



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE BILDUNGSROMAN: RE-BIRTH, TRAVELS, AND  
CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN, IRISH,  
AND RED SEAS

by

LEEN ROUWEID BOU NASSEREDDINE

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of English  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
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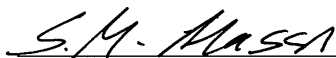
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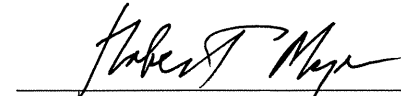
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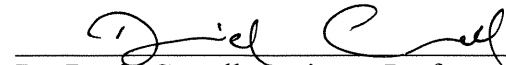
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Leen Rouweid Bou Nassereddine for Master of Arts  
Major: English Literature

Title: The Bildungsroman: Re-birth, Travels, and Conversations Across the Mediterranean, Irish, and Red seas

Scholarship on bildungsroman novels—European, Arab, postcolonial, male, female, or otherwise—is mostly traced back to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) as the archetype of the genre. Goethe’s novel is commonly used as the reference point for West-East, East-West frameworks in the discourse of the bildungsroman genre. This however, disavows literary traditions and influences on the bildungsroman novel that may have originated at earlier times or at different places, and limits the study of bildungsroman novels across disparate geographies and times. This study aims to relocate spatially and chronologically the bildungsroman tradition from an exclusively western scene outwards towards a global scene, to challenge narrowly defined national canons by analyzing the bildungsroman as a genre in motion, and to read Ahdaf Soueif’s novel, *In the Eye of the Sun*, alongside James Joyce’s bildungsroman, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to better understand the evolution of a coming of age tradition and its cultural translation across space and time. As we travel along the complicated and messy routes in this study, we uncover old, new, and different strands of the bildungsroman genre that have been buried in the dust, set them in motion, and watch them culminate into one constellation of a bildungsroman. Chapter One of this study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective”, demonstrates how tracing particular strands to different origins, strands that are inclusive of various cultures and traditions, creates a unity of fiction that helps negotiate cultures across space and time. As we explore the earlier complexities of the genre and its messy history, we challenge the compartmentalization of branches of knowledge, i.e. the bildungsroman genre, into exclusive categories such as “Western literature”. This chapter reads history as continuously in flux and sheds light on the travel of ideas and influence among individuals and the interrelatedness of nations. Chapter Two of this study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Motion”, demonstrates how one could trace the bildungsroman tradition across time and space to explore how literary forms and genres travel. As the genre traveled, it created in its journey new lines on the intellectual map of the world, lines that illustrate a variety of literary networks of transmission, reception and circulation of Joyce’s iconic bildungsroman text. After having traced the complicated routes and messy strands present in the genealogy of the bildungsroman genre in the first two chapters, the third and central part of this study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Constellation” brings to light the cultural exchange and translation of the bildungsroman genre through a comparative close reading of Joyce and Soueif’s texts. By tracing thematic and stylistic continuities and ruptures between the two texts, this close reading demonstrates how Soueif has appropriated the modernist bildungsroman tradition descending from Joyce. Through this appropriation, one can argue that this tradition has experienced its own coming of age, emerging as a new novel different by kind, not just by degree, that is, not merely another version of a bildungsroman but a new literary outcome of the bildungsroman genre.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

James Joyce and Ahdaf Soueif could never actually speak, however we can put them in conversation through their works, imagining that an exchange between Stephen Dedalus, of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and Asya Al-Ulama, of Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992), might appear as follows:

**Stephen:** "Welcome, O life, I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience" (Joyce 213).

**Asya:** "No. It isn't going to happen [at least not for me]" (Soueif 782).

Seventy-six years later, Asya is skeptical of Stephen's optimism when it comes to shaping one's own reality. Her reality as an Arab female living between Egypt and England makes her view the world differently. Within the bounds of a bildungsroman novel she is found straddling the line between reality and fiction, between developing into a free artist as a young woman and into a "portrait" of a free artist as a young woman. Stephen's quest for autonomy seventy six years later transitions into Asya's portrait or façade of autonomy, creating in the midst of this transition a new novel and a new narrative mode to express a coming of age. As the bildungsroman genre traveled from Ireland in 1916 to Egypt in 1992, it underwent changes that one could argue have formed a different novel by kind, not just by degree. Reading Soueif's novel alongside Joyce's bildungsroman allows us to better understand the coming of age tradition and its translation across disparate geographical locations and time.

Scholarship on bildungsroman novels—European, Arab, postcolonial, male, female, or otherwise—is mostly traced back to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) as the archetype of the genre. Goethe’s novel is commonly used as the reference point for West-East, East-West frameworks in the discourse of the bildungsroman genre. This connection however, disavows literary traditions and influences on the bildungsroman novel that may have originated at earlier times or at different places, and limits the study of bildungsroman novels across disparate geographies and times. In order to place two distinct novels under a comparative lens, it is important to recognize that the bildungsroman has a complicated genealogy with messy routes and to further study these routes on a literary map, drawing the genre’s movements across national borders. Recognizing the complicated genealogy allows us to envision Joyce and Soueif’s novels in relation to one another, despite their disparate location and time, and imagine an exchange between Asya and Stephen as a natural reaction to the genre’s multifaceted and messy journeys. This study aims to relocate spatially and chronologically the bildungsroman tradition from an exclusively western scene outwards towards a global scene, to challenge narrowly defined national canons by analyzing the bildungsroman as a genre in motion, and to read Soueif’s novel alongside Joyce’s bildungsroman to better understand the evolution of a coming of age tradition and its cultural translation across space and time. As we travel along the complicated and messy routes in this study, we uncover old, new, and different strands of the bildungsroman genre that have been buried in the dust, set them in motion, and watch them culminate into one constellation of a bildungsroman. With that said, conventional measures of time and distance do not apply to literature and as such one cannot exclude the relationship between Joyce and Soueif’s bildungsroman texts based on their mileage and dates. Despite the

obscurity of a literary genre's continuum, as a reader one can draw possible routes in which Joyce's work could have circulated outside of Europe and received by non-western writers and critics who introduced his work to the Arab world and ultimately to Soueif's library. Studying the genealogy, circulation and reception of the bildungsroman genre in and out of Europe allows us to envision the genre as a "traveler" and add a new route to its discourse, one that challenges the westerners' dominant role in the bildungsroman tradition and Europe's place in its history, as well as, offer a new vantage point in which one could negotiate cultural differences between the West and East.

This study is situated within a **world literature** methodological paradigm in which it studies the *reception, translation, and circulation* of Joyce's texts from Europe to the Arab world, in addition to **comparative and translation studies across languages and cultural spheres**, focusing on the overlapping of thematic and stylistic continuities found in a close reading of the texts. Also included is **feminist gender studies** as I intend to explore the differences between a male centered bildungsroman and a female one, as well as **James Joyce studies**. The methodology I aim to follow comprises two approaches: the first is theoretical/analytical and the second relies on a close reading. The first two chapters follow different genealogies and traditions of the bildungsroman genre to shed light on cultural exchange, but at the center of my project is my third chapter, which includes the close reading of Joyce and Soueif's bildungsroman texts. The purpose of this close reading is to shed light on what happens when literary forms and genres travel, i.e. how the bildungsroman genre is translated in travel.

The overarching questions of the study are: What happens when we situate the bildungsroman novel within a world literature paradigm, tracing its reception and

transformation across disparate geographical locations and time? What happens to the bildungsroman genre when one determines that it has multiple beginnings and traditions in and outside of Europe from which one can begin tracing from a non-linear and complicated genealogy, its thematic and stylistic continuity? Other questions include: How does a genre travel? What happens when a genre travels? How are pioneers of the genre from various places and times channeling one another (directly or indirectly) in their coming of age narratives? What happens when an Arab woman shapes the coming of age narrative?

Chapter One of this study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective”, relocates spatially and chronologically the bildungsroman tradition from an exclusively western scene outwards towards a global scene and demonstrates how tracing particular strands to different origins, strands that are inclusive of various cultures and traditions, creates a unity of fiction that helps negotiate cultures across space and time. As we think about the earlier complexities of the genre and its *messy* history, we challenge the compartmentalization of branches of knowledge, i.e. the bildungsroman genre, into exclusive categories such as “Western literature”. This chapter reads history as continuously in flux and sheds light on the travel of ideas and influence among individuals and the interrelatedness of nations. Rather than reinforce the notion that history can be studied from an exclusive vantage point that is “superior” and “unique” to its “other”, this part of the study focuses on reading the bildungsroman as a genre with multiple histories and roots that are all central to its discourse.

Chapter Two of this study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Motion”, demonstrates how one can trace the bildungsroman tradition across time and space to explore how literary forms and genres travel. Reading the bildungsroman genre as a genre in motion

traveling along complicated routes, this chapter challenges narrowly defined national canons. As the genre traveled, it created in its travels new lines on the intellectual map of the world, lines that illustrate a variety of literary networks of transmission, reception and circulation of Joyce's iconic bildungsroman text. In this chapter, the central concepts explored are **travel**, and **global circulation** and **cultural exchange**. When using the term "travel", I am engaging with James Clifford, who in his book *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) criticizes those who attempt to understand global cultures by only examining the roots of the natives without taking into consideration global circulation and exchange that have always been a part of their indigenous culture. Hybrid and cosmopolitan experiences are just as important as native and rooted ones, and examining one without the other leads to erasing important histories of global cultures. Also, when examining global circulation and cultural exchange, I engage with Lydia H. Liu's book *Tokens of Exchange: The Problems of Translation in Global Circulations* (1999) to argue that the translation of symbolic and material forms that travel with literary practices are just as central to the notion of global exchange as linguistic translation. Taking the translated bildungsroman texts as objects, I demonstrate how these translated texts have become "tokens of exchange" between peoples and cultures, in their symbolic and material forms. Their translation and circulation not only present a literary work in a different language, but also allow the bildungsroman genre to travel between regions and create meaning-value exchange between disparate cultures. Therefore, to trace the genealogy of the bildungsroman genre, while bearing in mind the concepts of travel and global exchange, I take Clifford's notion of "traveler" and "native" to examine how the genre can have both older rooted traditions in various literary genres and forms, and a

cosmopolitan experience. I read the bildungsroman genre, as both a “native” (Chapter One) and a “traveler” (Chapter Two) to better understand its tradition outside of dominant discourse that associates the genre to one main locale as the nexus—Goethe’s West, which is already enmeshed in travel and cultural exchange. I also take Liu’s notion of global exchange to trace how the bildungsroman texts, in both their linguistic and symbolic and material form, traveled beyond their place of origin and landed in the hands of Joyce and Soueif. I aim to show how the genre travels, and is exchanged globally, in order to set the foundation for the third and central chapter of this study which is focused on how the bildungsroman novel is **translated** in travel.

After having traced the complicated routes and tangled strands present in the genealogy of the bildungsroman genre in the first two chapters, I come to the third and central part of my study, titled “The Bildungsroman in Constellation”, a chapter that brings to light the cultural exchange and translation of the bildungsroman genre through a comparative close reading of Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun*. By tracing thematic and stylistic continuities and ruptures between the two texts, I aim to explore both the similarities and differences between their two traditions. This chapter is centered on how the bildungsroman novel is translated in travel and examines how bildungsroman traditions differ and yet remain similar to each other. In other words, I explore the ways in which we could universalize the tradition and the ways we could trace its exclusivity to one context. I chose to place both Soueif and Joyce’s texts in conversation for multiple reasons. Both novels fall under the umbrella of English literature, though they come from different places. Also, the legacy of British colonialism has left its mark on both Egypt and Ireland, making both Ireland and Egypt peripheral

places. Thus Joyce and Soueif could both be seen as writing from the margins. And lastly, Irish and Egyptian identities are immersed in a similar sense of nationalism and political activism. My study of Soueif's bildungsroman tradition in light of Joyce's provides another bridge between both cultures, more specifically the connections between the two manifested literary cultures that are illustrated by the two bildungsroman traditions. Placing both novels in conversation allows us to examine how the bildungsroman tradition has been translated in travel, where it came from, where it has gone, and where it is now. This close reading demonstrates how Soueif has appropriated the modernist bildungsroman tradition descending from Joyce, and through this appropriation one can argue that this tradition has experienced its own coming of age, emerging as a new novel different by kind, not just by degree, that is, not merely another version of a bildungsroman but a new literary outcome of the bildungsroman genre.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BILDUNGSROMAN IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures.

--Matthew Arnold, "On the Modern Element in Literature"

#### A. Introduction

When historicizing a genre, one could conceivably look at the "first" novel and its "one" point of origin to begin tracing the genre's continuity from that point in space linearly through time, causing the notions of influence and debt to be dismissed and encouraging the establishment of binary opposition. Any interaction between civilizations is ignored and the construct that cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous is denied. History is frozen and that "one" starting point becomes the nexus that all descendants of the genre are in direct dialogue with, replicating, resisting, or detaching themselves from. To describe a genre as unique to one nation is to deny the fact that "people have always lived in a global village throughout history" (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 3).

Understanding the bildungsroman genre from a global perspective allows us to undermine dangerous assumptions that there is an exclusively western intellectual history, western mindset or western *genre*.

Classically, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is widely accepted as the archetype of the bildungsroman genre, springing out of Germany in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, placing the West at the nexus of this genre and as the obligatory reference point to all

antecedent bildungsromans. Since the publication of Goethe's novel in 1795, scholars have mostly ignored traditions that preceded 1795, compared other coming of age novels with Goethe's tradition, and named Goethe the pioneering writer of the genre. Claiming ownership of the genre and recognizing it as exclusively belonging to one context limits the possibility of tracing literary influences across space and time and ultimately removes other non-German literary traditions from the discourse in order to lay claim to a tradition and be in a position of superiority. Literary scholars who locate the bildungsroman at one point of origin—Germany—do not take into consideration that ideas and traditions travel, and tend to forget that Germany did not exist as a state at the time of Goethe and that Goethe himself was not a nationalist (Austen 233). Therefore, rather than use the literary scene as a space that reinforces Eurocentric notions of superiority and create a distinction between one culture and the other, I read the bildungsroman genre's genealogy as one that consists of multiple strands with ties to various cultures in literary history in order to complicate the Goethean vantage point of the origin of the bildungsroman and its exclusive ties to a German "nation". I do not intend to simply replace the former genealogy with a new one, but rather to complicate the genealogy by emphasizing its multiple routes and ties with other literary traditions and cultures. The bildungsroman's origin could be stemming from more than one location, i.e. re-birthed at different places and times. Therefore, tracing its exact point of origin becomes less important the more we realize that it stems from various manifestations and has had an influence on different literary traditions stemming from various cultures, all of which are essential to its discourse. By relocating spatially and chronologically the bildungsroman tradition from an exclusively western scene outwards towards a global scene, I demonstrate that tracing particular strands to different origins,

strands that are inclusive of various cultures and traditions, creates a unity of fiction that manifests into what Samar Attar notes as “the unity of mankind” that “includes East and West” which “are like two moods of the same man; they represent two fundamental and complementary phases of human experience” (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 5), and in this case, of a genre’s life experience. In re-thinking the genre and its earlier complexities, we can then place novels from disparate geographies and time in conversation, understanding that these various strands from the past have come together to define what is characterized as a bildungsroman. The genre’s *messy* history challenges the compartmentalization of branches of knowledge into exclusive categories, such as “Western literature”. History is continuously in flux and to deny the flux of ideas and influence among individuals and the interrelatedness of nations is to reinforce the notion that history can be studied from an exclusive vantage point that is “superior” and “unique” to its “other”.

Understanding that the history of the bildungsroman does not have a straightforward genealogy allows one to recognize the importance of examining longstanding and mutually sustaining connections among cultures of the globe. A revision in literary scholarship is one that could not only allow for a re-visiting of texts outside the parameters of the canon, but also challenge discourse that has for some time regarded certain cultures outside of the dominant West as inferior and “by some lights, as the quintessence of the foreign and the Other” (Menocal 9). Further, in his book *Myth and Archive: A theory of Latin American narrative* (1990), Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria comments on the views of American author Ralph Freedman concerning the origins of the novel, who wrote,

Instead of separating genres or subgenres artificially and then accounting for exceptions by stipulating mixtures and compounds, it is simpler to view all of prose fiction as a unity and to trace particular strands to different origins, strands which would include not only the English novel of manners, or the post-medieval romance, or the Gothic novel, but also medieval allegory, the German Bildungsroman, or the picaresque. (7)

Echevarria adds that “The novel's origin is not only multiple in space but also in time. Its history is not, however, a linear succession or evolution, but a series of new starts in different places. The only common denominator is the novel's mimetic quality, not of a given reality, but of a given discourse that has already ‘mirrored’ reality” (*Myth and Archive* 8). In this chapter, I put Freedman and Echevarria’s words in motion and “trace particular strands [of the bildungsroman genre] to different origins” (Echevarria, *Myth and Archive* 7) to view the various bildungsroman traditions as a unity and bring the bildungsroman genre into a global context, where it belongs. Demonstrating that the bildungsroman history is not a linear succession or evolution allows me to envision two distinct novels, separated by seventy-six years, emerging from two different eras (modern and postmodern), from two different places (Ireland and Egypt) and of two different genders (male and female), as one single constellation in the third and most central chapter of this study.

## B. The Bildungsroman as Genre

The term “Bildungsroman” was first introduced by German philosopher and sociologist Wilhelm Dilthey in the biography of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1870) and was then popularized with the success of his *Poetry and Experience* (1906) (Boes 231).

Following the publication of *Poetry and Experience*, for over fifty years German scholars

“occupied themselves with differentiating between ever finer gradations of *Bildung* and with honing the thesis that the novel of formation possesses an inherent national particularity” (Boes 232). These scholars celebrated the genre growing out of Goethe’s tradition “as the German answer to ‘decadent’ French and English ‘novels of society’ ” (Boes 232). In 1961, German critics discovered that the term “Bildungsroman” was in fact not coined by Dilthey, but rather by German critic Karl Morgenstern in the early nineteenth century, who justifies the name of the genre as follows, “It will justly bear the name Bildungsroman firstly and primarily on account of its thematic material, because it portrays the Bildung of the hero in its beginnings and growth to a certain stage of completeness; and also secondly because it is by virtue of this portrayal that it furthers the reader's Bildung to a much greater extent than any other kind of novel” (Swales 12). However, though the term supposedly emerged in the early nineteenth century with Morgenstern, it received a lasting name only at the beginning of the twentieth century with Dilthey’s employment of the term. In *Poetry and Experience* (1985), Dilthey utilizes the term and discusses its characteristics in novels. He writes that bildungsroman novels “portray a young man of their time: how he enters life in a happy state of naiveté seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, how he grows to maturity through diverse life experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world” (Dilthey 335) and “other characters are placed beside its central character to produce a sense of contrast and completeness, just as in *Wilhelm Meister*” (Dilthey 269). Critic Jeffrey Sammons accuses Dilthey of “looking for a ‘legitimately German’ art form that might productively be contrasted with the overwhelmingly successful French and English realist novels” to which he then “artificially revived an extinct genre, and

succeeded in convincing modernist novelists such as Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse to write novels of formation in the fictitious Goethean tradition” (Boes 233). Goethe’s bildungsroman became known as the novel that represented the major form of the German novel and “like no other form of art is able to reveal the decisive, essential features of the German character” (Sammons 29). In addition, Theodore Ziolkowski attests that “Although the form has inspired nonGerman novels...the Bildungsroman is a typically German genre and constitutes Germany's main contribution to the European novel” (Sammons 30). Thomas Mann who himself reproduced the bildungsroman form in *Der Zauberberg*, *Doktor Faustus*, and *Joseph und seine Brüder*, claims “There is a variety of the novel that is German, typically German, legitimately national, and that is just the autobiographically filled Bildungsroman or *Entwicklungsroman*” (Sammons 30). In his book *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918), Mann states that the concept of “Bildung” itself is exclusively German, is derived from Goethe and “through him this concept has been elevated to an educational principle in Germany as in no other nation” (Sammons 31). This notion, shared by German critics such as Wilhelm Dilthey, isolates the genre from its counterparts in other countries and centers the bildungsroman discourse around Goethe’s novel as the single archetypal example. As Thomas Spaine in “Was Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre Really Supposed to Be a Bildungsroman?” (1991) notes, Goethe’s novel “has come to be regarded as the earliest and the greatest, the epitome of the German Bildungsroman, a model for itself and all its brothers” (119).

As the genre breached the confines of German-language literature and was adopted by the rest of the European literary community, the bildungsroman genre remained a form that was mainly seen as borrowed from Goethe and the German nation. The first English

occurrence of the term is cited in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1910, after which the term was utilized as a label for any novel that “has as its main theme the formative years or spiritual education of one person” (Boes 231). In 1930, Susanne Howe published the first English academic work on the subject of the bildungsroman in *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen*. In 1974, Jerome Hamilton Buckley published *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, a principle reference on the British novel of formation for the past several decades, assimilating the German tradition. In defining the genre, Buckley illustrates that each bildungsroman novel is characterized by two or three themes, taken from “childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy” (18), to list a few. Buckley relies on Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795) as the archetype of the genre, writing “*Wilhelm Meister* has established itself in literary history as the prototype of the Bildungsroman” (Buckley 12). He continues to build on its definition by writing,

The Bildungsroman in its pure form has been defined as the "novel of all-around development or self-culture" with "a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience." And the origins of its characteristic hero have been traced to a number of conventions and traditions: to the hero of the old moral allegories, to the picaresque hero who in his travels meets all sorts and conditions of men, to the Parzival figure learning slowly through his trials, to the "Renaissance man" bent on exercising to the full his many talents. (Buckley 12)

Here, Buckley’s remark on the origins of the bildungsroman hero being traced back to different literary traditions and figures sheds light on the different possibilities and routes from which the genre could have begun its course. Yet, like other scholars he continues to

use the term in relation to Goethe's novel as the archetype. Therefore, I use this chapter to carve a space for other conventions and traditions in order to avoid isolating the genre from its counterparts or viewing it from one vantage point that reinforces a Eurocentric discourse. As Nayef Al-Rodhan notes, "In relation to Europe, Eurocentrism—the tendency to view the world from the viewpoint of European dominance and an implied assumption of European uniqueness and superiority—infused Europe's account of its own historical development and place in world history. In these accounts, the role of the Arab-Islamic world in the rise of the West is obscured" (3) and so is the role of other literary traditions that are central to the rise of the bildungsroman genre. Therefore, rather than refuel this limited discourse, this study participates in a global discourse of the genre, one that takes into consideration the forces that have shaped the genre that originated outside of German language and literary borders. I use the term "German borders" to illustrate that after establishing itself as the prototype of the genre, Goethe's novel enclosed itself within invisible borders, problematizing its association with other traditions.

Going beyond these borders and stepping outside of Europe, the African bildungsroman is also seen as a form that takes its shape from Goethe. For instance, the Kenyan bildungsroman *Nervous Conditions* (1988), by Tsitsi Dangarembga, is referred to as the "the idealist vision of classical [Goethean] Bildung" (Austen 223). Moreover, the bildungsroman novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), by Olive Schreiner, is compared to the Goethean bildungsroman by Jed Etsy in "The Colonial Bildungsroman: The Story of an African Farm and the Ghost of Goethe" (2007), where Etsy writes, the novel's "conspicuously awkward temporal scheme challenges the formal dictates of the Goethean bildungsroman (with that genre's conventional sense of teleological and



masculinist destiny) even as it registers the deep contradictions of colonialism itself as a discourse of progress” (Etsy 408). Etsy also writes that in the chapter “Times and Seasons,” “Schreiner restricts Waldo’s development to the spiritual and intellectual plane, deliberately distinguishing it from the full human norm of the Goethean mode” (417). Likewise, in a key article on the Arabic bildungsroman “The Arabic Bildungsroman: A Generic Appraisal” (1993), Nedal Al-Mousa compares Arabic bildungsroman novels to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*. He compares Suhayl Idris’s *al-Hayy al-Latini (The Latin Quarter)* (1958) to Goethe’s novel, writing, “an instructive analogy can be drawn between the hero in *The Latin Quarter* and Wilhelm Meister in Goethe’s novel” (Al-Mousa 232). He also compares the course of events in Tawfiq Hakim’s *Usfur min al-Sharq (Bird of the East)* (1938) to Goethe’s novel.

If a genre strictly represents one nation, representations of other nations become muddled. For example, if one were to read Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun* as a bildungsroman that in nature is representative of the German nation and exclusively of the German language and literary tradition, one would wonder at what point the novel is representing the coming of age of Egypt and at what point is it slipping into an exclusively German narrative. Accordingly, Martin Swales in *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (1978) notes,

When we read a novel, we do so (whether we realize it or not) with certain expectations in mind. These expectations, these predispositions to a certain kind of reading, help to condition, and are in their turn conditioned by, the specific work before us. Hence, our understanding of the individual text is a constant movement between generality and specificity, between notional genre and given work. Moreover, it must be stressed that genre constructs have historical validity: they are not foisted on the works after the event by eagerly taxonomic

scholars and readers. Rather, the historical agency of the genre constitutes that "horizon of expectation" with reference to each individual work is made. This is not, of course, to deny the role of individual creativity. But the specific work activates and energizes those expectations in order to debate with them, to refashion, to challenge, perhaps even to parody them. (10-11).

If our expectations of Soueif's bildungsroman narrative are centered on it being an adaptation of a German genre, it becomes difficult to read her novel as an Egyptian bildungsroman with distinct qualities that constitute a coming of age of an Arab female in the Arab world. Though the term bildungsroman raises many complications, it is not my intention to simply delve into its history but rather to demonstrate the importance of removing connotations that the genre is exclusive to one tradition or stems from one specific context because such an approach limits the reading of other forms of the genre emerging outside of Germany and reinforces German ideals of superiority that do not take into consideration other novels central to the bildungsroman discourse. On that note, Hartmut Steinecke makes a suitable proposition to re-name the genre "Individualroman" and place any novel that takes the form of fictional biography or autobiography under that label (Sammons 33). Similarly, Frederick Amrine "has suggested that literary critics drop the term Bildungsroman from their vocabulary altogether, in the light of competing traditions that are oppressively restrictive on the one hand and irresponsibly promiscuous on the other" (Boes 233). In this regard, the term bildungsroman has come to be seen as a complicated and loaded term that carries with it notions of national superiority and German uniqueness, furthering the distinction between novels that are emerging in different contexts, particularly outside of Germany and the European continent. It is not my purpose to go into detail on the history of the genre; there exists much literature exploring this

aspect. Rather, I should like to demonstrate that the term has been associated with widespread misapprehensions on the genre that reinforce German national literary superiority. Placing Germany as the nexus continues to take place till this day as work on the bildungsroman continues to be traced back to Goethe.

