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THE STRATEGIC USE OF POSITIVIST ORIENTALISM IN AHDAF SOUEIF'S *THE MAP OF LOVE*[1]

AHDAF SOUEIF'İN THE MAP OF LOVE ADLI YAPITINDA POZİTİVİST ŞARKİYATÇILIĞIN STRATEJİK KULLANIMI

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Abstract: Ahdaf Soueif presents the difficult task of facing the Orientalist discourse in her tour de force *The Map of Love* (1999) and structures it on the strategic use of positivist Orientalism which produces an interesting novelistic outcome. Soueif subverts this violent discourse with a formative attention to, in Edward Said's words, its paradigms of research and explores colonialism and imperialism through strategic Orientalism. Paradoxically, academic Orientalism becomes an important source of linguistic, historical and cultural transmission in *The Map of Love* and Soueif articulates a heightened concern for history with this critical concept with which she explores transnational circuits of power and female empowerment. Soueif's strategic use of Orientalism reiterates visions of inclusivity and ambivalence as the defining characteristics of her contemporary hybrid females for she upholds travels between languages, continents and centuries and her hybrid characters produce and process histories which become both national epics and Oriental romances in retellings.

Key Words: *Ahdaf Soueif, Edward Said, Strategic Orientalism, Post-Colonialism, Anglo-Arab Novel*

Öz: Ahdaf Soueif başarılı yapıtı *The Map of Love*'da (1999) Şarkiyatçılık'la yüzleşmenin zorluğunu sunar ve romanı pozitivist Şarkiyatçılık'ın stratejik kullanımı üzerine kurgular. Bu durum roman yazınına ait ilginç bir sonuç doğurmuştur. Soueif bu şiddet dolu söylemi, Edward Said'in deyimiyle araştırma paradigmalarına biçimlendirici bir duyarlılıkla bakarak bozar ve stratejik Şarkiyatçılık üzerinden sömürgecilik ve yayılımcılığı inceler. Eserde, akademik Şarkiyatçılık çelişkili bir şekilde önemli bir kültür, tarih ve dilbilimsel iletişim kaynağı olur. Soueif bu eleştirel kavramla yoğun tarih kaygısını dile getirir ve uluslararası güç halkaları ve kadın öznenin güçlendirilmesi konularına değinir. Soueif, Şarkiyatçılık'ı stratejik olarak kullanarak diller, kıtalar ve yüzyıllar arası seyahatin önemini vurgular ve çağdaş kadın melez karakterlerinin tanımlayıcı özellikleri olarak dahil olma hayali ve duygu ikileminin altını çizer. Bu melez karakterler, yeniden anlatımlarla hem ulusal destanlara hem doğuya özgü aşk hikâyelerine dönüşen tarihleri üretir ve işler.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Ahdaf Soueif, Edward Said, Stratejik Şarkiyatçılık, Sömürge Sonrası Söylem, İngiliz-Arap Romanı*

The Map of Love opens in 1997 when Amal returns to Egypt after twenty years as a divorcee with two children left in England. Living in Cairo as an aloof, passive and secular intellectual, Amal cannot confront visiting the empty family house in Tawasi, Upper Egypt and her late father is no

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longer a *basha*[3] and an elite landowner after Nasser's abolition of the titles and socialist land reforms. In this intensely political novel about the Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*), Amal's dead mother is a Palestinian whose life is shaped by the miscarriages she had after the displacement in 1948 (*Nakba*). The personal histories of the family members from *Nahda* to *Nakba* are important in understanding the novel because Soueif associates *nasab*/genealogy with history and Amal is a reader, translator, writer, narrator and interpreter in the novel that has inserted texts and translations of testimonies in it. She is indeed a professional translator of novels, "*or does her best to translate them*" (Soueif 515), and the novel escapes the fixity of a single and regulating consciousness with her bilingual voice. Besides Amal's, another voice is on the first page in italics and this is of an Englishwoman, Anna Winterbourne, later Haram Sharif Basha al-Baroudi, and though a metropolitan informant, she does not marginalise the voice of the colonised. Anna's narrative indeed becomes the necessary impulse for the historical overlap in the novel because it is, in Saidian terms, a contrapuntal text. Furthermore, as Boccardi emphasises, female solidarity overcomes difference in the novel (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 113) and Nash relatedly argues that "*Soueif's concern is to unfold the solidarity of sisterhood, East and West, not to patronise the Arab Muslim women*" (29). As a result, *The Map of Love* becomes a contrapuntal narrative of imperial history in Egypt and of international sisterhood.

The novel begins with a Dickensian tone, "*To begin my life with the beginnings of my life*" (13), with chapters titled "A Beginning", "An End of a Beginning", "A Beginning of an End" and "An End", beginning itself becoming a potent metaphor for the unending effects of colonialism because as John Erickson emphasises in *Islam and Postcolonial Narrative*, "*Every beginning has its roots elsewhere"* (6). "A Beginning" and "The End" are deceptive and the ending is constantly deferred with a double-time structure that symmetrically puts the colonial past and the post-colonial present in a showcase. More clearly, Soueif shows the material results of colonialism that makes an after to it impossible, though aspired, and this recognition signals a post-colonial understanding of teleology (Heilmann and Llewellyn 141). Likewise, Amal says, "*why should I expect the story to be complete*" (104), because, as Edward Said indicates, "*Texts are not finished objects*" (*Culture and Imperialism* 312). The trace of deferral as the result of colonialism also marks the novel's emphasis on genealogy and, unlike in *David Copperfield*, "*I record that I was born*" (Dickens 13), the story begins not with birth, but with death: "*she cannot – or will not – understand, and give up hope. She waits for him constantly*" (4). The novel indeed starts with a family map the members of which carry the names and the fates of their

[3] Arabic words are spelled out as they are found in Western publications including Soueif's, and italicised. Existing spellings of the quoted materials are preserved. *Basha* is a title used in Egypt; Turkish pasha.

ancestors. The emphasis on genealogy therefore shows that the structuring action is reading, and writing history, and as *nasab*/genealogy is considered a form of history writing in the Arab East, "The Beginning" begins with a colonial past and the present turns into a horrifying double of the past, because as stated in the novel, "*Even God cannot change the past. Agathon*" (3).

In *The Map of Love*, Soueif unites the diary entries and letters of Anna Winterbourne and the testament of Layla al-Baroudi (al-Ghamrawi) at the start of the 20th century in England and the occupied Egypt which is connected to Amal al-Ghamrawi and Isabel Parkman at the end of the 20th century in the United States and Egypt. This cross-century story between generations of women that gives historical details is presented through a hegemonic European discourse: Orientalism. Soueif's novelistic alteration is two-fold: colonial history is transmitted between women (Heilmann and Llewellyn 147; Boccardi, "History as Genealogy" 195) which thereby dismantles Orientalist brotherhoods with a sisterhood and patriarchal genealogy with maternal genealogy. The friction between smooth narrative prose and history that disturbs the serenity of the novel is based on the catalysis of two narratives from two women, Anna and Layla, and an authorial figure, Amal, who copies and translates texts and fills in the gaps in and between them like an academic Orientalist. The dialectical bond between past and present is contrasted and destroyed with chronological and narrative development and the contrapuntal history turns into the criticism of colonial superstructures and their material results. The ambivalence towards past and present in the novel emerges from the post-colonial subject's confrontation with colonial history and Soueif reflects this with the production and processing of history in a novel that is about the fictionality of fictions, or the essential sameness of histories and literatures (Heilmann and Llewellyn 138, 141).

