought nothing:

And the children would have crowded round, and they [Asya and her family] would have said, 'Sorry, we think that the "mercy" we bring here every season delays the process of your liberation; we've decided to speed it up, to help you by increasing the pressure on you just that little bit more – ' And what would the children have done? Asya can see their faces turn sullen and uncomprehending as they retreat and watch from across the road. Of *course* it would be best if there were no children living among the tombs, if they all lived in clean little houses with a bit of garden like in

some Bavarian village – and who would look after the graves? A uniformed security guard employed by a company ... (Soueif, 1999, p.746)

Asya's conclusion that there would have to be a company in charge of such things is sarcastic and seems preposterous in the Egyptian context. This conclusion furthers the argument for the preservation of the current social organization while acknowledging social problems: the elite need the lower classes to fulfill certain social functions, despite the social problems that this perpetuates. In this instance *In the Eye of the Sun* can be categorized as a novel of exposure/of compliance, because Asya recognizes that this poverty is a problem but cannot or does not want to try to find a solution. These episodes involving servants and peasants have shown the contradictory stance of the Westernized urban elite: while they promote modernization and fight against some traditions, they do so because it preserves their social standing and lifestyle.

Another trend in Egyptian literature that is repeated in Soueif's work is the romanticization of the peasant. In Egyptian literature and culture, the image of the fatalistic peasant paradoxically coexists with an idealization of the peasant and village life. Peasants are not only symbols of backwardness. They serve as symbols of proud traditions and a simpler way of life (Barakat, 1993). This is evident in Tawfik al-Hakim's *The Return of the Spirit* (1933) and *'Usfour min ash-sharq (Bird from the East)* (1938), where he describes the peasants as good hearted and resigned to their fate of hard labour and few rewards (Barakat, 1993). This is similar to Soueif's portrayal of peasants in *The Map of Love*.

In *The Map of Love*, Amal's repeats her desire to go back to her family's land in Tawasi and "help" the peasants on several occasions, including one time when this desire is

inspired by the *Nahdat Misr* statue and its pharaonic symbolism. This wish to *help* must be questioned. When speaking with another large landowner who is bringing in a team of Israelis to optimize the land's productivity, Amal expresses a reluctance to do the same, not only at the hands of the Israelis but at the hands of anyone. She expresses a discomfort with the need for constant economic growth. However, by not helping the peasants become more economically competitive, she is ensuring their dependence on her and is not helping them to modernize. She is also reinforcing the romanticized image of the eternal peasant or *fellah* that is a large part of Egyptian nationalistic imagery, as shown in the *Nahdat Misr* statue itself. In this instance, *The Map of Love* is a novel of reconciliation, much like *In the Eye of the Sun*.

However, later in *The Map of Love* Soueif does point out the problem of the repressive political situation and the use of security forces against the peasants. Some peasants from Tawasi are arrested on suspicion of Islamist activities and the peasant women come and ask Amal for help in getting them freed. Amal must use all of her connections to achieve this. The peasants are unable to solve this problem without Amal. Amal herself is unable to solve this problem without use of the usual informal systems of patronage and connections. This demonstrates the power of informal institutions and traditions in Egyptian society and how they are inaccessible to the peasants. In this case, *The Map of Love* is a novel of exposure/of compliance, because while this does expose some problems in Egyptian society, it presents these problems as without hope of a solution.

Love Stories and Western Hegemony

Although from an intra-Egyptian perspective Soueif does reinforce the system that privileges the Westernized elite in *The Map of Love* and in *In the Eye of the Sun*, on an extra-

Egyptian level, she directly challenges Western cultural and political hegemony in Egypt, as well as Western perceptions of Egypt. One way Soueif does this is through the romantic relationships she creates in her novels. In *The Map of Love*, Soueif challenges Western cultural hegemony through the depiction of romantic relationships which nuance and in some instances change the flow of culture between the West and Egypt. Both the relationship between Lady Anna Winterbourne and Sharif Basha al-Baroudi, and the relationship between Isabel Parkman and ‘Omar al-Ghamrawi discussed in the previous chapter, depict Westernized Egyptians as well as Westerners who are undergoing an Egyptianization.

In *In the Eye of the Sun*, Asya’s love affair with an English man, Gerald Stone challenges political hegemony and represents colonial and neo-colonial relations between Egypt and the West, as well. Gerald has a history of dating women from the “developing” World. He imposes himself on Asya, eventually moving in with her and even staying when he is no longer wanted. Throughout their relationship, he continuously harasses her about her upbringing as a member of the Egyptian elite and pretends to sympathize with the lower-classes. Finally Asya confronts him about his treatment of her, when they are visiting his friends in New York:

‘Gerald,’ Asya says quietly, ‘why have all your girl-friends been from “developing” countries?’

‘What?’

‘You’ve never had a white girl-friend, why?’

‘I don’t think that way man.’

‘Yes, you do – and the reason you’ve gone for [girl-friends from] Trinidad – Vietnam – Egypt – is so you can feel superior. You can be the big white boss – you are a sexual imperialist –’

‘You don’t even believe what you’re saying’ – Gerald laughs.

‘Yes I do. You pretend – to yourself as well – that it’s because you don’t notice race – or it’s because these cultures retain some spiritual quality lost to the West – you pride yourself on that you dance “like a black man” – but that’s all just phoney –’

‘Hold on a minute –’

‘No, I won’t hold on. You’ve pushed me and pushed me and *pushed* me and I’ve had it. I hate it. I hate people who go around trying to change people. The hypocrisy of it. “I know you better than you know yourself” – *shit* – what you mean is that the way you think I *should* be is better for *you* than the way I *am*. Well, I’ve had it –’ (Soueif, 1999, p.723)

Here, Soueif challenges ideas that Egypt needs Western intervention (colonization/tied development aid) to solve its social problems. In combination with the scene at the mausoleum, discussed above, where Asya imagines Gerald’s negative opinion of their bringing charity for the impoverished children, this scene illustrates that although there are social problems like poverty in Egypt, it is not the place of the West to judge them since they do not understand how things work. Through the character of Asya, Soueif is saying that the West should not interfere in matters it does not understand and should not use discourses of helping “inferior races”, “savages” or “underdeveloped peoples” to legitimize its political projects. The last passage might be rewritten: “Egypt hates the West trying to change it. The hypocrisy of it. ‘The West knows Egypt better than Egypt knows itself’ - *shit* – what the West means is that the way the West thinks Egypt *should* be is better for *the West* than the way Egypt currently *is*. Well, Egypt’s had it - ”

Like *In the Eye of the Sun*, in *The Map of Love*, Soueif highlights how the Westernized elite resist Western hegemony. Soueif explicitly makes the case for the role of the Westernized urban elite’s prominence in national politics and anti-colonial activity through the character of Sharif Basha. She depicts the Westernized Egyptian elite at its beginnings through this character.

Sharif Basha’s incorporation of the traditional Turkish tarbush and cane into European dress, as well as his ease of expression in French is emblematic of this segment of

Egyptian society at the turn of the 20th century (Michael Eppel, 2009). As for his elite status, this is pointed by several indicators. One of these is the hints that Soueif makes that he has origins in the Turkish ruling class. Anna comments that he is “not an Arab anyway. Not properly (2000, p.154)” and his sister addresses him by “Abeih”, a Turkish term of respect for an older brother or male relative (Soueif, 2000, p.519). Another indicator is that Sharif Basha’s uncle is the real-life prime minister and famous poet, Mahmoud Sami al-Baroudi, who is of Turco-Kurdish origin. Another indicator is the al-Baroudi family’s lifestyle and their ownership of land in Upper-Egypt worked by peasants. Furthermore, throughout the novel, his circle of friends includes several prominent intellectuals and poets of that time, both from secularist trends and Islamic modernist trends.

Sharif Basha demonstrates a leaning towards the secularist trend, though he does use his connections in the Islamic trend out of necessity when trying to overcome obstacles to modernization. When Sharif Basha is trying to open the School of Modern Art, he gets his friend, the real historical figure and famous Islamic scholar Mohamed ‘Abduh¹¹ to write a letter supporting the school and saying that art is not necessarily equivalent to idolatry, as those trying to prevent the school from opening were arguing. Sharif Basha is upset that he should even have to get such a letter to be able to open the school and is frustrated that religion and tradition are holding modernization back.

