



Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper": A Narrative Identity in a Liminal Space

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Abstract

Self-fulfillment and homecoming are very complex psychological processes to achieve. To find oneself in a liminal space complicates these processes for he /she will experience ambivalent feelings. Such feelings are usually experienced by immigrants whose values and traditions clash with those of the host culture. Having set her feet in the West in pursuit of the dream of completing her higher studies in Britain, the Arab writer Ahdaf Soueif (1950-) has gone through the feelings of uncertainty and unrest. In her semiautobiographical short story "Sandpiper" (1994), she reflects on her protagonist's conflicting cross-cultural lived experiences. The paper demonstrates how Soueif has made use of travel narrative/rhetoric as a medium wherein she can culturally mediate between her homeland (Egypt) and her new country (Britain) while exposing the feelings of anxiety and discomfort of her interracial married characters. The paper analyzes Soueif's "Sandpiper" in the light of the psychological concept of narrative identity by Dan P. McAdams and the postcolonial concepts of liminality by Homi Bhabha and contrapuntal thinking by Edward Said. In addition to defining these concepts, the paper examines how these theoretical frameworks truly apply to Soueif's narrative discourse and her female protagonist.

Keywords: *Ahdaf Soueif, Cross-cultural, Liminal space, Narrative identity, Sandpiper*

Travel Rhetoric and Narrative Identity

Consciousness begins when brains acquire the power... of telling a story. (Damasio, 1999, p. 10)

Travel narratives dated back to the early 16th century. However, globalization has played a significant impact on the development of these narratives. It prompts postmodern travel writers to write discourses of power and identity. Contemporary travel writings (fictional or non-fictional) are written with the potential of spreading certain ideologies. Identity politics and power relations are addressed in these writings. Many travel writers reflect their travel experiences in their writings. Accordingly, they are approached by critics and researchers from the autobiographical theory. This paper will explain the concept of narrative identity that Dan P. McAdams introduces to personality studies in relation to the travel motif.

Postcolonial writers use travel motif as a strategy to contest and subvert the Eurocentric beliefs propagated by the West. Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" is chosen as a case study of a narrative identity in a liminal space. The paper examines how the borderline and personal experience of Soueif's protagonist (represented by the seashore) act as strategic potentials for her change for the better. It displays how these unsettling experiences have contributed to the psychological development of her personality. It highlights the significance of storytelling as a narrative technique capable of collecting the different fragments of one's identity wherein homecoming is achieved. Moreover, it answers the following questions: How significant has the migration experience been for Ahdaf Soueif? Does it help her to establish a textual space for herself as a postcolonial Arab writer? Is Soueif's "Sandpiper" capable of translating the feelings of instability a space has on one's identity? Can spatial transition be an impediment to one's cross-cultural relationships? and What makes Soueif's "Sandpiper" a discourse of identity in liminality?

It was not until 1980s that identity as a notion came to be associated with that of narrative by psychologists and thus narrative identity as a concept came into being. During the 21st century, this concept has become central to the development of disciplines such as personality psychology. For McAdams, narrative identity is an evolving "life story [which] is complete with setting, scenes, characters, plots, and themes... a big story, an integrative autobiographical project, a personal myth

that situates a person in the world, integrates a life in time, and provides meaning and purpose"(2018, p.361). This story, he continues, is never fixed for its contour can be influenced by culture and new cross-cultural alliances. Briefly put, it is a narrative where the different parts of the self are brought together and achieve integration both synchronically and diachronically; where a becoming I can finally be perceived (2018, p.361,364). The life-story model of identity, McAdams proposes, consists of at least four features: an event that represents a turning point, a setting that reflects the ideologies exercised, pictures of the self that reflect his/her motives, and a future plan that signifies rebirth or regeneration (2017, p.3).