In this web of filaments, another maternal genealogy complicates the novel with a straightforward reference to Scheherazade: for the Arab Oriental, a story "*can start from the oddest things: a magic lamp, a conversation overheard, a shadow moving on a wall*" (6) and, for Amal, it starts with a trunk that Isabel brings from New York. There are newspaper cuttings in it from *al-Ahram*, *al-Liwa*, *The Times* and *The Daily News*, books of Arabic calligraphy practice, letters, diaries, a shawl, and another shawl that can be a casual reference to the peripheries of Empire. For instance, Lady Bertram says in *Mansfield Park*, "*I wish he may go to the East Indies, that I may have my shawl. I think I will have two shawls*" (Austen 208) and Oscar Wilde in *A Woman of No Importance* talks about an "unwanted Indian shawl" (Fletcher 338). Anna's trunk is a treasure chest, perhaps "*Pandora's box*" (7), and there is a three-piece tapestry in it with a pharaonic image and Arabic inscription, indeed a

verse from *Qur'ān*: "*It is He who brings forth the dead*" (491) and "*from the dead come the living*" (516).[4] Perhaps a reminder of the flying carpet of the *Arabian Nights*, or a nod to Penelope of the Greek mythology, the "*magical tapestry*" (436), as Layla calls it, is woven by Anna with Egyptian cotton depicting Egypt's pharaonic history together with its Islamic heritage. In the course of the novel, the tapestry will become the overlapping and contrapuntal history of the metropolitan West and the colonial periphery and a symbol of cultural transmission and separatism.

As the tapestry shows, Soueif emphasises and celebrates the plurality of voices (also of the individual), and her primary concern is the asymmetrical power relations in the representation of the imagined Orient. She explores this especially with Amal because the fundamental problem for the post-colonial subject is the very existence of the archival material, and to read it, which is a troubling exercise as Amal sorts out and labels papers as an academic Orientalist by type and size of paper and colour of ink. Her encounter with the colonial past of Egypt turns into a testimony which is more problematized through her ongoing hybridisation, or "*metropolitan hybridity*" (Maleh 4)[5]. As an Arab/Muslim[6] woman educated in the imperial centre, Amal fluently speaks the imperial language like the other female protagonists of Soueif and she has read about Orientalism and is "*critically aware of the consequences of colonialism*" (D'Alessandro 34) which emerge at unexpected places in the novel. Well-read into history and politics, Amal is a Saidian intellectual inspired by the exilic position of others, and exilic herself, and for Amal, the tension while reading history is that bearing witness is demanding and beginnings are not easy because the present is a troubling double of the past.

Amal's act of historical witnessing is what Mohja Kahf describes as *waqf 'ala al-atlal* in her article on the English translation of Huda Sha'rawi's memoir, *Mudhakkirati*. Kahf indicates that memory is connected with space for the classical Arab poet as he establishes his genealogy and stands before the memory site. For the poet, remembering is to stand because he always figuratively stands before the campsite in order to start speaking and this is a conceit in Classical Arabic Literature known as *waqf 'ala al-atlal*/standing at the deserted site (Kahf 35). Similarly, Amal sets out to the empty family house in Tawasi, alone with the trunk, to mourn and to witness. There, she painfully remembers her ancestors; however, it is not only Amal, but also Isabel, who "*knew some of her own history must be*" in the trunk (7). There are many papers and documents in it in Arabic

[4] *The Quran* al-Rum 30: 19: "He brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. He gives life to the earth after its death, and you shall be raised to life in the same way".

[5] See also Radhakrishnan 159.

[6] Arab and Muslim are used interchangeably throughout the present study.

that Isabel cannot read and an interesting exchange starts with translation. Isabel is an American journalist doing a project on millennial views in Egypt and Amal will help her understand the texts and Egypt itself, which is a text for her, perhaps a blank paper at the start, because as Soueif states in *Mezzaterra*, "*Egypt more than most countries, tends to be regarded as a free-for-all; its heritage common to all comers, and every season brings a crop of new books about it, written by American women*" (248). With the translation of some personal documents, Amal starts reading history, which becomes a memorial practice and turns into a writing of it, and Isabel will surprisingly find her roots, too. The story coming out of the trunk, the "Anna story" as Amal names it, becomes a novel in the imperial language that is contaminated with the voices of both the Egyptian *efendiyya*/Western-educated-men and *fellaheen*/peasants in transliterated Arabic.[7] Although Amal says this is not her story, she finds about her past as she unpacks, unwraps and unravels the archive like an Orientalist scholar and reads and reads Anna's words that she almost learns them by heart.

Amal is now in the English Autumn of 1897 and, as the novel shuttles between past and present, she imagines herself as Anna and identifies with this English lady. Amal's position is complicated because she writes the Anna story, and writing reminds colonial acts, but as a reader and translator of novels, she also translates Layla's testimony into English which turns into a lost text. Paradoxically, Anna becomes as real as Dorothea Brooke to her and this is one of the problems this post-colonial text poses: a literary character identifies with another literary character and, more than that, a post-colonial subject identifies with the culture of the coloniser. D'Alessandro describes this tension as an "*awkward identity crisis*" (12) and English Literature, more specifically the novel institution, becomes a site of alterity and ambivalence for the post-colonial subject with its shaping and distorting influence while academic Orientalism ironically becomes an illuminating tool for the Oriental subject.

Amal slowly understands that Anna's diary illustrates the difficulties of the metropolitan's burden of witnessing. It is filled with "*talk of India and of Ireland, of the Queen and the Canal, of Egypt*"; "*The question of whether savage nations had a right to exist*", and "*Darwin and the survival of the fittest*" (13). Anna is under stress and confusion, perhaps estrangement from the English society in the periphery of the Empire, and her diary becomes a site of public and personal history, because as

[7] *Fallaheen* (also *fellahin,* sing. fellah) means "peasants" in Arabic. *Effendiyya* (also afandiyyah, sing. *effendi*), a popular term with a blurred meaning depending on the social context. Lisa Pollard describes *effendiyya* as "bourgeois Egyptians" (249-269). It means landowner, ruling elite or the Ottoman bureaucrats who adopted Western dress and ideas after the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876). See Eppel 2009; Amar 2011; Said, *Orientalism* 306. A Western-style dress distribution outlet in Egypt, Omar Effendi, uses the word *effendi* for the brand and Mamoun Fendy indicates that this is a conscious move for the word signifies state bureaucrats and thus power (393).