The German canonization process has resulted in a distorted view of the genealogy of the genre and has disavowed literary traditions and influences on the bildungsroman novel that have originated at earlier times and in different places. The majority of the discourse on the bildungsroman has ignored the fact that the term could be associated with multiple strands and can have multiple origins that existed prior to Goethe's publication in 1795. According to Sammons, "the confusion, indifference, and arbitrariness surrounding the employment of the term Bildungsroman is a symptom of...lost connections" (44-45). Though Sammons was thinking of the lost connections between Germany's literary developments in the nineteenth century and those of today, I consider the lost connections missing in the discourse of the bildungsroman between the various strands of the genre such as Ibn Tufayl, Maqama, Picaresque, Defoe, and Joyce. These missing connections are by no means meant to clear the fog surrounding the term, contrarily; they further complicate the genealogy of the genre. However, with these complex terms we can begin to see how different novels from different geographical locations can come together under one literary tradition carrying their own literary uniqueness and further informing the genre's tradition. Creating a bridge between cultures through an inclusive study of the bildungsroman and its various strands will allow us to find interesting connections amongst these cultures. Once we emancipate the genre from its exclusive German ties and Goethe's bildungsroman's canonical position we can begin to imagine a global literary genre and

challenge the genre's ties to the notion of having a straightforward genealogy. Tracing the complexities in the genre's genealogy allows us to better understand the relation between a literary tradition and its circulation. Though traditions and ideas travel, at times their source is hidden and at other times it is overly exposed, as is the case with Goethe, hindering the potential of a genre to be seen from a global perspective with its roots residing in various geographical grounds. As we uncover these roots and routes we learn that two bildungsroman novels from disparate geographical locations and time can come together in a literary discourse in the shape of a bildungsroman constellation that combines multiple strands of themes, placing the bildungsroman genre into a global context, where it belongs.

It is important to widen the scope when studying a literary genre and re-visit older non-European traditions, to challenge the "us vs. them" power schema existing within literary discourse. On that note, I join Tobias Boes who attempts to shift the discourse of the bildungsroman from belonging to an exclusive German tradition. In his article "Modernist Studies and the Bildungsroman: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends" (2006), Boes argues that the bildungsroman does not have one tradition, but many. By the early 1980s the bildungsroman genre saw new conceptual approaches that radically transformed how we perceive a coming of age novel. As Boes notes, several factors contributed to the development of the genre, and one of them is,

The immediate impact of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* [which] introduced a dialectical and historical dimension to genre criticism that did much to break up ossified structures. Jameson rightly stresses that literary genres are "experimental constructs" (145) which are constantly being renegotiated by new works that come into contact with them. (234)

Following Jameson's argument that literary genres are "experimental constructs", I will first provide an overview of different experimental constructs of the genre that have existed for a number of years prior to Goethe's archetype and continued to resonate after his publication. And second, I will illustrate how the tradition is "constantly being renegotiated by new works that come into contact" by pinpointing possible interactions across cultures and times between various constructs of the genre. Once we consider different combinations, i.e. bildungsroman novels in contact with one another, we can better understand Jameson's notion of the genre being an "experimental construct" that is constantly being appropriated and developing in time in relation to its various counterparts. Lastly, through a more inclusive study of the genealogy of the genre and its multiple and complicated strands we can break the wall "that seems to perpetually stand between East and West" the wall behind which "even the most liberal intellectuals wallow" (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 4). The wall here represents the German borders mentioned earlier, the invisible borders that Goethe's novel created which limited outside literary traditions from crossing. As Attar rightly stresses "people influence each other regardless of their race, religion, gender and culture, and... history is continuously in flux" (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 4). When we read a bildungsroman it is important to take into consideration the established connections in its genealogy, or, put differently in Mahmoud Baroud's words, "The moment we start reading we [should] move across boundaries, establishing connections and relations, and no longer [limit] our reading within one single literature but within the great wide circle of Literature with a capital L, what Goethe called Weltliteratur" (42).

And yet, scholarship on the bildungsroman continues to represent predominantly European traditions of the genre, therefore, this study carves a space for the analysis of other traditions that are central to its discourse and have reached Europe from other places. Aside from being predominantly Eurocentric, discourse on the bildungsroman has been predominantly concerned with what Mikhail Bakhtin notes in an essay “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism” (1987), “the image of *man* in the process of becoming” (19). Feminist critics who wrote against the exclusion of the female experience from the genre have challenged the bildungsroman’s male-centric nature. A groundbreaking study in this regard was *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (1983) edited by Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Other scholars also wrote about the role of the female bildungsroman, an example being, Carol Lazzaro-Weis who in her book *From Margins to Mainstream Feminism and Fictional Modes in Italian Women's Writing, 1968-1990* (1993), dedicates a chapter titled “The Female Bildungsroman” in which she notes that “many critics use the term ‘female Bildungsroman’ to defend the representation of women's experience in writing as a necessary means to fulfill the goal of finding a new female identity” (95). She continues to demonstrate how other scholars have discussed the female bildungsroman and argued that feminist writers used the form of the bildungsroman to reject its archetypal message of accommodation to society after they reveal the processes of social conditioning in their lives, and recognize their repression by society and their own participation in that repression (Lazzaro-Weis 95). More importantly, in comparing the male and female traditions, Lazzaro-Weis remarks that “the ‘male’ Bildungsroman, at least in its German manifestation, is not so dissimilar in its goals and results from its ‘female’ equivalent,

which also typically substitutes inner concentration and withdrawal for active accommodation and rebellion” (97). This idea will be examined closely in the third and most central aspect of the study, one that places two bildungsroman novels emerging out of various strands of the bildungsroman genealogy in constellation to illustrate the continuities and ruptures between a female and male bildungsroman, among other differences in their traditions. To do so, I use this chapter as a means to lay the groundwork for the various strands of the genre in which Soueif and Joyce’s bildungsroman novels could be traced back to, in relation to the different places of origin in which literary influence from their antecedents stem, followed by the second chapter that traces the genre in motion, looking closely at the circulation and reception of texts that made these various combinations possible. The first two chapters will allow me to place the two novels stemming out of disparate geographies and time in conversation (Chapter Three), understanding that these various strands (Chapter One) from the past have come together through cultural exchange and translation (Chapter Two) to build a bridge in the center of the bildungsroman discourse that presents the possibility of cultural interaction across the globe, and ultimately, a global genre.

### C. The Ibn Tufayl(ean) Route

Tracking a writer’s influence through time can uncover surprising and overlooked connections. Resurrecting the memory of a forgotten man and a forgotten seminal text to the bildungsroman tradition is important when challenging Eurocentric discourse that has isolated the genre from its older counterparts. Bildungsroman discourse that is centered on Goethe as the pioneering writer of the genre has disavowed literary traditions and

influences on the bildungsroman novel that have originated at an earlier time in a different place, i.e. Islamic Golden Age.<sup>1</sup> Known as the ‘ornament of the world’ at one time, Muslim Spain was a key point for the “transmission of knowledge and practices to Europe from the Arab-Islamic world, partly as a result of scholars, translators, pilgrims and traders travelling between Europe and the Arab-Islamic Empire” (Al-Rodhan 2). A prominent figure of that empire is Ibn Tufayl, an Arab Andalusian Muslim polymath, writer and Islamic philosopher known in the West as Abubacer. In the early 12<sup>th</sup> century he wrote *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, a text that was a catalyst for the bildungsroman genre, a genre said to emerge in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Lehrjahre*. Yet, scholarship tends to ignore his profound influence on European writers and “those who had borrowed freely from Hayy, had either kept silent about their debt for different reasons, or simply did not know that they were quoting his Arabic book” (Attar *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 2). Attar continues to note that ignoring the profound influence of the Arab-Islamic world on modern Europe “is mainly due to this very exclusive way of looking at Western societies as constituting separate and coherent entities very different from any other. The large divide created by historians between West and East seems to be responsible for many errors and misunderstanding in the transmission of knowledge in general” (3). On a similar note, the transmission of knowledge on the genealogy of the bildungsroman has overly simplified its tangled route by marking the genre’s origins with

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<sup>1</sup> Islamic Golden Age is a period of Islamic development that lasted nearly five centuries from 786 CE to 1258 CE, though some scholars extend this period to an even longer time. It is a period that “encompasses the remarkable accomplishments made by Islamic scholars, humanists, and scientists in all areas of the arts and humanities, the physical and social sciences, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, finance, and Islamic and European monetary systems over a period of many centuries” (Renima 1).



Goethe's archetypal novel and labeling other bildungsroman novels as descendants from that **one** tradition. This linear genealogy isolates other important works that have originated at an earlier time and place and have been disseminated to multiple places. For one, scholars have commented on Ibn Tufayl's text being a precursor to Goethe's bildungsroman. According to Dalal Malhas Steitieh in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Educational Thinkers* (2016),

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan was admired by many distinguished figures during the Enlightenment period. The great German philosopher, Gottfried von Leibniz knew it in its Latin translation and held it in high esteem. It has recently been suggested that the central idea of Daniel Defoe's famous novel *Robinson Crusoe* was borrowed from Ibn Tufayl's story, most probably from the Ockley translation of 1708. One may also see the story as a precursor of the European Bildungsroman, such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, popular at a rather later period. (36-37)

What has been known as the prototype for the bildungsroman genre titled *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* actually carries traces from an older tradition emerging from Ibn Tufayl's text, passed on to Goethe through other European writers such as Daniel Defoe. In addition, other European thinkers such as Da Vinci, Locke, Descartes and Kant and others have "formulated and reformulated Ibn Tufayl's notions of freedom, equality and toleration" (Attar, "Suppressed or Falsified History?" 121) and have been inspired by Ibn Tufayl in their formulation of the concept of the modern man. As such, just as Europe did not invent modernity and the sovereign man, it did not invent the coming of age of man/woman in fiction. Western scholars have for decades depicted Muslim civilization as only a "transmitter of the knowledge of others and not an innovator" (Attar, "Suppressed or Falsified History?" 118). Yet, reading Ibn Tufayl's text as a

precursor to Goethe's novel allows us to recapture the history of cultural borrowing between the West and the Arab-Islamic world in order to dismantle negative images of the Arab/Muslim "other" in the eyes of the West. According to Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan in "Introduction: A Thousand Years of Amnesia" in his book titled *The Role of the Arab-Islamic World in the Rise of the West* (2012) "knowing our common cultural heritage brings us closer together" (19) and recognizing the important role the Arab-Islamic Empire played in the rise of the West helps "instill a respect for peoples of the Muslim world that has been sorely lacking" (19). Al-Rodhan writes about the importance of recapturing the history of cultural borrowing between the West and the Arab-Islamic world, in order to dismantle negative images of the Arab/Muslim "other" in the eyes of the West. Sharing a similar opinion to Al-Rodhan, in her book *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage* (2010), Maria Rosa Menocal argues that [primarily western scholars] are governed—by the necessity of remaining superior—by the notion that western and non-western cultural history is fundamentally different and that any cultural history must fall under either category exclusively. Drawing that rigid line between two cultures has justified the canonizing of literary histories and "the crystallization of the Europeanness and its ancestry" (Menocal 6). The proposition that the Arab world played a critical role in the making of the modern West has been at large challenged by literary scholars who are in no means necessarily willing to dismantle the western ideology that has embraced cultural supremacy over the Arab world and allowed them to legitimize their position as cultural and literary makers of the world. Menocal explains that it is not the revising of the view of an earlier period of history that is difficult, but rather the "reversal of an ideological conditioned sense of the

communal Western self' (9) that makes it difficult to imagine modifications to the paradigms that have governed that "Western self". Yet, challenging these paradigms and encouraging a different view of relations between East and West allows for an appreciation of many critical subtexts and "cultural forces that were catalytic in the medieval period" (Menocal 15). On that note, to acknowledge the role of the Arab-Islamic world in shaping the modern West, I join both literary scholars Menocal and Al-Rodhan by shedding light on one particular literary genre (*bildungsroman*) in which Islamic influence has been obscured and ignored to secure European, or in this case, German dominance. Both Al-Rodhan and Menocal believe that this deliberate collective amnesia by westerners is due to the fact that they have embraced the self-image of themselves as dominant and superior to the "other" in the peripheral Arab-Islamic world, and prefer not to challenge it. This perspective, however, fosters a continued negative outlook on the Arab-Islamic world that had an important role in the development of what scholars now regard as the dominant western self. Through looking at the *bildungsroman* from Ibn Tufayl's vantage point, we challenge the westerners' dominant role in the *bildungsroman* tradition and Europe's place in its history by adding to the scholarship a study that bridges both the West and East within this tradition. In this light, one could see the Andalusian world<sup>2</sup> as a shaping force of a literary genre and recognize an older history of the *bildungsroman* genre by shifting its vantage point to a much earlier text. By recognizing non-Goethean traditions that are equally important and central to the genre, we can overcome certain ideological conditioned preconceptions that have

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Andalus was a Muslim territory that occupied most of the Iberian Peninsula and was "a major center of learning from which a variety of intellectual traditions were introduced to the rest of Europe through numerous means of translation" (Menocal 65).

impoverished our views of medieval literature and challenge the notion that the bildungsroman emerged from a western exclusive tradition or that there is “one” exclusive tradition to which the genre belongs.

In the book *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* (2007) Samar Attar argues that “one can never deny the fact that there has been always contact between nations” and makes the key point that “borrowing may be conscious or unconscious” (128). Once borrowing is acknowledged it creates out of literary studies a tool that helps us, in James Clifford’s words, learn about “cultures and histories different from [our] own, enough to begin to know what [we’re] missing” (39). Accordingly, Ibn Tufayl’s thoughts expressed in *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* “are echoed in the doctrine of the European Enlightenment during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the works of diverse thinkers such as Descartes (1596-1650), Locke (1632-1704), Newton (1642-1727)...and other Encyclopaedists” (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 54). Among the essential ideas of Ibn Tufayl’s philosophical tale are that man must think for himself and if he has to depend on himself he must seek a wide range of knowledge. These ideas are reflected by the general assessment of the Enlightenment period and seen more concretely in Kant’s essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1784) in which “his words describe faithfully Ibn Tufayl’s philosophy” (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 56). Published nine years before Goethe’s bildungsroman in 1795, Kant’s ideas were largely influential at the time of Goethe’s return from Italy in 1788, as Friedrich Jodl notes in “Goethe and Kant” (1901), “On his return from Italy (1788) Goethe had found Kantianism established as a spiritual force in his immediate circle” and it was known that “Goethe has been studying Kant's Critique (of the Pure Reason) for some time with great persistence”

(260). Jodl further writes “this new relation to Kant is revived and deepened from 1794 on by the intimate personal association with Schiller, who had been impressed by the Kantian philosophy in Jena and had thoroughly assimilated the ethical and aesthetic features of it” (261). His new deepened relation to Kant corresponds with the years in which he was writing his bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. As such, though Goethe may or may have not read Ibn Tufayl’s work, Kant acts as the intermediary between him and Ibn Tufayl. Tracing Ibn Tufayl’s bildungsroman’s influence on modern European thinkers who have affected Goethe himself demonstrates the extent to which Goethe’s ideas may have come from 12<sup>th</sup> century Andalusia. Though he might not have been aware of Ibn Tufayl’s influence on his work, it has indirectly played a crucial role in inspiring his bildungsroman. The history of Tufayl’s philosophy, having been widely disseminated to European thinkers, demonstrates the extent to which a literary genre cannot be unique to one writer or one culture as “all civilizations exercise a reciprocal influence on each other over a long period of time” (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 131).

#### D. The Maqam(ean) and Picaresqu(ean) Route

Interestingly, two centuries before Ibn Tufayl’s philosophy took its course the maqama genre appeared on the Arabic literary scene and writers in Al-Andalus cite al-Hamdhani’s maqamat (the first maqama texts created) as their inspiration (Drory 191). The first maqama texts were created “as a sort of comic relief at learning sessions in which serious adab materials were circulated and discussed” (Drory 191). In order to distinguish the texts from “ ‘genuine’ educational texts by and about real historical figures, fictitious characters had to be introduced, and their fictionality, to a certain degree, openly admitted”

(Drory 191). Following al-Hamdhani's public oral improvisations at the end of adab sessions of maqamat, another writer, al-Hariri took it upon himself to compose his version of the genre privately in writing and presented them in an authorized version of fifty pieces. Al-Hariri's maqamat became scholarly material immediately and were studied and transmitted as such. They became symbols of Arabic eloquence and stylistic dexterity and "with the success of al-Hariri's maqamat a 'real,' historical biography was invented for their fictional hero Abu Zayd al-Saruji" (Drory 192). In that light, one could recognize that the notion of a biography of a fictional hero could be seen emerging as early as the tenth century in Arabic literary. Just as one cannot argue that the bildungsroman is unique to Goethe, one cannot argue that the genre is unique to Ibn Tufayl's tradition either since his ideas may have, in part, been derived from the tenth century Arabic literary scene that preceded his own. It took the maqamat texts only twenty years or so to reach the Muslim West and the literary novelty of the maqamat intrigued Andalusian men of letters. Drory notes that al-Hamdhani's "Badi al-Zaman (Wonder of the Age) became a synonym for refined eloquence and stylistic dexterity in al-Andalus (Drory 192). Andalusian authors often expressed their admiration for a colleague's high prose standards by stating that he "has exceeded Badi al-Zaman" (Drory 192). Whether directly or indirectly Ibn Tufayl must have been exposed to the maqamat genre as it has been noted that "several eleventh-century writers in al-Andalus cite al-Hamdhani's maqamat as their inspiration, and others quote his maqamat extensively" (Drory 193) indicating that the well-read literary figure and philosopher must have been influenced by the maqama genre, especially since he composed the biography of his own fictional hero, Hayy. According to Nemah in "Andalusian 'Maqamat'" (1974) "The Andalusians were, understandably, impressed by the maqamat of

al-Badi' al-Hamadhani and of his successor al-Hariri and it was natural that their achievements inspired admiration and imitation, both of a general kind and in particular in the writing of maqamat. Hamadhani's maqamat and epistles were widely diffused in al-Andalus by the time of the mulik al-tawd'if, when many literary men began to compose in this genre" (83). Ibn Tufayl was among those who would compose novels based on the biography of a fictional hero. His tale detailed the coming of age of the fictional hero Hayy in *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*.

Aside from influencing Andalusian philosophical tales, specifically the bildungsroman of Ibn Tufayl, the maqama genre played a role in shaping the picaresque genre in sixteenth century Spain that emerged "specifically after 1554 when *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes* was published" (Echevarria, "Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Casebook" 5). As a matter of fact "the most common maqama is the so-called picaresque maqama, a comic story featuring a ragged hero whose eloquence is phenomenal" (Hameen-Anttila 11). The picaresque novel can be traced back to Andalusian literature (Delbari, Foroozankia 73) and "one element which has suggested similarity between the picaresque novel and the Maqamat is the fact that the picaresque has often been regarded and defined as 'any novel in which the hero takes a journey whose course plunges him into all sorts, conditions and classes of men'" (Abu-Haidar 3). The notion that Andalusian tales and picaresque novels share similar traces is further strengthened by the fact that

The anticlerical element in, for example, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and Quevedo's *La vida del Buscon* is so manifest that suggestions have been made that the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* might have been written by a morisco. Perhaps unmistakable in the Spanish picaresque novels are some recurring echoes of Arabic anecdote. It is not difficult to

trace the travel of this literature, and in bulk, from the Arab East to Islamic Spain. (Abu-Haidar 9)

In this light, if the bildungsroman genre's origins are traced back to the picaresque one can recognize that the genre can also share traces with the Arab literary scene in Islamic Spain, i.e. with a bildungsroman novel said to be a precursor to Goethe's infamous bildungsroman—Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*.

Moreover, influenced by what is said to be the first picaresque novel, Cervantes wrote his own book *Don Quixote* (1605). Cervantes wrote his own picaresque novel following the antecedent traditions of the maqama genre and the picaresque (Delbari, Foroozankia 73). According to Echevarria “Cervantes learned much from the Picaresque, and Don Quijote's narrative owes a great deal to it, not only in its episodic plot, which derived too from chivalric romances, but also in all the scenes in inns and roads, with their colorful gallery of rogues” (“Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Casebook” 5). He continues to describe the hero (Don Quijote) as a picaro, a fugitive from justice (Echevarria, “Cervantes' Don Quixote: A Casebook” 5). Though Cervantes rejected some elements of the picaresque, he learned a great deal from the picaresque tradition and shaped his hero like a picaro. According to Chad M. Gasta in “The Picaresque According to Cervantes” (2010), “Without *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzman de Alfarache*, Cervantes could not have written several of his *Exemplary Novels* or *Don Quixote*” (33). *Don Quixote* is also analyzed as a bildungsroman novel by scholars such as Admira Nushi in “Don Quixote, a Building Novel” (2016), and by Isabel Hernández in “Don Quixote and the German Bildungsroman” (2017), among others. The bildungsroman genre takes from the picaresque, as “all the picaresque novels are autobiographical in form with the picaros relating the events of their



lives from the day of their birth-usually in the most disreputable surroundings of cheating and theft” (Abu-Haidar 5).

In tracing different connections between literary traditions, one can recognize that just as Cervantes learned much from the picaresque, years after, Goethe learned much from Cervantes, both of whom have taken from the picaresque and bildungsroman literary genres. According to Theodore Huebener in “Goethe and Cervantes” (1950), Goethe read the translation of Don Quijote in 1777 by Bertuch and it meant much to him, to the extent that he wrote to Frau von Stein on August 9, 1782 many years before publishing his bildungsroman (*Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre*) that “Cervantes now carries me above official duties as a life-preserver bears up the swimmer” (Huebener 114). Cervantes’ influence on Goethe is evident in a number of his shorter prose works and in his two novels *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*. As Huebener notes, “the author of Faust developed a deep and enduring affection for the creator of Don Quijote (114). Aside from Huebener, other scholars and writers have commented on the connections between Goethe and Cervantes. For one, “author Rahel Levin wrote on January 29, 1822...How is it possible to conceive, to invent and to represent a second Don Quijote! Kiss one another, Cervantes and Goethe!” (Huebener 114). The Austrian dramatist Grillparzer is cited commenting on Goethe’s bildungsroman “I always call *Wilhelm Meister* the German *Don Quijote*” (Huebener 115). And in an introduction to *Don Quijote* by German poet Heinrich Heine in the 1837 edition, he remarks “as Goethe constantly reminds one of Shakespeare so he recalls Cervantes, whom he resembles even in the details of style, in that agreeable prose which is tinged with the sweetest and most harmless irony. Cervantes and Goethe even show similarities in their faults, in their digressiveness” (Huebener 115). Since Don

Quixote has elements of the picaresque, Goethe could also be said to have been influenced by the Spanish tradition, and interestingly, his bildungsroman is cited in a scholarly article as “Wilhelm’s picaresque” (Miles 983). Revising literary traditions and genres such as the bildungsroman generates new global sites to further our understanding of its tradition on a more inclusive scale. Seen in this light, one can merge the route of the bildungsroman genre with that of the picaresque tradition to deepen our understanding of the lost connections amongst various literary moments and bring the bildungsroman genre into a global context, where it belongs.

#### E. The Defoe(ean) Route

In understanding Daniel Defoe’s relationship to the bildungsroman there are two important connections to be made. One, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), noted by many as the first novel and a bildungsroman in nature, takes from Ibn Tufayl’s *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. And two, three years after the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe published a female bildungsroman titled *Moll Flanders* (1722), which was said to be based on the first picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). Both combinations demonstrate the extent to which the bildungsroman genre is versatile in nature and cannot be said to have a straightforward genealogy. If we were to read *Robinson Crusoe* as part of the bildungsroman tradition, it is evident that it goes back to 12<sup>th</sup> century al-Andalus. As Steitieh notes, “It has recently been suggested that the central idea of Daniel Defoe’s famous novel *Robinson Crusoe* was borrowed from Ibn Tufayl’s story, most probably from the Ockley translation of 1708” (37). In his book *The Shipwrecked Sailor in Arabic and Western Literature* (2012), Mahmoud Baroud demonstrates how Ibn Tufayl influenced

Defoe's writing by undertaking a detailed investigation starting from translations of Tufayl's text, to its reception in the East and West, to other historical links. An interesting remark Baroud makes is that Defoe was known to be a "compiler" (42). In light with understanding how he came to write his own bildungsroman, having the characteristic of a compiler allows us to recognize that it could not be said that Defoe wrote an "original" work, and likewise, no literary tradition of his could be traced to only one point of origin exclusively. According to Baroud,

Defoe is often considered a compiler, whose 'eclectic method' lies in gathering material from various sources; he 'rarely missed any important work that would help him'. His art consists in the way he uses his sources, adapting them to his purposes and making them his own. Nonetheless, Defoe's eclectic method is not one distinctive to him alone as a writer. It can be applied to great literary figures such as Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens, who all made use of other writers' materials, remoulding them and creating something which, by the end of the process, was called original. (42).