In their book entitled *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*, McAdams et al. have theorized that all human beings are the storytellers of their own stories and those human beings are the stories they tell. They ground this conceptualization on William James' imagined belief that the stream of consciousness stands for the I. This belief makes them argue that consciousness must be the outcome of narrating "a story of the self [which] becomes part of the Me"(2006, p.3). Moreover, their interest in developmental psychology enables them to differentiate "between the 'I' and 'me' as that between the self-as-teller and the self-as-the-told"(2006, p.3). In other words, me would not have an existence in narrative had the I not narrated the autobiographical self /memory. Therefore, travel writings that include autobiographical touches (personal and memorial experiences) or those written in the form of memoirs are regarded as narratives of power. They are so because they are stories about themselves, about the personal growth and the transformation their identities have achieved, about the redemptive significations and relative stability they have found, and about themselves in relation to society (be it their own culture or a new culture they transnationally move to).

Narratives start migrating transculturally as entities crossing boundaries with the travelling in of many Anglophone immigrant writers. With such literary aspiration, travel writers not only contribute to the flourishing of this genre, but also to textualizing their experiences through cultural encounters wherein they add a historical value to their narratives, sociological significance to immigrant literature, and meaning to the "abstract and ahistorical theories of cosmopolitan hybridity and interstuality"(Loingsigh,2009,p. 2).The geographical spaces (or roads where the travelling subject encounters new experience) have become the barometers for

exploring, shaping, and imparting her old /new identities (Lipski, 2018,p. 1,5) as well as recognizing the narrative stance, i.e. the way narrator/author responds to profound differences among individuals, cultures, and ideological camps. Through travel writing, the metaphor of life as a journey is textually experienced, concluding with a homecoming that is tantamount to greater personhood or going on without end.

Demarcating Identity in Relation to Place: A Postcolonial Perspective

There is a relationship between identity and place. The way a physical space is lived strongly influences one's identity and his/ her reactions and communications. Significant contributions are made by postmodern studies to the conceptualization of identity for they have adopted varied frameworks that relate the construction of identity to the power of discourse. Moreover, the power of discourse as a means wherein place-identity constructs are realized is strengthened by the intellectuals' understanding of the performativity of culture and the impact it plays on selfhood.

For some philosophers of place, the space, which is occupied by the individual, represents an indispensable part of who this individual is. Through their attachment with the land, people come to identify themselves: it is theorized that selfhood can be regarded in terms of the association between the self and the environment. Accordingly, to succeed in making or claiming a space as home means that an individual is able to achieve autonomy. This is more manifested through the dynamic process represented by psychological home (to feel homely in a space even if outside house) than the passive process of identification represented by the sense of place (Fisher et al., 2002, p. 32).

Many identities and spaces start either to lose or celebrate centrality during globalization. Mobility gives a space to self-fragmentations and the emergence of multiple identities. It helps people either to escape peripheral stances and rise into power or the opposite. Because of its discursive operations, any location can never be taken as a stable and passive vessel for people's inter/actions. However, the psychological impact a liminal space has on an individual is the strongest in nature: in such a central/ de-central place, an individual will confront the irreconcilable differences of his/her being after going temporarily through a "middle stage of suspension and transmutation"(Piazza, 2019, p. 3). Hence, an individual's inner

cracks will produce an agent whose contrapuntal consciousness is his /her source of power. Edward Said has introduced contrapuntal thinking or reading into criticism. Moreover, he recommends using contrapuntalism as an ethically idealized analytical strategy for comparative literature. For him, empowerment lies in contrapuntal thinking which he theoretically conceptualizes in relation to the rigorosity he finds in music and "its capacity for plurality of voice"(Said, 1983,p. xxxii).