Amal says, "'*The personal is political,' I quote*" (338). While Amal reads about the Scramble for Africa in the diary, Anna loses her husband Edward who witnesses the atrocities of the Empire in the Omdurman War (1898) and, in mourning, she regularly visits the South Kensington Museum in London and finds consolation in Frederick Lewis paintings. After this textual encounter with the imagined Orient, she decides to go to the British-occupied Egypt with a company of English aristocrats and her Oriental adventure begins. Cross-dressed as a European man in the desert, she wants to see the Sinai with an Arab manservant, Sabir, but is mistakenly abducted by Arab nationalists on the road. They cannot release her fearing it might cause more trouble because she is an aristocrat Englishwoman on the occupied country. Therefore, Anna is brought to the house of an Egyptian pasha, and a man of law, Sharif al-Baroudi. There, she meets Layla, Sharif's sister who also writes a testimony and, as a sign of hospitality, Sharif accompanies Anna in her desert journey till she is safely restored to the English life in the symbolic Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo where she can panoptically see the Orient (D'Alessandro 54). Anna's journey becomes a rare life changing experience –with a domestic resolution that will be broken– because she marries Sharif in a turbulent political climate that shatters Egypt and Sharif is assassinated at the end which forces Anna to return to England with Nur al-Hayah, their only daughter.

In *The Map of Love*, texts replicate texts and characters replicate characters; texts also travel, not to say characters (Moore 153). Languages are appropriated, stories are produced, history is reproduced and there is a continual process of repetition and displacement which is the result of witnessing trauma. In this mobile novel, the setting smoothly changes from late Victorian and Edwardian England to modern day New York and Cairo with Amal, Isabel and Omar al-Ghamrawi and Anna, Layla and Sharif al-Baroudi. Amal's brother Omar, "*the 'Molotov Maestro*'" and the "*Kalashnikov Conductor*"" (17), is indeed a loosely portrayed Edward Said (Malak 145; Moore 148; Valassopoulos 32; Boccardi, *Contemporary British Historical Novel* 108). It should be noted that Said is labelled the Professor of Terror by *Commentary* and, like him, Omar is a pianist, a conductor and writer of books: "*The Politics of Culture* 1992, *A State of Terror* 1994, *Borders and Refuge* 1996" (21). This repetition shows that Soueif constructs archives of selves and what ties these is a distinct Arabo-Islamic understanding of witnessing that is established with genealogy: Anna and Sharif are the Victorian mirrors of Isabel and Omar, and Amal, the classical Orientalist-substitute is the grand-daughter of Layla. Boccardi indicates that "*genealogical relations extend horizontally in the present as well as vertically with the past*" in the book ("History as Genealogy" 199) and Soueif reveals that Isabel, Omar and Amal are grand-cousins. There lies the importance of the tapestry because from the dead comes the living.

On the surface, the novel is Oriental and exotic, and very familiar to the European reader except for the bleak ending that Moore describes as "*sentimental dénouement*" (151) but, in particular, the reader finds an analogy with Said's colonial discourse analysis. At the start of the novel, Anna hopelessly writes about a son who is sent "*up the Nile to 'learn Arabic, keep a diary and acquire habits of observation and self-reliance and not to imbibe Jingo principles*'" (13). As Said indicates in *Culture and Imperialism*, "*disgraced younger sons are sent off to colonies*" (75) and Anna wants to be like one of them, though shameful it is. At this moment, Soueif gives hints about an Oriental adventure and slowly and strategically manipulates the course of the narrative by which the novel turns into a parody of the Orientalist discourse and a mock narrative of captivity stories and romances about the imagined Orient. Soueif frequently returns to Edward Said's discussions of academic Orientalism in her novel and gives it in a novelistic content. More to the point, she strategically uses Orientalism so as to subvert it and offers an interesting understanding with a positivist use of it. Her concern is to create a real Orient that is absent in Said's criticism and she gives voice, form and history to the orientalised Oriental which makes the novel contrapuntal. As Boccardi states, Soueif "*re-imagines the situation posited by Said but redefines, at least in part, his pessimistic outlook on the very possibility of a meaningful interaction between the West and the Orient in two ways*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 107).

In this post-colonial novel, Soueif draws attention to appropriation, or Arabisation, of European cultural forms, such as the novel genre, to deconstruct the Orientalist discourse. Appropriation is the subversive use of imperial cultural forms and languages and *The Map of Love* resists political and cultural hegemony in its treatment of language. In the novel, the attitude toward language, and to imperial languages, is very complex and Soueif dismantles the centrality of English by appropriating it. Noticeably, *The Map of Love* is an English-Arabic novel because, as Soueif underlines in an interview, Arabic becomes a veil in it. She indicates that the novel has an authentic Arab voice in its English expression which culminates in the Arabic word *wigdan*/inner soul, passion and sensibility (Massad and Soueif 89). D'Alessandro emphasises that none of the characters speaks his or her native language, but always a mix of languages that she describes as "*a search for one's identity*" (33), as Amal says, "*We speak as we always have: Arabic inlaid with French and English phrases*" (200). It is important too that, as Dalal Sarnou underlines, Soueif is conscious of the depth of Arabic and has "*no personal history of opposition or rejection of English*" (72). Claire Chambers also observes that "*Soueif's use of English is like a translation in the sense of forcibly moulding the dominant language to reflect the cadences of Arabic*" (*British Muslim Fictions* 248).

As the principal narrator, Amal does not report in standard English and Soueif shows that language and identity are interdependent in a distinct post-colonial understanding (Ashcroft, Griffits and Tiffin, *Empire Writes Back* 53, 71). In *In the Eye of the Sun*, an earlier publication, Soueif italicises Arabic vocabularies, but there are dialogues in transliterated Arabic in *The Map of Love* and, although Soueif provides a glossary as a cultural, literary and historical commentary, the novel presents the native language as a metonymic gap. A refined form of abrogation, metonymic gap is a cultural gap when unglossed words, phrases or passages from a first language are inserted into a text that creates a sense of distance because the reader might be unfamiliar to them (Ashcroft 75, 115; Ashcroft, Griffits and Tiffin *Post-colonial Studies* 62; Ashcroft et al., *Empire Writes Back* 152-153). Likewise, many of the Arabic vocabularies in *The Map of Love* do not appear in the glossary which is, in post-colonial terms, selective lexical fidelity and, with metonymic gaps and abrogation, Soueif points to the difference between cultures stressing "*the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts*" (Ashcroft et al., *Empire Writes Back* 63). The novelty is not the insertion of Arabic into a novel in English, but the attention Soueif pays to the variations of language while code-switching. She brilliantly captures the Victorian diction of Anna and the American English of Isabel besides colloquial Arabic, especially of women. As a post-colonial novelist, Soueif mimics, with astonishing plausibility, the characteristic tone and plausibility of every non-Arab character, even the grammar mistakes of Anna when she speaks Arabic, and Moore says that Soueif carefully inscribes different pronunciations of English, elementary standard Arabic, idiomatic Egyptian Arabic and even body language in the novel (153). Albakry and Hancock similarly emphasise that "*Soueif uses language and specifically code switching as a potential means to convey […] themes in her novels*" that is shown by the "*dichotomy between al-fusha and al-ammiyya*"; the high and low varieties of Arabic (228).