Despite this, scholars often referred to Defoe's novel as the first and the "original" novel, an example being Quentin G. Kraft who in his article "Robinson Crusoe and the Story of the Novel" (1980) emphasizes the idea that a new genre was born with the publication of Defoe's text. Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) has also commented on Defoe's novel as being the first fictional narrative, adding "in the sense that it is the first fictional narrative in which an ordinary person's daily activities are the centre of continuous literary attention" (74). And yet, in 1719, the same year Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was published, the famous English poet and critic Alexander Pope notes "the story of Alexander Selkirk and the story of *Hayy Bin Yaqzan* were the best models in front of Defoe when he wrote his novel *Robinson Crusoe*" (Baroud 68). Others have noted that "the first part of *Hayy Bin*

*Yaqzan* bears a considerable resemblance to the adventures of *Robinson Crusoe*” and “the most pronounced echo of Ibn Tufayl’s romance in the succeeding centuries is to be found, without doubt, in *Robinson Crusoe*” (Baroud 69). Aside from *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* being called the precursor of *Robinson Crusoe*, the character Hayy is read as a “Crusoe-like” character (Baroud 71), though Crusoe was invented many centuries following Ibn Tufayl’s publication. According to Attar, “Textual evidence proves that the father of the English novel [Defoe] has read the Arabic book and has borrowed whatever suits his purposes” (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 129). Here, readers begin to see how one bildungsroman stemming from a much older tradition from the Islamic world entered the western tradition of the bildungsroman novel. The Arabic book was a source of influence for “the father of the English novel” implying that the “children” of the English novel, i.e. the proceeding novels, also share its Arabic roots. We have to keep in mind that this idea would not be taken lightly by some western scholars who in their research have historically stereotyped Arabs as their inferiors, and are used to looking at western societies as constituting separate and coherent entities very different from any other. As Attar rightfully notes, “It is not always easy to fight against one’s own prejudices, particularly when the new ideas emanate from one’s enemy, or from people who are considered primitive, or barbarians” (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 4). Therefore, acknowledging the traces of influence from different cultures on a figure characterized as the father of the English novel (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 129) and a writer who has created the first novel (Kraft 74) is vital to combat the interplay of the negative image of the Arab-Islamic world. Looking at the bildungsroman genealogy in this light demonstrates the extent to which literary traditions cross borders and that this has been the

case throughout history. Moreover, though ideas might not have traveled quickly or on as large a scale as they do nowadays, they did nevertheless manage to cross borders because there has always been “travelers, merchants, missionaries, diplomats, students and warriors who [have carried] ideas along to distant shores” (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 4). Though Ibn Tufayl was writing in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Defoe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has been proven that literary traditions are capable of traveling across space and time and those who make a large impact (i.e. Ibn Tufayl’s *Hayy ibn Yazan*) remain present in other works. Ibn Tufayl, though buried under the dust, still lives in Defoe’s writing and Defoe’s writing still lives in another’s work and so on. In that case, it should not be surprising to find that bildungsroman traditions overlap despite being several centuries apart, and most importantly, these connections should not be ignored as this would limit the analysis of novels from disparate geographical locations and scholarship would miss interesting and vital overlaps between literary traditions.

Also, published three years after his first bildungsroman *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722) has been analyzed in conjunction with *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) as a female bildungsroman based on the aforementioned picaresque novel. In the article “Muddled Origins in Picaresque Literature: The Foreshadowing of Chaotic Lives” (2014) by Terri Schroth and Bryant Smith, Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* is found sharing the same picaresque traits as in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, “the birth into a low social status and inescapable genealogy of the pícaro, the first-person narration of random or fragmented episodes of the pícaro’s life, and the education that transpires by following several masters and by playing an assortment of roles” (304-305). Though traversing national borders and representing different time periods of the picaresque, both novels share a similar picaresque

tradition and illustrate the extent to which the bildungsroman genre as embodied in Defoe's texts, could have taken from the picaresque tradition in its formulation. Tracing literary influences on Defoe's bildungsroman seems to come from various different strands, origins, and literary traditions, which makes it difficult to trace a straightforward genealogy of the genre. It is important to note that for the majority of scholars who begin tracing the bildungsroman tradition from Goethe's novel as the archetype in 1795, they are, dismissing Defoe's influence on Goethe, and in turn, the dismissal of the picaresque genre's influence on Goethe indirectly through the influence of the picaresque *Lazarillo de Tormes* on Defoe. And two, they are dismissing Ibn Tufayl's direct influence on Goethe through Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant. And lastly, these scholars are dismissing Cervantes's influence on Goethe, who was influenced by writers from Al Andalus. These connections can only be made once the genealogy is no longer perceived as emerging from one exclusive origin or traced only in a straightforward manner. Once we re-think the genre and its very complex genealogy we can begin to generate combinations that illustrate interesting overlaps between literary traditions and cultures across space and time.

#### F. The Joyce(ean) Route

Understanding Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to be a modernist icon for the bildungsroman genre leaves one pondering about how a bildungsroman becomes an icon and who are its literary antecedents. In other words, it goes without question that a novel bearing the responsibility of being a representative of a genre on a canonical and iconic level must have reached this stature through the spread and influence of its antecedent bildungsroman literatures. Joyce's novel's stature has rendered it an iconic

bildungsroman and has given it the façade of being the most important text in the genre. The consequences for ascribing unique traits to one novel, is that for those who are not familiar with antecedent traditions of the bildungsroman it becomes a matter of “excluding others” whether intentional or not, and in return leads to “ignor[ing], or minimize[ing] the debt one owes to the dead, or dying, or living civilizations” (Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 131). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that Joyce’s iconic bildungsroman owes its success to other texts who may or may not have shared the same canonical stature in the bildungsroman tradition of their times. For one, Joyce’s novel could be traced back to Defoe, and two, it could also be traced back to Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*. Both novels belong to different periods and yet they both could have influenced Joyce’s iconic coming of age narrative. Interestingly, as noted earlier, both Defoe and Cervantes were influenced by the picaresque genre, making it reasonable to deduce that Joyce’s *A Portrait* may have borrowed particular traits from the picaresque genre. And also, both Defoe and Cervantes’s text could be traced back to the texts of 12<sup>th</sup> century al-Andalus further strengthening the argument that Joyce’s *A Portrait* may have found its roots in Muslim Spain.

A collection of Joyce’s critical essays in the book edited by Kevin Barry titled *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (2000) includes a chapter on Joyce’s critical writing on Daniel Defoe. In this chapter, Joyce writes “It is by no means an easy task to make an adequate study of a writer as prolific as Daniel Defoe” (168). Joyce goes on to analyze Defoe’s work and praises his style of writing, “he has a style of admirable clarity quite free of all pretension, that shines forth unexpectedly in a burst of brief, sweet splendor in certain pages of Robinson Crusoe and Duncan Campbell” (Joyce “Occasional” 170).

With that, it is understood that Joyce has read and likely been influenced by Defoe's writing, specifically *Robinson Crusoe*, making it all the more likely that his own bildungsroman takes from Defoe's tradition. Joyce even admired the character of Robinson Crusoe, who in many ways resembles Stephen Dedalus. In a lecture on Daniel Defoe in Italy in 1912 (four years prior to *A Portrait's* publication), Joyce says,

The true symbol of the British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who, cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman. He is the true prototype of the British colonist...Whoever rereads this simple, moving book in the light of subsequent history cannot help but fall under its prophetic spell (James Joyce, lecture on Daniel Defoe, Università Popolare, Trieste, Italy, March 1912). (Cullen)

Keeping in mind Ibn Tufayl's influence on Defoe, one can infer that Robinson Crusoe must share commonalities with Hayy from Tufayl's novel, and this influence carries on all the way to Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *A Portrait*. Another possible source of influence for Joyce's iconic bildungsroman narrative could have been through Cervantes and his novel *Don Quixote*. In a book length study on the thematic and structural continuity that exists between *Don Quixote* to Joyce, titled *Structure and Theme "Don Quixote" to James Joyce* (1983), Margaret Church characterizes Don Quixote as "the ancestor, so to speak, of all fictions and of all metafiction" (2). Commenting specifically on the relationship between Don Quixote and Joyce's literature she writes, "In *Ulysses* Don Quixote is mentioned twice, [and] in the 'Scylla and Carybdis' episode ... Stephen sees himself as Don Quixote. Further, George Moore and Edward Martyn are compared to Don Quixote and Sancho, Moore described as 'A knight of the rueful countenance here in Dublin. With a saffron



kilt””(Church 135). She concludes that the fact that Joyce casts Stephen, George Moore, Shem, and Saint John in his texts as Don Quixotes perhaps offers a clue to Joyce’s reaction to Cervantes’ novel (Church 135). Cervantes, who takes from the picaresque tradition, has influenced Joyce, and Defoe’s influence on Joyce’s writing could also be traced back to the picaresque genre as Defoe based his female bildungsroman novel *Moll Flanders* on the first picaresque. As Attar notes, “borrowing may be conscious or unconscious” (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 128), and Joyce through his admiration for Defoe’s writing, could have been in contact with the picaresque indirectly through his reading of *Moll Flanders*. Whether we trace the bildungsroman genealogy from Defoe or Cervantes, both demonstrate that it has an even older literary tradition—the picaresque. Taking it from an older vantage point, one could begin tracing the genealogy from Ibn Tufayl through to Defoe and Cervantes, both of whom had an influence on Joyce. In addition, considering common bildungsroman scholarship pointing to Goethe as the pioneer of the genre, if we were to join the discourse we can also see that Joyce could have been influenced by Goethe and his bildungsroman tradition could also have stemmed from that vantage point. Though not much has been said about Joyce’s relationship to Goethe, David Barry in his article “Peninsular Art: A Context for a Comparative Study of Goethe and Joyce” (1992) provides a thorough study about connections found between Goethe’s writing and Joyce’s *Ulysses*, *A Portrait* and *Finnegans Wake*. Barry reminds readers that the library scene in *Ulysses* in which Stephens’ theory of art is explained opens with a reference to Goethe’s bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister* (384). He also notes that Joyce’s connection with Goethe is deeply engrained in *Ulysses*. Cyrus Hamlin also suggests that in regard to the “encyclopedic” quality of Faust, “one might look to Joyce’s *Ulysses* for a similar range of

styles and diversity of incidents joined together in a thematic or symbolic way” (Barry 381). With that in mind, it could be noted that the study of the bildungsroman genre and its influence on Joyce could have stemmed from multiple places. The multiple origins and directions one could examine the bildungsroman genre from, complicate its genealogy and demonstrate the extent to which influence travels, which will be thoroughly examined in the second chapter of this study.

With Joyce’s tradition in mind, we can move forward seventy-six years and end up with a new tradition of the bildungsroman emerging from the Arab world and representing a female coming of age novel—Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun*. Following my earlier discussion, if one were to study the vantage point from where Soueif appropriates and embodies the bildungsroman tradition they would recognize that the bildungsroman genealogy could have more than one beginning and take on more than one route. These multiple strands and combinations between the bildungsroman traditions allow us to place Soueif’s novel in conversation with Joyce’s bildungsroman, two novels that do not obviously go together in the third and most central chapter of this study. Once we understand that a tradition can stem from more than one origin and take on more than one route, it becomes easier to envision two distinct and distant novels coming together in one literary discourse, a discourse that can discover interesting overlaps between two traditions. Though the texts discussed come from different places and times, by complicating the genealogy of the bildungsroman tradition we can place them together in multiple combinations, because as Attar argues “one can never deny the fact that there has been always contact between nations” (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 128) and this

contact must be examined in all its forms, the obvious and obscure, in order to allow ourselves to find interesting overlaps between traditions and bridge cultures.

## G. Conclusion

To borrow Jorge Luis Borges's words "every writer, creates his own precursors" (Church 137) and it is the study of those precursors that enriches a literary tradition and creates unique possibilities for the genre. Stepping outside the realm of literature, every individual regardless of their ethnicity or culture has experienced a coming of age and it would be unjust to base a literary tradition built on representing a certain individual's own reality and social parameters exclusively on one period and one place. In Attar's words, "to describe certain ideas and values as unique to one's own civilization is to freeze history and deny the prospect of any change" (*The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment* 131). Moreover, bildungsroman scholarship that has focused mainly on Goethe as the pioneering figure of the genre has denied the influence of other literary cultures from different places and times and their role in shaping the bildungsroman tradition. As such, I use this space to "un-freeze" the history of the bildungsroman, in the sense of literally putting to **motion** different possible routes and various movements in the bildungsroman tradition. This then leads me to my second chapter "The Bildungsroman in Motion" in which I trace the reception and circulation of bildungsroman texts outside of their national borders. In examining the bildungsroman as a traveling genre, I demonstrate how the multiple routes I have explored can then culminate in a comparative analysis of two distinct bildungsroman texts Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* and Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The multiple combinations of bildungsroman texts found in its complex genealogy make it

easier to envision a unique combination of two texts—an Irish, male, modern bildungsroman in relation to an Egyptian, female, postmodern bildungsroman. In the midst of traveling along the complicated routes, I uncover various strands of the genre that have been buried in the dust (Chapter One), set them in motion (Chapter Two) and watch them come together to form their own *portrait* of a bildungsroman (Chapter Three).

## CHAPTER III

### THE BILDUNGSROMAN IN MOTION

Impossible distances beg to be crossed precisely because they cannot be.  
--Nirvana Tanoukhi, "The Scale of World Literature"

#### A. Introduction

When drawing the lines of "national" borders in a literary field, one looks at the motion of texts as they cross these "national" borders, creating an intellectual map of the world through their travels. World literature scholars for many years have attempted to construct an intellectual map of the world as they trace the movement of literature across these borders and along the space-time continuum. As texts are born again into different spaces and times, these relatively recent and arbitrary "national" borders are challenged, and these texts become participants in a broader literary world. Following the first chapter, "The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective," this chapter journeys on the same path of reading literary works as belonging to a space-time continuum of related literary forms and subjects by reconstructing the international literary network Joyce's writings are embedded in.

Challenging narrowly defined national canons, this chapter considers the bildungsroman as a genre in motion, traveling along the complicated routes illustrated and creating in its travels new lines on the intellectual map of the world, lines that illustrate a variety of literary networks of transmission, reception and circulation of Joyce's iconic

bildungsroman text. Though a rupture of its time<sup>3</sup>, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* today has become an iconic and canonical text, read through a prism of writers who have re-linguaged, re-fashioned, and re-invented Joyce's bildungsroman tradition. Scholars have examined Joyce's reception in and outside of Europe<sup>4</sup> over the years but little has been written on his reception in the Arab world aside from one chapter titled "Joyce in the Arab World" in Suheil Badi Bushrui and Bernard Benstock's book, *James Joyce: An International Perspective* (1982). The lack of scholarship on the reception of Joyce in the Arab world is in itself an important statement that showcases the mechanisms of geopolitical power in literary transactions and exchanges across borders. As a space most commonly seen in the light of orientalism, the Arab world remains a speck of the exotic, the *Arabian Nights*, and the Sheherazadean image among various literary scholarships, making it less likely to be seen as a space in which an iconic writer can reside in various forms and intellectual circles. On that note, it becomes imperative to view the ongoing translation, dissemination and influence of Joyce's work on Arab writers and scholars, to offer a different perspective on the Arab world, and recognize its participation in Joycean studies.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Pascale Casanova, "James Joyce, rejected and even banned in Dublin, was welcomed and consecrated by Paris, which made him an artist who revolutionized universal literature rather than merely an Irish national writer (128).

<sup>4</sup> Most recently, a book dedicated to the study of the circulation of Joyce's work in the Ibero-American and intra-Latino literary systems titled, *TransLatin Joyce* (2014) edited by Brian L. Price, Cesar A. Salgado and John Pedro Schwartz and an older but notable work on Joyce's reception in Europe titled, *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe* (2004) edited by Geert Lernout and Wim Van Mierlo.

By tracing the reception and circulation of Joyce's work in the Arab world, I add to the discourse a study that illustrates Joyce's bildungsroman text in motion, traveling to the Arab world, and specifically to Egypt where it poses a direct and indirect influence on Egyptian writers such as Soueif, who has written her own Arab female bildungsroman seventy six years later. According to Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz, Joyce is "a writer that you had to read" (El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* 17), suggesting that it could be taken for granted that Soueif has read Joyce's novels. Other variations are also possible, such as the possibility of Soueif encountering Joyce indirectly through her reading of other writers, which further illustrates the complicated and various routes one has to encounter when tracing one writer's influence on another across space and time. Looking at Joyce and Soueif's bildungsroman texts through a comparative lens, we find continuities and ruptures between both traditions, which demonstrates how a genre in motion can travel across borders and be born again in a different country and at a later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, culminating in a hybrid and cosmopolitan constellation examined in the third chapter of this study—"The Bildungsroman in Constellation".

#### B. En Route with Joyce's Bildungsroman

At the end of Joyce's bildungsroman novel, in a diary entry, Stephen calls out to a cosmopolitan community that will replace the bounds of his nation, his family, and his religion,

April 16: Away! Away! The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone. Come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen.

And the air is thick with their company as they call to me,  
their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their  
exultant and terrible youth. (Joyce 213)

Bildungsroman novels are said to have autobiographical traces, making Stephen a fictional manifestation of Joyce himself. Therefore, Stephen's intention to join an international community provides us with the basis for viewing Joyce as a traveler from the start of his literary journey. By leaving behind the constrictions of his nation, Joyce is seen as "a pacifistic combatant, reconciling, coalescing, building bridges, [and] breaking down barriers" (Bushrui and Benstock, "Introduction" 7). While en route with Joyce's literature, we reconstruct the international literary network Joyce's writings are embedded in, looking closely at his iconic bildungsroman novel traveling and landing in Egyptian writer Soueif's creative and intellectual space. When using the term "travel", I engage with James Clifford, who in his book *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) criticizes those who attempt to understand global cultures by only examining the roots of the natives without taking into consideration global circulation and exchange that have always been a part of their indigenous culture. Hybrid and cosmopolitan experiences are just as important as native and rooted ones, and examining one without the other leads to erasing important histories of global cultures (Clifford 24). Clifford urges readers to imagine culture not as bounded, local and homogenous but as a place of exchange between people who travel and those who stay at home. He problematizes traditional anthropology which encourages anthropologists to dwell in one locale and live as the native would, in order to learn more about the native's culture. In "Traveling Cultures" he gives examples of different well-documented observational studies, in which informants would live among the natives and document what they observe. However, Clifford argues that this is a problem



because it assumes the native is someone who does not travel. The informant stays observing from a tent, only documenting what they see of the native in his own locale. This narrow observation does not take into consideration any cultural exchange the natives might have, which erases histories of travel and cultural exchange that are important to understanding their lives. To avoid over simplifying global cultures, Clifford encourages theorists and ethnographers to focus on both the “traveler” and the “native” (Clifford 25). In this study, I take Clifford’s notion of “traveler” and “native” to examine how the genre can have both an older rooted tradition stemming from various literary traditions and cultures and a cosmopolitan experience as it travels from Europe to the Arab World. Seen in this light, the bildungsroman is both a “native” and a “traveler” that carries its tradition across borders and challenges the “dichotomies that structure the world space... the same ones that oppose academics to formalists, ancients to moderns, regionalists to cosmopolitans, writers on the periphery to writers in the center” (Casanova 110).

By reading the bildungsroman genre as a native with complicated and tangled routes and a traveler among volatile “national” borders, we counter the dichotomy between center and periphery. According to Wolf, “Rather than thinking of social alignments as self-determining...we need—from the start of our inquires—to visualize them in their multiple external connections” (Clifford 24). To read this differently, I replace “social alignments” with “bildungsroman genre” and follow a similar notion of visualizing the genre in “multiple external connections” by considering a global genealogy of the genre and its traveling routes. According to Margaret Cohen in “Traveling Genres” (2003), international thematics are not necessary for a form to travel. A form with a focus in one context can also travel if it is meaningful across diverse social contexts (495). She adds that genres that

travel must not only contain elements that can pass from one national literary context to another, but also offer a way to negotiate cultural differences (Cohen 496). For the purpose of my discussion, I extend her argument by offering examples of how the bildungsroman genre can negotiate cultural differences as it travels from one locale to the other. To shed light on the cultural exchange practices happening between different bildungsroman traditions, I first must examine the reception of these traditions outside of their local context. Tracing the reception of the genre, and how the genre becomes a “traveler”, allows me to situate the bildungsroman within the discourse of “traveling genres” and add a new “route” to its discourse.

Placing this study in a world literature discourse allows us to examine how the bildungsroman genre can become a “traveler” and belong to more than one literary conception across space and time. In *What is World Literature?* (2003) David Damrosch describes world literature as pertaining to one or all of these following conceptions: an established body of classics, an evolving canon of masterpieces, and as multiple windows on the world. Some writers are capable of holding all three conceptions together; a single work may be classified under two or even three of these headings (Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* 15). As Damrosch notes, “Virgil’s *Aeneid* is the very type of a timeless classic, but it is also a masterpiece of its genre, registering one stage of development in the long series of works from Gilgamesh and the Iliad up to Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Walcott’s *Omeros*. Equally, the *Aeneid* is a window on the world of imperial Rome; though it is set before Rome’s founding and treats legendary materials, in its underworld scenes and epic similes it opens out with unconcealed directness toward Virgil’s contemporary world” (*What is World Literature?* 14-15). On that note, Joyce’s bildungsroman in this study shifts

from being seen as a “masterpiece” to also seen as “a window on the world” once one recognizes its worldly nature and circulation, and the conversations it initiates with other literary traditions such as Soueif’s Egyptian bildungsroman. Though it is known to be about Ireland and an Irish protagonist, it becomes a window on the world once it is placed in constellation with Soueif’s novel, in which the continuities and ruptures between both traditions shine and both Egyptian and Irish cultures are illuminated. The notion of cultural exchange illuminated is best illustrated in the following passage from Soueif’s novel in which the main character, Asya, ponders by the Thames river, “But I haven’t come to you only to take, I haven’t come to you empty-handed: I bring you poetry as great as yours but in another tongue. I bring you black eyes and golden skin and curly hair, I bring you Islam and Luxor and Alexandria and lutes and tambourines and the date-palms and silk rugs and sunshine and incense and voluptuous ways” (Soueif 512). Reading Joyce’s novel in parallel with Soueif’s allows us to see elements of Ireland in Egypt, and elements of Egypt in Ireland, making Joyce’s text a “window on the world” outside of its own parameters. Put in Damrosch’s words, “a literary work manifests differently abroad than it does at home” (*What is World Literature?* 6) in this sense, reading it “abroad” i.e. with another culture (Soueif’s Egyptian bildungsroman) Joyce’s text manifests differently. Following this thought, Joyce’s text also manifests differently once it is seen outside of an exclusive Joycean studies paradigm and in the realm of world literature.

Following Damrosch’s theory, Joyce’s work “enters into world literature by a double process: first, by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin” (*What is World Literature?* 6). Circulating beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin, Joyce’s bildungsroman is in

and of itself representative of “world literature”. According to Matthias Freise in “Four Perspectives on World Literature: Reader, Producer, Text and System” in the book *Tensions in World Literature* edited by Weigui Fang (2018),

It is the text which embodies whatever might be world literature. It is, strictly speaking, world literature. Therefore, literary scholarship should be able to find world literature first of all within the micro-cosmos of one literary text. As a micro-cosmos, the text establishes relation as such, and by doing so it makes out of the world a relational space. If read semantically, it provides a collecting lens for the world, which makes the world ascertainable, as in the riddle about the tiny window through which the whole world can pass. (200)

Following this notion, not only if read semantically, but also if read comparatively i.e. with Soueif’s bildungsroman, Joyce’s text can provide a lens for the world outside of European parameters, and build a bridge between two disparate places and times. In Joycean terms, it provides a “portrait” of the outside world—outside of Europe—if placed under a comparative lens. By reading Joyce’s text as part of world literature or as world literature itself, we open up the bildungsroman tradition to other relations between traditions and cultures. In commenting on a literary work in travel, Damrosch in “Frames for World Literature” notes that, “it would be a mistake to suppose that a work’s foreign reception involves a simple process of loss of essence; rather, a work takes on a new form as it travels abroad, showing new facets and features that are brought into view in its new surroundings” (110). In the final chapter of this study, Damrosch’s notion of a work showing new facets is illustrated as Joyce and Soueif’s bildungsroman novels are explicated. As we place Joyce’s work in constellation with an Egyptian bildungsroman, we recognize that Joyce’s work begins to gain a different facet, and the main character,

Stephen is no longer isolated but in tandem with an Egyptian female who, like him, is attempting to come of age against the bounds of her nation.

However, placing Joyce's text in a "worldly" constellation, and seeing it from a world literature paradigm, though it frees it from the bounds of the European canon and European borders, makes it vulnerable to another border—the borders of world literature. According to Damrosch, "The borders of world literature are formed at once on a global scale and at the most individual level, made and remade in the shifting relations between world-wide capital flows, national publishing industries and university systems, and the personal preferences of individual readers, who may be drawn to very different works for all sorts of reasons" (Damrosch, "Frames for World Literature" 111). The relations between capital flows, publishing companies and university systems all constitute borders surrounding the text. If the text is to travel outside the bounds of its nation, it must be given an opportunity to do so. A scholar who has written about the forces that challenge a text's dissemination is Pascale Casanova in her notable study *The World Republic of Letters* (1999) noting that, "In reality, the great heroes of literature invariably emerge only in association with the specific power of an autonomous and international literary capital. The case of James Joyce rejected in Dublin, ignored in London, banned in New York, lionized in Paris is undoubtedly the best example" (Casanova 109). Perhaps this could explain the lack of scholarship on Joyce in the Arab world, as the Arab region is not associated with an international literary capital. Bushrui comments that the lack of scholarship on Joyce in the Arab world is due to the complex untranslatable language of his work. For example, the translation of *Ulysses* would require the invention of an "Arabic language of one's own and infuse it with a wealth of puns, mimicry and parody" and the variations between the

colloquial Arabic would “make it quite impossible for those of Joyce’s work...primarily Ulysses and Finnegans Wake to receive universal recognition in the Arab world” (“Joyce in the Arab World” 233). Another difficulty for the Arabs is the psychological world represented in Joyce’s works, “neither Freud nor his counterpart exists in Arab culture, and Arab novels are reticent on the subject of sex” (Bushrui, “Joyce in the Arab World” 234). This remains the issue today as Soueif notes in an interview that if she were to translate her bildungsroman to Arabic she would have to “take out the explicit sex scenes, outrageous in Arabic countries” as she says “I have to make decisions about the breaking of boundaries in Arabic literature...once translated and published in Arabic, it risks being banned in Arab countries” (Fox). Due to the widespread censorship and political oppression and violence against Arab writers in Arab countries, writers have relied on London to publish their works freely (Fox). The political tension witnessed in the Arab world limits the circulation of texts outside of Europe and their translation into Arabic, which could play a role in the limited circulation or discourse on the reception of Joyce in the Arab world.