Contrapuntal music is that music which music theorists ground in other terrains. It produces melodic tones that are counterpoint to each other, yet maintain their independence. Therefore, the culturally hybrid identity of Said has led him to strategically celebrate contrapuntal thinking in "revolt against the claims to authentic national identity of those whose very cultural formation was a product of the colonial encounter at home and abroad" (Ashcroft and Kadhim, 2001, p. 5). In contrapuntal reading, Said finds a method to move beyond the ethics of ambiguity that he identifies in discourse analysis and deconstruction. Said emphasizes the significance of such a device especially in reading canonical texts and connecting the structures of narrative to experiences (political or social) outside the text. The employment of such technique will enable the intellectual to grasp full meaning and develop an autonomous identity. This device, Ashcroft and Kadhim continue, will bring the intellectual "to re-read past ideologies with present concerns, while avoiding entrapment in the ideologies of the present"(2001, p.10).

The postcolonial studies among many other disciplines such as political science, anthropology, and human and cultural geography direct much emphasis to the border phenomena. Such phenomenon is primal to the interaction of humanity, the practice of power, self-identification, the ordering of human experience, and getting through a process of transformation for the better or worse. Being on the limen (meaning borderline in Latin) can never be taken as synonymous with being on the margin. Liminality indicates both the temporary celebration of a heightened sense of a self and lamentation of being a social outcast. To be on the threshold or in the liminal phase means that one will experience ambivalence: in these cultural zones, one simultaneously feels unsafe and certain especially when entering into different kinds of relationships whether social, socio-spatial, or even political.

Cartographic practices and mapmaking are made use of in geographical discourses and spatial literary studies. They serve certain ideological purposes. Connected to the Eurocentric myth is the notion of spatiality and difference. Social and spatial disparities are among the persistent motifs and key concepts that start to rule the world and govern seriously its "cultural, geographical, and historical imagination since the age of classical imperialism from the end of the eighteenth century onwards"(Mazumdar et al, 2009, p. 1). These motifs destabilize the social fabric, change fixed and fast-frozen relationships, and cause raptures and disruptions that have been either lamented or celebrated by different ethnic groups. With this, physical (actual) and imagined spatially inscribed territorailizations have become subject to appropriation and demarcation. No more taken for granted, the geographical commonsense, upon which the Asia-Europe dialectic of Orientalism is built to articulate otherness and naturalize cultural differences in political and social relations and concerns, can produce appropriations like Hegel's synthetic statement:" World history travels from east to west; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning" (1975, p.197).

Like Said, Homi K. Bhabha as an intellectual of mixed origin has found himself "negotiating the untranslatability between cultures"(Dennis, 2007, p.119). He handles many of the spatially oriented texts with deconstructive eyes. Bhabha's concept of hybridity has contributed to our understanding of cultural studies and power relations. He uses the word hybrid is to describe a person who can't claim a pure and distinctive racial/ national identity. Such an identity lives in a state of in-betweenness. Rather than viewing culture as an object of epistemological speculation, he takes it as a site of power that operates rather discursively. In his book *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha writes: "In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative"(1994, p.145).Bhabha's ideas of 'colonial ambivalence', hybridity, and mimicry are of help when it comes to analyzing aesthetically intercultural relations within the context of empire. His idea of ambivalence is responsible for the production of colonial subjects who "are almost the same but not quite"(1994, p. 89). Bhabha criticizes Said for his emphasis on binary oppositions, arguing that identity can be construed through a liminal space where double-consciousness is experienced: "identity is only ever possible in the *negation* of any sense of originality or plentitude; the

principle of displacement and differentiation (absence/presence, representation/repetition) [that always] renders it a liminal reality"(1994, p.51). Moreover, Bhabha finds in colonial ambivalence a force that combats ethnocentrism because of its strategies that work discursively with regard to the powers of segregation which need to be continuously charted. The paper displays the feelings of cultural in-betweenness that pervade Ahdaf Soueif's narrative identity under study. Whether explicitly or implicitly posed, the question of subjectivity (agency) remains Soueif's primal focus.