Sharif Basha has a Western education and holds Western ideals of democracy and liberty to heart. He uses the products of the Enlightenment to argue against its producer’s colonization of Egypt. In this way, Soueif’s work could confirm many post-colonial theorizations of cultural mixture in the colonial context. As theorists of hybridity and

¹¹ Mohamed ‘Abduh (1849-1905) is considered the founder of the Islamic modernist trend.

transculturation have argued (Bhabha, 2004; Loomba, 1998; Papastergiadis, 1997), by coercing or forcing the natives into mimicking its culture, the colonizer, though producing some inferiority complexes, ultimately loses control of the exact meaning/parameters of that mimicked culture. Natives appropriate the colonizer's culture, including its intellectual traditions, create a new cultures and use it to resist the colonizer's hegemony. In this way the hybridized elite created by the colonizer eventually creates powerful anti-colonial discourses.

However, Soueif's work contests the theories of hybridity like that elaborated by Bhabha (2004). This is because Sharif Bahsha's demonstration of Enlightenment ideals should not be chalked up to mere mimicry. In fact, he is not only at the forefront of revolutionary change in Egyptian society but he is at the forefront of revolutionary change on a worldwide level because he is appropriating and internalizing the very latest political trends like nationalism, at the same time as Westerners, at the turn of the 19th century.

Sharif Basha writes an article in 1911 about the political situation in the Arab world stemming from colonization and Zionism, to be published in concert with articles from two other intellectuals sympathetic to the Arabs' situation. In his letter, Sharif Basha reiterates the Egyptianist argument that Egypt is at the origins of modern civilization, and says that it is the European Colonial Enterprise has made it impossible for Egypt to successfully take its place among modern nations. He also argues against claims that the Westernized urban elite is not representative of the Egyptian people, comparing this elite with those in the British parliament representing the people of England:

The Colonialists' response – if response there is – to this article, will be to say that it does not express a general view. That its author is an Anglophile or Francophile or a -phile of some sort that renders him not representative of the mass of his people. To this I say that there are many others who think and speak as I do. And

that this body of men and women bears the same relationship to the fellaheen of Egypt and the Arab lands as your Honourable Members to the farmers of Somerset or the factory-hands of Sheffield whom they represent in your Parliament.

If there are elements of Western Culture in us, they have absorbed through visiting your countries, learning in your institutions and opening ourselves to your culture. There we have been free to choose those elements that most suited our own history, our traditions and aspirations – that is the legitimate commerce of humanity. (Soueif, 1999, p.484)

Furthermore, Soueif presents the political activities of Sharif Basha and his grandson, ‘Omar, who follows in Sharif’s footsteps, in order to demonstrate the political relevance of the urban elite. ‘Omar uses his fame as a conductor as a platform to shed light on Western political hegemony and the Palestinian issue, touring and writing to raise awareness of these issues. In this way, she demonstrates that the urban, Westernized elite has remained politically engaged and committed to the Arab and Palestinian causes for decades.

In conclusion, although Soueif’s portrayal of Egyptian society through characters from lower classes does expose social problems like poverty, population growth and the rise of conservatism in the face of the identity crisis, this portrayal maintains the position of the urban elite without questioning its role in perpetuating such problems. Notwithstanding, while her depiction of Egypt through her characters and their interactions preserve the current internal social order in Egypt, they reverse the terms of cultural exchange with the West. The love stories between Asya and Gerald exposes and argues against cultural hegemony, and the relationships in *The Map of Love*, challenge the idea that there is a unidirectional flow of culture from the West to Egypt. This constitutes a conceptual strategy that minimizes the cultural legacy of colonialism on Egypt.

Indeed, while Soueif embodies the colonial legacy as a member of the hybrid, Westernized elite that resulted from the processes of transculturation, this colonial legacy of transculturation has enabled her to surmount what Bhabha and Spivak see as the burden of the hybrid. This Post-colonial analysis of Soueif's novels shows that the hybrid can surmount the colonial encounter *using* his hybrid identity instead of being sentenced to re-experience the colonial encounter *because* of this identity.

CHAPTER 3:

DETERRITORIALIZING IDENTITY: SOUEIF'S WORK FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIASPORA

In the previous chapters, looking at Soueif's work with a Post-colonial perspective showed how her work is an arena for the politics of hybridity in the Egyptian context. In this arena, disparate temporalities of the West and the Arab world at different points in history come into contact with each other to create and/or reinforce divisions in Egyptian society, while they also problematize the cultural terms of exchange between Egypt and the West. However, the experience of diaspora creates a deterritorialization of hybrid politics and this leads Soueif to collapse disparate temporalities onto each other and emphasize similarities and continuity between these temporalities in order to facilitate integration into multiple spheres of attachment.

In the work of Deleuze and Guattierri, who were the first to speak of deterritorialization, the concept is used in many ways. Sometimes, it refers to the changes and displacements caused by capitalism in various fields and levels (from economic to psychic), like in their book *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2004). At other times, it signifies the dynamic process of language transformation that takes place when language is alienated from its original context to be recontextualized in a new way, as they discuss in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986; Papastergiadis, 2000). Overall, their use of the term, designates a process where one thing, person, meaning, culture, etc. is disconnected from one context and is journeying towards

recontextualization elsewhere and/or otherwise. Deterritorialization is therefore a continuous and circuitous process that implies a reterritorialization that itself has the potential to be deterritorialized in a new way. Soueif's work bends this process to her purposes as a diasporic writer by decontextualizing elements of Egyptian culture, like Pharaonicism, and putting them to work in new contexts, like those of her society of settlement, Great Britain. In her novels, Pharaonicism is changed from a nationalist discourse to a discursive integration strategy in its new context.

Indeed, Soueif's work uses several strategies to bring together disparate temporalities in order to return to her homeland, Egypt, integrate into her society of settlement, Great Britain, and assert a deterritorialized diasporic identity. To do this, she uses Pharaonicism as a myth of return, she manipulates the Orientalist literary tradition and the English language, and she engages in political activism. By collapsing disparate temporalities onto one another and by asserting her deterritorialized diasporic identity in these ways, Soueif is able to transcend the colonial past. Furthermore, by establishing a diasporic identity in these ways, she challenges some ideas about the political empowerment of diasporas commonly held in Diaspora scholarship.

Pharaonicism as a Myth of Return

Diaspora scholar James Clifford (1994) writes that diasporic identities are about tensions between memories of the homeland and experiences of displacement, between the myth of return and decentered global connections, and between exclusion and belonging to multiple spheres of attachment. In sum, "Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" (p.312). Scholar Rogers Brubaker (2005) work highlights the role of these tensions in creating diasporic identities. He says that the boundaries between diasporic

communities and societies of settlement are in constant flux because members of diasporas manipulate these tensions strategically for political aims. According to Brubaker, by actively deciding which boundaries to maintain and which to erode, diasporas formulate discourses that legitimate their political claims and stances. He says diaspora should be seen as a category of practice because members constantly negotiate identities for political ends and mobilize them strategically.

Soueif manages the tension between homeland and society of settlement, between loss and hope by creating a deterritorialized diasporic identity that maintains Arab identity while eroding boundaries constructed by Eurocentric and Orientalist discourses. To do so, she draws on multiple spheres of belonging (the homeland, the society of settlement and other communities of the diaspora (Abdelhady, 2006)). In her novels, on a discursive level, Soueif uses Pharaonicism as a myth of return to define an Arab and Egyptian identity and pride. In Brubaker's (2005) terminology, this is an instance of boundary-maintenance. However, Pharaonicism also circumvents discourses about Arab backwardness that may hinder their integration into Western societies (boundary-erosion).