As the principal narrator, Amal is an interpreter more than a translator in the novel and there is always the risk of foreignizing translation for the post-colonial subject. Editorial intrusions, footnotes, glossary, explanatory prefaces, if made by the author and situated outside the text, represent a post-colonial reading rather than writing and the post-colonial Other becomes the Other as reader/interpreter. Ashcroft et al. describe such writing as "*interpretative space*" and indicate that "*The post-colonial writer whose gaze is turned two directions, stands already in that position which will come to be occupied by an interpretation for he/she is not the object of an interpretation, but the first interpreter*" (*Empire Writes Back* 60). As an interpreter, Amal hesitates to translate some words and the Arabic word *zaghārid*, for example, the untranslatable joy-cries of women, always appear in Arabic in the novel (Hassan 763) although there are some scenes in *In the Eye of the Sun* which depict *zaghārid* as exotic and therefore Oriental. *Tarab* is also a difficult word to translate, as Amal says, "*a paragraph of*

explanation for something as simple as a breath" (515). At another moment, she yearns: "*How do I translate 'tarab' […] without sounding weird and exotic, describe to Isabel that particular, emotional, spiritual and even physical condition into which one enters when the soul is penetrated by good Oriental music?*" (332). Hassan indicates that with *tarab* Amal "*suggests that the risks of foreignizing translation range from undue estrangement to (self-)exoticism*" (763) and it is clear that glossing underlines alterity and ambivalence in the novel. As the "*most primitive form of metonymy*" (Ashcroft et al., *Empire Writes Back* 60), the glossary emphasises genre definitions and borders because the frames between languages and genres get lower and lower in this translational novel.

While appropriating, Soueif pays attention to the palimpsestual history of Egypt and defines, for example, *abeih* as "*title of respect for an older brother or male relative*", respect appearing with continued emphasis in the novel, and although it does not appear in the text, she passes a note about *abla* (f.) indicating that the two words are Turkish. These words are defined with Egypt's history under the Ottomans but, for the word *effendi*, Soueif solely emphasises education in the imperial centre although it is also of Greek-Turkish origin: "*an urban (Western–) educated man (see Basha)*" (519). Soueif does not address *effendi*'s Ottoman connotation and emphasises it later with *basha*: "*Ottoman title, roughly equivalent to 'Lord' […] titles in use in Egypt – and all countries subject to Turkish Ottoman rule – were 'Effendi' (an urban person with a secular education and wearing Western dress – although not Western himself)*", and "*(Turkish: Pasha)"* (520). This detail is very important because the title for Sharif appears as pasha in Anna's writing and as *basha* in Amal's rewriting which shows that language speaks through the colonial history of Egypt in the novel.

Parenthetically to note about *effendi* is that the focus on Western dress is important because, as Massad indicates, the sartorial changes of the characters result in an epistemological change (Massad and Soueif 82). On the other hand, the attention to clothing can also be read as a reminder of the Orientalist fashion that swept Europe (D'Alessandro 82; Bulfin 427; Inal 150). In novel's diverse locations, there are discussions about sartorial items and "peignoir", for example, reminds Amal of *Anna Karenina*, Sharif and her father. As a French word, peignoir is a cultural signifier and reminder of colonial history for Amal because she can imagine Sharif only in European dress and that is how Anna and Layla describe him; as an *effendi*. Amal also recognises also that has never seen her father and her brother "*in the old costume of an Egyptian gentleman*" (254). When Anna and Sharif first meet in his house, Sharif is in Western dress and Anna is cross-dressed as a European man. When she sees Sharif in Egyptian dress for the first time, Anna cannot recognise him and when Sharif sees her for the first time in a gown, he questions, though indistinctly, Anna's imperial background. On the other hand, Anna wears veil in the journey to the Sinai that she defines as a

"*liberating thing*" (195) because it gives her the power of gaze while making her invisible and, when captured by the nationalists, Anna is presented one of the Egyptian gowns of Sharif. Soueif also shows Anna's nervousness about the dress code for the Khedive's ball at the 'Abdin Palace and her imperial obligation that speaks through sartorial items:

> as I knew that Moslem notables were to be present I thought it would provide me with adequate covering and would not cause offence. We are after all in their country. But I did wear Lady Winterbourne's tiara and my mother's amethyst necklace and I believe I did not disgrace the Empire! (94).

The veil that hides Anna's European identity and her numerous sartorial changes throughout the novel attest to the disappearance of her moral and authoritarian gaze and make her metropolitan background invisible. Anna is also the invisible translator of the articles Sharif writes for European journals against the Occupation and, in a similar vein, Amal becomes the invisible translator of Layla's testimony though she regularly reminds herself with disruptive involvements. As Hassan indicates, *The Map of Love* "*draws attention to the 'invisible' agency of the translators and to the 'fluency' and 'transparency' of their translations" that makes it a "translational text*" of Anglophone Arabic literature (754). Like in other translational texts, the language of the colonised becomes the veil of the text and the Arabisation of English shows that translation is a theme to question Orientalism and the stylistic elements in the novel maintain its centrality.

The cadences in the characters' use of Arabic and Soueif's para-textual refinements for the international reader demonstrate that she expertly weaves elements for her poly-vocal text. In the glossary, Soueif neatly defines most of the Arabic vocabulary and confidently talks about Egyptian history. It is also noteworthy that she explains every day Islamic phrases, such as "*al-hamdu-l-illah*", "*la hawla wala quwwata ill b-Illah*" and "*Allahu Akbar*" as some of her characters use Islamised English. Arabic proverbs also appear with intensity in the novel in beautiful English translations: "*her thirst for adventure was watered*" (243); "*the monkey, in his mother's eyes, is a gazelle*" (281); "*A bean does not have time to get wet in your mouths*" (284) and "*if Anna had asked for bird's milk he would have brought it to her*" (392). In the interesting glossary, on the other hand, Soueif's prevailing political tone is prevalent and the Balfour Declaration is included, but with a quote: "*His Majesty's Government looks with favour upon the creation of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine*" (520). Soueif also glosses Jama'at Islamiyyah and some slogans in Arabic, for example *Sallim silahak ya 'Urabi* of the 'Urabi Revolt of 1879. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod indicates that modern Egypt experienced three major revolutions within three generations: in 1879-1882, 1919-1921 and in 1952 (325), and later Tahrir Revolution and, as will be explained, the idea of a post-colonial liberation in the novel clusters

around the etymology of the Arabic word *inqilab*/revolution. By reminding the slogan, and explaining it for the international reader, Soueif creates space for the cultural memory of the Egyptians as the novel chronicles the 'Urabi Revolt, the Saad Zaghloul's 1919 Revolution and the British Occupation in a contrapuntal structure.

With equal emphasis, Soueif writes about Coptic cultural memory to remind the persecution of Christians in Egypt during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diclidianus and it is an important part of Egypt's palimpsestual history. This makes the glossary a historical reminder of imperial acts that are not limited to European imperialism. Similarly emphasised is *corvée*: "*forced labour – employed for large national projects like digging the Suez Canal, but also for work on the Pasha's or the Khedive's lands*" (521). As a French word, *corvée* reminds the death toll over the Canal, especially the wars over it, and the 'Urabi Revolt, because with *corvée* Ottoman Suzerainty in Egypt, or "*Suez-erainty*" as Bulfin describes, becomes "*Suez-cide*" (438) and Egyptians start to claim their country and the canal.