Ahdaf Soueif 's Rejection of Binary Oppositions

Muslim Arab immigrant women authors have used English to contest the Oriental/Occidental dichotomy. Compared to other languages, English is considered by the Europeans as the most powerful; not only as the means of communication, but also as a strategic tool to write a counter-narrative wherein oppression is resisted (Hafsi, 2017, p. 97). In their book *The Postcolonial Short Story*, Maggi Awadalla and Paul March-Russell have pointed to Ahdaf Soueif's use of Arabo-English in her examination of West-East divide. They are of the point that such a hybrid use of language is meant to destabilize both Arabic and English. For them, this leads her to produce a discourse not of her own, but rather a new "cross-cultural, multinational arena of public discourse"(2013, p.139). This hybridized language, they argue, is at play for it functions dually in the sense that "it deterritorializes and consequently reterritorializes [her] discourse"(2013, p.139). However, such kind of language is regarded as the only possible way to celebrate a "textual space"(2013, p.134) as an Arab Muslim female writer in the West. As a woman intellectual from the third world, the Egyptian-born Soueif participates actively to hold a strong position in the literary circle of the mainstream culture. In hybridizing her language, Soueif comes to revitalize her narrative identity (discourse). Moreover, she enables intellectuals to approach her text contrapuntally and understand it in a better way. It is only by such a strategy that co-existence or contrapuntal humanism is lived. She deconstructs the hierarchal structures that grand narratives promote by means of this prism and illustrates how significant it is in meaning-making out of lived experiences. Liminality gives rise to ambivalent feelings that make her protagonist suffer from an existential crisis. However, these ambivalences give birth to a new identity.

Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" is a first-person narrative account told from the perspective of a traumatized and trapped Western woman. Her entrapment is due to falling desperately in love with an unnamed Egyptian man whom she joins to live with in the west of Alexandria where the story is set. Their matrimonial relationship causes her troubles for they belong to different cultures. According to Irene Visser, traumatic experiences can have two tendencies in effect; an adverse impact if it runs quietly through the structure of a larger community and divides it into small fragments, and a positive one if helps them to undergo a better transformation and consolidate a sense of attachment based on mutual trust (2014, p.107-109). The story reflects the development of the protagonist's personality. Her positive change is hinted at only towards the end of the story. Her trauma has been transformative in the sense that she comes to achieve psychological adjustment with her new environment.

As the story opens, the notion of mobility is addressed. The globalized world witnesses the movement of many marginalized ethnic groups who desire to escape colonial periphery and celebrate the opportunities of the center. However, the story unfolds with a reversed picture; with the drifting of a "beaten white stone" (Soueif, 2009, p.370). Metaphorically speaking, the protagonist is depicted as a white stone that gets imprisoned by her intercultural marriage (love) and her movement to Egypt. Looking from her window, she says that she can see the different shapes that the drifted white sands take. In fact, she is taking about her personal experience while away from her flat in Georgian square. The opening paragraph of the narrative is suggestive of her alienation. At the beach, she acknowledges that the sand has occupied many of the white spaces on which she desires to place her foot:

White sands drifted across the path. From my window, I used to see patterns in their drift. On my way to the beach, I would try to place my foot, just the ball of my foot, for there never was much room, on those white spaces that glinted flat and free of sand. I had an idea that the patterns on the stone should be made by nature alone; I did not want one grain of sand, blown by a breeze could not feel, to change its course because of me. What point would there be in trying to decipher a pattern that I had caused? (Soueif, 2009, p. 370)

The above symbolic quotation reveals how miserable her life turns to be after her intercultural bond. She thinks it is useless to search for meaning in the life she has chosen. She says it is better to leave things to nature to determine her lot. It is clear that she is telling her story while she is on the beach. According to Maggie