The myth of return is an important aspect of the diasporic experience. Kim Butler (2001) says that “ (...) it is the existence of the *issue* of return, and the related sense of connection to the homeland [the *myth* of return], that is intrinsic to the diasporan experience, rather than a specific orientation toward physical return” (p.205). Many scholars in the field of Diaspora studies discuss the function of this myth in maintaining a sense of belonging to a mythological homeland and in constructing a diasporic sense of identity. Khachig Tölölyan (2007) defines the myth of return as follows:

A (...) salient characteristic of diasporas, especially those dispersed by catastrophic destruction in the homeland, is a rhetoric of restoration and return that, in practice, takes the form of a sustained and organized commitment to maintaining relations with kin communities elsewhere, and with the homeland, to which diasporans either return literally or, more commonly, “re-turn” without actual repatriation: that is, they turn again and again toward the homeland through travel, remittances, cultural exchange, and political lobbying and by various contingent efforts to maintain other links with the homeland. (p.649)

Although these authors focus on the myth of return as a way to maintain ties with the homeland, it is part of a diasporic strategy to integrate into the society of settlement as well. This phenomenon is shown in Soueif’s work and it has been studied in Iraqi-American communities by Evelyn Alsultany (2006). The myth of return that Soueif constructs in her novels acts as a diasporic integration strategy by connecting Egyptians and Arabs to their homelands, linking them with their societies of settlement and establishing them as global citizens. These myths of return therefore establish deterritorialized diasporic identities by maintaining connections with multiple spheres of attachment. In doing so, they bring together many disparate temporalities and create continuity between them.

The myth of return that Soueif builds around Pharaonicism is apparent in *In the Eye of the Sun*, in the episode when Asya comes across the unearthed pharaonic statue. As the analysis of this episode in the preceding chapter found, the pharaonic statue serves as a symbol of return to Egypt’s roots, but a certain kind of roots that posit ancient Egypt as the origins of all civilization, especially Western civilization, and which links Egypt to the West and argues for a rebirth of Egypt in the future. Soueif further develops this symbolism in *The Map of Love*, through her use of the *Nahdat Misr* statue and the tapestry woven by Lady Anna. The analysis in the first chapter found that these symbols evoke a common Egyptian identity based on ancient Egypt as the origin of all civilization and they establish an alternative originary homogeneous past, not based on Islam.

In the context of diaspora, Soueif's use of Pharaonicism legitimizes the presence of the Arab diaspora in the West by establishing the Arab world as the center of Western and World civilization. It also downplays the cultural and religious differences that Islam creates. In this way, the myth of return based on Pharaonicism is a strategy of integration that challenges Orientalist discourse and breaks down the divisions between temporalities.

This myth of return expresses the loss/hope tension of diaspora described by Clifford (1994): the myth of return constructed in Soueif's work is simultaneously a means of returning to Egypt and a means of making a home in a new society. Shohat's (1991) conception of hybridity discussed in the previous chapters helps to explain the logic of this myth of return: Egyptians in the diaspora mobilize this originary homogenous past with the political goal of mobilizing a Westernized secular identity to create ties with many spheres of belonging. It pre-empts the possibility for Westerners to accuse Soueif, and members of the Arab diaspora in general, of having divided loyalties. Soueif has built upon the power of the hybrid discourse that is Pharaonicism in order to facilitate the integration of the Egyptian and Arab diaspora.

This is not an uncommon effect of the diasporic experience for Arabs living abroad. In fact, several authors have found that myths of return are constructed as a way to remain attached to the homeland while making new attachments in societies of settlement and maintaining connections with other communities of the diaspora worldwide. The use of ancient civilizations by members of Arab diasporas as a hybrid strategy has been demonstrated by Alsultany (2006) in her chapter "Iraqi-Americans negotiating race in the US" of the book *The Arab Diaspora: Voices of an anguished scream*. She explains how Iraqi-Americans use Babylocentrism as a strategy to overcome Orientalist ideas about Iraqis

as uncivilized “camel-riders” and “tent-dwellers”. To do so, they create a discourse that makes Babylon the originator of world civilization:

Such narratives [the experiences related by the interviewees of Alsultany’s study of Iraqi-American racial identity] reveal the context within which pride is negotiated; it is a context in which Arabs are constructed as “less civilized,” closer to the desert and camels, behind the unilinear path to civilization, and therefore backward. Many of the interviewees seek to demonstrate that such constructions are not only false, but reflections of Eurocentric ignorance. Their Babylocentric narrative is as follows: Not only are Iraqis civilized; they were the first civilization, the first moderns, and those who are known for being civilized today and for being at the forefront of modernity (i.e. Europeans and Euro-Americans) are not as educated as they claim to be; for if they were, they would know about Babylon and its significant place in history [...] The Eurocentric unilinear path to civilization script is flipped [by Babylocentrism] and replaced by a linear narrative of Babylon as the first civilization and Iraqis as the pioneers of civilization. Eurocentrism is deconstructed and replaced with Babylocentrism, an ideology similar to Eurocentrism advocating “civility” and each imagining one’s ethnic group as the superior population. (p.136)

Alsultany goes on to explain that such manipulations of history for political ends are common among Arabs in general who evoke ancient civilizations like Babylon and ancient Egypt, as well as the role of the Arab civilization in preserving and making scientific discovery while Europe was in the Dark Ages. This turns the tables on Eurocentrism by creating a discourse of Arabcentrism.

What is more, through this strategy, hybridity challenges Orientalist discourses about the backwardness of Arab societies¹². This is an example of how the myth of return can be used in a way that establishes a platform for members of Arab diasporas to act as cultural ambassadors who challenge Orientalist ideas about Arabs. The use Babylocentrism in the context of diaspora analyzed by Alsultany is analogous to Soueif’s use of Pharaonicism as a hybrid strategy to integrate and negotiate identity in the diaspora.

¹² This is an instance of hybridity because Babylocentrism and Pharaonicism incorporates European ideas about nationalism and local historical references.

Both Pharaonicism and Babylocentrism are means by which members of the Arab diaspora actively negotiate their identities by creating discourses that help them to integrate into their Western societies of settlement, while maintaining an Arab identity. In the process, they bring together the fragmented temporalities of these spheres of attachment.

Literature and Language

Another way Soueif brings together disparate temporalities is by manipulating the Western literary tradition and by writing about Egyptian and Arab subject matter in the English language. For Soueif to write in English is notable in itself because it indicates a shift in Egyptian fiction written in foreign languages. In general, Egyptian and diasporic Egyptian authors of various extractions,¹³ like Out-El-Kouloub (1892-1968), Andrée Chédid (1920-2011), Albert Cossery (1913-2008), Robert Solé (1946-), who write in a language other than Arabic have tended to write in French instead of English.

The popularity of French as a language for literary endeavours among Egyptians writing in a European language is due to a number of factors, including the tradition and popularity of French as a lingua-franca between different ethnic and confessional communities in Egypt before the 1952 revolution. This is especially true for members of Egypt's multicultural elite and intellectual circles (Zahida Darwiche Jabbour, 2007; Jean-Jacques Luthi, 1974). In fact, Soueif does highlight this language's influence in Egypt's intellectual and artistic trajectory by depicting its important role for the elite at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries in *The Map of Love*. While the fact that Soueif

¹³ When discussing Egyptian authors who write in French, scholars such as Zahida Darwiche Jabbour (2007) and Jean-Jacques Luthi (1974) include writers of various ethnic backgrounds, like French, Italians, Spanish, Syro-Lebanese, Turks, Armenians, as well as Egyptians. These various ethnic groups integrated into Egyptian society and are not separable from it. Therefore, these scholars include people of different ethnic extractions, who were born in or who spent a fair amount of time in Egypt, and whose work contains a fair amount of Egypt-related material, in the category of Egyptian authors.

writes in English can be partly explained by the decline of French-language education and the social, political and cultural changes that have led to the decreasing popularity of French in Egypt, she could have chosen to write her novels in Arabic. In fact, she does regularly write political and cultural commentary in Arabic. By deciding to write her novels in English, she decides to explore the connections between Egypt's colonial past and her diasporic connections to Great Britain.