The power operations that limit a text’s circulation existed even at the time when Joyce was publishing his work. As Casanova notes, “Joyce, rejected and even banned in Dublin, was welcomed and consecrated by Paris, which made him an artist who revolutionized universal literature rather than merely an Irish national writer” (128). Politics and power schemas play a role in the circulation of a text. Paris in Joyce’s time, and London today, was the hub for writers and alone determined the life of a text and its circulation. Similar to the translation and circulation limitations seen in the Arab world today and in Joyce’s time, in the book *TransLatin Joyce* (2014) edited by Brian L. Price, Cesar A. Salgado and John Pedro Schwartz, readers are told that

Perennial post- and neocolonial power conflicts in the transnational and transoceanic spaces of Iberian languages and dialects make the horizons of reception of Joyce's work therein oscillate and change constantly—although these perimeters of interpretation may often overlap, they remain ideologically and aesthetically incommensurate, rarely concentric in their simultaneous expansions and contractions. (xiii)

They also make the important point that, “scholars working at the intersection of translation studies and comparative literature need to move beyond assumptions of benign translatability, cross-cultural equivalence, and mutual substitutability to consider how mechanisms of geopolitical dominance and asymmetrical power operate in translational transactions” (xii). As such, it is important when speaking of a text, as part of world literature not to dismiss its own political limitations and boundaries.

Translation constitutes a big part of world literature studies, as Damrosch notes a “defining feature of world literature...is that it consists of works that thrive in translation. (Damrosch, “Frames for World Literature” 95). Translation studies scholars such as Emily Apter have written on the politics behind translation processes to complicate the notion of world literature and demonstrate that it too has its own borders that make it difficult for texts to cross. In her book *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), Apter puts forth the notion that translation, if practiced incorrectly, offers cheap touristic access to another culture without having to do a lot of work. She argues that untranslatability is a way of practicing translation with the awareness that politics certainly do play a strong role in translation practices. It is easy to simplify Apter's argument by claiming that she is saying we should cease to translate. Yet, her argument is not so much against translation and world literature, as suggested by her title, but rather about being

aware of its limitations and its role in eradicating a culture and lessening the value of a written work. With that in mind, knowing that politics play a role in the translation of a text complicates its modes of circulation. Her argument brings to mind several problematizing questions: After a text is translated, does it remain the same text as it circulates outside of its place of origin? Did the Arabs receive the same Joycean bildungsroman tradition as the Europeans? Recognizing that translation is not always innocent is important when examining the translation and circulation of Joyce's texts outside its place of origin. Cultural exchange in this sense is problematized because as Apter notes, literature for export (literature produced for the purpose of circulating outside its country of origin) violates an identity and a culture by misrepresenting it or over simplifying it for the purpose of ensuring its circulation. I agree with Apter that translation is not innocent and that circulation of translated texts may complicate cultural exchange in that they exchange "unauthentic" cultures. However, I would argue that in the case of this study, when examining how the bildungsroman genre traveled outside its point of origin, though we point briefly to the translation of the texts across languages that made the circulation to other places possible, we are more concerned with the translation of the genre across cultural spheres.

The cultural exchange we focus on in this chapter pertains to the cultural **form** of the genre being exchanged amongst global cultures rather than the content. I am concerned with the genre as a form of literature in motion, being transported through different means to other cultures. I do not intend to make the claim that the content of bildungsroman novels are universal. On the contrary, the core of this study demonstrates in the third



chapter that although coming of age novels are similar they are also very different in nature. With that said, Apter's arguments are useful if we apply them to translation across cultural spheres, because they allow us to question the politics behind the global exchange of genres when exploring how the form of the genre travels across space and time. On that note, understanding that the lack of scholarship on Joyce's work in reference to the Arab world is not an innocent oversight allows us to see the complicated and tangled route a genre faces, not just in its development as we saw in "The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective," but also in its travels. Though Soueif is more likely to have read Joyce's *A Portrait* in English, as she has noted in an interview that she prefers to read in English<sup>5</sup>, she may have encountered Joyce through other Arab writers who have read and been influenced by Joyce's *A Portrait* in the Arabic translation by Maher Batuti in 1973. The various sources of influence that a writer encounters makes it important to understand that the route traced of a genre in motion is not straightforward but complicated and its ruptures must not be overlooked.

### C. On the Lookout for Joyce's Bildungsroman

In examining a genre's traveling routes, it is important to consider the concepts global circulation and cultural exchange. In defining these terms, I engage with Lydia H. Liu's book *Tokens of Exchange: The Problems of Translation in Global Circulations* (1999) to argue that the translation of symbolic and material forms that travel with literary

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<sup>5</sup> In an interview with Joseph Massad Soueif notes, "I read al-Tayyib Salih, I read Naguib Mahfuz, I read Yusif Idriss and Fathi Ghanim, a lot of current poetry, but in the end I read more English. Maybe it was because English was the language I first read in-the time I started to read was the time I was in England, when I was four till I was seven" (88-89).

practices are just as central to the notion of global exchange as linguistic translation. Taking the translated bildungsroman texts as objects, we can recognize that through travel they have become “tokens of exchange” across peoples and cultures, in their symbolic and material forms. Their translation and circulation not only present a literary work in a different language, but also allow the bildungsroman genre to travel between regions and create meaning-value exchange between disparate cultures. Liu characterizes the term global exchange as the traveling of material and symbolic forms, a form of cultural translation, or what she calls “material circulations” (Liu 4). She approaches translation as a symbolic and material exchange among different cultures. Liu views “translation as a primary agent of token making in its capacity to enable exchange, producing and circulating meaning as value among languages and markets” (11). She suggests that by simply translating a text you give that text a means for it to travel between cultures. I therefore assert that the translation and circulation of Joyce’s texts allow each to act in their own capacity as “tokens”. Their translation and circulation not only present a literary work in a different language, but also allow the bildungsroman genre itself to travel between regions and allow for meaning-value exchange between disparate cultures. In examining the material circulation of the bildungsroman genre to different contexts, I join Liu by tracing the global exchanges of the material culture of the bildungsroman—its material and symbolic form—more so than its linguistic translation, across space and time. As such, in this study I borrow Liu’s notion of global exchange that takes into consideration the symbolic and material forms that travel with literary practices, and trace how Joyce’s bildungsroman text in its symbolic and material form traveled beyond its place of origin and landed in the hands of Soueif and led to her own bildungsroman.

It is important to note that I focus in this chapter on influence and impact, not adaptation and imitation, when tracing the reception of Joyce's text in Soueif's world. In order to avoid pitfalls in terminology and semantic overlaps, it is necessary to make the distinction between the terms influence/impact and adaptation/imitation. The term adaptation, according to Mahmoud Baroud refers to "works written in a foreign language [that] are often based on literal translations—ranging all the way from congenial reworking of a model to more or less commercial attempts at making a work palatable to foreign audiences" (6). Unlike adaptation and imitation, influence usually portrays the influenced writer producing work that is fundamentally his own. Simply put, influence is "a result of unconscious imitation" while imitation is an "intentionally directed receipt of influence" (Baroud 5). While this chapter traces how writers can influence and impact one another, Chapter Three, "The Bildungsroman in Constellation," highlights how this still allows for the development of unique literary works. Baroud argues that though influence is inevitable, writers can manage to demonstrate their originality. I borrow Baroud's use of the term influence, and in the third chapter "The Bildungsroman in Constellation" I demonstrate that what is most significant in studying the influence of writers is examining "the turning crucial point at which the writer[s] free [themselves] of the influence and find [their] originality and creativity" (Baroud 6).

As texts are engaging with a broader literary world, they are seeking a variety of literary networks of transmission, reception and circulation of works from each world. In focusing on how Joyce's text was circulated, translated, and received outside its place of origin, in specific the Arab world, I demonstrate how his tradition could have landed in the hands of Soueif and paved the way for the writing of her own bildungsroman, of a portrait

of the artist as a young woman<sup>6</sup>. To challenge national literary traditions I engage with Wai Chee Dimock to illustrate how a literature continuum creates a cultural continuum. In her article “Literature for the Planet” (2001), Dimock writes,

[Literature] continuum extends across space and time, messing up territorial sovereignty and numerical chronology. Authors centuries and thousands of miles apart can turn out to be inseparable. Their adjacency stems from a linguistic bond and has little to do with the metrical structure articulated by numbers, whether these numbers take the form of latitudes and longitudes or whether they take the form of dates. For the remoteness or proximity of linguistic events does not lend itself to uniform calibrations. It cannot be expressed as a numerical constant: as one hundred years or one thousand miles. Literary space and time are conditional and elastic; their distances can vary, can lengthen or contract, depending on who is reading and what is being read. No mileage can tell us how far one author is from another; no dates can tell us who is close to whom. (174)

The conventional measures of time and distance do not apply to literature. One cannot assume the relation, or lack thereof, between two authors or works based solely on their distance in time and space. The relation between one text and the other is relative to the reader and that text. As a reader I pose in this study the argument that one cannot exclude the relationship between Joyce and Soueif based on their “mileage” and “dates”. Rather, their relationship depends on who is reading their work i.e. the global circulation of their texts and their receptions. As such, despite the obscurity of a literary genre’s continuum, as a reader one can put together possible routes in which Joyce’s work could have circulated

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<sup>6</sup> In a book review written by Rasheed EL-Enany, published in the *Independent*, a British online newspaper the year the book came out in 1992, he writes, “Ahdaf Soueif’s second novel can in many ways be seen as a ‘portrait of the artist as a young woman’ - an Egyptian woman called Asya. But where Stephen Dedalus had to free himself from the bonds of religion, homeland and family before he could present his purified self at the altar of art, Asya has different shackles” (El-Enany, “Book Review”).

outside of Europe and received by non-western writers and critics who introduced his work to the Arab world and ultimately to Soueif's library.

In 1950, the Arab world gained a new Arab writer, Ahdaf Soueif, and the earliest known translation of Joycean literature in Arabic, allowing us to safely assert that Joyce's influence had already made it to Egypt in time for Soueif's birth. The last part of Molly's monologue in *Ulysses* appeared in an essay by Louis Awad titled "Fi al-Adab al-Ingilizi al-Hadith [On Modern English Literature] in 1950 and in 1956 the short story "The Boarding House" from *Dubliners* was translated to Arabic by Jamil al-Husni and was included in a collection of short stories titled "Mukhtarat min al-Qisas al-Ingiliziyyah al-Qasirah" [Selections from English Short Stories] (Bushrui, "Joyce in the Arab World" 235). Some writers in the Arab world did not wait for the Arabic translations of Joyce's literature and had read his work in the French translation, specifically writers in Lebanon such as Suhail Idriss. Their contact with Joyce came through French literature because French culture and language was stronger than English in Lebanon. Bushrui notes that Joyce's influence on Idriss came from the French translation of *Ulysses* ("Joyce in the Arab World" 236). The most significant book on Joycean studies in the Arab world is Taha Mahmoud Taha's "Mawsu'at James Joyce: Hayatuh wa Fannuh wa Dirasit li A'malih" [A James Joyce Encyclopedia: His Life, Art and Works] published in 1975. In this book, Taha, who is an Egyptian professor of English at Kuwait University, offers a complete survey of Joyce's literature and translates two short stories "The Sisters" and "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" and extensive key passages from *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, *Exiles* and *Stephen Hero* (Bushrui, "Joyce in the Arab World" 235). In terms of Joyce's reception in the Arab world, the most significant text is Suheil Badi Bushrui's chapter "Joyce in the Arab World"

published in 1982 in *James Joyce: An International Perspective*, whilst he was appointed Chair of the English department at the American University of Beirut, a position he held from 1968-1986. Bushrui was the first Arab national to be appointed chair of English at AUB, and interestingly, he was the first non-westerner to be appointed chair of the International Association of the Study of Irish Literature. Among his many firsts, he was also the first to contribute to Joycean scholarship a perspective on Joyce in the Arab world and his contribution remains the most prominent resource for the reception of Joyce in the Arab world today. Bushrui's association with the Arab world and the West allows his work to be distributed between both readers; his writing on Joyce has influenced readers from both regions. In "Joyce in the Arab World" Bushrui writes, "Arab novelists have found *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* more accessible examples of how to focus on various aspects of life, particularly the seedier aspect, in a personal, detailed and evocative manner. The influence of *Dubliners*...is evident in such early short-story writing as *Rusul al-Insaniyyah wa Qisas Ukhra* [The Agents of Humanity and Other Stories] by Abdul Malik Abdul-Latif Nuri, and more recently as *Nas min Ras Beirut* [People from Beirut] by Samir Sanbr" (232-233). Bushrui notes that Arab critics often praised Joyce's literary strengths, "notably Joyce's ability to sum up the human predicament and depict, with impeccable sincerity, the crisis in the spiritual and material life of twentieth-century man" ("Joyce in the Arab World" 234), and as this study will demonstrate, his ability to sum up the "crisis in the spiritual and material life of twentieth-century man" can also be discussed in light with the life of a twentieth-century woman—Asya in the third chapter "The Bildungsroman in Constellation".

We also find Joyce's influence resonates in the Arab world in the writings of various Arab authors. Joyce influenced prominent literary figures in the Arab world such as Naguib Mahfouz, Tayeb Salih, Yusuf Idris, Ibrahim Sonallah and more recently, Egyptian writer Ahmed Naji. In *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* (1993), Rasheed El-Enany writes "with regard to [Joyce's] use of internal monologue he has this to say, 'All that happens is that I sometimes encounter a Joycean moment in my hero's life, so I render it in Joyce's manner with some modification'" (20). Bushrui has noted in his chapter on Joyce's stylistic influence on Arab writers, such as the Joycean techniques of stream of consciousness, interior monologue, and historical and mythical parody ("Joyce in the Arab World" 236). The aforementioned Arab writers are prominent in the Arab world and constitute the main pillars of the Arab literary canon. Their influence by Joyce indicates that Joyce has left a great mark on the Arab canon, as Mahfouz notes, Joyce is "a writer that you had to read" (El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning* 17). Seen in this light, these prominent writers act as intermediaries between Joyce and the rest of the Arab world. Their widely disseminated literature carries Joycean traces and yet Joyce's impact on the Arab world has not been written about much over the years. Although Bushrui hoped that his chapter would lead "as interest in Joyce increases throughout the Arab world, to the publication of the first complete bibliography of Joyce in Arabic" (Bushrui, "Joyce in the Arab World" 237), this complete bibliography is yet to have appeared. The lack of Joycean reception studies in the Arab world is unfortunate because Joyce's influence resonates with the most prominent writers of the Arab world, and has encouraged many translators to introduce his work to Arabic. On that note, it could be said that there are many reasons behind a chosen text for translation, but for Iraqi poet Salah Niazzi, choosing to translate

Joyce's *Ulysses* to Arabic was to protect his health. Joyce's impact on Arab writers goes beyond their literary spaces and into their reality, as Niazi notes, "I was protecting my health from the news of wars in Iraq...I couldn't bear to watch day and night on television. Many friends, Iraqi friends in Europe whom I knew, had heart attacks...so to protect my health, I said let me go and do something very difficult and forget about all the wars and killings...I decided to go for *Ulysses*" (Greaves). Though an unusual reason to translate a text, Niazi's admiration for Joyce's work was enough to submerge him in another world, a world that is not associated with his real world—Iraq.

In light of cultural exchange, aside from Joyce influencing Egyptian writers, Egyptian culture resonates in Joyce's writing. In a recent book length study titled *Hieroglyphic Modernisms: Writing and New Media in the Twentieth Century* (2018), Jesse Schotter discusses Joyce's utilization of Egyptian hieroglyphs as a universal language in his writing. Schotter notes that, "For Joyce, the only possible universal language is not to be found in the present or future, but in the past – and, particularly, in visual languages like Egyptian hieroglyphics. Like Naguib Mahfouz, who invokes hieroglyphs and ancient Egypt as a way of linking Egypt with the rest of the world and demonstrating its importance, so Joyce likewise turns to Egyptian writing for universalist aims" and continues on to write, "recalling al-Hakim and Mahfouz, Joyce finds in ancient Egypt and its hieroglyphs a way of expressing both the underlying links among races, cultures and languages, and, subtly, the significance of his own nation of Ireland. And as in those Egyptian novelists, that turn to the Egyptian past also involves a grappling with the relationship between writing and new media" (Schotter). Discussing hieroglyphs



and ancient Egyptian civilizations was not uncommon in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Starting in the late eighteenth century, Europeans were discovering Egyptian antiquities, which aroused curiosity among European scholars and writers and the interest continued on into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Joyce being a child of his time was influenced by excavations taking place on Egyptian ground by Europeans, and discussed in newspapers, books, and by travel writers at the time. As Joyce's writing began to emerge, so did Egyptology in Europe, specifically the fascination with excavation sites and museum exhibitions (Colla 11). According to Elliott Colla in *Conflicted Antiquities* (2007), "The knowledge of the artifact...transformed how modern Europeans and modern Egyptians looked at one another...the ability to interpret ancient Egypt was understood, certainly by Europeans, as further indication of their superior moral right to be the primary caretakers of Pharonic artifacts and monuments" (96). Following suit, by Joyce placing ancient Egyptian culture in his book, Joyce, like other Europeans at the time becomes a "caretaker" of ancient Egyptian artifacts, placing Egypt on display in his book, much as artifacts were displayed in European museums.

Just as Egypt's past was now relevant to a European present, this concept rang louder in modern Egyptian culture, best illustrated with Mahmoud Mukhtar's monument *Nahdat Misr*—a peasant woman and a sphinx. Similar to hieroglyphs being an important aspect of European modernity, the sphinx is an important aspect of Egyptian modernity. In Mukhtar's time modernity was celebrated by allusion to the pharaonic past and ancient Egypt came hand-in-hand with modern Egypt as seen with the monument *Nahdat Misr* described in depth in "The Bildungsroman in Constellation". On a similar note, Schotter

writes, “Joyce’s linkage of Ancient Egypt and writing, particularly physical forms of writing, goes back to *Portrait*, in which he invokes the Egyptian God of writers: ‘Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon.’... Similarly, in *Ulysses*, Stephen thinks of ‘Thoth, god of libraries’”. Joyce linking ancient Egypt to modern times is similar to the idea of *Nahdat Misr* and also to Soueif linking ancient Egypt to modern Egypt in her bildungsroman novel, which will be discussed further in “The Bildungsroman in Constellation”. On the notion of traveling genres, however, one can argue that Joyce’s linking of Ancient Egypt and writing, in his bildungsroman, indicates that his text “traveled” to Egypt in two ways. One, through Egyptian culture’s influence on the writing itself, within the bounds of the book the text encounters a culture different than its own. And two, the text itself is literally traveling, as it is translated and disseminated out of Europe and to the rest of the globe as previously illustrated. The global circulation of Joyce’s work outside of Europe and into the Arab world and specifically Egypt brings us one step closer to identifying his influence on Soueif’s own bildungsroman in order to close the distance between both novels and broaden the discourse on the bildungsroman genre.

#### D. On Locating Joyce’s Bildungsroman

It would be advantageous, though not essential, to be certain that Soueif had read Joyce’s *A Portrait* in order to suggest its influence on her own bildungsroman. Soueif’s exposure to Joyce could come through the circulation of his text to the Arab world as noted in the previous section, and through his influence on Arab writers whom she has read and been influenced by. It is important to note that Soueif was in England when she started

picking up books from her mother's library at age four to seven. The first language she read in was English and she continues to read more in English today, as she notes in an interview,

I live in England and therefore I am not as au courant of what's happening on the Arabic literary scene as I ought to be...I did read a fair amount of what was current when I was growing up... I read al-Tayyib Salih, I read Naguib Mahfuz, I read Yusif Idriss and Fathi Ghanim, a lot of current poetry, but in the end I read more English. (Massad 88)

To gain a better understanding of the books Soueif has read, we could use her novel *In the Eye of the Sun*, a novel replete with intertextual references to a combination of both Arab and western writers who have all read and been influenced by the iconic Joyce, to recreate Soueif's library in this study. The intertextual references she makes in the novel, both in the epigraphs to the chapters and within the narrative itself, allow us to compile a list of literary works and writers who have influenced the novel. Soueif systematically evokes iconic modernist writers throughout the narrative, but omits Joyce, which could be seen as a deliberate act of elimination. However, the lack of the explicit mention of Joyce is not indicative of the absence of his influence, because as I have demonstrated in the first chapter of this study, "The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective" and continue to do so in this chapter, literary works have complicated routes and influence cannot be traced back to one point of origin. Writers are exposed to one another through the travel of a genre, and this exposure cannot be neatly traced back to one text or one writer. Literary influence cannot be measured in a straightforward manner, "No mileage can tell us how far one author is from another; no dates can tell us who is close to whom" (Dimock 174). What we can know, however, is Joyce's stature in his time and assume from the reception and

circulation of his work that he was widely read. As Naguib Mahfouz reminds us, Joyce is “a writer that you had to read” (El-Enany 17), allowing us to catch glimpses of Joyce in the writers present in Soueif’s hypothetical library created in this study.

In the book *Arab Culture and the Novel: Genre, Identity and Agency in Egyptian Fiction* (2007), Muhammad Siddiq writes about Egyptian writer Ibrahim Sonallah and discusses *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in relation to Sonallah’s notable novel *Tilka El Ra’iha*, published in Arabic in 1966 and translated to English, *That Smell*, in 1971. Siddiq writes, “Ibrahim affixes to the novella a telling epigraph from James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. It reads: “This race and this country and this life produced me...and I shall express myself as I am” (Siddiq 30). Siddiq continues to say that it is “difficult to see how the distinctly Irish context of the cunningly autobiographical aesthete of *A Portrait* at the beginning of the twentieth century applied to the condition of the politically active Egyptian writer in 1960s” (30). Siddiq makes an important note, yet for the purpose of our discussion one could argue that Joyce’s influence on Ibrahim demonstrates the wide reception of his work in Egypt and the universal applicability of the bildungsroman novel outside of Ireland. Ibrahim is one of the most important Egyptian writers of the modern era, known for his leftist and nationalist views expressed in his work. He writes in Arabic but much of his works are translated to English and other languages. He was imprisoned during the 1960s for his leftist political opinions in Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser’s rule, which influenced his writing of his prison novel *Tilka El Ra’iha* (1966). His semi-autobiographical novel tells the story of a prisoner recently released from prison and seeking to reacquaint his life with his family, friends and the city. The novel was banned for its sexual content immediately after its publication in Egypt, though many have

noted that the government was more concerned with how Ibrahim depicted the imprisonment and torture in Egypt's jails and the novel's political connotations. Some of the copies salvaged from the printers were circulated underground, and censored editions were published without Ibrahim's consent decades later (El Rashidi). It is important to note here that Ibrahim's novel is mentioned in Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*, suggesting that she has read it, which also suggests an indirect influence of Joyce's text on her writing. Soueif is not often seen as belonging to the same group of prominent Egyptian writers as Ibrahim, since her primary literary language is English. However by mentioning his novel she inscribes herself in the same Arab literary tradition. She associates herself with those writers, further indicating that Joyce influencing Ibrahim's writing could be taken a step further to understand that Joyce influenced her own writing as well, albeit indirectly. To extend this argument even further, in the book *The Short Story: Introduction* (2009), Paul March-Russel writes, "postcolonial writers such as...Soueif mimic the panoramic scale of James Joyce and George Eliot" (257). As noted, Joyce's technical influence on Soueif's writing indicates that she has been influenced by him, either through reading him directly or by being exposed to his writing through the traveling of his literature outside of Europe and his influence on Arab writers she had read, or even both at different stages of her life. Soueif may have read Joyce, and a few years later, read Ibrahim Sonallah's novel and been exposed to Joyce a second time through the eyes of Sonallah. Other variations are also possible, which further illustrates the complicated and various routes one has to encounter to trace one writer's influence on another across space and time.

In her novel *In the Eye of the Sun*, Soueif makes intertextual references to writers who have published during the time of Joyce or have influenced Joyce's own writing.

Having understood how literary genres travel and the complicated genealogy of the bildungsroman, we now can recognize that Joyce's literary scent can be picked up from numerous novels in her library, even those published before his novel *A Portrait* and/or within the same time period. Our task of compiling books for Soueif's hypothetical library is made more complicated once we recognize that a writer reading one text is also reading its antecedents. By Soueif reading Joyce, she is also reading Flaubert, Kipling, George Eliot and Colette, all of whom she makes intertextual references to. According to Frank Budgen in *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'* (1972) "Of all the great nineteenth century masters of fiction Joyce held Flaubert in highest esteem (184) and in the novel, Soueif refers to the dancer Kushuk Hanim, a key figure in Flaubert's orientalist accounts of the East.