Awadalla and Paul March-Russell, Soueif manipulate such a very vast and open space so as to expose her character's confined state of mind (2013, p.140). Moreover, the positioning of the family's life on the shore of Alexandria is read as an emblem of the restless and unstable life the family is leading. It entails them to hover "between two cultures, in an 'in-between' space, a place where they are neither in real Egypt, nor in England"(Hafsi, 2017, p.102). Color symbolism is of crucial significance for it reflects power relations. 'White spaces' are symbolic of Westerners like her. As a white woman, she comes to realize that she has no place in her husband's life and on his land, having felt the unbridgeable gap between their cultures. It foreshadows the sterile matrimonial relationship between husband and wife which she describes: "My foreignness, which had been so charming, began to irritate him. My inability to remember names, to follow the minutiae of politics, my struggles with his language, my need to be protected from the sun, the mosquitoes, the salads, and the dry water"(Soueif, 2009, p. 374). Cultural differences between the married couple are communicated to the readers by Soueif's reference to vulnerable feelings that her husband's land generates. She fears this landscape and starts to feel disorient. Furthermore, the protagonist's disorientation is translated by her inability to comprehend his language. Her spell vanishes due to his recognition of her Englishness that he desires to escape.

What complicates the narrator's situation and makes her feel dislocated is the fact that her husband has lost his interest in her and this brings her to suffer intensely "from a dual confinement,"(Awadalla and March-Russell, 2013, p. 140) which is both physical and psychological in nature. In addition, her foreignness stands as a barrier to her being assimilated in her husband's world. She seems so passive to take action: in spite of the fact that she has spent eight years with him, she has not attempted to learn his language. In the beginning, she is a woman so inactive to make any change on exercise change on her unfeeling husband (sand): "I did not want one grain of sand, blown by a breeze could not feel, to change its course because of me"(Soueif, 2009, p.370). Again, this quotation tells the readers that she prefers living in rather than escaping from the confinement she is doomed to experience for the sake of their daughter, Lucy (perhaps she is the one grain of sand whose course she doesn't want to change). Again, what engulfs the relationship between husband and wife is that her husband has no more been charmed by her foreignness/ whiteness. He starts drifting away from her. Her words show her

disappointment. Her exoticism and ethnocentric superior rank gradually make him lose interest in her.

Like her unnamed female protagonist, Ahdaf Soueif also gets traumatized by her intercultural marriage to her second husband, the English poet and critic Ian Hamilton whom she married in 1981 and "separated from before his death from cancer in 2001" (Chamber, 2011, p. 246). She is critical of interracial marriages. She marries twice and both of her marriages had been unsuccessful. In addition to her two traumatic marriage experiences (also has divorced her first Egyptian husband), there is however another trauma in her life: "the wrong Ph.D., a dry, quasi-scientific attempt to classify metaphors [and] her dislike of a nameless northern English town that resembles Lancaster" (Chamber, 2011, p. 246). Unlike Soueif, the narrator doesn't take any action or separate her husband in spite of her husband's hint to leave her: "On that swirl of amazed and wounded anger when, knowing him as I did, I first sensed that he was pulling away from me, I should have gone. I should have turned, pick up my child and gone" (Soueif, 2009, p.372). This kind of division between husband and wife is also represented by her reference to Lucy (the fruit of their love) as the result of hybridization : throughout her narrative, the protagonist refers to Lucy as being either hers or his. In fact, Lucy symbolizes power. She empowers her mother to rethink of staying where she is. The protagonist doesn't separate him and her love for him helps her to reconsider her past life and reason out the flaws that keep him away from her. She concludes that she can't live away from her husband and their daughter.

Soueif's protagonist feels dislocated and her sense of dislocation is made explicit by Soueif's skillful use of locale which she has shown symbolically through her reference to the physical wall: "Outside, there is a path. A path of beaten white stone bordered by a white wall-low, but not low enough for me to see over it from here," (Soueif, 2009, p.370). This wall despairingly prevents her to see what is beyond (Whiteness). In addition to the wall, the narrator's room also confines her for she resides in it most of the time, doing nothing but counting: "I lean against the wall of my room and count: twelve years ago, I met him. Eight years ago, I married him. Six years ago, I gave birth to his [not our] child" (Soueif, 2009, p.371). What makes her survive confinement and servitude is her maternity and her child whom she describes in a parodic way as her 'treasure' and 'trap' (Soueif, 2009, p.376). Exposed to ambivalence, she manages to achieve personal growth and have in her