Soueif explores these connections in *The Map of Love*, through a manipulation of Western literary heritage. The novel *The Map of Love* draws on the Western tradition of Orientalist literature to appeal to her Western audience by taking up familiar themes of the traveling British Lady and the harem. She then modifies the usual representation of these themes to critique Orientalist ideas. Through this manipulation she is able to bring together disparate temporalities.

The relationship between Lady Anna Winterbourne and Sharif Basha in *The Map of Love* undo Orientalist ideas in this way. At the beginning of the novel, Lady Anna Winterbourne is like many female travellers in Egypt in the late 1800s and engages in normal sight-seeing activities for that period. However, she has the feeling that she is not seeing the real Egypt and wants to visit the desert. She dresses as a young man and has an acquaintance's servant accompany her. Lady Anna is abducted because she is mistaken for an important young man. When it is discovered that she is a woman, she is welcomed into the harem of Sharif Basha al-Baroudi, an Egyptian notable, and befriends his sister during her stay there. It is here that she is initiated into "the real" Egypt (or perhaps a more realistic aspect of Egypt being as it is still an upper-class part of Egyptian society). Soueif engineers

this opportunity to present harem life differently from that described in the diaries, letters and books of Europeans of the time.

In the novels of Orientalist writers, like Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880) and Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855), women, the harem, and the East in general, are presented as realms of negative sexual freedom, licentiousness, exoticness and debauchery. These characteristics are closely associated with femaleness. The relationship in *The Map of Love* between Sharif Basha and Lady Anna, as well as the relationship between ‘Omar and Isabel, in themselves challenge ideas about the female Orient that is dominated by the West. In both relationships, it is Egyptian men that fall in love with Western women instead of Western men who fall in love/seduce Egyptian/Arab/Oriental women. This is in contrast to Orientalist writing which often features the sexual conquest of “Oriental” women by European male travellers (Said, 1994). The love relationships in *The Map of Love* are symbolic of a reversal or at least of an equalization of cultural hegemony between the West and the Arab world.

In Orientalist works, women themselves are depicted as purely physical creatures without thoughts (Edward Said, 1994). Similarly, in the diaries and letters of European ladies who visited harems in Arab countries, Turkey and Persia, the women of the harem were often described as lazy, stupid, sometimes ugly, imprisoned and abused by the system of polygamy (Shirley Foster, 2004). In contrast, through the character of Lady Anna who ends up marrying Sharif Basha al-Baroudi and living in the harem, Soueif depicts the ladies of the harem as politically engaged, well educated, beautiful and cherished by men. In fact, Lady Anna and Laila al-Ghamrawi, Sharif Basha’s sister, are well educated women. They communicate in French and start a magazine together discussing women’s issues and politics. Both women have good relationships and monogamous relationships with their

husbands. Although they are largely segregated from men outside of the family, this is not depicted in a negative way. Sharif Basha worries that Lady Anna will not like life in the harem and that she will find it isolating. But, Lady Anna thoroughly enjoys life in the harem. In addition, the novel runs contrary to Orientalist writings in that it is devoid of polygamy or sexual deviance.

However, the image of the Arab world that is projected by these novels is a particular one. As stated before, it is an upper-class and secularist image that has underlying political goals. Soueif's depiction of life in the harem does deconstruct stereotypes, but in doing so, they sometimes go further than necessary and can be argued to construct a counter-stereotype that dismisses women's rights problems in the Arab World. This counter-stereotype can be argued to be part of a larger diasporic integration strategy that seeks to promote the secular and liberal qualities of Egyptian culture and downplay certain elements associated with its Islamic heritage, like polygamy, that may hinder acceptance into Western society and make it more difficult for her to establish a diasporic identity based on many spheres of belonging. It is important to remember that Soueif wrote her novels before violent islamism and islamist terrorism had become major fears in the West. Because of this, it is not fair to say that she is trying to undo the association between Arab diasporic communities and the fear of Islamic conservatism in the West. Instead, she is appealing to Western familiarity with the Judeo-Christian tradition by inserting Islam into this tradition (through the tapestry woven by Lady Anna) and avoiding the issue of polygamy in Islam.

To show that values like modernization, democracy, liberalism and anti-colonialism are not alien to Egyptians and Arabs, Soueif includes characters such as Sharif Basha. They show that Arabs will adjust easily to living in the West. In the end, Soueif's manipulation of

Orientalism and Pharaonicism to emphasize the similarities between disparate temporalities aims to make a place in the West for the Egyptian Westernized elite at least, if not for all Egyptians.

Besides manipulating the Western literary tradition, Soueif manipulates the English language itself in *In The Eye of the Sun*, when she brings together disparate temporalities by explaining Arabic language and culture in English. This is demonstrated when Asya tries to explain an Egyptian song to some of her English guests at a little gathering. The song is by Sheikh Imam (1918-1995), a famous blind popular singer and it is about President Nixon's visit to Egypt :

'Sharraft ya Nixon Baba,
Ya bta' el-Watergate -'....

'Well,' says Asya, 'as I said, he says, "You've honoured us, Nixon Baba – "Baba" means "father" but it's also used, as it is used here, as a title of mock respect – as in "Ali Baba", for example – that's probably derived from Muslim Indian use of Arabic – but the thing is you could also address a child as "Baba" as an endearment – a sort of inversion: like calling him Big Chief because he's so little – and so when it's used aggressively – say in an argument between two men – it carries a diminutivising, belittling signification. So here it holds all these meanings. Anyway, "you've honoured us, Nixon Baba" – "You've honoured us" is, by the way, the traditional greeting with which you meet someone coming into your home – it's almost like "come on in" in this country. So it functions merely as a greeting and he uses it in that way but of course he activates – ironically – the meaning of having actually "honoured" us. "You've honoured us, Nixon Baba / O you of Watergate" I suppose would be the closest translation – but the structure "bita' el-vegetables", for example, would be someone who sold vegetables, while "bita' el-women" would be someone who pursued women. So Nixon is "bita' el-Watergate", which suggests him selling the idea of Watergate to someone –selling this version of Watergate to the public – and pursuing a Watergate type of policy but all in a very non-pompous, street vernacular, jokingly abusive kind of way. The use of "el-" to further specify Watergate – a noun which needs no further defining – is necessary for the rhythm and adds comic effect. ... (Soueif, 1999, pp.496-497)

This episode is an instance of the abrogation and appropriation of English, as described by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989). Abrogation and appropriation are two parts of a process that denies the centrality of proper or Standard English by refusing fixed meanings for English words and by assigning new meanings to them. In the passage above, “father” gains new metonymic meaning through Soueif’s explanation of the meanings of the Arabic word “baba” and its ensuing association with the Egyptian colloquial usage of the Arabic term for father to joke and belittle in the context of the song.

In such instances, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that this process “abrogates the centrality of ‘[the imposed standard of] English’ by using language to signify difference while employing a sameness which allows it to be understood” (1989, p.51). Asya employs a sameness (explanations in English) to help her guests understand some cultural differences between Egypt and the West. These differences are expressed by the gap between the meanings of words in Egyptian colloquial Arabic and English. In the process of trying to bridge this gap, Soueif assigns new meanings to English words. For example, the verb “to honour” gains new meanings through metonymy in Soueif’s explanations: the idea of welcoming someone into one’s home becomes associated with being honoured by the visit of this person. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin see this as a denial of the authority of Standard English over the meaning of English words.

Soueif’s explanation of this song goes on for several pages in the same vein and her reader is left with a feeling that understanding Egyptian culture is a daunting and overwhelming undertaking because the cultural differences seem so great. The gap that is created between the cultures “is not negative but positive in its effect. It presents the

difference through which an identity (created or recovered) can be expressed” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, p.52). Indeed, Soueif expresses her diasporic identity through this gap because in this gap she is able to transmit the differences between cultures, as well as her intimate knowledge of the cultures of disparate temporalities and the possibility for others to understand these differences too, no matter how overwhelming this may seem.

In the novel, Asya’s effort to bridge this gap is appreciated by her guests who are genuinely interested in understanding the song. Overall, this extends a positive outlook about difference because members of diasporas use this difference as an occasion to bring elements of their homelands to their societies of settlement. One way this is done is through the modification of the society of settlement’s language by associating new meaning to its existing words through cross-linguistic metonymy. In turn, this is yet another way in which disparate temporalities are brought together.