Further, the title of Soueif's bildungsroman is derived from Rudyard Kipling's "Song the Wise Children" a writer who was of the same generation as Joyce and whom is noted by Joyce to be among the "three writers of the nineteenth century who had the greatest natural talents" (Ellman 661). Further, Soueif repeatedly references George Eliot and Colette, both of whom wrote bildungsroman novels prior to Joyce's *A Portrait*, which further supports the argument that Joyce's exclusion from the text is a deliberate act of elimination. Soueif refers to Colette, a French female author most widely known for her novella *Gigi* (1994). What is most interesting for this study, however, are her first four bildungsroman novels, *Claudine à l'École* (1900), *Claudine à Paris* (1901), *Claudine en Ménage* (1902), and *Claudine S'en Va* (1903) published under her husband's pen name "Willy". The Claudine series chronicle the development of the main character Claudine and are published in English as *Claudine at School*, *Claudine in Paris*, *Claudine Married*,

and *Claudine and Annie*. On a similar note, Soueif refers to George Eliot's *Middlemarch* repeatedly in three epilogues and in the narrative. Eliot's text is another female bildungsroman published under a male pen name. The two selected female authors, who wrote female bildungsromans prior to Joyce's iconic male bildungsroman *A Portrait*, are a convenient choice for Soueif given the fact that she excludes Joyce completely from her novel despite the wide circulation and canonical stature of his bildungsroman novel. The similarities of both references could not be a mere coincidence, because their repeated inclusion is coupled with the exclusion of Joyce's iconic male bildungsroman, in order to place herself in the same boat as her female antecedents. One would assume that with her repeated inclusion of intertextual references to modernist writers, and writers whom influenced Asya (a semi-fictional version of Soueif herself) that Soueif would also allude to Joyce's bildungsroman novel. Soueif's choice of referring to iconic writers of the modernist era but omitting Joyce, knowing that her work is a descendant of his iconic bildungsroman, could be seen as a deliberate act of elimination. According to Sandra Gilbert in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) "The woman writer—and we shall see women doing this over and over again—searches for a female model not because she wants dutifully to comply with male definitions of her "femininity" but because she must legitimize her own rebellious endeavors" (50). Soueif repeatedly mentions George Eliot and her female bildungsroman *Middlemarch* to direct readers to the fact that her bildungsroman follows a female coming of age tradition. Joyce's absence can be seen as prerogative, as a deliberate act of distancing from Joyce placing importance on wanting to produce her own bildungsroman tradition that is not only different by degree but rather different by kind, not dependent on a male exclusive tradition. Soueif is seen "actively seeking a female precursor

who... proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible” (Gilbert 49). One can argue that her intertextual references to female bildungsroman novels published prior to the iconic *A Portrait* is not a coincidence, but a deliberate choice which can be understood as Soueif indirectly working with Joyce’s text by directly writing it out as the iconic male authoritative bildungsroman, seeking female role models instead for her own female bildungsroman. Her reading of Joyce, though it cannot be located on the surface of the text, can be detected once we consider the other books in Soueif’s library. Locating Joyce in Soueif’s work allows us to see how the genre has traveled and circulated in and outside of Egypt, and the different possible routes the text could have taken to land in Soueif’s library and influence her own female coming of age, analyzed thoroughly in conjunction with Joyce’s *A Portrait* in the final chapter of this study “The Bildungsroman in Constellation”.

#### E. Conclusion

When we consider the bildungsroman as a genre in motion we challenge narrowly defined national canons and read texts born over and over again into different spaces and times as participants of a broader literary world. By placing Joyce’s iconic bildungsroman under the prism of world literature studies in conjunction with Joycean studies, *A Portrait* becomes a text that can surpass literary boundaries and become a token of exchange across national and literary borders. As the genre traveled along its various complicated routes, it created in its travels new lines on the intellectual map of the world, lines that illustrate a variety of literary networks of transmission, reception and circulation of Joyce’s iconic bildungsroman text in the Arab world, and ultimately, lines that led to Soueif’s own library.



As we observe the intellectual map of the world illustrated in this chapter, we can see that just as “Don Quixote now shares the stage with Arabic and Hebrew writing from medieval Andalusia” (Damrosch, “Frames for World Literature” 99) as illustrated in “The Bildungsroman in Global Perspective”, Joyce’s *A Portrait*, as it has traveled outside of Europe and into the Arab world, can now share the stage with Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun* in “The Bildungsroman in Constellation”. Lastly, “Insofar as the word *Bildung* itself is related to *Bild* and *Bildnis*, it may connote ‘picture’ or ‘portrait’ as well as ‘shaping’ or ‘formation’; and the Bildungsroman may then typically become what Joyce’s title promises, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*” (Buckley 13). The third chapter will illustrate that as the bildungsroman tradition traveled from Joyce to Soueif, it turned the word “Portrait” from its animated reality “of the artist in his progress from early childhood through adolescence” (Buckley 13) into an absurd coming of age narrative that could only exist as a “portrait”—a mere image of what a coming of age ought to be, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter “The Bildungsroman in Constellation”.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BILDUNGSROMAN IN CONSTELLATION

#### A. Introduction

When examining a constellation one looks at the continuity of stars, aligned one approximate to another, in an attempt to form a recognizable figure from the individual points. At times, however, discontinuous stars create a rupture in the pattern, complicating the traditional well-known shape. At that point, one could either dismiss the existence of the constellation altogether or imagine a new, abstract constellation that brings multiple strands of stars together. Choosing the former means losing sight of new possibilities because they do not fit into “traditional” molds of what a constellation is. Choosing the latter breaks the mold and allows us to ponder what happens when we pull multiple strands of stars together and complicate traditional molds of constellations. Following this line of thought, this chapter will treat Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun* as two separate constellations, i.e. bildungsroman novels, with the stars in each constellation representing key themes in the genre. We will overlay these two constellations atop one another and analyze through close reading the continuities and ruptures between them. As we trace from star to star, i.e. theme to theme between the books, the stars of the two constellations that are approximate to one another will represent the continuities between the two traditions, whereas those stars that do not align can be read as ruptures from the recognizable pattern of a constellation. By viewing *A Portrait* as the more recognized and traditional constellation of the two, we will find that the overlying *In*

*the Eye of the Sun* is an abstraction of its traditional bildungsroman antecedent. Where one constellation, i.e. Soueif's novel, is approximately 800 pages in length consisting of ten chapters, the other constellation, i.e. Joyce's novel, is only 213 pages in length with five chapters, yet the vast disparity in length does not make the novels incomparable. This study brings both novels to a closer orbit despite the disparity in length and volume between them. The close reading demonstrates that the overlaps between these two texts relate to the protagonists' sexual awakening, the quest of coming of age as free artists, historical and political contexts, and language and form, whereas the ruptures that are responsible for creating the abstract image of a bildungsroman novel arise from the gender differences and the West-East dichotomy, specifically orientalist representations of the 'other'. These ruptures from Joyce's tradition have taken the more recognized and iconic *A Portrait* and created an abstract constellation within the genre, Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*. On one hand, we have an iconic traditional image of what the genre can be and has been for a long time, i.e. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and on the other hand we have an abstract formation of another possibility of the genre, i.e. Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*. Continuous stars that are in place create real shapes and follow the tradition, whereas odd stars that are out of place create ruptures that produce an abstract shape. Soueif's novel follows in the tradition set by Joyce but the ruptures in her novel, due to gender differences rising to the surface in the thematic and stylistic comparative close reading, create an abstract constellation of the precedent traditional and iconic bildungsroman novel. Both novels tell of a protagonist coming of age, yet Joyce's male protagonist turns the object of the title's "Portrait" into an animated reality, whereas Soueif's female protagonist Asya becomes a portrait itself, because as the story unfolds her coming of age becomes more of

an absurdity residing in an actual “portrait”, an image of what a coming of age ought to be. By definition, a portrait is an image, a mere representation of an object, an unreal version of the true subject. This makes "Portrait" a more appropriate title for Soueif's novel than Joyce's; Stephen through his coming of age attains true freedom, becoming a true version of what he set out to be, whereas Asya's coming of age only allows her to attain an image of freedom, developing only into a “portrait” of a free artist.

As the genre traveled from Joyce's *A Portrait* to Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*, it was culturally translated and gender appropriated, resulting in an abstract descendant of Joyce's modernist tradition. Stephen's quest and possibility for real personal autonomy has transitioned into Asya's portrait or façade of autonomy. Reading Soueif's novel alongside Joyce's bildungsroman allows us to better understand the coming of age tradition and its translation across disparate geographical locations and time. As the genre traveled from Ireland in 1916 to Egypt in 1992 it underwent changes that one could argue have formed a difference in kind and not just by degree. From the first constellation to the second, we get an abstract shape of the genre, one that Soueif has created to represent a coming of age narrative in which the main character Asya Al-Ulama, when compared with the iconic Stephen Dedalus, is starring in a coming of age narrative that aligns with Joyce's tradition, while simultaneously battling personal decolonization, a term best defined by Frantz Fanon's words, “exorcise...liberate...[and] explain” (57) herself as an autonomous entity capable of coming of age with her nation. As such, Soueif develops a new novel and a new narrative mode to express Asya's coming of age narrative—one that demonstrates a female's limitations in the outside world while simultaneously hindering her coming of age into a free artist. In order for Soueif to illustrate an Arab-female bildungsroman, one that is

different by kind and not just by degree, that is, not merely another version of a bildungsroman but a new literary outcome of the bildungsroman genre, she is seen deviating from the previous tradition set by Joyce as a modernist icon, though his influence cannot be denied, made evident by the thematic continuities with his work that resonate in hers. In a conversation with her friends on possible English literature exam questions, Asya confirms that previous literary traditions must be remembered as influence travels from one writer to the next through the centuries,

‘I thought,’ says Asya, ‘we might get a question on influences and all that.’

‘Influences?’

‘Well, you know, how Eliot was influenced by the seventeenth century—’

Mimi looks anxiously at Chrissie, who sucks on her pencil and gives Asya a warning look.

‘He wouldn’t do that, would he?’ asks Mimi. ‘We’ve only done the twentieth century this year—’

‘You’re supposed to remember *all* of it,’ says Asya. (Soueif 231)

By making her protagonist speak of the importance of past influences in literature, Soueif foregrounds the importance of influence in literary traditions, which further suggests that she herself “remembers” and is influenced by antecedent literary traditions. As the genre traveled and was culturally exchanged, as demonstrated in the previous chapter “The Bildungsroman in Motion”, by a female writer, it demonstrated that Joyce’s male exclusive tradition poses limitations on the continuity of the genre free from ruptures. The ruptures caused by gender differences have produced a different type of novel. Rather than being a possibility setting a character on the road to autonomy, maturity and triumph, the bildungsroman becomes a female fantasy following the ideology embedded in the bildungsroman tradition—the process of becoming a *man*. As such, Asya’s coming of age

becomes “just another female somnambulist fantasy, an incoherent blotting of colours on a canvas, a therapeutic activity in order to ease some hysteric impulse, too insignificant to impose itself on the male space of representation and thus make a difference” (Gjurgjan 112). Therefore, when discussing Soueif’s novel as an abstract constellation I use the term abstract with two different meanings. On one level, Soueif’s novel is an *abstract* bildungsroman because the ruptures in the tradition turn the genre into an unidentical yet recognizable shape when compared to its antecedent. And on the other level, Asya’s coming of age is *abstract* because although she develops throughout the novel, her journey seems unreal since her desired goal to become a free artist is an unattainable achievement for an Arab woman living in the modern world, creating only a “portrait” of a bildungsroman. Soueif’s novel is a “portrait” of a coming of age narrative contained within an abstract version of an established tradition, “an incoherent blotting of colors on a canvas” as Gjurgjan accurately put it.

## B. Monsters of their Nations

Soueif’s bildungsroman *In the Eye of the Sun* tells the story of an Egyptian woman named Asya who comes from an intellectual middle class family and is immersed in western culture from a young age through her parents’ books and her travels. As the story unfolds, readers follow Asya as she completes her early education, falls in love with Saif, and waits impatiently for her graduation in order to be allowed to marry him. As soon as Asya and Saif are interlocked in marriage, things begin to fall apart for Asya. Saif and Asya are unable to consummate their marriage because of the pain that Asya feels the first time they try, after which Asya and Saif decide to live apart to pursue their careers. Asya travels

to England to pursue her PhD in linguistics, writing a thesis on metaphors, and Saif has to remain in the Middle East for his business. Frustrated with her lonely marriage and unfulfilled womanhood, Asya invites Gerald Stone into her home after which her life takes a new turn. Her adulteress character, though seemingly rebellious in nature, strips her of her autonomy and hinders her coming of age. It weakens her position as an independent woman as Asya allows herself to be physically and mentally tortured by her lover Gerald, who becomes the man in possession of her life who limits her freedom by treating her as his object. From that moment on, Asya faces painful struggles of maturity, autonomy, and triumph, both as an Egyptian woman and as the embodiment of Egypt as a nation. The novel ends with Asya returning to Egypt, having divorced her husband and starting a new chapter in her life, one that was chosen for her. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* tells the story of a boy named Stephen who gradually decides to free himself from social, familial, political and religious ties. Like Asya, Stephen too is struggling with maturity, autonomy and triumph, but unlike Asya, he finds in art the consolation of all three. For Stephen, instances of apprehension, inspiration and creation of art bring him in contact with the universe and help elevate him to the status of free artist, creator of his own world. Though written 76 years apart, Soueif and Joyce's novels share similar themes of sexual awakening, art, education, and politics, yet ruptures take place mainly due to gender differences and in certain instances when the West-East dichotomy rises to the surface, specifically orientalist representations of the 'other', which place Stephen the westerner further away from Asya the easterner. According to Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978), "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth century European [i.e.

feminine, erotic, exotic], but also because it *could be*—that is, submitted to being—*made Oriental*” (6). Unlike Stephen who, as a white western male, is almost free from subjugation, Asya is subject to be “made Oriental” by a western male gaze that follows her throughout the narrative, “exoticizing” and “eroticizing” her. Asya is in constant battle with this gaze, as she is seen attempting to exorcise this version of herself seen as the “other”, the “foreigner”, both as a woman and as an Arab in a western land.

However, despite the instances in which Stephen, in comparison to Asya, appears as the dominant western male, it could be argued that Asya and Stephen both come from peripheral countries. Egypt is generally recognized as part of the periphery and Ireland is marginal in Europe, and both of these countries bear the legacy of British colonialism, one from within Europe and one outside of European borders, making both Ireland and Egypt peripheral places but one is at a further distance from the center. Understanding this, Joyce and Soueif could both be seen as writing from the margins. Irish and Egyptian identities are immersed in rebellion against colonialism and occupation. Interestingly, Soueif literally brings the two places together in her novel as Ireland is mentioned in relation to Arab politics when Asya’s friends are having dinner and they decide not to “go on too much about Arab politics” but rather “divide the time between the Middle East and Northern Ireland” (Soueif 485). Joyce grew up in an Ireland subject to British rule on the one hand and Roman Catholic domination on the other. His protagonist Stephen grows up in the shadows of ongoing political disputes, as Ireland’s claim for independence was not only disputed by Britain, but at one point also by the Catholic Church. When the church condemned the Irish Parliamentary Party’s Charles Stewart Parnell who was the man most likely to “achieve Home Rule” for Ireland as “unfit for public life” because of his ten-year



affair with a married woman, the country split into those with the Church and those against it, which becomes the backdrop of the novel. Stephen grows up like Joyce, “never [to] forget what he considered the treachery of the priests and their hand in the destruction of Ireland’s ‘uncrowned king’” (Johnson ix). He grows up against the backdrop of “the history of the domination of Ireland by Britain, of Irish Catholics by British Protestants, and of those Irish Catholics themselves by the strictures of the institutionalized Catholic Church” (Johnson x). Though Stephen refuses to support either authority he wanted to “create art out of the tale of their mutual entanglement” (Johnson x).

Coming out of a similar political context, Soueif integrates the private history of Asya al-Ulama and her family with the political history of Egypt between the years 1967-1980. As the story unfolds we learn of Egypt’s defeat in the war with Israel, president Gamal Abdel Nasser’s sudden death and the decline of his version of pan-Arabism. President Gamal Abdel Nasser helped carve a new path for the Arab world by encouraging Arab nations to act as a group, and was the first Arab leader in modern history to promote pan-Arabism amongst the Arab masses (Jillani 77). Though Egypt had gained a “formal” independence from Britain in 1922, it was not until Nasser’s supreme act of defiance against the West with the nationalization of the Suez Canal, that Egypt managed to gain full independence in 1956. In 1956 Egypt was invaded by Israel followed by the United Kingdom and France with the aims of controlling the Suez Canal and removing President Nasser from office. Soon after the war started, political pressure from the United States, Soviet Union and the United Nations led to the withdrawal of the three invaders and the end of the Suez War, leaving Egypt in control of the canal. The removal of the British military base in the canal zone and the confiscation of British and French property in Egypt marked

the official independence of Egypt from Britain under Nasser's rule (Jillani 80). However, in 1967 tension between Israel and Egypt began building which led to the Arab six-day war against Israel in June. Egypt was defeated and Nasser, taking full responsibility for the political decisions leading to the war, resigned on the last day after which the Egyptian masses organized street demonstrations to demand his continuation in office. Nasser accordingly continued in office until his death in 1970 (Jillani 75).

The death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Charles Parnell puts Stephen and Asya in closer orbit because they had to watch their idols fall out of grace and their countries unravel further into chaos, "the Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space" (Joyce 155) and "Nowadays you only come upon photographs of 'Abd el-Nasser in private homes—in private homes or on the walls of coffee-shops, or in the countryside...In Midan el-Tahrir the granite pedestal stands empty; the plans, sketches, proposals for his statue probably gathering dust in some office of the presidency" (Soueif 763). The death of their idols at the beginning of the narrative triggers the political ambivalence that they face as they are coming of age. The personal/political binary overshadows their coming of age journeys. In Joyce's novel, Stephen listens to his family arguing about the dispute between the church and Parnell. They suddenly realize that they should not be speaking about it in front of Stephen,

–Really, Simon, you should not speak that way before Stephen. It's not right.

–O, he'll remember all this when he grows up, said Dante hotly—the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home.

–Let him remember too, cried Mr Casey to her from across the table, the language with which the priests and the priests' pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave. Let him remember that too when he grows up. (Joyce 27-28)

Stephen not only remembers the political conflicts of Ireland as he grows up, but, like Asya, Stephen faults his country for shaping his identity, accusing "Ireland [for being] the old sow that eats her own farrow" (Joyce 171). Stephen regards Ireland as unable to develop, as it gets older while preventing its offspring from growing. Similarly, Asya says, "we are not allowed to outgrow our past" (Soueif 383). The political turmoil of the two nations plays a key role in their own development. Stephen and Asya's coming of age coincides with the coming of age of their respective nations, politics are interwoven within the narrative, but unlike Stephen who can "fly by those nets" (Joyce 171) Asya's nation pulls her to the ground.

Both Soueif and Joyce are writing coming of age novels that are autobiographical, and their narration dates coincide with their younger selves. Soueif's novel was first published in 1992, but its narrated time takes place within the years of 1967-1980 as explicitly stated in the novel, the same years in which Soueif, who was born in 1950, would have been 17-30, the same age as Asya in the novel. "The narrator's life story turns together with the author's to a point where one seems to largely frame the other: Asya, like Soueif, comes of age in Nasserian Egypt, is the child of affluent university professors, is raised on a political and intellectual diet of Arab socialism, and leaves Egypt for England in order to earn an advanced degree" (Chakravorty 135). Joyce's novel was first published in 1916 in the midst of World War 1 and its narrated time takes place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Joyce, like Stephen, was also coming of age. Joyce was born in 1882 and graduated from University College, Dublin, in 1902. These years approximately form the parameters of the novel. The specific time of narration of the novel is never explicitly stated but the

death of Parnell in 1891 early in the novel helps give us a better idea of the novel's timeline. Stephen also tells the priest during his confession that he is sixteen years old, making it the year 1898 if we go by Joyce's birth year. Both dates provide readers with a rough estimate on the time of narration. Both novels take place at the same time and in the same place as the first two decades of their respective authors' lives, supporting the claim that both novels are autobiographical in nature. What brings these novels closer, however, other than the fact that they are bildungsroman of writers is that, they tell the story of nations with a shared history with British colonialism. British colonialism has taken a toll on both Ireland and Egypt, and, interestingly, both countries gained independence from Britain in 1922. However, Joyce's novel depicts Ireland still under British rule whereas Soueif's novel is postcolonial, depicting an Independent Egypt. Yet, despite living in an independent Egypt, Soueif writes against British imperialism, which can best be seen when the narrator shares Asya's thoughts as she is walking by the Thames river,

She turns her back to the [Thames] river and looks again at the solid, grand facades of Whitehall. The statues, the spacious greens where with her parents she used to listen to military bands on sunny afternoons, the great black wrought-iron railings, the intricate tower with the four-faced clock: the accouterments of Empire. Built of course on Egyptian cotton and debt, on the wealth of India, on the sugar of the West Indies, on centuries of adventure and exploitation ending in the division of the Arab world and the creation of the state of Israel etc. etc. etc. (Soueif 511-512).

Soueif goes on to illustrate that a nation's coming of age as a free entity is not made easier post-independence from Britain. Growing up in the heyday of Nasser's era, Asya lives through Egypt's defeat in the war with Israel, which is documented in the novel along with the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. Just as Stephen chose to free himself from the bounds of his

nation in order to pursue his own life unconditioned by his nation, Asya in postcolonial Egypt must do the same if she is to come of age as a free entity. Yet, the personal/political binary is not as easily broken for an Arab female as it once was with Stephen. As the genre traveled from a colonial to a postcolonial setting, it further illustrated the importance of breaking the personal/political binary if one was to free themselves from the shackles of their own nation. Stephen best describes his position against his associating himself with his nation when talking to Davin about Ireland, saying “my ancestors threw off their language and took another...They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?” (Joyce 170). Stephen’s unwillingness to participate in up keeping Irish language and traditions and his “what for” attitude becomes more understandable when one reads of Asya and Egypt’s coming of age story in Soueif’s novel. Despite having gained political independence, Egypt’s political instability, along with the instability of the entire region at the same time in the novel, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Lebanese civil war, has created a state of paralysis in its offspring. Asya as an Egyptian continues to “pay the debts” of her nations’ ongoing political history that is yet to be put at a halt. Stephen’s ability to dissociate himself from his nation and break the personal/political binary that Ireland, like Egypt, forces upon its people is what gave him the chance at creating his own life outside of the nets of Ireland. And it is the lack of this ability that grounds Asya in her nation and leads to her assuming its turmoil.

One could argue that by both writers incorporating the political into the personal (bildungsroman novels), they are writing the coming of age of their characters along side the coming of age of their nations. By writing their characters into existence and tracing

their development, they are also writing their countries into existence, following Goethe's iconic bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* published in 1795, which was also written at a time when Germany as a country did not exist, since it only came into being in 1871. Goethe, Joyce, and Soueif could all be said to have written bildungsroman novels about their countries coming into being as independent countries as well as about their protagonists. Ireland, like Egypt, was considered a peripheral country at the time of Joyce's narration and was under British rule. Ireland only came into being as an independent nation in 1922, six years after Joyce published his novel in 1916. As Joyce writes about Stephen coming into being in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland too is coming into being, in the process of establishing itself as an independent country. In Soueif's novel, though Egypt had already established itself as an independent country at the time of the novel's narration, Soueif takes a different approach than her two antecedents in writing the coming of age of her nation. Having already established its independence, Soueif, rather than write the country into being, writes the country's coming of age from an Arab perspective. Writing through the eyes of an Egyptian, Soueif is countering western narratives of the history of the Arab world and the ongoing political disputes being reported subjectively by the West with the purpose of gaining further dominance over what they depict as a weak nation. Throughout the novel, Soueif interrupts her storyline with contemporary pieces of news about the ongoing political strife in Egypt and the Middle East, either with direct narration or by including newspaper clippings or letters to Asya from friends and family in Egypt. By interweaving politics into the narrative, Soueif illustrates how the Arab nation is forming itself amidst political upheaval. Both Ireland and Egypt at the time of narration are peripheral and are coming into being through the eyes of the colonized.

With that said, if one were to label these two characters based on the state in which they grew up and the influence of the political turmoil of their nations on their upbringing, they would be called “Monsters of their Nations”. It could be argued that the two nations have created “monsters” of their offspring, made evident with how other characters in the novel comment on the “dangerous” ways in which Asya and Stephen shape their private lives. Upon realizing that Asya decided to ignore everything around her and pursue her journey as an artist, i.e. completing her PhD, Gerald says “You’re not human...you know what you are? You are a monster, man, you’re dangerous, you *really* are“ (Soueif 613). Of course here Gerald described her as such because she had decided to not care about anything but her dissertation, her own “art” and her own “private life” that is focused purely inward. Asya’s choice of committing herself to her “art” makes her appear a monster, a dangerous misfit in society. The man who prefers to control her sees her desire to breakaway from everything and everyone around her, as dangerous. One could juxtapose Gerald’s anger towards Asya’s choices in her “private life” with Davin telling Stephen “when you told me that night...those things about your private life... I was not able to eat my dinner”, to which Stephen responds, “You mean I am a monster” and continues to say “this race and this country and this life produced me... I shall express myself as I am” (Joyce 170). Asya too believes that her choices have been conditioned by her nation, and the person she has become is a product of a troubled nation, best seen when she responds to a friend accusing Arabs of always being at each other’s throats to which she comments, “And who’s responsible for that? Who set it up to be that way?” (Soueif 383), implying that Arabs are conditioned by their colonial legacy. Both Asya and Stephen attempt to place themselves in isolation and focus on their own artistic creations. However, Asya and

Stephen choosing to devote their time to art is not taken lightly by those around them. Referring to Asya as a monster for choosing an isolated path, or in the case of Stephen, for choosing the life of a free artist, brings both characters together. Stephen and Asya both believe that whatever they have become is a result of the context of their upbringing. Their country “is responsible” for shaping who they are, even if who they are is “monsters”. In addition to Gerald thinking she is a monster for being so focused on her thesis and locking herself up in an isolated cottage, Asya’s own mother doesn’t understand her need to be away from Egypt to figure out who she is, “I just want to be *free* for a while—“ (Soueif 690) Asya explains, to which her mother responds, “Oh Asya...you always make such a problem out of everything” (Soueif 690). Yet, a rupture arises when Asya is brought down by another woman, further indicating the extent to which gender plays a role in determining whether or not Asya can freely become the “monster” she is. According to Helene Cixous, as a woman, “you want to have. You want everything. But having is forbidden to human beings. Having everything. And for woman, it’s even forbidden to hope to have everything a human being can have. There are so many boundaries, and so many walls, and inside the walls, more walls” (3). For Asya, these “walls inside the walls” are embodied by her mother, who as a female inside the walls of patriarchy is finding it difficult to understand Asya’s desire to break these walls, “the vitality and hopefulness characterizing the adolescent hero’s attitude toward her future here meet and conflict with the expectations and dictates of the surrounding society” (Pratt 29).