place on the seashore a point of reference. While alone in her room, she starts recalling her past and fond memories before their happiness comes to an end. Soueif reflects on her protagonist's search for love and her desire to put ink into paper regarding her first journey into vast Africa: "Nine years ago, sitting under my first mosquito-net, I had written, 'Now I know how it feels to be a memsahib'... I never wrote the story, although I still have the notes... I told it to him instead_ and across the candlelit table of a Cairo restaurant he kissed my hands... I married him and I was happy"(Soueif, 2009, p.373). The protagonist's first attempt at writing her Africa story is not fulfilled. However, the notes she has preserved and the workings of memory help her to reconstruct a narrative identity (a story that accounts the psychological growth/ rebirth of an individual) that unites all fragments in one whole at last.

The story's title refers to Soueif's protagonist as a sandpiper, a bird that neither lives on the land nor on the sea, but on the thin intersection between two different polarities. In spite of her Western origin, she occupies now the borderline or a zone where the sea meets the sand. This in-between space represents the ideological setting that McAdams identifies as one feature of the life-story model of identity (the protagonist'). She is seen standing at the edge of Africa with the hope of seeing what is beyond the visual horizon, but what she manages to do is just to conjecture the sea's boundaries instead of seeing the infinity of the sea:

Now I realize, I was trying to work out my co-ordinates. I thought a lot about the water and the sand as I sat there watching them meet and flirt and touch. I tried to understand that I was on the edge, the very edge of Africa; that the vastness ahead was nothing compared to what lay behind me. But_ even though I'd been there and seen for myself its never- ending dusty green inferior, its mountains, the big sky, my mind could grasp a world that was not present to my senses _I could see the beach, the waves, the blue beyond, and cradling them all, my baby. (Soueif, 2009, p.371)

In the above quotation, the cold sea is the past symbol of the narrator and her country whereas the hot sand stands for her husband and his country. The story ends with the narrator's reconsideration of her limitations that had trapped her in the beginning. Moreover, the ending draws a different image of the protagonist. In the light of McAdams' life-story model of personality, this transition and co-ordination between the past image of her and the present one can be taken as a sign that marks a difference in her character or as McAdams calls a turning point. Her past portrait

gives life to her new one. The liminal stance enables her to celebrate a new possible future "state of deterritorialization" (Lillvis et al., 2017, p. 199). With a glimpse of hope, the narrator closes her story with some rhetorical questions (undetermined end) implying the idea of her being awakened even if lately and thus her acceptance of living contrapuntally:

With each ebb of *green* water the sand loses part of itself to the sea, with each flow another part is flung back to be reclaimed once again by the beach. The narrow stretch of sand knows nothing of the world better than does the white waves that whip it, caress it, collapse onto it, vanish into it... And what does the beach know of the depths, the cold, the currents just there, there_ do you see it? _ where the water turns a deeper blue. (Soueif, 2009, p.376)

Metaphorically speaking, the protagonist's homecoming is captured by these unanswered questions. In travel narratives, the question of homecoming is usually addressed in relation to autonomy. According to Nadia K. Thalji, homecoming is a process that one usually experiences after undergoing a transnational or traumatic experience away from home. It often speaks of one's being at home or one's success to emerge as an empowered self. Accordingly, such empowerment is attributed to one's potential to achieve psychological integration and transformation; to one's ability to bridge conflicting forces(similarities/ differences, consciousness/ unconsciousness, home /no home, past/ present)together in a third world(2018, p.11,14,19). Soueif's protagonist has come to the realization that the sand and water can't separate for each completes the other. The sand and water are dependent on each other and this dependence is translated to readers by Soueif' reference to the phenomenal process of ebb and flow. Furthermore, she is asking readers if they can acknowledge the far beyond (blue water) to imply that her past can be lived by remembering memories but the physical acknowledgment of it has still been of the past. She is satisfied to occupy the liminal position for the beach is attached to the sand and green water more than the depths of the blue water that she is doubtful she can see in full again. In this liminal zone, the solid sand and the liquid get mixed. She can't depart this place where the two parts of her achieve integration (herself with her husband and her daughter).