Corvée shows that Soueif deconstructs the Orientalist discourse with the language of the coloniser and she suggests another similar resistance with the word harem (Shao-Pin 87), the imaginary sensual space of the Orientalist discourse. Reina Lewis states that harem "*is the most fertile space of the Orientalist imagination*" (4) and Malek Alloula notes that "*a single allusion to it is enough to open wide the floodgate of hallucination just as it is about to run dry*" (3). Hassan also emphasises that the women's quarter in the Orient "*evokes the well-known discourse on the harem – from Montesquieu to Ingres*" (761). Extrapolating from similar insights, Soueif does not use the word harem in the novel and it only appears under *hareem* in the glossary although she glosses *haraam*, *haram 'aleik* and *haram*. Against harem, Soueif offers an alternative space with *haramlek* and *salamlek* to underline the sexualisation of the Orient in the Orientalist discourse. As she describes, *haremlek* is "*the area in a house reserved for women*" (522) and *salamlek* is "*part of the house where men can move freely (as opposed to the haramlek, where they can go by the permission of the women)"* (525). By a careful rejection, Soueif shows that *haremlek* is a place where intellectual and artistic endeavours take place by women and about women, and unlike harem, *haremlek* is a real place where women are historical agents. Despite the Orientalist connotations, Catherine Wynne argues that Soueif represents "*harem as desirable domestic place*" and that she achieves this by aligning her writing with the 19th century (English) women travellers (56).

Harem as an empty signifier shows that language is a signifier of place and this is underlined in Soueif's attempt to capture the metropolitan's imagination of the Orient as an empty and static place. When Anna first arrives Egypt, she cannot recognise that she is in Alexandria and only after seeing an Arabic script, she gains spatial consciousness:

> I fancy I am not really in Africa yet, for certainly this place, from what I have seen so far, seems to have more of the Europe of the Mediterranean in it than anything else, and were it not for the costume of the native Arabs and the signs in their language, you might fancy yourself in some Greek and Italian town (58).

Anna's knowledge of the Orient is textual because she is familiar with the Orientalist discourse and, while at the Shepheard's Hotel, one of the symbols of Egypt's colonial past, she "*is possessed by the strangest feeling that still [she is] not in Egypt*" (102). Edward Said indicates that the actual encounter with the Orient changes the perception of the Orientalist as he feels betrayed and Anna's spatial ambivalence perfectly illustrates this. When Alphonse Daudet's Tartarin arrives in Algeria in 1872, he "*sees few traces of 'the Orient' that had been promised him, and finds himself instead in an overseas copy of his native Tarascon*" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 222). With Anna, Soueif hints at the discussions about the implied real Orient in Said's writings and Anna will later state that the Orient that she sees is not the Orient as it is represented by the West. As Valassopoulos indicates, "*several incidents throughout the book as well as the structure of this novel lend themselves readily to post-colonial criticism*" because "*the novel employs varying identifiable strands in post-colonial theory and criticism"* (29-30).

After her spatial shock, Anna starts learning Arabic, but "*could not yet readily tell where one word ended and another began*" (81) because, as Amal indicates, there are not any gaps in cursive Arabic. In this scene, the ambivalence arising from language is reflected through the inner monologue of Amal concerning a colour card: "*You can say with certainty 'this is blue, and this is green' but these cards show you the fade, the dissolve, the transformation […] And you? You are in between; in the area of transformations*" (66). The colour card strengthens the idea of language as a symbol of ambivalence in the novel, and by implication, Soueif emphasises that it is hard to know where one culture ends or the other begins in the archive of the self and where the past ends and the present begins in the memory of the individual. Leila Ahmed in *A Border Passage* similarly emphasises the role of native language in the identity construction of the post-colonial subject and underlines an important fact about cursive Arabic. English is always valued over Arabic in her family and Ahmed indicates that, as an English schooler, she sees her mother inferior because they converse in Arabic and she loves Arabic music. One day, his father, a distinguished engineer, starts writing his memoirs on his death bed after being radicalised because of his opposition to Nasser's High Dam, and she inherits the papers. However, the archive is indecipherable, as she says, she does not have the "*easy mastery of the cursive Arabic*" (23) Unlike Ahmed, however, Amal can understand the Arabic handwriting of her grandmother Layla and Soueif shows that language never operates to flatten differences in the novel, but to make characters plural. Soueif's abrogative strategy that puts Arabic words abruptly

in an English text, and thus needs a mediator-translator like in the Orientalist discourse, thus demonstrates a re-evaluation of Said's *Orientalism* and its continuing significance for the novel.

The most creative preoccupation with language in *The Map of Love* is Arabic conjugations and etymological explanations that make the novel a site of linguistic control for the post-colonial subject. As Moore states, this also strengthens the cross-cultural correspondence between non-Egyptian/non-Arab and Egyptian/Arab characters (151). Boccardi also observes that "*linguistic mediation in the novel is an important dimension of productive cultural understanding*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 113). In a symmetrical narrative pattern, Layla teaches Anna Arabic and Amal too teaches Isabel Arabic. While explaining the structure of the language, Amal says that everything stems from a root which acquires new meanings with conjugations. Her example is *qalb*/heart from "q-l-b" and the conjugation will show that "coup" and "heart" come from the same root in Arabic:

> in the case of "qalb" you get "qalab": to overturn, overthrow, turn upside down, make into the opposite; hence "maqlab": a dirty trick, a turning of the tables and also a rubbish dumb. "Maqloub": upside down; "mutaqallib": changeable; and "inqilab": a coup" (81-82).

Qalb/heart becomes *inqilab*/coup and the conjugation shows that the concern in the novel is a political and post-colonial questioning through language. As a mono-lingual English-speaker, Isabel is astonished at this change and Soueif points to her textual understanding because she asks for a book. On the other hand, although Isabel has textual attitude, as "*the good Westerner*" (Adawalla 448), she is able to define the structure of the native language with positivity – fertilisation: "*like ovae; the queen in the centre, and all the other eggs, big and little*" (82). Her recognition can be interpreted as a signal of unlearning and recovering from the Orientalist discourse and Empire because, as Moore says, the use of Arabic competency can be an "*index to character sympathy*" in the novel (156). Hassan similarly indicates that

> Arabic-language competency of Western travellers and residents in Egypt is an index to their politics, so that no provision is made for orientalists with superb language skills who serve as the agents of imperialism (although good orientalists are prominent in the novel) (757).

Albakry and Hancock emphasise that "*interspersing of Arabic is a linguistic technique that might signal the main western characters' growing intimate relationship with the country*" (226). Likewise, in the novel, Anna tells Dean Butcher her desire to learn Arabic and he jokes about the *Mu'allaqat*, the most famous Seven Odes of Arabic poetry hung on the walls of Ka'bah in Mecca before Islam. Suddenly, Anna recognises that *Mu'allaqat* and *Mu'allaqah*, her famous church in Cairo, share the same root, but Amal abruptly cuts her narrative and explains the etymology: "'*A, l, q: to become attached, to cling, also to become pregnant, to conceive; and in its emphatic form 'a, ll, q: to hang, to suspend, but also to comment*"

(90). In Islam, surah al-'Alaq in *Qur'ān* is believed to be the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammed and *al-'alaq* means the clot. As the first command to Prophet Muhammed, *al-'alaq* also means the imperative "read" and this conjugation exemplifies the key intention of Soueif because, with *mu'allaqat*, Anna comprehends the structure of the native language with positivity and fertility like Isabel, and starts understanding Arabic. Here, Soueif also strengthens the assumption that the post-colonial Muslim subject holds linguistic control because, as the interpreter Other, only Amal can explain the conjugation.