Just as Stephen is critical of the Church, which he claims destroyed Ireland’s only chance for independence and sunk the country into further turmoil, Asya is outspoken about president Anwar Sadat’s political agenda being detrimental to Egypt. We learn in Soueif’s



novel that President Sadat, appointed following Gamal Abdel Nasser's death, dismantled the centralized state socialism that Nasser had created in favor of a neoliberal program of economic development that encouraged local markets to be open to foreign investment and privatization. Asya is critical of Sadat's plans to dismantle Abdel Nasser's project and his close ties to the Americans, specifically the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed by Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and witnessed by United States President Jimmy Carter in 1978. For many in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, the peace treaty was a betrayal. After watching Carter's interview on TV Asya thinks to herself, "Carter couldn't have said it more clearly: the United States does not want to see a 'fairly radical new Independent nation in the heart of the Middle East'. Well if the United States doesn't want it, then it's not going to happen—so what are they even pretending to negotiate about?" and sarcastically Asya comments on Sadat's negotiations with Israel, "Is this it...has he made his historic blunder; taken the step from which all things will now evolve?" (Soueif 714). Sadat signing the peace treaty was seen by many Arabs as a "historic blunder" as the peace treaty did not effectively evolve the situation and many Arab parties abandoned Egypt, which complicated the positions of Arab countries, and the potential for Arab unity drastically decreased. Also, Sadat's pro-capitalism agenda led him to nurture the Islamists in order to beat the leftist-socialists in the country, causing more extreme upheaval in Egypt. Asya, like Stephen, grows up not necessarily against her nation but extremely critical of it. However, early in her life she had believed that "the world *does* change through the act of one person" (Soueif 421) and she wanted to be that person, as she became older she began sharing the view that changing the world in this case requires one to "prescribe radical surgery for the country—and the whole Arab World" (Soueif 16). The

metaphor pushes Asya further from the optimistic view she once had after she gradually begins to lose hope in the control she has over her own life, let alone her country and the whole Arab World. On the other hand, Stephen becomes more optimistic as he grows older, gradually believing he could be a creator of his own world and create a new Ireland for himself as he desires it to be. He ignores voices of those around him urging him to be a “good Catholic” and “be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition” (Joyce 70) and instead sets sail for an isolated journey to his own Ireland, saying with all confidence, “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use— silence, exile, and cunning” (Joyce 208). The Ireland he creates as a free artist would at the very least allow him to change his own world if not of his entire nation, an opportunity Asya is deprived of because, as she notes, “one can’t be free of one’s own— character” (Soueif 690) especially not when the character is shaped by the nation.

### C. A Portrait of Freedom

Cixous, in “Coming to Writing,” (1991) writes, “maybe I have written to see, to have what I never would have had” (4). While Cixous writes to see what she never would have seen, Soueif writes a coming of age narrative that culminates in “what [Asya] never would have had”, a mere portrait of freedom. The new novel and new narrative mode needed to express Asya’s coming of age narrative—one that demonstrates a female’s limitations in the outside world while simultaneously repressing her coming of age in an imaginary, fiction-like world that exists in her imagination, takes shape into a “portrait” of

a Bildungsroman. The reason I use the term “portrait” is because as the novel traveled from Joyce’s *A Portrait* and was appropriated by Soueif, it demonstrated that a female coming of age, if attempting to follow a Joycean tradition, could not fully realize the true freedom that Stephen attained, and must be reserved to having only an image, or “portrait”, of that freedom. Thus, as the tradition traveled from Joyce to Soueif, it was transformed from a reality to only an image of reality—a coming of age that can only exist in a portrait as opposed to in the real world.

Asya recalls one of Gerald’s many evaluations of her, telling her,

The trouble with you,’ he’d said, ‘is that all your ideas are second-hand; they’re derived from art—not life.’ That’s true. And, ‘OK. You’re intelligent, you’re bright, you’re good at taking things to pieces, but you’re no good at putting them together again. (Soueif 706)

Taking Asya to be representative of Soueif herself, and following the constellation analogy I began my chapter with, we can understand from Asya agreeing with Gerald, “That’s true”, that Soueif’s tradition is not only derived from art, i.e. Joyce’s *A Portrait*, but also that her inability to put pieces together further indicates that she has created her own abstract constellation by taking Joyce’s thematic pieces and assembling them into her own form of a bildungsroman. Aside from Soueif putting together a bildungsroman novel, in the novel itself, Asya is literally systematically arranging poems together for her PhD dissertation in linguistics. This parallel is telling of Soueif’s belief in the power of language for shaping a coming of age of a woman in society. Accordingly, in considering why have there been no great women artists, Linda Nochlin in her piece titled “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” (1988) suggests that “The fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and

our education—education understood to include everything that happens to use from the moment we went this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals” (Nochlin 150). The problem lies in our institutional structures and the reality they impose on human beings which is the subjection of women to men. Anything outside of that universal custom is seen as unnatural. Nochlin continues to write,

Women and their situation in the arts, as in other realms of endeavor, are not a ‘problem’ to be viewed through the eyes of the dominant male power elite. Instead, women must conceive of themselves as potentially, if not actually, equal subjects, and must be willing to look the facts of their situation full in the face, without self-pity, or cop-outs; at the same time they must view their situation with that high degree of emotional and intellectual commitment necessary to create a world in which equal achievement will be not only made possible but actively encouraged by social institutions. (Nochlin 151)

Following Nochlin, Soueif portraying Asya studying linguistics is not a coincidence but a deliberate choice in order for Asya to conceive herself as an equal subject pursuing an education that will place her on the road to becoming a free woman artist.

Moreover, abstraction is a motif in Soueif’s novel, it starts when Asya notes that Saif does not like “Her tendency towards abstract discussion” (Soueif 358), her repeated comparisons of the worlds she lives in and the worlds she reads about, and her constant self comparisons to fictional characters, an example being when she describes herself as “sitting behind your table surveying him as though you were Colette or Piaf or Cleopatra or even Kushuk Hanim” (Soueif 538). It is interesting to see Soueif place these three legendary women together, Colette and Piaf being icons of modernity with Cleopatra an icon of Egypt’s ancient past. Linking modernity with ancient Egypt is popular among Egyptians who celebrate their modernity by alluding to their pharaonic past. In this example, not only

does Soueif place modernist icons with an icon of ancient Egypt, Cleopatra, but also with Kushuk Hanim who is an invention in Flaubert's orientalist fantasies. Placing ancient and modern real icons with a fictional figure allows us to see how Asya is reconciling with her reality as an Egyptian woman and her fictional world, placing both worlds in one, the real, the old, and the fictional. All four women are icons that Asya sees herself in, and the disparate distance between them suggests that Asya is still attempting to reconcile her place in the world, unsure where she belongs or to who she belongs. In *Orientalism* Edward Said illustrates an example of the West claiming they know the East, and are able to define, and represent them, when he speaks of Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan a typical "oriental" woman, "she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her" (6). Soueif alluding to Kushuk Hanim, along with modernist artists with a voice, suggests that Asya at times sees herself as an independent female artist and at other times she is an invention, just like dancer Kushuk Hanim, but rather than belong to Flaubert she belongs to Saif, Gerald and Egypt, all three speak "for and [represent] her" (Said 6).

Asya seems to be living outside of the real world, on one level she could be seen as living inside a fictional reality, one that exists on pages bound by spines, and on another level she could be seen as having unrealistic thoughts as Saif notes, "She truly thought that you could shape life as you pleased; that if you wanted something you would get it, that if you did certain things, others would necessarily follow. She was so open, so vulnerable. She knew nothing. Nothing at all" (Soueif 140). Asya knowing nothing of the real world is another recurrent motif in the novel. Her inability to distinguish between real life and books further strengthens my argument that her coming of age narrative is only a "portrait", i.e. an

image of a coming of age that straddles the line between fiction and reality. Asya is under the impression that real life and books are both a “product of conscious imagination” (Soueif 579), and just as she places real life and books under the same spectrum, so can one place her coming of age novel and fiction under one spectrum, making the argument that Asya’s coming of age is fictional and can be read as a “portrait” of a coming of age. As the story unfolds, her coming of age deviates further from reality as opposed to Stephen who on his journey of becoming an artist “would be transfigured” (Joyce 54) from a portrait of an artist to an actual artist whose own soul is seen as “going forth to experience” (Joyce 87) life. The repeated use of the terms “transfigured” and “experience” throughout Joyce’s novel leads readers to witness a physical transformation in which Stephen is “transfigured” into a real life artist, as opposed to Asya whose coming of age narrative remains an ambiguity undistinguishable from fiction. As such, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* travels to Soueif in which she writes a “portrait” of a bildungsroman, an abstract image of a Joycean coming of age narrative. Though a critic has noted that Soueif’s novel is “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman”, they did not fully comprehend the extent to which that sentence rings true<sup>7</sup>. As an Arab female living between both the West and the East under both Arab patriarchy and a western male gaze, her coming of age as an autonomous female takes form into an abstract version of the tradition, achieving only a “portrait” of the freedom that her Joycean counterpart does. She is limited by the fact that

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<sup>7</sup>In a book review written by Rasheed EL-Enany, published in the *Independent*, a British online newspaper the year the book came out in 1992, he writes, “Ahdaf Soueif’s second novel can in many ways be seen as a ‘portrait of the artist as a young woman’ - an Egyptian woman called Asya. But where Stephen Dedalus had to free himself from the bonds of religion, homeland and family before he could present his purified self at the altar of art, Asya has different shackles” (El-Enany).

she is a female and an Egyptian, both her gender and place of origin have shaped her coming of age, as she notes, “I’ve done what I’ve been *conditioned* to want. I’ve woken up every morning and done what I already *knew* I had to do” (Soueif 690). According to Susan Fraiman in *Unbecoming Women* (1993) heroines in coming of age narratives understand that their “formation is foisted upon them, that they are largely what other people, what the world, will make of them” (6). Asya continuously questions her own autonomy, seen when Soueif writes, “*She* had assumed she did want it. But had she ever chosen it—*really* chosen it?” (449). Words italicized in the novel are words that are meant to make readers question what is being said. The word “really” italicized in this case indicates that though readers see Asya making choices, it is a mere façade, once again aligning with the notion of Asya’s portrait of a bildungsroman. When she first contemplates on leaving Saif, Asya cannot fathom the notion that she has the freedom to make such a decision, her simply thinking about it is described as, “Absurd. She might as well talk about leaving her father or her country. She might as well talk of leaving herself” (Soueif 359). When she does finally leave Saif towards the end of the novel, readers are told that “he’s left her” (Soueif 668) and even Asya in a previous passage tells her mother, “he’s going to leave me” (Soueif 668). Therefore, even when Asya is liberated from the imprisonment of her shell of marriage, her husband is the one making that choice, just like one would decide the life of a portrait, dictating what gallery it would be in, when it would be put on display and when it would be taken down. Earlier in the novel, Asya and Saif travel to Beirut as an unmarried couple where she experiences freedom for the first time outside of Egypt and describes it as “Life. More than just Life: this is Colette come true” (Soueif 133). At the sight of freedom she relates the real world to the world she has to come to know through Colette’s fiction,

even suggesting that Colette is “more than just Life”, in other words more than her real world. Just as Asya wanted Colette’s fictional world to become her reality, Stephen too “wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld” (Joyce 54). However whereas Stephen desires to bring art into his reality, Asya’s makes her “reality” into a fictional world, one in which her coming of age remains a portrait of Stephen’s coming of age. In Soueif’s novel the word reality is used four times in the 800 page novel, and on the occasions that it is used, it is used skeptically; “that’s the only reality” (Soueif 312), “no reality” (Soueif 492), “further distance, further rejection of reality” (Soueif 492), and “further and further from reality” (Soueif 592). Asya is almost exclusively seen doubting the existence of reality. As the story unfolds, reality becomes an obscure thought as opposed to the uplifting, plausible desire seen in Joyce’s novel. When faced with the word reality in Joyce’s novel readers recognize Stephen as not only conquering reality but also “he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality” (Joyce 77). Joyce also uses the word reality with certainty of its existence and his ability to attain it, “he could no longer disbelieve in the reality of love” (Joyce 126), “the one eternal omnipresent perfect reality” (Joyce 126), and “his will seemed drawn to go forth to encounter reality” (Joyce 134). In the last few pages of Soueif’s novel, Asya revisits her life goals checklist and comes to the realization that “No. It isn’t going to happen” (Soueif 782) as opposed to Stephen who on the last page of the novel in a diary entry writes, “Welcome, O life, I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience” (Joyce 213). These quotations from the final pages of both novels make it seem as though Stephen is sure of his reality, saying “I go to encounter...the reality of experience” (Joyce 213) but Asya



remains skeptical, responding to him with “No. It isn’t going to happen” (Soueif 782), at least not for her.

During her brief stay in Italy, Asya “learns what freedom really is” (Soueif 174), however, it was only a result of the influence of “white powder” (Soueif 174) i.e. cocaine. Readers learn that,

Carlo offers her a line of white powder on the back of his hand and shows her how, and first she sneezes but then she gets it and learns what freedom really is, for now she realizes that all her life she has had a headache and her mind had been pressed and cramped and confined in a tiny space, and at last it is being set free and the headache is lifting and lifting so her mind can stretch itself out and out and out. (Soueif 174)

Asya’s experience of a short-term sense of freedom comes only after she is elevated to another reality, i.e. outside of her “portrait” of freedom, where her mind can “stretch itself out and out and out” (Soueif 174). Being under the influence of cocaine, she has come to know a new world, and only in this world she “learns what freedom really is” (Soueif 174). The last words “out and out and out” are comparable to Stephen whose body is seen transfiguring outwards into a new reality, a reality that pushes him closer to art and requires a “new terminology and a new personal experience” (Joyce 176). However, readers learn that Stephen is able to attain that experience for the “millionth time” (Joyce 213) whereas Asya remains “earth-bound” (Soueif 565), which becomes clearer to readers as the story unfolds. Readers later hear from Gerald that Asya has not yet tasted freedom, “You’re still learning, baby...you’re still tied to your earth-bound existence. Once you’ve tasted freedom, once you’re really up there, I know you won’t turn back” (Soueif 597). Gerald was unaware that Asya had “tasted” freedom in Italy, because since that freedom was only experienced through a drug, she is still not recognized as a truly free woman able to “taste”

freedom on her own volition. Asya in Soueif's "portrait" of a bildungsroman remains "tied to [her] earth-bound existence" (Soueif 597), a place in which a female's quest to becoming a Joycean artist is only a possibility when the mind is stretched "out and out and out" of Soueif's "portrait" of a bildungsroman.

When Asya returns to Egypt at the end of the novel she finds that much has changed,

Gone is the roof-garden with the dinner-jacketed band where she had gone with her parents one magical evening when she was eleven and seen a foreign woman in blue chiffon tango round the floor. She had decided then that being grown-up would mean being romanced on that roof, would mean being able to sit all night at a table overlooking the Nile in the 'Night and Day'—with a pot of coffee, a packet of cigarettes and a note-pad, looking up briefly to greet the odd acquaintance who walked in, and then down again at what she would be writing. Now it was all gone, she would never be able to these things—she would never be grown up now—not like that. (Soueif 749)

Her description of what she thought growing up would look like is similar to what Stephen achieves when he begins writing his own diary at the end of *A Portrait*. However, where Asya is doubtful of achieving this dream, as Soueif's novel ends with "she would never be able to do these things...she would never be grown up now—not like that" (Soueif 749), Stephen excitedly writes about his artistic plans and his continued journey of growth. Asya's growing up would never be like Stephen's, instead, it remains an image, a dream a young Asya at eleven years old had of a coming of age story. It is as if Stephen Dedalus's coming of age is the one she desires; it is he whom she is describing in this scene, a figure who appreciates beautiful settings and "artistic conception, artistic gestation, and artistic reproduction" (Joyce 176). According to Annis Pratt, "the novel of development portrays a

world in which the young woman hero is destined for disappointment” (29). In addition to Stephen, Asya’s desires are compared to other male figures who have reached heights, “What could she do that couldn’t be done—and better—by others? She couldn’t be Beethoven or Michaelangelo or Guevara or Yusif Idriss or Tayyib Salih or the Beatles.” (Soueif 457). When Asya thinks about female characters, they are almost always **fictional** characters she wants to look or act like, but when thinking about reaching heights, it is **real** male figures that she thinks about emulating but cannot see herself reaching. Again, Asya’s coming of age is limited by her being a female and her story is merely a “portrait” of a bildungsroman. On the other hand, when Stephen thinks about fictional characters like Mercedes from Alexandre Duma’s *The Count of Monte Cristo* who “eluded him” (Joyce 55) and whom he desired, this desire pushes him one step closer to becoming an artist as he manifests his desire of a fictional character into reality by having sex with the prostitute. Joyce first encountered Alexandre Dumas’s novels at ten years old, “during the fifteen-month interlude between his withdrawal from Clongowes Wood and his admission to Belvedere College, and as the Parnell crisis raged above his head” (Owens 20). His determination to fulfill his artistic purposes is influenced by Alexandre Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and specifically the notion of becoming “the declaimer of proud refusals and the pursuer of vengeance upon his putative betrayers” (Owens 21). The intertextual reference to Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo* places importance on how Joyce’s “youthful acquaintance with Dumas provided momentary glosses to his own subsequent serious literary purposes” (Owens 22). Looking for the fictional character Mercedes from Duma’s novel and identifying her in the shape of the prostitute he can seek in reality, we see Stephen capable of bringing art into his own reality. Whereas Asya’s desires of

becoming her own artist veer her further away from reality and remain desires residing permanently in her thoughts, in other words, “she would never be able to do these things—she would never be grown up now—not like that” (Soueif 749). Further, Stephen notes that “When we come to the phenomena of artistic conception, artistic gestation, and artistic reproduction” one would “require a new terminology and a new personal experience” (Joyce 176). However, if the attainability of this experience is gender exclusive, it makes it difficult for someone like Asya to become a Joycean artist. As Pratt notes, “Although the authors attempt to accommodate their heroes’ *Bildung*, or development, to the general pattern of the genre, the disjunctions that we have noted inevitably make the woman’s initiation less a self-determined progression towards maturity than a regression from full participation in adult life” (36). As such, Asya becomes her own artist, different by kind and not degree, an artist whose journey begins and ends in a “portrait”, a mere image of a bildungsroman rather than follow the general pattern of “self-determined progression towards maturity” experienced by her male counterparts.

Interestingly, a conversation takes place between Saif and Asya on what is dubbed real versus a copy, or for the sake of this argument, real versus *abstract*. As they walk through Athens, Saif and Asya come across statues of “white ladies” (Soueif 588) and Asya stops to comment,

‘Isn’t it just—amazing,’ she says when he stands in front of her. ‘To think of them standing there all these years—

‘They haven’t been,’ he says.

‘What do you mean?’

‘They’re not real. Don’t you know?’

‘What?’ says Asya.

‘They’re fake. The real ones are in the museum.’

‘They made them like that? Copies?’

‘Yes,’ he says.

‘And broke off their arms and chiseled away at their faces?’  
‘Copies,’ he says. (Soueif 588)

Though I do not argue that Soueif’s novel is an attempted copy of Joyce’s bildungsroman, this conversation leaves one wondering about different books representing a similar tradition. If one were to take the museum as a place in which important works are preserved, it would be arguable that statues in a museum are similar to novels in a canon. Taking the museum to symbolize the English literature canon, and Joyce’s novel as the iconic modernist bildungsroman and Soueif’s antecedent, Joyce’s *A Portrait* is comparable to the statues in the museum as opposed to Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun* being the statues displayed in public areas. I evoke this conversation because though Soueif’s novel is not a “copy” of Joyce’s bildungsroman, coming out of the shadows of a male exclusive genre, Soueif’s novel testifies to “the impossibility of the (re)possession of the metaphysical space of representation” (Gjurgjan 107), the space in which Joyce’s male bildungsroman resides, creating out of the genre an abstract possibility of a female becoming a *woman* in the world. As the novel unfolds, Asya’s coming of age fantasy resides in her imagination, unsuccessfully repossessing spaces of the real world, turning the novel into an abstract constellation of Joyce’s male exclusive genre, a mere “portrait” of a bildungsroman.

Moreover, the way in which Asya’s coming of age coincides with the coming of age of her nation further contributes to seeing her coming of age as only a “portrait”. As an Egyptian woman she represents Egypt as a whole, much like Mahmoud Mukhtar’s iconic monument *Nahdat Misr* (Egypt’s Renaissance) does. Mukhtar, the father of sculpture in Egypt, crafted *Nahdat Misr* a monument that “instantly became an icon not just of Pharaonist aesthetic style, but of the Egyptian national liberation movement and *Nahda*-era

culture more generally” (Colla 228) and was unveiled in 1928. It was the first monument created by an Egyptian artist and is a symbol of Egyptian modernism. The monument is of an Egyptian peasant woman looking forward into the future with her hand on the head of the sphinx resting at her feet. The monument illustrates modern Egypt in touch (literally as the woman’s hand is on the sphinx’s head) with Egypt’s Pharaonic past. The woman representing modern Egypt is protecting her Egyptian heritage by placing her hand on the sphinx, which suggests that modern Egypt will always come hand in hand with Egypt’s past and will always protect it. Speaking of the statue, Prime Minister Mostafa al-Nahhas noted “it represents a picture of young Egypt preoccupied with the sphinx so that it may revive through her and she through it” (Colla 230). Interestingly, the monument stands in Cairo, the capital of Egypt, and Asya describes Cairo as a place “remote and unreal” (Soueif 274). Asya, as one with the nation, describing the capital as unreal further validates the argument that she herself is an unreal character, a fictional character in a portrait of a bildungsroman much like the unreal character of the peasant woman in Mukhtar’s monument. To strengthen this claim, if we take a closer look at the text we find Asya describing herself as an “unreal figure” (Soueif 626) towards the end of the novel. As the story unfolds, Asya no longer wonders about her future with her husband Saif and Soueif writes there was a time “when she would have wondered about them...Now she does not wonder. Her eye rests on them neutrally—unreal figures in an unreal day” (Soueif 626). Here, she describes herself as an “unreal figure” in an “unreal day”, indicating that what she once envisioned as part of her future no longer resonates as the bildungsroman comes to an end. As a matter of fact, her perception of life from the beginning of the novel, “this is Colette come true” (Soueif 133) turned into “unreal figures in an unreal day” (Soueif 626)

as the narrative came close to an end, as opposed to Stephen who reminds readers that he is going to encounter the reality of experience “for the millionth time” (Joyce 213) on the last page of the novel. Asya’s coming of age remains a portrait of Stephen’s coming of age, an unreal figure of a woman in an unreal day coming out of an unreal place. Just like *Nahdat Misr* is an “unreal figure” standing amidst an “unreal place” representing Egyptian modernity, Asya as “An Arab Modern woman” also represents her nation, making her an “unreal figure”. Asya can be related to the monument *Nahdat Misr*, an object standing still in the midst of an unreal city, reinforcing the argument that as a female, her bildungsroman is a mere representation of a Joycean coming of age, unreal when overlaid atop the iconic male exclusive *A Portrait*.

At the end of *In the Eye of the Sun* Asya is eager to start a new journey but finds herself relating to a statue of antiquity, symbolic of her need to reconcile the past and carry it alongside her in the present and into her future. Earlier in the novel, Asya reconciles with her reality as an Egyptian woman and her fictional world, placing both worlds in one, the real, the old, and the fictional by placing ancient icons of Egypt such as Cleopatra with icons of modernity such as Colette and Piaf. On a similar note, at the end of the novel Soueif once again links modernity with ancient Egypt by alluding to Egypt’s pharaonic past with Asya’s discovery of Ramses’s wife in an excavation site, illustrating that the start of Asya’s new journey as a modern woman entails excavating the past, as ancient Egypt comes hand in hand with modern Egypt. She encounters a statue of a long dead princess “lying face-down in the sand, uncovered now after what? Three thousand years?” (Soueif 785). Asya’s encounter with the dead, a woman that could have been “a dancing girl whom the great Ramses took a fancy to and elevated into a Sister-Wife” (Soueif 785), could be

representative of her coming face to face with herself. Throughout the novel Saif refers to Asya as *Princess*, and Asya's first mistaking the statue to be that of a princess alludes to the fact that she saw herself in that statue. The last lines of the novel of Asya's encounter with the dead princess read "But this woman who had in some way belonged to him, and who now lies here in the sand—she had indeed found a gentle grace; for here she is, delivered back into the sunlight still in complete possession of herself—of her pride, and of her small, subtle smile" (Soueif 785). If we were to follow the trope of Asya representing statues such as *Nahdat Misr*, we could extend this to argue that she also represents the statue of the princess she encounters at the end. One could suggest that the statue of the princess, i.e. Asya, who once belonged to Ramses, i.e. Saif, is "delivered back into the sunlight" given another chance at life, indicating that Asya too may be given another chance at her life. However, earlier contextual clues indicate that if given another chance Asya would remarry, "Is that how it will be? That she will be with nobody? And if not nobody, who? Asya amuses herself by describing him. He would have to be at least forty—or maybe thirty-eight—but not younger" (Soueif 782). Asya goes on for the next twenty lines describing the man she would marry after Saif, and suddenly thinks to herself "No. It isn't going to happen" (Soueif 782), as if realizing that she was ultimately going to repeat her previous choices and once again fall into the same ordeal of giving herself up to a man who would become "the author and the director [of her life]...and I am just the cast" (Soueif 592) as Fraiman notes "when apprenticeship reduces to a process of marital binding, it never leads the heroine to mastery but only to a lifetime as perennial novice" (6). Though her encounter with the dead at the end of the novel could be read as a hopeful open ended ending, i.e. Asya given another chance at life, knowing that Asya has yet to gain autonomy



and be triumphant in her journey towards becoming a free artist, it is more likely that she will participate in the ongoing cycle of history repeating itself, much as it does in the Arab nation. Her inability to reach freedom limits her coming of age to only becoming a “portrait” of a bildungsroman; much like her Nation is only has a “portrait” of a free state. According to Mrinalini Chakravorty in “To Undo What the North Has Done” in the book *Arab Women’s Lives Retold* (2007) edited by Nawar Al-Hassan Golley,

The distance *In the Eye of the Sun* travels over time, from Asya’s adolescence to adulthood, from Nasser to Sadat is also the distance in history from colonialism to a nouveau imperialism, dominated by the rise of U.S. corporatization. If Soueif is critical of Nasser’s authoritarian leftism and its unaccounted-for margins, she presents Sadat’s “getting cozy with the Americans” as a deliberate giving in to an imperialism that views the Arab world itself as wholly marginal. (152)

On that note, one can argue that Asya embodies Egypt and she and her nation’s development over time coincide. Asya’s choice of “conjoining” with the West, i.e. Gerald Stone, can be juxtaposed with Sadat’s choice of “getting cozy with the Americans” (Soueif 218) specifically in relation to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1978. Further, in terms of growth, Asya notes, “We are not allowed to outgrow our past” (Soueif 383). The word “allowed” indicates that the children of the nation do not, as the nation itself does not, have the choice when it comes to its personal growth. Stephen on the other hand experiences personal growth despite growing up under British occupation, which demonstrates the extent to which he is separate from his nation. Therefore, one can pose the argument that her inability to make choices that are not determined by outside pressure is similar to Egypt’s inability to make choices without any outside interferences, which have proven, as they have with Asya, to be detrimental to the coming of age of the nation. As Chakravorty

notes, "From Asya's perspective...Sadat's negotiations for peace with Begin and Carter appear to be mere puppetry, as it becomes clear to her that 'the United States does not want to see... a fairly radical new independent nation in the heart of the Middle East'" (153). As a country in a weak position, a former colony, and an 'other' its position makes it vulnerable to outside interferences or "a blind compliance with the United States", similar to Asya, as the weaker sex and an Arab 'other', her choices are not personal nor autonomous. Therefore, the idea of a personal coming of age is obscured as it emerges from the Arab world and just as an Arab nation's independence and free choice is a façade, so is Asya's.