Political Activism

Outside of her fiction writing, Soueif engages in political activism by granting interviews, writing articles and opinion pieces and participating in political organizations. Most recently, she has spoken and written pieces about the revolutions in the Arab World, with special attention to that of Egypt. She is has also been active in support of the Palestinian cause for a long time. These activities create, mobilize and reinforce her multiple attachments.

Abdelhady’s (2006) study of Lebanese diasporic communities in Montreal, New York and Paris has demonstrated how political activism as a means of return to the homeland, evolves into a diasporic identity. Through her study, Abdelhady (2006) has

demonstrated how the myth of return helps in the process of integration and establishing multiple spheres of attachment. Her study of members of the Lebanese diaspora has found that they actively try to integrate by using their attachments and affinities to the homeland (i.e. by mobilizing the myth of return) to involve their diasporic community in political and cultural activities in the society of settlement.

Initially, Abdelhady's respondents took on political causes that touch their homeland and used their position in the diaspora to lobby Western governments and organizations to help them in these causes. But, eventually those surveyed developed a sense of global citizenship because of their attachments to multiple spheres of belonging. They actively sought the support of non-Arabs/Lebanese by framing political issues as issues of interest for people worldwide, for instance as human rights issues. In doing so, they garnered the support of members of their societies of settlement and people around the globe. In her articles and interviews, Soueif has used her deterritorialized diasporic identity in a similar fashion.

On July 12th, the British newspaper *The Guardian* included Soueif's political opinion piece "Egypt's revolution is stuck in a rut, but we still have the spirit to see it through" (Soueif, 2011, July 12). In this article Soueif writes about the obstacles posed by the security forces, including the interim military leadership, to making more changes and lasting changes in Egypt. In doing so, she uses a platform in England, *The Guardian*, to try to affect change at home, and to reach out worldwide for support.

In another article in *The Guardian*, on May 21st entitled “Our revolt is not Obama's” Soueif used these multiple attachments to critique American foreign policy in Egypt and in the region. She concludes:

In the end, our revolutions are not by or for or about the US. We in Tunisia and Egypt, and soon in Libya, Syria, Yemen, are looking for ways to run our countries to the benefit of our people and the world. We see that democracy is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. "Democratic" systems are failing their people, in Britain, in India, in the US, as millions fall into poverty, banks take precedence over hospitals and universities, the environment is degraded and the fabric of society frayed, the media are compromised, and politico-business scandals are standard entertainment.

The world needs better; and that's what we're working for. (Soueif, 2011, May 21, paras. 11-12)

Above, Soueif establishes ties with the Arab world, the West and people worldwide. She connects with Arabs in other countries using the pronoun “We” to unite Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen. She pulls from her experience in the West to critique the democratic system and she points to its failings to question why it is imposed from the outside on the rest of the world when it has serious deficiencies. Moreover, she uses a British newspaper as her platform to make these critiques. But, she maintains a hopeful attitude and implies that if people work together, a better system can be created “The world needs better; and that’s what we’re working for.”

Soueif is similarly well-known for her activism in support of the Palestinian cause. In March 2010, she won the Mahmoud Darwish Award in recognition of her creative work in support of this cause. Furthermore, she is the founding chair of the annual Palestine Festival of literature, which is a festival that takes place across Palestine to bring together international and Palestinian artists, students and academics. This festival not only helps

Palestinians to network with artists outside Palestine but brings attention to what is happening in Palestine. In a November 2010 interview of Soueif (AS) by Daud Abdullah (DA), Soueif said that it is important for her to use her voice to draw attention to the injustices taking place in Palestine:

DA: You are well-known for your fictional writing, but you are also a serious commentator on Palestine, why do you feel compelled as a prize-winning author to comment on Palestine?

AS: Being an author and having a name gives you a platform from which you may comment. It opens channels to newspapers, radio programs and so on. Having this platform and this audience makes it a responsibility to say what you believe and to draw people's attention to the issue.

DA: Which is?

AS: Well, which is what is possibly the greatest injustice happening in our time: Palestine. This is a flashpoint for a great deal of conflict in the world. In other words, I believe if you were to sort out Palestine–Israel in a just manner, a lot of the other problems in the region and in the world could be addressed more positively. (Daud Abdullah, 2010, November 19, paras. 10-13)

Soueif goes on to try to open up the Palestinian cause as a human rights, environmental and globalization issue that affects people worldwide. In this way, she is establishing ties with multiple spheres of attachment in the Arab world and outside. Like the respondents of Abdelhady's (2006) study, she asserts a sense of global citizenship and invites others to take part, saying that this is an issue that is not Arab-specific. Moreover, from this diasporic platform, she directly critiques Eurocentrism, colonialism and Orientalism, and she defines the Middle East as the center of the world:

DA: Do you view it from a purely Arab nationalistic point of view or an international humanitarian....

AS: I view it from a human rights of point of view...this is about human rights...it has nothing to do with being Arab. I hope that if this were happening anywhere in the world I would feel passionately about it, but the fact is that because it is happening somewhere which is central to the whole world it affects the whole world. Also it plays into the old orientalist syndrome. The conflict has given new life to anti-Islamic

sentiment, which in the 50s 60s looked like it was disappearing. I think the reason that it has been whipped up again and you have this Islam versus the West confrontation is almost totally to do with Palestine. Everything is connected: Palestine, Israel, oil, colonialism. The nucleus is right there.

I also think in this situation you can see a microcosm of many of the serious conflicts in the world today. You have, for example, technologically advanced consumerist societies opposed to more traditional societies. You have environmental issues, where people are actually polluting rivers and drying them up and pouring raw sewage into villages and uprooting olive trees; you have the whole ecological environmental threat looming there with water and so on. And then you have human rights as well, and the whole issue of representation. Finally there is the matter of the language used to describe this situation and who is it that determines this language and its terms and the role of the media in all this.

So basically this is an area that is central to the world, it is important to the peace of the whole world, it encapsulates many of the conflicts or dichotomies that exists in the world today. A huge injustice is taking place as we speak while the world pretends to uphold the principles of human rights, the right to self-determination, democracy, freedom of speech and freedom of movement. All of this is happening at the heart of the world, so it is an intensely human issue rather than a nationalistic one. (Abdullah, 2010, November 19, paras. 14-17)

By “returning” to Egypt and the Arab world through the discursive maneuver of Pharaonicism in her novels, Soueif has been able to contest Eurocentrism and argue that the Arab diaspora easily integrates into the West because of their shared civilization roots. She has been able to put this into practice through her political activities, interviews and writing. These activities have not only strengthened her ties to her homeland. They have build new ties to Great Britain and established a political platform there that supports her “return” through political activities and she has established connections with people interested in the Arab revolutions, Palestinian cause, and human rights in general, worldwide. In these ways, Soueif has constructed a diasporic identity that shows how diasporas are arenas of politics of empowerment that use multiple attachments, hybrid spaces and the collapse of disparate temporalities to contest hegemonic discourses.