Conclusion

Ahdaf Soueif's "Sandpiper" revolves around the lived experiences of an identity whose agency is attributed to her being on the seashore, an intersectional arena that enables her to re-appropriate her heritage. The borderline makes possible for a co-ordination between the self and the other. She regards it as the best weapon to deconstruct the Orientalist discourse cultivated by the West. Moreover, it enables her protagonist to contrapuntally survive the fragmentation which is caused by her interracial marriage.

Soueif has made use of colors to signify Englishness and Africaness which the beach unites. Culture differences (the West/ East dyad) are pointed to with the intention of speaking truth to power i.e. to produce a discourse of power and identity. Through the liminal identity of her protagonist, Soueif portrays her protagonist's wish for a globalized world where the individual and the collective can co-exist. Because of Soueif's realistic depiction, she may wrongly be judged as siding with the West rather than the East. However, this is not the case. Like her autodiegetic narrator, Soueif appears existentially caught by suspension that makes her paradoxically experience sameness and difference (inclusion and exclusion). She keeps hovering both physically and textually between two spaces that are indispensable strands of her identity. In her story, she holds the middle position of Bhabha's hybrid and expresses her desire to live in a contrapuntal way wherein conflicts are almost put to an end.

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الهوية السردية في الفضاء الحدّي: طائر الطيّوي لأهداف سوييف أنموذجاً

أسيل هاتف جسام

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/ كلية التربية الأساسية/ الجامعة المستنصرية / العراق

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كلية التربية الأساسية/ جامعة ديالى/ العراق

المستخلص

يَصعب تحقيق الذات وإيجاد الوطن لكونهما عمليتان نفسيّتان معقدتان للغاية. أن يتواجد الفرد في فضاء حدّي يُعقد هاتين العمليتين ذلك ان الفرد سيعيش في دوامة مشاعر متناقضة. عادة ما يشعر بمثل هذه المشاعر المهاجرون الذين تتعارض قيمهم وتقاليدهم مع ثقافات البلد المضيف. فبعد أن وطأت أقدامها الغرب سعياً لتحقيق حلم إكمال دراساتها العليا في بريطانيا، مرّت الكاتبة العربية أهداف سويف (1950-) بحالة عدم اليقين والاضطراب النفسي. ومع ذلك، وجّدت سويف في الكتابة وسيلة للتنفيس عن مشاعرها السلبية فضلاً عن مشاعر بطلتها. لقد كشفت سويف عن التجارب الحياتية المتضاربة والعبارة للثقافات التي عاشتها البطلة في قصتها القصيرة شبه السيرة الذاتية والتي تحمل عنوان "طائر الطيّوي" (1994). يوضح البحث إمكانية الكتابة في استخدام أسلوب الخطاب لأدب الرحلات كوسيلة في التنقل بين وطنها (مصر) وبلدها الجديد (بريطانيا) والكشف عن مشاعر القلق والانزعاج لدى شخصياتها المتزوجة من أعراق مختلفة في الوقت ذاته. يُحلل البحث قصة سويف " طائر الطيّوي" في ضوء المفهوم النفسي للهوية السردية عند دان بي ماك آدمز ومفاهيم ما بعد الاستعمارية كالحديّة عند هومي بابا والتفكير الكاونترينتالي عند إدورد سعيد. بالإضافة إلى تحديد هذه المفاهيم، يبحث البحث في كيفية تطبيق هذه الأطر النظرية على خطاب سويف السردية وبطلة قصتها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أهداف سويف, عابر للثقافات, الفضاء الحدّي, الهوية السردية, طائر الطيّوي