#### D. Little Rascal and the Princess

Wandering in a maze, both Stephen and Asya experience the beginning of their personal quest to maturity. Joyce describes Stephen wandering "into a maze of narrow and dirty streets" (Joyce 84) moments before he encounters the prostitute that he has sex with. Asya encounters a different maze with a stranger in Italy, "She whispers, 'No', but his fingers continue their slow, gentle, teasing search. She had never known there was so much scope for searching down there: a miniature maze where you could wander for a lifetime, a maze of soft, shaded paths and a hundred hiding places all longing to be discovered" (Soueif 176). The juxtaposition of the two images of mazes illustrates the difference between the two character's experiences, one experiencing the real outside world versus the other wandering in an imaginary maze. This difference between real and imaginary sets the pace for the ruptures taking place in the theme of sexuality when comparing the two novels. Though both Stephen and Asya's sexual awakening are defining moments in their lives and

catalysts for their coming of age, Asya as a female, has sexual experiences that drive her further away from freedom as “Every element of her desired world—freedom to come and go, allegiance to nature, meaningful work, exercise of the intellect, and use of her own erotic capabilities—inevitably clashes with patriarchal norms” (Pratt 29). Her experiences place her in a world in which coming of age means coming out of a Joycean reality and settling for an abstract conception of a bildungsroman existing in one’s imagination. Further on the notion of having a similar experience to Stephen but only in her imagination, prior to her sexual “awakening”, she imagines having sex with Gerald, and tells herself,

He would be nice to make love to. Is that *right*? She snaps; you’re the great expert, are you? ‘He would be nice to make love to’—sitting behind your table surveying him as though you were Colette or Piaf or Cleopatra or even Kushuk Hanim—a vast experience you have, have you? Such a variety of men you’ve tasted, you’ve ensnared and bedded: fair ones and dark ones, middle-aged Herculesees and willowy Ganymedes , African warriors and California tycoons, Leons and Rudolph’s and love-lorn swains and doublecrossing treacherous bastards, you’ve had them all, that you can now sit back in your chair and opine that ‘he would be nice to make love to’? You are twenty six and you are more or less a virgin; never mind the lost baby, never mind the laughably pointless IUD, the three years of *careza*, the plastic penis, the debauchery a la Dolce Vita: the fact is, *you haven’t done it*—.  
(Soueif 538)

Readers are aware however that prior to meeting Gerald Asya had “more or less” slept with her husband, though it was a painful experience that was not repeated (Soueif 538). Despite getting pregnant and having a miscarriage, she still does not believe she has really had sex and still identifies herself as a virgin. It is as though her first sexual experience existed only in her imagination, and in reality “the fact is, [she hasn’t] done it” (Soueif 538). The ambiguity between fact and fiction posed by Soueif in this scene, illustrates the extent to

which elements of the bildungsroman are taking place in Asya's imagination, but not in reality, at least not in a Joycean reality. The blur between what is real and what is imagined is noted when readers recognize thematic continuity from Joyce's tradition to Soueif's, yet are faced with ruptures that make it difficult to argue that Soueif's bildungsroman is different only by a degree. On the contrary, Soueif's bildungsroman becomes a different kind of novel, one in which a female is attempting to reach Stephen's heights but when faced with the reality of her gender, deviates from the Joycean coming of age.

After having sex with Gerald for the first time, Soueif writes, "She is older now, much older, grown-up at last" (Soueif 540). When Asya first falls in love with Saif, she stops writing in her diary for "it seemed that real life was beginning and there was no longer any need to yearn for it on the page" (Soueif 442). Ironically, after experiencing sex with Gerald and "growth", she is driven back to writing in her diary. Asya turns back to the page, indicating that her sexual "awakening" and growth took place in a world that was not real. Though Soueif's novel thematically continues on the same tradition of sexual awakening that took place in Joyce's novel, we will see that writing about a female sexual awakening becomes less real. As Asya comes of age out of Joyce's tradition, the notion of Asya as an artist transforms to a literal "portrait" of an artist. When reading about Stephen's sexual experience with the prostitute, one can recognize that at that moment his sexual awakening triggers his coming of age and becomes his means to developing into an artist and master of his own world. Joyce writes, "He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries" (Joyce 84) and continues, "It was his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding back upon itself, fading slowly, quenching its own lights and fires. They were

quenched: and the cold darkness filled chaos” (Joyce 87). Stephen’s soul is awakened and by reading “going forth to experience” one can recognize that his soul is transitioning from one state to the other. Stephen’s soul steps into the real world as he thought it would when he, earlier in the novel, fantasized about the fictional character Mercedes in the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, imagining that in an intimate encounter with her “He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment he would be transfigured” (Joyce 54). While Stephen is “transfigured” after his sexual awakening “from a slumber of centuries”, Asya is put to sleep. As the story progresses, the more she is “awakened” by sexual encounters with Gerald, the less she is able to come of age in reality. Asya’s sexual experience with Gerald Stone, which one could argue is comparable to Stephen’s experience with the prostitute because it lacked love and was for the purpose of driving her coming of age, closes her off to the world. Gerald, as they are in the midst of one of their sexual interactions, tells Asya “‘Open your eyes,’ ... ‘Keep them open. Look at me. Where are you?’ he says with every thrust. ‘Where are you? Come back to me, babe, come back to me’” (Soueif 600). Where Stephen’s sexual encounter awakened him, Asya’s does the opposite to her and drives her further away from reality. The first time Asya decides to commit adultery with Gerald she compares herself to the female characters she read about in novels, “You’ve committed adultery, you’ve done it, you’ve joined Anna and Emma and parted company for ever with Dorothea and Maggie – although Dorothea would have understood—would she? Yes, she would; she would not have approved, she would have urged her to renounce, to stop, to send him away—but she would have understood; she had a great capacity for understanding” (Soueif 539-540). Her immediate comparison to fictional characters once again drives her closer to the world of books, the world of fiction,

and the catalyst for her coming of age becomes fictional in nature unlike Stephen who allows it to anchor him in reality. After having sex with a prostitute he feels an immense sense of guilt and begins disciplining himself, “Each of his senses was brought under a rigorous discipline” in order to mortify his sense of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch (Joyce 127). The world around him was experienced as he chose to experience it, for example, “he made it his rule to walk in the street with downcast eyes, glancing neither to right nor left and never behind him. His eyes shunned every encounter with the eyes of women” (Joyce 127) and “the only odour against which his sense of smell revolted was a certain stale fishy stink like that of long-standing urine; and whenever it was possible he subjected himself to this unpleasant odour” (Joyce 127). Stephen subjected himself to his own version of reality in order to mortify his sin, while Asya placed her reality in fiction. After having sex with Gerald, Asya gets a message from Saif that he is no longer coming to visit her for Christmas, and in that moment we see Asya sink into sadness, much like Stephen, claiming that she deserved this punishment after what she just did and recognizes that in reality she cannot be a real life version of these fictional characters, she asks herself, “where is the mighty adulteress now, she thinks, the liberated, fulfilled, sensuous woman, the defiant *femme de plaisir*<sup>8</sup>?” (Soueif 543). The woman Asya describes here is a female version of Stephen, a woman sexually fulfilled just as his soul was “quenched” (Joyce 87). However, doubting her own existence places importance on the fact that in reality she is not a female version of Stephen, she is not the woman she thought herself to be. A woman like that exists only in fiction and her name could either be Anna, Emma or *Asya*. Asya joins Emma and Anna as all three of these female fictional characters and the stories of their

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<sup>8</sup> The phrase “Femme de plaisir” translates to woman of pleasure.

female development “point to the ‘feminine’ as a site of ideological confusion, struggle, and possibility” (Fraiman 31). Their entrance into the world is not portrayed as a simple, graceful passage but rather attends to the world’s dangers and its deprivations (Fraiman 31). Additionally, Asya also asks herself, “What are you, a modern woman? You’re an Arab Muslim”(Soueif 541). Answering her own rhetorical question indicates that she is not a modern woman because she is *actually* Arab Muslim, making it seem like the two are opposites. Asya as an Arab female is doubly oppressed by patriarchy and orientalist misrepresentations of her identity. The fact that she is an Arab Muslim further distances her from the “liberated” woman she *thought* she became in her intimate moments with Gerald, while also distancing her from western Stephen.

Moreover, aside from the fact that Asya being an Arab Muslim causes a rupture in the thematic continuity of sexual awakening from Joyce to Soueif’s novel, her gender plays a critical role in differentiating her sexual experience from Stephen’s. Both Stephen and Asya feel overwhelmed during sex, Joyce writing “It was too much for him” (Joyce 85) and Soueif writing “*her* pain is truly unbearable, and her body bucks and rises to escape” (Soueif 540). However, Stephen is able to forever escape his partner while Asya feels imprisoned from the moment she invites Gerald to stay the night. Not only did she let her sexual experience define her, but also it changed her life and literally took away her freedom as we see Gerald develop into an obsessive stalker. Accordingly, Patricia Meyer Spacks writes in the chapter called “The Adolescent as Heroine” in *The Female Imagination* (1975)

Female sexuality understandably seems to many female authors to mean danger rather than power; male sexuality is power. Female aspiration is a joke. Female rebellion may be

perfectly justified, but there's no good universe next door, no way out, young potential revolutionaries can't find their revolution...Pain is the human condition, but more particularly, these books [female bildungsromans] announce, the female condition. (150)

Asya becomes imprisoned by the sexual encounter that was meant to lead her on the road of becoming a free artist. Gerald "doesn't trust her enough to leave her alone" (Soueif 599), always wants to know what she is thinking, and forces her to read her letters with him. Secondly, Asya's sexual experience with Gerald places responsibility on her that Stephen does not have to carry. By having sex with Gerald she has hurt everyone around her, her sexual experience becomes the experience of the collective rather than the individual. Accordingly "for a modern woman responsibility to family too often restricts and even excludes self-development, while adherence to traditional mandates of patriarchal society impedes self-determination" (Braendlin 20). While in England, Asya thinks about her family, friends and her nation on a daily basis. Every choice she makes seems to affect her family; everything is connected, similar to the family tree on the first page of the novel. Stephen on the other hand, "felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them [his family] but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother" (Joyce 82) allowing him to experience sin on his own, making it an easier burden for him to bear and outgrow. Later, he tells his friend Davin "My ancestors threw off their language... They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?" (Joyce 170) indicating that he is not willing to let his nation dictate the course of his life. Asya does not have the luxury of that freedom because as an Egyptian female she is the nation; her choices not only affect her but everyone around her.



There is continuity of the theme of sexual awakening experienced by Stephen and Asya in the fact that they both feel guilt after their sexual experience, but there is a rupture as to where that guilt is coming from. Stephen's guilt comes from his own beliefs, in this case his religion, and we see him punish himself "mortify his senses" (Joyce 127). He is in control of the guilt that he feels and is able to deal with it on his own terms. On the other hand Asya's guilt has an external source. The morning after having sex with Gerald for the first time, "When Asya wakes she surprises herself. She had gone to sleep expecting to wake up to the cold finger on the heart; to the weight of the rock of doom settling on her chest: guilt, fear—confusion...but there is nothing" (Soueif 540). She feels no personal guilt for her action. It is only when she reconciles her deed with the fact that she is an Arab woman does she start to feel the responsibility for her action. She tells herself "You are an Arab, a Muslim, if the law of your people were applied you would be stoned to death" (Soueif 541), here we see how her gender and her ethnicity are responsible for the guilt that she feels. As Stephen experiences a new sense of freedom, Asya loses hers. It is as though she is being punished not by God, not by herself, but by the fact that she is a woman responsible for something that is greater than her, i.e. the sense of responsibility she has as a representative of her gender and nation. Soueif writes however, that "the door of repentance is always open" (Soueif 541) as it once was for Stephen at the "confessional" (Joyce 121). However, readers find that repentance is not Asya's concern because she does not feel a sense of personal guilt and there is no confession that can allow her to be freed from responsibility. Another difference driven by gender is the responsibility for the other party that Stephen and Asya have. Stephen does not feel responsible for how his actions affected the prostitute. For him, that is her job and there is no concern with how she was

used as a means to drive his coming of age, she made him feel “strong and fearless and sure of himself” (Joyce 85). Whereas Asya, being of the more apathetic gender, tells her mother “He’s [Gerald] been used” and “I had wasted a year of *his* life” (Soueif 683) feeling for those she may have hurt in her actions. Even in this act of rebellion, her adultery becomes more of an imprisoning act than one that helps her find freedom.

Though both of their sexual awakenings were a catalyst in their coming of age narratives, Stephen is awoken to a life of the free artist, able to construct a world of his own, whereas Asya veers further from having what Virginia Woolf characterized as “a room of her own” in her essay *A Room of One’s Own*. In this essay, Woolf writes “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (4) and gain a voice that permits here to rebel against the societal norms and long term fixed ideologies of women. At the beginning of the novel, Soueif emphasizes Asya’s excitement of having a room of her own when she travels to Italy as an exchange student, after feeling homesick “her spirits had lifted a little when she saw the narrow, cobbled, Etruscan streets and when she saw her own large-windowed room and her carved oak bed in the Signora Alumni’s establishment” (Soueif 165-166). This was the first time Asya stays in her “own room” and coincidentally as mentioned earlier, also in the place she first feels freedom, though only momentarily—Italy. As the story progresses, Asya travels to England where once again she gets her own room, but this time she is married and sharing it with Saif. As Fraiman notes “when apprenticeship reduces to a process of marital binding, it never leads the heroine to mastery but only to a lifetime as perennial novice” (6). When tracing the changes that her spaces undergo as the narrative unfolds, one can recognize that the phrase “my room” (Soueif 336) earlier in the novel becomes “Saif’s room” (Soueif 546), “his house” (Soueif

561) and “your husband’s house” (Soueif 568). Losing ownership of the room as she comes of age illustrates the extent to which Asya is driven further from the possibility of attaining freedom. On the contrary, Stephen Dedalus has a room of his own and the freedom of becoming his own artist, rebelling against Ireland and the Catholic Church. Asya on the other hand, becomes an object in her husband’s room. In one instance she is described as a doll, “you’re turning yourself into some kind of a doll; a crying doll: you squeeze her and the water comes out of her eyes. You don’t even make a sound.” (Soueif 600) and in another instance she is asked, “what are you some sort of machine?” (Soueif 599). Describing her as inanimate objects that are controlled by the subject, whether a doll that needs to be squeezed, or a machine that needs to be operated, further drives her away from the possibility of coming of age on her own, free of someone else’s manpower. I use the word *manpower* specifically, because it is literally the power of a man who directs her coming of age, as Asya describes the man in her life as “the author and the director...and I am just the cast” (Soueif 592). This director drives her to become an object in someone else’s room. Therefore, as Asya comes of age she transforms from “princess” to “baby” to “doll” and finally a “machine”, all of which define her as inferior, inanimate, and incapable of having a life of her own, not allowing her the choices that Stephen has, and all of which need a director. The words director and cast further show that her life is fictional, it is painted into an artistic performance of a bildungsroman. She is pushed further from reality, from a real person to an abstract conception or an object, as she grows older. She becomes an image painted by someone else. Though her coming of age comes out of Joyce’s tradition, it remains trapped in the word *Portrait*, a painting of a bildungsroman—different in kind.

Further obscuring Asya's identity as a real free artist, when it comes to the two most important men in her coming of age story, both Saif and Gerald do not call her by her name. Saif calls Asya "Princess" throughout the novel and Gerald calls her "baby". When Gerald calls her baby for the first time, "Asya imagines Saif to disapprove of the word baby and she thinks to herself "Why not? Why not 'baby' and 'babe' and 'honey' and 'sugar'? Why should she always be 'sweetie' and 'princess'" (Soueif 539). Interestingly, as Asya develops her name changes, she turns from princess into baby. Baby, though it is a term of endearment, also literally means someone young of age and naïve. Stephen, on the other hand, is given only one nickname, "little rascal" (Joyce 84). During his sexual encounter with the prostitute readers are told "she passed her tinkling hand through his hair, calling him a little rascal" (Joyce 84). Here, the prostitute nurtures Stephen and calms him by calling him a "little rascal", and as a result, he feels strong and confident and worships her physically and spiritually. Therefore, the nickname comforts him in that moment and helps him transform from a young rascal to a free artist with sex being his first act of creation, unlike Asya who is seen gradually transforming into her nickname rather than out of it. She gradually becomes a "baby" and continues to believe that "The only thing to be done now is to adapt, to be the person he wants her to be; the person he probably believes she is" (Soueif 358). The nicknames chosen for her end up defining her character and shaping her growth. As Asya comes of age she transitions into "baby" as opposed to Stephen who earlier in the novel is referred to as "young Dedalus" (Joyce 18) and later becomes "the noble Dedalus" (Joyce 63) and "The Dedalus" (Joyce 141). Asya's "growth" can be seen more as a regression, and is indicative of the implausible nature of Asya's coming of age narrative, further showing that the tradition stemming out of Joyce has changed to become

different by kind and not just degree. The bildungsroman of Soueif both is and is not a bildungsroman. Though it traces the growth of Asya, her growth seems to be happening in the opposite direction and it has shifted her potentiality of becoming a free artist from the real to the abstract world, a world in which an Arab woman artist comes of age differently than her predecessor artist, Stephen Dedalus. In her book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1997), Annis Pratt extensively discusses the impossibility of the female bildungsroman and demonstrates how society provides women with models for "growing down" instead of "growing up," as is the case in the male model. Though Pratt is mainly concerned with western female bildungsroman novels, she effectively highlights the difference between male and female characters in a male-centric genre. This paradox between growing up and becoming a child—growing into a younger version of oneself—is not of a typical male bildungsroman nature descending from Joyce's tradition.

Interestingly, Soueif writes, "Paradox: Since March 1975 I have—apart from certain moments—felt closer to him when we've been separate than when we've been together. So my image of him is getting further and further from the reality" (Soueif 592). Here, Asya is referring to her husband Saif, and one could argue that just as her image of him is "getting further and further from the reality" so is one's image of Asya's coming of age, "apart from certain moments" (Soueif 592). The certain moments would be her sexual encounters with Gerald in which she becomes "a living body" (Soueif 492) as mentioned earlier, and is called by her first name—Asya. During sexual intercourse the princess gets called by her name, "Last night, at the end of the final desperate plunging that had made her frantic with pain—had made her dig her heels into the fluffy cream rug and rise up on her elbows in an attempt to escape him—he had thrown his head back and cried, no, roared out her name"

(Soueif 541). Calling her by her name in this scene demonstrates that for a short moment, Asya had become herself, and ironically it was the moment in which she was used for Gerald's own pleasure. She only becomes Asya to him when he is using her body, despite her pain and attempts to escape him, for his own satisfaction. She becomes Asya at his choosing, under his own circumstances. Therefore, one could argue that in that moment in which she had the least control of what was happening to her, she was called Asya because she was closer to the Asya readers have to come to know in this portrait of a bildungsroman, one who is painted i.e. "conditioned" (Soueif 449) to be the Asya she is, with little control of the course of her life, and the Asya who has always done "what [she's] been conditioned to want" (Soueif 449).

#### E. The Eastern Butterfly

As an Arab female coming of age novel dubbed "'The Great English Novel about Egypt' which is also 'The Great Egyptian Novel about England'" ("In The Eye of The Sun"), Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* features as an undercurrent theme the ambivalence and self-questioning of the postcolonial intellectual vis-a-vis "western" societies. According to Edward Said, *In the Eye of the Sun* is "an example of Arabic literature that happens to be written in English. It is a novel in English, set in Egypt and England, about Arab culture and sensibility" (Fox) and in an interview with Edward Fox, Soueif confirms Said's statement saying "People [in Egypt] want to see how they are being seen in England" (Fox). Throughout the book, Asya has to reconcile her Eastern origins with her western interests and setting. Despite having lived outside of Egypt for the majority of the novel, Asya reminds readers of her inability to express herself outside of her Egyptian

identity when she tells Mario, “But one can’t stop being involved with one’s country just because one’s living abroad, do you think?” (Soueif 417). Asya, despite being outside of Egypt, could not be freed from the bounds of her nation and its intrusions on her identity. How Asya’s nationality confines her ability of expression contrasts with an important moment in Stephen’s coming of age journey when he decided “I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can” (Joyce 208). The phrase “express myself” is important to consider when comparing him to Asya because that is where the greatest rupture lies. As an Arab female coming of age, to express herself freely she has to decolonize herself and exorcise the version of herself imposed upon her by the western colonizer. Following Joyce’s tradition it is viable to say that expressing oneself freely is essential in one’s journey to becoming a free artist. However, once the tradition becomes carried by an Arab female, the notion of expressing oneself is made complicated. For one, Asya’s notion of herself is “conditioned” by her own Arab family from the day she was born and continues to be “conditioned” by her husband even after she left her family’s home (Soueif 690). Anything she expresses of “herself” will be an expression of everyone but herself. At one point in the novel, readers get the sense that Asya desires to be able to express herself freely, thinking, “how wonderful to think her own thoughts—not to have her mother’s or her father’s or Saif’s superimposed over her own so that she cannot tell if the thoughts she manages to have arrived at freely or in sympathy—or in reaction” (Soueif 174). Asya being unable to “think her own thoughts” (Soueif 174) is different from Stephen, whose own thoughts are free to mature from the beginning to the end of the novel. And two, it could be argued that Asya is not free to see and express herself because she has no ownership over herself while she lives in England, the land of her colonizers. In

England, she is entrapped by the western gaze of Gerald Stone. Gerald calls Asya, “my beautiful, beautiful Eastern Butterfly” (Soueif 564) and forces her to look at herself in the mirror after he turns her into what Edward Said characterizes as a “feminine, erotic, exotic” orient. It is not enough for him to see her as his “eastern butterfly”; he wants *her* to see herself as such. As she is coming of age she is being forced to see herself as an ‘Other’, making it difficult for her to express herself as “freely” and “wholly” as she can, like Stephen does. Her coming of age is not deemed possible without an act of personal decolonization.

Further, Gerald asks Asya to take off her pearls, to stop resembling the Queen of England, and instead wear one of her “silver things” and says, “I’m going to let your hair down...*I* want to do it” (Soueif 562) and then “pulls her head round by the hair and holds it so that she has to look into the mirror” (Soueif 563) and says, “Look at you, baby. Look at you” (Soueif 563). Gerald changes Asya’s image from western and Queen-like to the exotic eastern object of his desire and then forces Asya to embrace this image, demonstrating the extent to which Asya is not in control of her own self. It is interesting to note how Gerald asks her to stop looking like the Queen, a representation of the same political power that subjugated Asya’s nation from 1882 to 1922. To Gerald, he didn’t like Asya having that power over herself, rather he wanted her to look like a woman who lacks power, so he changes her image from the western colonizer back to the eastern colonized, to, in Said’s words, “a European invention” (1), i.e. Gerald’s invention. Bound by these outside powers that seem in control of her life, to gain autonomy Asya must go through a process of decolonization that Stephen does not have to endure, she has to free herself from “a strange *foreign* man whom she is allowing to... have his way with her” (Soueif 563). Yet, time and



time again, Asya is seen trying and failing to free herself from Gerald. At one point in the narrative she asks herself, “is it not simply ridiculous? Ridiculous and naïve. Is it a sinister, insidious colonialism implanted in her very soul; a form of colonialism that no rebellion can mitigate and no treaty bring to an end?” (Soueif 512). As the narrative progresses, unlike Stephen, Asya is found to be losing instead of gaining freedom. Looking at this rupture in tradition more closely, one could argue that Stephen is superior to Asya in this aspect. While his coming of age is experienced a million times, her coming of age remains stuck in a “portrait”. The older Asya grows, the further her relationship with Gerald develops and the more difficult it becomes for Asya to become a free artist. The difficulty she faces in decolonizing herself illustrates a rupture in Joyce’s bildungsroman tradition. As the genre travels from the West to East, from a place and character in a position of superiority, to an Egyptian female, it loses its notions of freedom and power. Similar to Asya being inferior to Gerald, she is inferior to Stephen, whose freedom is a possibility while hers is an ideal, an image that remains in her imagination but not reality. Her coming of age story remains only an image of a coming of age, one that portrays Asya on her quest to freedom, a freedom that is unattainable in reality by an Arab female. Stephen, who is superior to Asya, as the iconic hero of a bildungsroman narrative, is arguably comparable to Gerald, the western male who dominates an eastern woman in order to, as Asya puts it, “be the big white boss” (Soueif 723). Stephen too shares “the big white boss” fantasy as he says, “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church” (Joyce 208). In his struggle to defy societal norms and rebel against the institutionalized power that attempts to force an identity upon him, Stephen implicitly replicates some patriarchal values of the very same society he is rebelling

against. Put differently, Stephen takes advantage of these patriarchal norms and rebels within their system. According to Laurie Teal, “On the one hand, Stephen—as a male artist—wants to seduce Ireland and create an imaginary nation that validates both his sexuality and her own. On the other hand, Stephen wants to embody Ireland, to create and contain the new Ireland within himself” (67). As a male in society, Stephen has been driven to conquest. Similar to conquering women (e.g. the prostitute) Stephen attempts to conquer Ireland by rebelling and forging a new identity for himself, one that is liberated from everything that constitutes Ireland and the Irish. Similarly, Soueif describes Gerald as a “sexual imperialist, pursuing women from “Trinidad-Vietnam-Egypt” so he can “feel superior” to them (Soueif 723). He tries to pass his choice of women off as a sort of cultural and racial acceptance, to stand out from the rest of westerners who subjugate non-white girls, but as Asya accurately points out “that’s all just phoney” (Soueif 723). Seen in this light, both Gerald and Stephen are brought together as similar characters, both superior to the inferior, conquered Asya, who seems to be constantly under another’s rule. This further demonstrates her lack of autonomy, affirming that as an Arab female her coming of age as a free artist is only a portrait of the antecedent Stephen’s.