Overcoming the Colonial Past

Soueif brings together disparate temporalities in order to overcome gaps between temporalities that may undermine her sense of belonging to different spheres of attachment. She strengthens ties to her spheres of attachment in *In the Eye of the Sun* through the collapse of different times and spaces upon one another. In an episode where Asya reflects upon how the histories of Egypt and England are inseparable, and how she embodies the resulting hybridity, Soueif constructs parallel myths that emphasize the continuity between disparate temporalities:

Asya walks slowly along the Embankment feeling the sun on her back and on her arms. Her bags are packed and she has told the hotel that she'll be back at four. Occasionally she stops and looks at the river. Sometimes she stands for a long while, resting her arms against the warm stone of the wall and watching the broken shadows on the brown water. Strange how the Thames seems almost incidental here – incidental to London, even, let alone the whole of England. Well, it *is* incidental to London, even, let alone the whole of England. Well it *is* incidental, isn't it? It doesn't feed the whole country: 'Great Britain is the gift of the Thames!' If it were to dry up, how many people would be affected? And yet, standing here, seeing just this one section of it, it seems every bit as important, as mighty, as the Nile. Well, it probably is to the people who work on it. She looks at a slow-moving barge with one solitary man seated in the bow. If this were the Nile there would be twenty men at least clambering all over the boat, singing, throwing ropes, shouting to each other, calling out greetings to the people on the shore. Here it is all still and quiet. A pleasure-boat drifts by, its deck packed with sightseers on red seats. The voice of the guide wafts indistinctly across the water. Long ago there would have been rowing-boats with canopies and musicians, carrying kings and queens from Westminster to Windsor to Greenwich and other boats, dark, silent, covered-up boats carrying Sir Philip Sidney, carrying Sir Thomas More, carrying Anne Boleyn from Hampton Court to the Tower. 'Softly drifts the river –' what was it? 'Other little children, shall bring my boats ashore.' (Soueif, 1999, p.511)

In this passage, Soueif is deconstructing the myth of the Nile in order to construct a myth around the Thames. When Asya muses “ ‘Great Britain is the gift of the Thames!’”, she is making a direct reference to Herodotus' famous quote about the important role of the

Nile in shaping Egypt: “Egypt is the gift of the Nile.” In doing so, she comes to understand that the Nile has maintained a significant place in the imagination of Egyptians because its longstanding economic role has supported the creation, maintenance and development of their culture. On this basis, Soueif tries to construct a myth around the Thames by evoking its historical and cultural importance. She does this by naming important places and figures associated with the river.

Asya’s alteration of Herodotus’ quote does not quite work for the Thames, so she then points to the place of rivers in the imaginary of the English-language literary tradition by quoting a poem from Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson’s popular collection *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (2007) called “Where Go The Boats?” (p.21). This poem takes the reader through a child’s imagination as he sends a toy boat down a river and imagines its journey. The last stanza of this poem does not say “Softly drifts the river...”, but rather “Away down the river, /A hundred miles or more, /Other little children /Shall bring my boats ashore” (p.21). In this way, Stevenson evokes other times and places as he often does in *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, by mentioning children elsewhere. However, Stevenson’s fragmentation of temporalities (the child present in the poem and those he imagines far away) does not create nostalgia, longing, memory and disconnection. Instead, it describes an imagination that is forward looking and has the power to create continuity between the disparate temporalities experienced, where the boat collapses these different times and places upon each other (Ann C. Colley, 2003, p.181-182).

Soueif also collapses different times and places upon each other in order to confront and reconcile the history of colonialism between Egypt and Great Britain in the passages following the one quoted above:

She turns her back to the river and looks again at the solid, grand façades of Whitehall. The statues, the spacious greens where with her parents she used to listen to military bands on sunny afternoons, the great black wrought-iron railings, the intricate tower with the four-faced clock: the accoutrements of Empire. Built of course on Egyptian cotton and debt, on the wealth of India, on the sugar of the West Indies, on centuries of adventure and exploitation ending in the division of the Arab world and the creation of the state of Israel etc.etc.etc. Why then does she not find it in her heart to feel resentment or bitterness or anything but admiration for and pleasure in the beauty, the graciousness, the harmony of this scene? It is because this magnificence is only a – monument, rather like the great temples of Abu Simbel or Deir Bahari? Or is it because the thoughts, the worlds, the poetry that wound their way down the years in parallel with the fortunes of the Empire have touched her so nearly and pulled her in so close that what she feels now and what she has felt when looking with awe at the great sweep of the Champs Elysées, for example – she feels almost *proud* of all this – as though she would be glad to show it all off to some visitor who was new here as she would show off the pyramids or the mosque of Sultan Hassan. (Soueif, 1999, p.511-512)

In the passage above, Asya links Egypt and Great Britain through their shared history. Despite the fact that this history is based on the exploitation of Egypt by Great Britain, she does not, in fact, she cannot focus on the negative aspects of this legacy. Instead, she recognizes that this shared history is what has shaped her, especially her love of English literature. In fact, it is the love of English literature by her mother's teacher, her mother and her that establishes continuity between the disparate temporalities:

It is quite ridiculous, though – as that very English gentleman walking towards her in his grey pinstripe and his hat would tell her if he knew what she was thinking: because of your Empire, sire, a middle-aged spinster from Manchester came out to Cairo in the 1930s to teach English. A small, untidy twelve-year-old girl fell in love with her and lived and breathed English Literature from that day on. That girl was my mother, and here, now, am I. You cannot disclaim responsibility for my existence, nor for my being here –beside your river – today. But I haven't come to you only to take, I haven't come to you empty-handed: I bring you poetry as great as yours but in another tongue, I bring you black eyes and golden skin and curly hair, I bring you Islam and Luxor and Alexandria and lutes and tambourines and date-palms and silk rugs and sunshine and incense and voluptuous ways ... She smiles, and the man – middle-aged and comfortable, with a florid face and greying bushy eyebrows – glancing up as he passes her, smiles back and walks on. (Soueif, 1999, p.512)

Here, Asya speaks about her love of England as well as of her love for Egypt and Arabic culture. She also speaks about her role in bringing some of that culture to England. In this way, she creates a sense of continuity between temporalities that are fragmented and distant from one another. And, Even when the specter of colonization appears, she quickly rejects it:

Or is it not simply ridiculous? Ridiculous and naïve. Is it a sinister, insidious colonialism implanted in her very soul; a form of colonialism that no rebellion can mitigate and no treaty bring to an end? What would happen to her if – as in 1956 – the Lion shook himself awake, growled, and stretched a paw – its claws old and yellow but still sharp – towards Egypt, or Syria, or Iraq, or any other Arab country? How would she feel then standing here among his trappings? Asya turns again to the Thames. A river is a river is a river: water and fish – no, probably not fish, it looks pretty dirty – what, then? Bodies. Oh, stop it, she tells herself: he’s [her husband Saif] right, you know, you *are* melodramatic. (Soueif, 1999, p.512)

In this passage, Soueif describes how, despite questioning the effects of colonialism, the hybrid can come to terms with the colonial past and move beyond it. In the end, Asya dismisses the past: things are the way they are, the past is the past, “A river is a river is a river.” The repetition in this line also creates continuity similar to that in Stevenson’s poem by reducing the rivers to their similarities and dismissing any differences: Stevenson reduces the children present in his poems and the children he mentions in other places to their similar play habits.

By emphasizing continuity instead of disconnection, Soueif, like Stevenson adopts a forward looking perspective. Ann Colley (2003) says “With ease, the child [in Stevenson’s poems] journeys back and forth between modes of consciousness and terrain without the experience of difference that can complicate the adult experience. In a sense, perhaps, the child is able to realize or make facile the fantasy of empire and eradicate the anxieties

attending its displacements” (p.180). In a similar way, Soueif is able to mobilize her diasporic attachments in her novels to overcome the traumas and displacements of colonization because her diasporic experience allows her to feel at ease in many different temporalities.

Soueif manipulates space and time in *The Map of Love*, as well. In this novel, her manipulation of temporalities is more deliberate and very masterful. Soueif breaks up the narrative in a way that links the different places and times in the novel, highlighting a cyclical history and establishing links between the West and Egypt. The narrative does not follow a linear timeline, but rather skips back and forth between the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries and between England, Egypt and America. The disjointed times and locations are tied together by the narrator, Amal al-Ghamrawi, who is piecing together her family’s story from letters, journals and objects found in a trunk by her long-lost American cousin, Isabel Parkman. Among the most important of these objects is the tapestry woven by Lady Anna, analyzed in depth in the first chapter of this study, which links ancient Egypt, colonial Egypt, colonial England, modern Egypt and modern America.