Mu'allaqat can also be traced at Anna's tapestry that becomes a hanging poem (Moore 151). As a memory collector, Amal unites the three pieces of the tapestry together as she unites stories and this reminds Isis, an Egyptian goddess, who mourns the deaths of her beloveds. Together with Osiris, Isis appears on the hybrid tapestry of Anna and Adawalla indicates that Amal's story parallels Isis who "*gathers the pieces of Osiris' dismembered body scattered all over Egypt to give him eternal life*" (449). Isabel's name demonstrates another significant parallel for it means, as explained in the novel, "Isis the Beautiful" (22). This way, Soueif points to cultural crossings and Amal slowly gives up categorising Isabel as "*the American*" and starts addressing her by her name (Moore 147).

Names also serve as potent illustrations of imperialism and colonialism in Egypt and Soueif points to this with the Arabisation of the names of the colonial officers. A ghostly trace on the consciousness of the Arab post-colonial subject, Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, is known as "Over-Baring" (Chambers "An Interview with Leila Aboulela", 86-87) in the Arab East colonies of the Empire and he is "*el-Lord*" among the locals in *The Map of Love*. There are frequent references to Cromer's colonial administration and, in *Mezzaterra*, Soueif indicates that the West is "*personified in Egypt then by Cromer*" (269). Anna writes that Cromer himself speaks no Arabic except for *imshi*/go away (71) and that his nickname, Mina, illustrates his coloniser attitude. Nina Baring, Lord's wife, tells in the Agency that "the Earl used as, as a child, to pick up any object he could carry and cry '*mine-a, mine-a' till that became his childhood name*" and Anna sarcastically says that the Lord wants to have Egypt for himself alone and the childish word Mina "*accounts for his attitude to Egypt*" (66). *El-Lord*, in another instance, serves as a password for Anna when she is mistakenly abducted by the young nationalists. It is the only word she can recognise in the stream of Arabic and Anna is extremely astonished when one of her abductors addresses her in eloquent French. She realises that she has never been spoken to by an *effendi* before and, like other English people in the occupied Egypt, she only converses with Arab servants who can barely speak English. Moreover, Anna feels that she forms her understanding of the country, the people and their culture on this limited basis and cannot understand why, because it is the talk in the Agency, *effendis* "*should be considered less*

Egyptian" because of their fluency in French (106). Harry Boyle, the Oriental secretary, who earns the nickname *enoch*/eunuch because he always walks with Lord Cromer says, "*Effendis are not real Egyptians and their opinions can therefore be safely neglected*" (98). On the other hand, as they speak French and are educated in the imperial centre, *effendis* are not welcome by Egyptians as well.

Paradoxically though, French, as the language of the previous coloniser (Layla's house is furnished in the French-style and Anna does not like it), is the medium of linguistic equality because, before Arabic, Anna converses in French with Layla and Sharif. Sharif thinks that French makes them "*foreigners both*" (157) and it is hinted in the novel that, although he understands the language of the coloniser, Sharif never speaks English because of the Occupation that exiled 'Urabi and his uncle, muted his father and killed a lot of Egyptians. As Boccardi indicates, French is "*a neutral means of communication between Anna and her husband*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 113) and Albakry and Hancock emphasise that French as a "*rivaling colonial language is used to erase the boundaries and the class distinction between the Empire and the other*" (230). On the other hand, Edward Said acknowledges that all empires were not the same and France's empire "*though no less interested than Britain's in profit, plantations, and slaves, was energised by 'prestige'*", reproduced itself in the periphery and justified territorial acquisition by irradiating genius (*Culture and Imperialism* 204). In that respect, Soueif's treatment of French can be considered, as Moore observes, "*a slightly odd elision of France's colonial ambitions*" (151).

As the examples show, identity problems cluster around the use of imperial languages and Soueif discusses this also with Arab characters who speak broken or real life English, especially the Arab servants whose voices rarely find place in Orientalist writings. Anna is in the Sinai in the company of Sharif and the loyal manservant Sabir protects her. Amal imagines a scene in the desert: "'*They no English,' he says, then again: 'You happy now?' 'Yes,' says Anna, 'very happy.' 'Sahara,' he says. 'Tents, camels, fire'*" (190). Sabir will later be of use because of his English and will work in Sharif's employ and, like Sabir, Harry Boyle makes himself useful to Lord Cromer with his command of spoken Arabic because, as Michael Edwardes observes, few of the colonial administrators "*really bothered to learn language of the people they ruled with any fluency*" (qtd. in Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 183). Hassan emphasises that Boyle is the translator-forger in the novel; the author of a letter "*allegedly written in Arabic about a planned uprising, intercepted by the British […] and sent to the Foreign Office in London in a last-ditch effort to support Cromer's unsuccessful bid for military reinforcements in Egypt*" (763). Originally composed in an absurd English, Boyle's letter talks about the Oriental mind and although Boyle invents a translation for an imaginary Arabic letter, it is translated without an original. This untranslated letter is re-translated into French and Arabic and is meaningless in all the three

languages. It is but a proof of Boyle and Cromer's Orientalist understanding of the native mind, language and character.

Language is mobile, hybrid and appropriated in *The Map of Love*, but sometimes the post-/colonial subject cannot speak and is completely suppressed. After the defeat of Colonel 'Urabi, Sharif's father, a fellow of the Colonel, speaks only with quotations from *Qur'ān* besides hadith and daily Islamic phrases and his non-enunciative position complicates the understanding of language in the novel. When the Revolution fails, Colonel 'Urabi, Mahmoud Sami (Sharif's paternal uncle) and another six men were exiled from Egypt and Khedive Tewfiq summons Sharif and says that if his father stays silent, no harm will be done. The father then locks himself in the house and holds fast to his shrine denying himself the right to speak and echoing the sacred word of the *Qur'ān* and hadith. Sharif describes him with the Arabic word *magzub* and Amal tells that he is forced by the colonisers and the ruling elite to be a *magzub*: "*one drawn to (God) by religious fervour to the extent that he separates himself from all worldly matters – and (the worldly) part of his mind*" (524). This incident shows that language is a problem in itself and, like the Arabic *magzub* in the English text, the father disappears in colonial history.

The silence of Sharif's father is close to the silence of Edward, Anna's first husband, and will be the silence of Anna. Hassan remarkably argues that, unlike Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, Edward does not "*seek redemption through story-telling*"; he is led "*by disillusionment and guilt to withdrawal into silence*", and his silence becomes his death (760). Similarly, Anna's diary ends with the assassination of Sharif and she only writes brief letters to Layla after returning to England that only mention Nur. In fact, Anna's silence is confined in the English "no"; the only and the last word she says when Sharif is killed. His death is described by Layla alone: "*'No,' she cried – and it was an English 'no'*" (501). With the English "no", Anna's story returns to where it begins, "*But she cannot – or will not – understand, and give up hope. She waits for him constantly*" (510), and she disappears from the narrative. The al-Baroudi family never learns who killed Sharif and, alongside Arab characters, Anna suffers under the burden of colonialism. The assassination brings to light the turmoil Cromer's colonial administration created in the county. Layla says

> They say it could be Coptic fanatics in retaliation for Boutros Basha's assassination […] Muslim fanatics for my brother's position on women's rights and because he married Anna and was known to wear her image on a chain round his neck […] the British agents to get the Copts blamed and increase the divisions in the country and rid themselves of a national leader […] the Khedive out of spite – and not fearful of the consequences, since Lord Kitchener would be glad to see my brother dead (506).

Soueif contextualises Anna's worldliness to create a sympathetic character and, although Sharif is assassinated, she underlines visions of inclusivity and hybridity with Anna whose access to knowledge is inseparably in the centre of discussions. Anna hears about the Occupation from her goodhearted father-in-law who serve the Empire during the Bombardment of Alexandria and she makes preparations before sailing to Egypt like Napoleon who transforms Orientalism with his army of Orientalist scholars. She reads the letters of Lady Duff Gordon and is familiar with the travel writing of Victorian women. Reina Lewis indicates that "*Western women had for two centuries been doing their best to sate the appetite of a Western readership curious about harem life*" and their success as bestsellers was due to having "*actually seen the space forbidden to Western men*" (12). Besides women traveller's accounts, Anna enjoys the paintings of Frederick Lewis and wants to know if the world in the paintings truly exists. Formless, ungraspable, massively incomprehensible, and even threatening and mysterious, the Orient of the Orientalist discourse is far from her grasp and she feels that something eludes; an intimation that she sees in the paintings and hears in the talks in England. Anna observes an asymmetry between the representations of the Orient in the West and the real Orient and she realises that the places she has been in Cairo and Alexandria are replicas of Empire because "*colonial space must be transformed sufficiently so as no longer to appear foreign to the imperial eye*" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 273). Hopelessly, Anna looks for the Orient she has read in books and seen in paintings, and with her received ideas, she "*ventures into the desert*" to get a glimpse of it and to live "*the romance of the desert*" (Ibid., 133, 198). In Egypt, stories circulate about Lord Cromer sending a party to pursue an English lady who wants to ride across the desert to the Suez and Anna knows that she will be averted either by the Arabs or the English because she is a woman. In an imperial sense, the Orient is terra nullius for the Western traveller, but it is a special place for Anna where she is released from the oppression of the English society at the Agency which in turn changes her epistemology. Anna's fearless mobility can be interpreted as a search for roots through routes because the journey changes not only herself but also others (Moore 153; Shao-Pin 84).

Although Anna refuses the Orientalist discourse, her attitude to the Orient is dangerously textual because she makes casual references to the native mind: "*I cannot help feeling that the letters of Lady Duff Gordon gave a truer glimpse into the Native mind than do all the speeches of the gentlemen of Chancery*" (107). Lady Anne Blunt and Lady Duff Gordon break dominant models and appear as sympathetic figures in the novel (Hassan 760), but D'Alessandro indicates that it is impossible to distinguish complicity from resistance in their writings and Anna too is influenced by the Orientalist baggage (17, 58, 70, 99). Boccardi says that Anna's "*decision to travel to Egypt is typically Orientalist*" (*Contemporary*

British Historical Novel 108) as she aspires to sail after reading the publications of women travellers to the Orient. Although these women became bestsellers because they had actually been in harem, Lewis underlines that their accounts should not be read as simply realistic and unmediated because, as all textual productions are, they are historically contingent, or in Said's understanding, worldly. Lewis observes that "*Western women's accounts were heterogeneous and contradictory*" because "*they offered clashing commentaries based on differing amounts of excess and expertise*" (13). Amal too recognises that Anna's letters and diary are part of the Oriental adventure and she might have thought of publication:

> a little self-conscious perhaps, a little aware of the genre – *Letters from Egypt*, *A Nile Voyage*, *More Letters from Egypt*. I assume that what I have is a copy of the letter she sent to Caroline. Perhaps she was thinking of a future publication. In any case, I forgive her the mannered approach as she feels her way into my home. What else does she know – yet? (58).

D'Alessandro indicates that Soueif consciously uses Western travel writing to deconstruct stereotypes that depict Eastern women as exotic, sensual and low beings. She argues that Soueif subverts "*the semantics of the English literary canon*" with travel writing which is a genre of transition that smoothly passes from the private to the public (15, 30, 68). Valassopoulos underlines that "*Soueif uses the travel writing genre in order to deliberately change its function and turn it into [a] cultural critique*" (40). Therefore, unlike with the Oriental romance-seekers, mobility has a positive material result in *The Map of Love* and Anna's dependence on the Orientalist discourse that shape her epistemology slowly ceases. She starts a new green journal and leaves the first brown one blank. Amal is glad to see that Anna's first journal is simply put aside and Hassan emphasises that "*the abandonment of the notebook allows Orientalism simply to trail off into silence*" because, unlike Edward, whose silence is death, Anna's silence initiates an "*alternative discourse*" (761).

Anna decidedly ventures into the desert, but finds herself in the harem of a pasha, as Sharif will later mockingly describe it: "*Weren't you afraid of me? The wicked Pasha who would lock you up in his harem and do terrible things to you?*" (153). Boccardi describes the scene as "*the parodic articulation of the Orientalist view*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 110) and King indicates that *The Map of Love* is modelled after and is a critique of the Oriental tale (453). It is because, as Boccardi indicates, the novel's "*dialogue with Said's seminal text is extensive*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 108). Although Anna thinks that it is the harem that she saw in the paintings in London, she is in the *haramlek* of Zeinab Hanim, the mother of Layla and Sharif and, after the imperial encounter, both Layla and Anna start to simultaneously write their personal histories from the *haramlek* which will be a contrapuntal history, or as Amal describes, "*the palimpsest that is Egypt*" (64). Amal's relationship to

the text is to execute the Empire on a textual basis to subvert its image, and playing the stereotypical Orientalist, she ransacks archives like Silvestre de Sacy: "*I go through the archives of al-Ahram*" (59). Amal is obsessed with Anna's journals and needs to "*fill in the gaps, to know who the people are of whom she speaks, to paint in the backdrop against which she is living her life here*" (26). Like Napoleon and his Orientalist savants, she wants to know all of Anna and Layla's lives to piece a story together, and for this, she visits the British Council Library in Cairo, Dar al-Kutub and the second-hand book stalls. She also writes to her son in London and asks for cuttings of old newspaper issues.

Going to the archives is not only a resonant historical experience, but also a reshaping of space in memory. Through the trunk's transformative potential, Amal is reunited with her sons, recovers from her house arrest and discovers Cairo. As she says, "*longing for a place can take you over so that you can do nothing except return*", which she does, "*to return and pick at the city, scraping together bits of the place you once knew*" (119). Amal reads through Layla and Anna about a Cairo that she does not know and she starts to piece together the Cairo that she grew up in. Reading history mobilises the post-colonial subject and the setting accordingly changes to Tawasi, Upper Egypt as Amal carries the "*colonial archive*" (D'Alessandro 115) wherever she goes. Returning is a painful experience for the post-colonial, because in any case you might not be able to return. For example, Amal's mother could not return to Palestine after the *Nakba* and embarrassed her once by suddenly crying for a bar of Nabulsi soap at a grocer's. On the other hand, Jasmine, Isabel's mother, the grand-daughter of Anna, has Alzheimer's and is liberated from the pangs of memory, but not from language and history: "*Jasmine had been lucid, coherent, but in another time and another language: she would only speak French*" (341). Jasmine's father is French and Amal sadly thinks about the "*parchmentlike*" (53) skin of her grandmother and all those women bring to surface troubling questions about memory as the Nabulsi soap that becomes a symbol of the dispersal that forced migration violently generated.