The disjointedness of the narrative in *The Map of Love* highlights the similarities between these times and locations. Like their ancestors, the English Lady Anna Winterbourne and the Egyptian Sharif Basha al-Baroudi, Isabel Parkman and ‘Omar al-Ghamrawi (Isabel’s cousin and Amal’s brother) fall in love and have a child. These relationships feature Western women who fall in love with Egypt and Egyptian men, linking the West to Egypt. Additionally, both of these men are intellectuals who are politically active, especially in terms of issues relating to the Arab world and the Palestinian cause. In the end, both are killed (or implied to be killed in ‘Omar’s case) for political reasons. Soueif

connects these love stories to the pharaonic myth of Osiris and Isis, in which Osiris is killed, but reborn in the form of Horus from his wife Isis. This myth is echoed by the birth of Sharif, ‘Omar and Isabel’s child, whose namesake is Sharif Basha al-Baroudi. This birth shows that although Soueif looks to the past, she does it in a way that builds a cyclical history that collapses fragmented temporalities upon one another. ‘Omar and Isabel’s child, Sharif, is symbolic of a reconciliation of the fragmented temporalities. Like in *In the Eye of the Sun*, in *The Map of Love*, Soueif maintains a hopeful orientation towards the future and again uses this to create a continuity between the near and the distant and overcome the rifts caused by the colonial past. This affirms connections to disparate temporalities and reinforces deterritorialized diasporic identities by undermining the divisive influence of this painful past.

The Victim Model of Diaspora vs. Political Agency

The analysis of Soueif’s work above has demonstrated that diasporas are arenas of politics of resistance (to Orientalism and Eurocentrism) and arenas of politics of empowerment (to engage in political activism and transcend the colonial experience). Diasporas actively create identities between cultures *and* beyond their usual vessels: the nation-state. This creates a space for hybridity to develop, in terms of a deterritorialized political strategy that simultaneously uses the rallying power of ethno-national affinities and the discourses of societies of settlement to further political agendas. The resulting discourses are often counter-hegemonic, as we have seen. In fact, this is a somewhat paradoxical position because the global inequalities caused by (neo)-colonialism have created conditions in which hybridity can form these counter-histories. This is because hybridity flourishes in

many societies of settlement which have become countries of immigration. Interestingly, these countries are mostly societies of former colonizers and today's hegemonic powers.

It is important to note that diasporas do not only exist between nation-states *physically*. They are similarly found between the *imaginaries* of nation-states: they find themselves between and therefore partially outside of the space and time of the nation-state. The discrepant temporalities arising from the diasporic experience – often a continuation of the discrepant temporalities of (post)-colonial hybridity – make the diasporic individual all the more aware of injustices and inequalities between the homeland and the society of settlement.

In fact, Daphne Grace (2007) writes that the diasporic experience of deterritorialized identity has wakened the consciousness of dispersed people through exposure to new experiences and knowledge. In turn, this has positioned those living in diasporas advantageously in terms of their ability to question colonialism, as well as its legacies and continuing influence in the era of Globalization. This positionality is evident in the work of diasporic writers, like Soueif, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Hanif Kureishi, Nadeem Aslam, Ahmad Susa and Shimon Ballas' (Grace, 2007; Salhi, 2006).

As Soueif's work has shown, discrepant temporalities and the consciousness it awakens allow individuals to question, challenge and fight against hegemonic conceptions of the Other: "Once consciousness is understood as the dynamic substrate to all human experience, it can be argued that such an understanding is fundamental to resolutions of otherness and the problems inherent within the power dynamics of oppression that continue, now decades past the colonial era into the neo-colonial and beyond" (Grace, 2007, p.14). In

the same thread, Salhi, writing specifically about members of the Arab diaspora, says that members of diasporas are apt to act as a bridge between cultures and foster understanding. She says that Arab diasporic writers often fulfill this role and make the connections necessary “for demystifying the image of the ‘Other’ as being the exotic attraction both to the East and the West” (p.4).

Soueif’s deterritorialized identity has even allowed her to create a future-oriented perspective that transcends the colonial past by seeking to bring together disparate temporalities in order to build a new deterritorialized identity. While this identity is partly constructed by the painful colonial history between Egypt and Great Britain, the possibilities for its mobilization are not defined by it. Soueif’s political activism demonstrates this because she constructs a platform from inside the former colonizer of Egypt and modern-day world power, from which she can fight against neo-colonization and political hegemony.

These findings directly challenge the role and importance of a *certain* Jewish diasporic experience in theorizing diaspora. The “classical” Jewish archetype emphasizes victimization and alienation in the diasporic experience and the role of these feelings in constructing diasporic identities. Authors who have based their studies of diaspora on the Jewish ideal-type, like Tölölyan (2007), William Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997), have largely (and mistakenly) focused on boundary-maintenance and static myths of return of diasporic communities to the detriment of understanding how diasporas dynamically negotiate many connections for political ends. In fact, the Jewish ideal-type, that is used as a meter stick against which diasporas are measured, is a constructed myth itself. Various authors have demonstrated that the Jewish diaspora is itself multi-local and multi-centric with many myths of return.

Until the second half of the twentieth century, the concept of diaspora remained closely associated with the Jewish experience. This Jewish experience of dispersal was given certain characteristics, by the community itself and diaspora theorists, which defined the Jewish diaspora as victimized. In this “victim tradition” of diaspora, the dispersal of diasporic peoples was seen as involuntary and the result of catastrophic circumstances which sent them to live in many places. The involuntary nature of the dispersal served to instill a feeling of longing for home during exile. Despite their geographical dispersal, the Jews maintained links (real and imaginary) between the communities of the diaspora. This longing and these many links constituted the foundation for a strong myth of return to the Promised Land and ultimately its translation into the Zionist movement.

Because of this victim tradition, some authors characterize the diasporic experience as one of cultural limbo where migrants are no longer part of their homeland but have not become part of their society of settlement either. This gives migrants a feeling of loss, disconnection, longing, alienation, discrimination and/or exclusion. Some theorists say that this feeling is a defining characteristic of diaspora and motivates the construction and maintenance of myths of return. Cohen (2006) has included “A troubled relationship with society of settlement, suggesting a lack of acceptance, at the least, of the possibility that another calamity might befall the group” (p.43) in his list of possible characteristics of diasporas. Likewise, Clifford (1994) says that migrant communities establish diasporas in order to mitigate this feeling of alienation, as a sort of survival strategy when the society of settlement does not completely accept them. Salhi (2006), in the same vein, describes the diasporic experience as one of “identity, loss, and longing” (p.4), but that these feeling may serve as creative fuel.

The misrepresentation of the Jewish experience as one of victimization and anti-Semitism has wrongly translated into an important role for alienation in the scholarship about diaspora. But, a counter-history to the victim tradition of the Jewish diasporic experience has emerged. This counter-history challenges ideas about the dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of the temple as being *the* traumatic experience of the diaspora. In fact, Jewish communities were subject to many different dispersals after which they would build new attachments or myths of home to add to their identities (Clifford, 1994; Stéphane Dufoix, 2003; Salhi, 2006). The Jewish diasporic experience, while composed of many negative periods of exclusion, is also composed of periods of inclusion in which the diaspora strengthened and flourished through integration, such as during the Umayyad rule of Spain and the ‘Abbasid rule of Baghdad.

The analysis of Soueif’s work and the Jewish counter-history of diaspora question the negative perspective of victim tradition diaspora theorists on issues of deterritorialization. These findings present deterritorialization in a positive light in the sense that this deterritorialization can result in integration into multiple spheres of attachment from which to make political claims, instead of resulting in victimization and alienation. Soueif’s work, as well as Alsultany and Abdelhady’s studies show that members of diasporas use diaspora as a discourse of empowerment and are themselves using their position in diasporas as a platform for political contestation and to make political claims. This contests the Jewish archetype in diaspora studies, which supposes a position of victim for diasporas, and not that of an empowered political actor. Butler (2001) concisely explains how diaspora has become a discourse of empowerment by drawing on James Clifford’s research:

James Clifford notes that oppressed peoples that may once have conceived of their situation in the context of “majority- minority” power relations are now embracing diasporan discourse as an alternative. This more recent usage is a departure from earlier identifications in which a sense of powerlessness, longing, exile, and displacement was strongly associated with the Jewish diaspora. Membership in a diaspora now implies potential empowerment based on the ability to mobilize international support and influence in both the homeland and the host-land (Clifford 311). (Butler, 2001, p.190)

In fact on a global scale, diasporas represent an intriguing arena for politics of resistance. They pose a resistance to negative aspects of colonization despite the fact that they are born of these negative forces, along with some positive forces. Indeed, when diaspora is acknowledged as an arena for politics, it joins the corpus of post-colonial concepts that identify hybrid positions which question Eurocentrism and its strict dichotomies:

Like the critical terms *rhizome*, *créole*, *creolization*, *hybridity*, *heterogeneity*, *métis* and *métissage*, then, diaspora has emerged as an internal critique of the binarisms (colonizer/colonized; white/black; West/East) that circulated and found currency within colonial discourse and that persist even within some sphere of postcolonial studies... (Brazier & Mannur, 2003, p.4)

So, in contrast to Tölölyan, Safran and Cohen’s emphasis on alienation, powerlessness and victimization in constituting diasporic identities, by looking at diaspora as a category of practice and an arena of politics, as this study, as well as those of Alsultany and Abdelhady, have shown, members of diasporas can become self-empowered political agents through their integration strategies.