Reading the archive also introduces desire to the novel, and transforms it. This is but an Orientalist subversion as Amal constantly says that she wants the story. This subversion is explicitly hinted at a scene when Amal dreams about Sharif in Tawasi resonant with the licentious desire of the Oriental tales: "*I kiss his face, his eyes, his shoulders […] He holds me and lets me kiss him, slightly amused at my passion. 'Thank you God you are not my father,' I say over and over*" (446). The emphasis on incestuous desire is the continuation of an ambivalence. Earlier in the novel, Isabel gets pregnant and Omar suddenly learns that Jasmine is the woman who helps him when he is badly injured during a protest in New York. Jasmine is married then and they have a brief and tormenting affair. It is discussed in the novel that Isabel might be Omar's daughter and wife, and Amal amusingly connects it to Egypt's history with a stress on Omar's hyphenated identity: "*Father and grandfather in one – like*

Rameses and Akhenatun or any of the great pharaohs. He would not appreciate that. He is a modern man: an Arab/American" (433). Amal's dream therefore emphasises pleasures of reading and reminds Scheherazade whose stories refuse to be closed. It can be suggested that Amal cannot break with the inherited script – the sexualised translation of the *Arabian Nights*, not Lane but Burton's. With the problematization of desire through the hyper-sexualisation of the orientalised Oriental, filiation (Sharif) is replaced with affiliation (*Arabian Nights*). Therefore, misconceptions arise in dreams and memory; in the unconscious of the post-colonial subject, where *nasab*/genealogy and history are also contested.

Like Burton's sensual *Arabian Nights*, Anna's abduction is certainly exotic and Oriental and Isabel aspires to produce a film of the story. Amal, on the other hand, wants to keep Anna for herself perhaps because she "*finds solace in the past*" (Boccardi, *Contemporary British Historical Novel* 114). It is also seen that Amal has an uneasy sense of categorising Isabel as the Western observer, and for her, in Said's words, "*no one has the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting the world free from the encumbering interests and engagement of the ongoing relationships themselves*" (*Culture and Imperialism* 65). Perhaps Isabel "*too is susceptible to unhelpful stereotyping*" (Moore 147) and Amal obviously does not want Anna's life turn into a useful past for a Hollywood drama. In a period-movie, Layla might be excised and the story might lack its contrapuntal perspective.

Soueif shows that Layla narration starts with a questioning of the imperial encounter: "*I found myself quite forgetting that she was a stranger. And what a stranger: the British Army of Occupation was in the streets and in Qasr el-Nil Barracks and the Lord was breakfasting in Qasr el-Dubara*" (136). In the novel, the narratives of Anna and Layla are integrated and Anna's image of the Orient starts to unsettle as she says, "*it seemed so odd just to sit there – in one of my beloved paintings, as it were, or one of the Nights of Edward Lane*" (137). The description of the harem shows that "*Anna has immersed herself in Orientalist culture*" (D'Alessandro 110) because in her first journal, Anna describes *haramlek* as the harem of the Orientalist discourse and the index of her description reveals Orientalist vocabulary:

> my first thought on waking was that I had slipped into one of those paintings […] I had been abducted as a man and in the Oriental tales I have read it has happened that a Houri or a princess has ordered the abduction of a young man to whom she has taken fancy. She would have him brought to her castle and there she would offer him marriage (134).

However, Anna later recognises that the tale Layla tells is "*not out of the medieval East*" (137) but a realistic picture of the imagined Orient. With Layla's help, the Orient ceases to be an absent content and starts to speak for itself and about itself. To attest to this, Anna learns that what she thinks to be a celebration while she is heading to the 'Abdin Palace for the Khedive's ball is in fact

a demonstration against the Occupation and some of the demonstrators, including Layla's husband Husni, are arrested.[8] In the course of the novel, Anna is integrated into the upper class Egyptian society after her marriage to Sharif and is actively engaged in the independence and liberation struggle of Egypt (Malak 139; D'Alessandro 118). She translates articles and lectures on art in the newly founded university to women students and this epistemological shift is also seen in her appropriation of the Orientalist paintings. She weaves a tapestry and paints realistic scenes of the Orient, some of which are still in the house in Tawasi. Boccardi describes this change as the "*transition from a mediated to an actual experience of the Orient, from preconceptions to understanding*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 111). Hassan states that Anna experiences a "gradual shift from a Eurocentric to an ideal(ized) Western observer of, and participant in, Egypt's struggle for independence" (759). Anna enjoys Egyptian domestic life and furnishes her new house drawing on her "*beloved Frederick Lewis for inspiration*" (324); the "*exotic interiors in Lewis's paintings*" (Boccardi 112) that she finds solace after the death of Edward. However, the analeptic trajectory of the novel breaks with the Empire, or what Edward Said calls untutored nationalism, and it shatters Anna's dream-like integration and happiness.

In "The End", as the subverted executer of the Empire, the Orientalist scholar, and the "*critical postcolonial eye*" (D'Alessandro 104), Amal "smooths down each sheet of each letter and cutting and arranges them neatly in files" (510). Boccardi emphasises that Amal "*provides the Orientalist materials of the nineteenth-century story with a dialogical dimension*" (*Contemporary British Historical Novel* 108), but the paradigmatic power of Orientalism does not consolidate the vision of Empire in *The Map of Love* and it generates a contrapuntal history of Egypt. Like the modern secular Orientalists, but also unlike them, Amal rescues the Orient from the archive and strangeness, especially for the non-Arabic speaker, and the Orient gains power for representation. She does this especially with philology like Renan, and polishes the English text with Arabic conjugations. Although Amal speaks philologically and about philology, and although her texts are processed in her philological laboratory, she does not create or imagine an Orient like Renan and many other Orientalist scholars did. In Saidian terms, Amal doctors texts, annotates them; arranges, codifies and comments on them like Sacy, but her texts do not turn into explicated fragments for use in the classroom; labelled and sealed. Quite the contrary, she "*has not the heart to bury them in the trunk. They remain in her bedroom, on the table by the window. Her brother will want to see them*" (510).

[8] See Lockman.

Interestingly, like the Orientalist Edward William Lane, Amal rarely talks about sensual enjoyments, and she reminds herself in a Lane-esque manner to prevent smooth transitions in the novel. In *Orientalism*, Said indicates that Lane's self-excision as the detached observer is to strengthen objectivity (159-166), but Amal does not excise herself completely from the text and it is only through her presence can she investigate the fictionality of histories: she is not "the invisible scribe of the Empire" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 203). Soueif's interpretative change of perspective allows her to challenge the unquestioned authority of the detached Western observer, because Amal looks back at the archive, begins to read and write it contrapuntally with a "*simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and those other histories which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts*" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 59). *The Map of Love* integrates reproduced copies of women's writing that have been considered historically fragile for centuries and there is a built-in resistance in the novel. As a post-colonial novel, *The Map of Love* turns into a subverting historical text that deconstructs discursive structures like Orientalism with a strategic and positivist use of it.

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