In conclusion, this analysis of Soueif’s work from the perspective of Diaspora studies has demonstrated how hybridity in the context of diaspora creates opportunities to form deterritorialized identities. In turn, these identities create platforms for politics of

empowerment that allow members of diasporas a unique standpoint from which to criticize Western cultural and political hegemony and from which to transcend the colonial past. However, such platforms are accessible only to a limited amount of people, who have been able to obtain the linguistic, cultural, economic and political capital to fully mobilize their diasporic attachments, like Soueif. Because of this, the content of such contestations and the accessibility of transcending the colonial past is limited. In this manner, a residual colonial logic privileging the more Westernized elements of Egyptian society remains.

CONCLUSION

The interesting thing about post-colonial writers is not their role in confronting one end of a colonial dichotomy (us/them, West/East, colonizer/colonized, etc.) with the other, but rather their ability to negotiate and manipulate the tensions created by these dichotomies. The diasporic dimension adds to this new and perhaps more immediate tensions that must be negotiated to be successful in the society of settlement, such as the tensions arising from the diasporic experiences of a territorialized myth of return and the deterritorialization of identity based on multiple spheres of attachment.

Soueif has realized that the manipulation of these tensions is more rewarding than their resolution. In her novels, Soueif has shown this in both the Egyptian and diasporic context. In the Egyptian context, she uses the discourse of Pharaonicism to establish a hybrid identity that privileges Western culture and the Westernized elite. She reinforces this identity and the social system that justifies its privileges by portraying social and religious divisions in a way that maintains the status quo of social organization in the Egyptian context.

However, the discourse of Pharaonicism problematizes the origins of Western and Egyptian culture. Through this discourse, she deterritorializes Western cultural hegemony and reterritorializes it, in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari's work (1986, 2004), in the realm of ancient Egyptian civilization. She therefore undermines the basis of Eurocentrism and Orientalism. Furthermore in the diasporic context, she deterritorializes Pharaonicism itself, recontextualizing it as a discourse that helps to build diasporic identities. In this context,

Pharaonicism collapses disparate temporalities and emphasizes the civilizational and cultural similarities between Egypt and the West in order to help Egyptians to integrate into their societies of settlement in the West while reiterating ties with the homeland and building political platforms that can help to transcend the legacy of colonialism.

It can be argued that a residual colonial logic persists in Soueif's manipulation of hybrid tensions because she uses Pharaonicism. This discourse can be seen to admit the centrality of Western culture by its very nature because it was constructed as a direct response to it and in doing so, it acknowledges Western cultural hegemony and works within the limits that it sets. Her use of Pharaonicism can therefore be perceived as maintaining the importance of Western culture.

However, Soueif's use of this discourse can also be seen as pragmatic. By accepting and preserving of a place for Western culture, Soueif has access to the tools (like knowledge of Western languages, cultures, histories, etc.) that help her to infiltrate Western culture and become part of it. This gives her the power to decontextualize elements of Egyptian and Western culture and recontextualize them in new ways that subverts and changes both cultures. This results in a neoculturation that challenges Eurocentrism, Orientalism and Islamism; and it allows Soueif to influence the future parameters of residual colonial logics in the future.

In Soueif's work, the process of transculturation, recontextualization, and deterritorialization is constantly at work. And, although elements of the colonial logic always remain, their presence is continuously minimized and their influence is selectively worn away. The colonial experience is transcended little by little and its footprints are

altered. The process of overcoming the colonial legacy is shown to be an ever-evolving politics of hybridity, an unfinished process that oscillates between poles of total Westernization and total erasure of Western cultural influence. Even as this process tends towards erasing the experience of colonization, a small part of it always remains; it is never totally eroded. However, it is not important to erase any evidence of the colonial experience in Egyptian culture. What is important is transcending the colonial experience, in the sense of moving past it and trying to actively shape what effects its remnants can have in Egyptian culture and politics, in Western politics and in diasporic politics.

Soueif has shown this creative transcendence in her political activism as well as her writing. She seeks to mold the political landscapes she is part of by accepting some elements of residual colonial logics while critiquing and rejecting others. For example, Soueif critiques the poverty and social problems in Egypt but does not accept that the Westernized elite may play a role in propagating these problems. Instead, she largely accepts the continuum of transculturation (a direct remnant of colonization) that divides Egyptian society in various ways and defines access to certain economic and social resources according to one's degree of Westernization. She actively creates the parameters in which the discussion of Egyptian social problems can take place and the elite are placed squarely outside of them. In another instance, Soueif indirectly appears to accept Orientalist ideas that Islam is not compatible with democracy and liberal values, while she totally rejects other Orientalist ideas that Arabs are incompatible with these values. Again she sets the framework in which political discussion can take place and defines the problem not as an Arab one, but as one that may have to do with Islamic elements of Arab society. Some may see these approaches

as hypocritical, but they are not. Soueif makes pragmatic stances based on her positionality as anyone does in politics.

With the recent revolutions in Egypt and the Arab world, one wonders how politics of hybridity are going to look in the future. In her work to date, by using Pharaonicism, by mixing languages and literatures, by bringing together disparate temporalities overall, Soueif demonstrates a willingness to foster the intermingling of elements of Western and Egyptian culture. In the process, she is disputing ideas of cultural purity in both the Egyptian and Western contexts. This, combined with the opening up (of a debatable scope) of spaces for political participation, at the very least makes it an exciting time for creative political thinking in Egypt. Although many worry that political problems are so systemically engrained that they will just materialize under a new façade, this willingness to draw solutions from all available sources and engage in discussion about the revolution both inside and outside of the Arab world is encouraging.

This means that it is an exciting time for possibilities of further creative transcendence of the colonial past, as well. Egyptian politics are already being decontextualized from their former autocratic frame, and depending in which terms they are recontextualized, they have the potential to undo some of the social problems that arise from residual colonial logics. In fact, since the revolution, Soueif has actively worked to bring the Egyptian revolution to the world stage by writing and speaking in English-language and Arabic-language media and by participating in numerous events, like the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She has been outspoken about the need to use the Arab revolutions as an opportunity to change the political systems in the Arab world and on a global scale, as some of her articles in this thesis have shown. Soueif's involvement in the

Arab revolutions demonstrates that the Egyptian and Arab diasporas have a role to play in shaping the revolution and these events have the prospective power to build new diasporic connections and platforms. Diasporas can continue to be and perhaps be even more effective agents of hybrid politics. This is a time when they can seize the opportunity to shape what the influence of residual colonial logics might be in the future.

These revolutions, though only at their beginnings, may not only be revolutionary in terms of politics. They may even end up being revolutionary in terms of literature and art in the Arab world. In terms of hybrid politics in Arab and Arab diasporic fiction writing, the revolution may be reflected as an increase in the number of novels of revolutionary change, to follow Barakat's categorization (1993), in the years to come. Perhaps it will lead to the creation of new literary categories. But, this can only happen if there is a serious transformation of the political system that would have to grant more agency to the people and decrease censorship. Such political changes, though they may still be a ways off, may lead to thrilling new themes and focuses and more overt critiques of national politics, the like of which are difficult to yet imagine.

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