At one point in the novel, Asya begins to analyze Gerald. If one were to argue that Asya stands for Soueif herself because of the autobiographical nature of a bildungsroman and follow the argument that Gerald is comparable to Stephen, then one can read Asya’s following analysis of Gerald as Soueif’s analysis of Stephen,

You’re an intelligent person, a literary person, analyse that. A stranger can’t see his face: no reality, no commitment. The accent: what is it? Vaguely European—so, not Arab, not English, further distance, no common ground, so you can’t tell—don’t need to care what he thinks, how he sees things,

what he's like outside this room—and the room: gold braid and canopies, my God, exoticism run wild, consumerism rampant. The blindfold: further distance, abdication of responsibility; what's happening is nothing to do with me. And then, of course, he doesn't use his own body—his body, as far as we can make out, remains safely clothed throughout. Instead he uses a heavy (ivory? Ebony?) object—further distance, further rejection of reality, rejection of the living body in favour of a work of art, further rejection of him as anything other than a tool, and in fact in the end he isn't even using the tool: he is confined to a watching, cheerleading role—in other words, what you have is a completely masturbatory fantasy—and the language—the chatter—the language is really the point, isn't it? Saying, 'Fuck me,' is the high point of the event—so a repressed, regressive masturbatory fantasy. D.H. Lawrence would have had a field day with you—“ (Soueif 492)

In her description, Gerald represents a Stephen-like character that is in favor of art and doesn't want to be directly involved in the reality around him. Gerald, like Stephen, uses art as a tool that is a mediator between himself and the real world i.e. Asya. In *A Portrait*, Stephen distances himself from Ireland and its political situation in his pursuit of artist freedom; he too uses art as the mediator between him and his real world—Ireland. And in the specific case of Gerald, we see a western male figure par excellence that is literally using “tools” to exert his power over an inferior Eastern nation—Asya. Despite having argued that both Stephen and Asya come from the periphery, Stephen's identity as a western male figure remains dominant over that of an Arab female, hence why his coming of age as a free artist is a success as opposed to Asya's coming of age that turns her into an entrapped entity. By reading Gerald as Stephen, one could argue that both are patriarchal oppressors. Stephen takes advantage of patriarchal norms and rebels within their system. As a man he is free to have sex with a prostitute as a means to an end. Whereas Asya is unable to take advantage of England's oppressive system because when she gets close to using an

“Englishman” as her means to an end, we find that the “Englishman” begins to use her instead. Similar to the British exerting power over Egypt using “tools”, Gerald in this scene is replicating the colonial scene in Egypt and the colonial mentality, the “abdication of responsibility; what’s happening is nothing to do with me” (Soueif 492). In other words, whatever consequences are laid on Egypt are not to be pointed back to the British. Further, this passage portrays Asya in a literal blindfold, unable to witness her own present, much like the metaphysical blindfold that she wears which keeps her from coming of age in a true reality. In order to progress on her journey towards freedom she must free herself of outside control and undergo a personal decolonization, yet she is still unable to remove the blindfold imposed on her by her colonizer. Gerald is dominant over Asya, and by seeing Gerald as Soueif’s projection of a Stephen-like character, it becomes clear that Stephen’s coming of age that sees him develop into a free artist is superior to Asya’s whose coming of age remains only a “portrait” of that.

#### F. Metaphors and Metamorphoses

What places Asya and Stephen in a closer orbit is the fact that, though they are of different nationalities, they are both living in what Joyce classified as “Europe of strange tongues” (Joyce 141). Though Soueif and Joyce both write in the English of their colonizer—British English—their characters are seen making differentiations between the British tongue and their native tongue. At the time of the novel, the Irish language was prominent because it was used to resist British influence, a tool of which was the English language. The colonization of Ireland during the early modern period was “a watershed for the Irish language in Ireland” (Christ 106). The Irish language was being eroded by “the

extension of modes of governance, administration and law which were driven by the English language” and “from the outset of modernity the English language [was] viewed by both English-speaker and Irish-speaker alike as the language of social, economic and political emancipation” (Christ 106-107) and continues to be viewed as such. Irish communities, during this period were eager to combat the decline of Irish as a spoken language, an example being Davin, Stephen’s friend in *A Portrait* who announces that he is “an Irish nationalist, first and foremost” (Joyce 169) and continues to fault Stephen for not learning Irish, asking him “Why don’t you learn Irish? Why did you drop out of the league class after the first lesson?” (Joyce 170). Davin repeatedly tells Stephen “Try to be one of us...In your heart you are an Irish man but your pride is too powerful” to which Stephen replies “My ancestors threw off their language and took another Stephen said. They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made? What for?” (Joyce 170). On a similar note, Joyce does not write his novel in Irish but chooses to write in English outside of Ireland, and similarly Soueif chose to write in English about an Egyptian female living outside of Egypt.

Writing in the language of the oppressor while also incorporating their home language emphasizes the power these writers have in utilizing the British tongue to make a clear distinction between both. Ironically, the English of the colonizer is used to demonstrate the persistence and continued existence of foreign tongues in the face of British English. Writing in the language of the colonizer illustrates an inverted power relation where Soueif and Joyce are dressed as the colonizer with British English, and are now themselves learning about the language of the colonized through their characters Asya and Stephen. This is best illustrated in similar scenes in the novels where Asya and Stephen

are seen teaching their “colonizer” their foreign tongue. One day, the phonetics lecturer approaches Asya and asks her if she could “come and do a demonstration for the MAs on Wednesday” (Soueif 353). During the demonstration Asya is asked to say words in Arabic that do not have the same sounds in English, for instance the “‘h’ only from lower down in the throat” (Soueif 353) and to say a word with “the sound that in English [that] is represented as ‘kh’” (Soueif 353). At one point she is unable to speak, words do not come out of her mouth, and the lecturer asks her “can you say your name? For the vowels and stresses?” (Soueif 354) but she opens her mouth and no sound comes out, then she whispers, “I can’t” (Soueif 354). In comparison, as Stephen teaches the Dean his Irish language, it becomes clear as to why Asya was unable to utter Arabic words in her demonstration. In an encounter with the dean, Stephen is seen teaching the English dean the difference between the British English language and his Irish. The dean tells Stephen “not to pour in more than the funnel can hold” and Stephen confused asks “What funnel?” (Joyce 158). Stephen then tells the dean that the funnel “is called a tundish in Lower Drumcondra...where they speak the best English” (Soueif 158). After that Stephen thinks,

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (Joyce 159)

Asya’s inability to speak is comparable to Stephen thinking, “My soul frets in the shadow of his language” (Joyce 159). Both Stephen and Asya’s native language gets silenced in the face of the language of their colonizer—British English. Ironically, by presenting readers with these scenes both Soueif and Joyce are battling this silence. Both writers are ensuring

that readers know that their own language still lives. Also, Soueif and Joyce placing these scenes in the midst of their English novels illustrates their ability to give voice to their own inferior language<sup>9</sup> by carving a space for it in the core of the superior one. Allowing their own language to exist on the same ground, i.e. within the same novel as the English language, is an act of defiance against the British colonizers, or as an Egyptian student in Soueif's novel calls them "the enemy" (Soueif 754). Stephen shares a similar view when he writes in a diary entry "Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us. Damn him one way or the other!" (Joyce 212). On a similar note, Asya thinks to herself, "I haven't come to you only to take, I haven't come to you empty-handed: I bring you poetry as great as yours but in another tongue" (Soueif 512). Both Joyce and Soueif use their novels as a space to defend their position as marginal in the face of the British.

Following the notion of defending their position, the rupture lies when Asya *literally* has to use her Arabic language to defend herself against the aggression of her Englishman, Gerald. Gerald forces Asya to read her letters in front of him "we're going to read them together" (Soueif 601) and she thinks to herself "Please God, please God, please God...make them in Arabic" (Soueif 604). Fortunately, she finds that the letter from her best friend Chrissie and the letter from her father are both written in Arabic. Gerald makes her translate them but at that point Asya chooses to translate them incorrectly, leaving things out and adding things in because the content of the letters are urging her to leave

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<sup>9</sup> Both Arabic and Irish are relatively inferior languages to English. In "The Alchemy of English" Braj B. Kachru writes "The English language is a tool of power, domination and elitist identity, and of communication across continents" (291) implying its superiority to other languages.

Gerald. Here, she is seen as an artist who is using her own language to free herself from her colonizer, however it only works well until she is faced with English text in her father's letter "You are making a mess of your life" (Soueif 606). This sentence makes it difficult for her to change the content of the letter because at that point she knows that whatever she chooses to translate to Gerald has to somehow remain consistent with the English words. Readers recognize that the image of Asya as a free artist using words to literally free her from Gerald's hostility immediately comes to a halt. This is because she comes from a marginal place as an Egyptian and her language makes it even more difficult for her to place herself on the road to becoming a free autonomous entity. In the presence of a superior language (English) it becomes difficult for Asya's inferior language (Arabic) to be utilized as a tool of power. In this scene, once again Asya's soul, like Stephen's, "frets in the shadow of [Gerald's] language" (Joyce 159). Her Arabic language can no longer be used as a means of decolonization because at that point she no longer had the freedom to translate as she pleased to avoid angering Gerald. In the presence of the English language, Arabic had lost its power, which is symbolic of the English's presence on Egyptian land that diminished the power Egypt had prior to British occupation. Asya's Arabic language becomes a tool that imprisons her and pushes her further away from becoming a free artist. Asya went from feeling grateful that the letters were written in Arabic to thinking "Why did Daddy write that in English...couldn't he have written it in Arabic?" (Soueif 606). Asya decides that her dad wrote it in English because in Arabic "it would not be the same". (Soueif 606). Here, readers see a different type of translation failure, one in which the Arabic language cannot express the same meaning as English, which illustrates the lack of power the Arabic language has in discussing an English *subject*, i.e. Gerald Stone, symbolic



of Asya's lack of power in the presence of an Englishman.

Continuing on the same notion of language as a source of power, words either become tools that push Stephen and Asya closer towards reality, providing them with "glimpses of the real world" (Joyce 52) or divert them away from it, "this is life, not art" (Soueif 525). Tracing the continuity of the vocation of language in a bildungsroman from Joyce's tradition to Soueif's, one can recognize that words play an important role in both coming of age stories. For Asya, her entire coming of age narrative revolves around words and poetry. It is not a coincidence that Asya is studying linguistics but rather it illustrates Soueif's strong belief in language as a source of power for a female in society and for her coming of age. The majority of the story takes place in a cottage where Asya is writing her PhD dissertation on metaphors. It is fitting that Asya, a girl whose coming of age as an autonomous triumphant woman is only a "portrait" of what she intended to achieve, is studying metaphors, phrases whose literal meanings are only a "portrait" of what they are intended to portray. As the story unfolds, we get excerpts of her written work and follow her process from classifying metaphors on notecards to dividing them systematically on paper and later coming up with a thesis argument. Similarly, Stephen's relationship with words and poetry also develops as he comes of age. The language of the narrative is made more complex and the ideas more abstract. From beginning the narrative with a child's nursery rhyme and baby talk "tralala lala tralala tralaladdy" (Joyce 5) to ending it with a high-minded aesthetic discussion towards the end, and the final calling to the great Greek Dedalus, "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (Joyce 213), the language of the novel develops as Stephen grows older to represent the development of his ideas. Though their relationship with words develops as their coming of age unfolds,

Stephen and Asya's quest for freedom moves them in opposite directions. As Asya comes of age, her story develops from a potential quest to achieving freedom to an implausible quest existing only in her imagination, whereas Stephen's coming of age moves him closer towards becoming a free artist. As Asya's thesis develops, she increasingly feels trapped by it, and the further away she gets from freedom. Therefore, the rupture lies when readers begin to notice a development happening in an opposite direction. While writing her thesis, Asya says to herself "your brains have not matured" (526) as opposed to Stephen who goes from being unable to write a poem about Parnell where "his brain had then refused to grapple with the theme" (Joyce 58) to writing a poem about Eileen in the style of Lord Byron, a more daunting task. Stephen's relationship with words take him closer to his goal of becoming a free artist, whereas for Asya, her relationship with words pushes her further away from freedom. When she first started she was confident in her choice of linguistics. When her friend Noora asks her "Why're you choosing linguistics" Asya responds, "It's not linguistics. It's stylistics. And it *is* poetry. And it's really just an extension of the New Criticism. Concentrating on the text and all that. It makes sense" (Soueif 312). However, once Asya starts working on her PhD she loses confidence in her work claiming that it is "so stupid...so naive, so transparent" (Soueif 526) during which her coming of age regresses from being a possibility to a reality existing only in her imagination.

Both Stephen and Asya study metaphors, but while one has mastered the art of using them the other is attempting to understand them. Asya's attempted escape to the field of linguistics becomes an experience of imprisonment as opposed to Stephen's freeing one. Stephen uses a metaphor when he speaks with his friends asking "Do you think you impress me...when you flourish your wooden sword?" (Joyce 166). Stephen displays that

he has conquered metaphors, using them as a form of expression, whereas Asya is bound by them, struggling to classify and analyze them, they take away her freedom rather than add to it. Asya ends up having a more dialectical reading of metaphors. It could be argued that Stephen has mastered the art of understanding the artist's world and to a degree so does Asya eventually when she completes her PhD and presents her viva, yet she remains skeptical of its applicability in the real world, "Why is she always thinking, somewhere deep down in her mind, underneath the bit that's analyzing the metaphors and modifying the theories, why is she always thinking what's the use" (Soueif 450). Her experience of art remains on paper and we learn from Asya that she wants to "put it away and never *ever* have to look at it or think about it again—" (Soueif 691). The closest Asya gets to becoming an artist like Stephen is when she writes and defends her dissertation on metaphors in poems, yet according to Asya that will not change her world, "I'm going to sit there working on my metaphors day after day for three years, and then I'll finish and do the viva and the world will be just the same" (Soueif 421). Therefore, her dissociation with metaphors, i.e. the world of poetry and art and inability to see their potential in changing her world, further illustrates the difference between her and Stephen. Where Stephen has found freedom in metaphors, using them as a tool of expression of himself as a free artist, Asya builds herself a prison out of metaphors for three years, from which when she emerges she will not have moved any closer to freedom, her coming of age remaining as stagnant as a "portrait".

Soueif's bildungsroman is a different kind of novel than Joyce's, one in which a female artist's world takes the shape of words in a dissertation or images in the imagination as opposed to in real life. We read of Stephen's enthusiastic acceptance of life in his second

to last diary entry, “Welcome, O life!” (Joyce 213). Art for Stephen brought him in contact with truth, beauty, and the universe whereas for Asya she tells herself that her ideas on metaphors are “stupid, she thinks, they’re so naïve, so transparent...if you’re going to invent your own life you’d better come up with something better than that” (Soueif 526), something better than art. Asya throughout the novel fluctuates between thinking there shouldn’t be a distinction between life and art and at times arguing “this is life, not art” (Soueif 525). Her inability to have one position on art and life is because unlike Stephen she is not free to be an artist, the creator of her own world that she yearns to be. At times she is hopeful for the similitude of life and art, because it means she is free to construct her life as an artist and at other times she loses sight of that possibility. Asya has to remind herself that “this is her life: *her life*—not a book he’s [Saif’s] writing” and desperately wonders if “a book [can] be written in tandem” (Soueif 525). Saif has written her life and she has become a “spectator merely—waiting to find out what happens next” (Soueif 525). Unlike Asya who is a passive observer, Stephen is an active participant in the course of his life, best seen when he says, “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets” (Joyce 171). As an Arab female coming of age, Asya’s story, though following Stephen’s path by some degree, strays from Joyce’s tradition when faced with gender ruptures, and because of their gender differences Asya and Stephen have different views when it comes to seeing themselves as free artists. Understanding that becoming a free artist is a central aspect of a bildungsroman, Soueif’s novel, similar to Asya’s indecisiveness on the position of art and life, is indecisive in nature on its position in the bildungsroman tradition, an abstract version of Joyce’s constellation.

## G. Duration and Maturation

I began this chapter with the discussion of Joyce and Soueif's bildungsroman novels as constellations I overlay on top of each other in order to trace continuities and ruptures in their patterns. Upon tracing thematic continuities and ruptures I argued that the ruptures in Soueif's tradition, as a descendant of Joyce's, has created an abstract formation of Joyce's iconic bildungsroman because of two key differences between the two protagonists—gender and West-East dichotomy. These differences however not only affect the themes but also the form of the novel, creating yet another rupture in the bildungsroman tradition. For starters, if we were to begin using the term “overlay” in its literal sense and overlay Soueif's novel on top of Joyce's we would be able to see that Soueif's 800 page novel is more than triple the magnitude of Joyce's in page count. At that sight, one would expect Soueif's ten chapter long novel to be incomparable to Joyce's five chapters because of its additional page numbers, expecting that with the vast disparity in length much of the content covered by Soueif would have no reciprocal in Joyce's novel. For example, if one were to examine closely the theme of sexual awakening in both novels, Stephen's sexual awakening takes place over one chapter in Joyce's novel while the same theme occupies around 500 pages in Soueif's. This long page difference is because Asya's sexual awakening, mostly taking place in North England, is constantly being interrupted by letters she receives from her friends and family about the ongoing political turmoil in Egypt and the Arab world that is occurring simultaneously with her sexual awakening. Her coming of age is directly interwoven with the coming of age of her nation, explicitly seen when the narration is interrupted by newspaper clippings and realist documentary detailing the

Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Lebanese Civil War or the consequences arisen in Egypt after President Gamal Abdel Nasser's death. Soueif constructs a more capacious space to capture the story of maturation of Asya and of Egypt, detailing the events that have played a role in shaping the Arab nation and the Arab identity.

Along with the ambiguity of the conclusion of Soueif's novel, the dates she included with her divisions and the way she organized her chapters further exemplify her deviation in form. Just like Soueif starts her novel with the present and then goes back in time, readers can view her ending as the beginning of the novel, finding that reading the novel backwards would produce a the same "coming of age", similar to an abstract painting in which there is no definite beginning and end. Further, Soueif divides the sections of the novel according to years, each section spanning one year, as opposed to using simple Roman numerals to number the chapters as Joyce does. Within each section, she uses numbered scenes along with the date and place, i.e. Scene 3, Thursday, 16 November 1967, Cairo. Once again, Joyce does not provide such details of date, year and setting when labeling his divisions, but rather places asterisks to divide his chapters. The difference in these divisions, where one is detailed and the other is not, is significant because it is as if Soueif is aware of the discontinuity of her novel and adds these places and dates to create a map for her readers. This argument is strengthened by the fact that Soueif also includes a table of contents and a glossary to her work to further guide her readers. Another rupture in form is seen when comparing the conclusions of the two novels. Soueif's novel's ending is ambiguous; readers finally see Asya free of the burdens of an unhappy marriage, far from her mother's influence and living on her own, but with no clear idea as to how her life will

continue. As a matter of fact, at the end of the novel she is seen talking to her friend about finding a new husband as though she is ready to repeat her life over. Soueif's novel follows a circular plot, defying the tradition of the linear plot generally followed in the bildungsroman of a male artist. On the other hand, at the end of Joyce's novel, Stephen is set on leaving the country and pursuing his journey as a free artist. Where Stephen is ready to embark on a freeing journey, Asya is considering getting married again and falling into the same institution that made her a spectator of her own life, highlighting that as a woman perhaps this is her only choice. After 800 pages of the bildungsroman, she is no further than where she started, making her coming of age only a portrait, a mere image, of what Stephen experiences. One cannot start Joyce's novel at the end and comprehend Stephen's development, yet one can read Soueif's ending as the beginning of the novel because of the circular plot that complicates the iconic constellation of a bildungsroman.

Reading both novels in tandem and analyzing closely the form of the novels and their different sections in comparison to one another, one can recognize further how the genre passed on from Joyce's tradition has been appropriated by Soueif to represent a coming of age of an Arab female. In the fifth chapter of Joyce's novel, the end of the novel, we learn that Stephen is beginning a new chapter in his life and he is on his way to becoming a free artist and master of his own future. However, at the end of Soueif's fifth chapter we find Asya and Saif picking out furniture for their new home. It ends with two pages written in italics from Saif's perspective. Fittingly, Saif is also talking about chapters in life, thinking to himself "It felt like the end of something. 'Yesterday all the past.' It felt like another part of a closing chapter that had started in 1967—before I had even met her"

(Soueif 222). It is important to note that as Asya develops she begins to realize that Saif is writing the book of her life and she is just a spectator (Soueif 525), and following his earlier thoughts, one could argue that him writing her life begins at the end of the fifth chapter where he is thinking about ending one chapter and beginning another one, a chapter on Asya. Where Joyce's novel ends at the fifth chapter with him ready to create and write his own life, Soueif's fifth chapter marks the beginning of Asya's coming of age, which her husband is ready to curate. When compared to Stephen's own autonomy, Saif's control over Asya further affirms the gender limitations place on her coming of age as a free artist.

Continuing to explore their structural similarities and differences, both novels employ epigraphs. Joyce's novel has one single epigraph at the beginning of his first chapter, taken from Ovid's "Metamorphoses", it reads "Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes", which translates from Latin to "So then to unimagined arts he set his mind" (Johnson 224). Soueif builds on this part of the bildungsroman tradition by employing a total of eight epigraphs, one at the beginning of each chapter with the exception of the third, seventh and eighth, and before the epilogue. Of the epigraphs that appear before the chapters, three are from George Eliott's *Middlemarch*, one from Gerard de Nerval's *Les Femmes du Caire* one from Philip Larkin's "Love Songs in Age", one from a pre-Victorian British erotic novel published anonymously in 1828 titled *The Lustful Turk* and one from Ab-U-Or (2030 BC). The epigraph of the epilogue is where the title of the novel is derived, from Rudyard Kipling's "Song the Wise Children". Not only do they refer to antecedent literature in the epigraphs, both Joyce and Soueif systematically refer to antecedent literature throughout their chapters. Soueif systematically evokes modernist writers



throughout the narrative, specifically those who have influenced the main character Asya and to some extent shaped her coming of age. Aside from immersing her in the world of fiction, at times, antecedent literature barges in on her life and literally alters her perceptions of those around her. In describing Asya's first fight with her husband, her friend Chrissie notes "Asya was saying [George Eliot] was a great writer and he was saying she wasn't" (Soueif 298). After this first dispute Asya and Saif's relationship took a turn for the worse. Though her marriage did not depend on Saif sharing her opinion of George Eliot's writing, "that *wasn't* what it was about, it was about *him*. He hasn't read her yet and he can sit there and say she's not worth reading... he knows plenty, but he makes fun of things he doesn't know anything about", where she had "thought he was... *available* to... *life*...[instead] he's got a closed mind" (Soueif 299). Here, literature is the catalyst that makes Asya recognize Saif's narrow-mindedness, the first change of perception of the love of her life. As a result of this conflict, readers witness Asya transform from a naïve girl in love, anxious to get married so her husband can show her the world, to realizing he is not the right person for this task, telling her mother "I thought he was adventurous" (Soueif 298). For Stephen, like Asya, literature sets him on the road of a free artist and then barges into his life and changes his perception of the Christian church that had up to that point shaped his life. Stephen begins to doubt his relationship and perception of the church when he recognizes flaws in a priest who condemned Victor Hugo for being an inadequate writer because he "had never written half so well when he had turned against the church as he had written when he was a Catholic" (Joyce 132). The priest's judgment of that writer allowed Stephen to realize the narrow-mindedness of those he had once regarded in high stature. As the two narratives unfold, we see Asya and Stephen begin to change their perception of

their world and the people around them, however ruptures arise because though Stephen is able to distance himself from the world that he now views differently, Asya cannot escape though desperately wanting “to be free for a while”(Soueif 690).

## H. Conclusion

One of the many aspects of Asya that Saif didn't like was "she takes too long to tell a story" (Soueif 358) and following suit, Soueif takes 800 pages to tell the story of Asya. Perhaps in this coming of age narrative the most rebellious choice Soueif (who one could argue could be interchanged with Asya herself) makes, is completely ignoring Saif's remark and making sure to take her time in narrating Asya's story. Soueif develops a capacious space to narrate the maturation of Asya despite it residing merely in a "portrait" of a bildungsroman as opposed to in reality. With that said, in a review by Marilyn Booth, she writes Soueif "allows herself a canvas on which discrete dramatic scenes impinge abruptly on one another" (1). Aside from Booth's precise observation, she uses the word "canvas" which I found to be an interesting choice given the fact that I argue that Soueif constructs Asya on a canvas, creating out of her a literal portrait of the artist as a young woman and a portrait of the bildungsroman genre. By overlaying Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* onto Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we are able to trace continuities and ruptures that have illustrated a genre that is different by kind. Soueif develops a new novel, and a new narrative mode to express Asya's coming of age—one that demonstrates a female's limitations in the outside world while simultaneously repressing her coming of age in an imaginary, fiction-like world taking shape in her imagination. Soueif's genre becomes an abstract version of a bildungsroman, one in which an Arab female's coming of age cannot take place in reality and instead exists in her imagination. This close reading demonstrates that the overlaps between these two texts relate to the protagonists' sexual awakening, the quest of coming of age as free artists, historical and political contexts, and language and form, whereas the ruptures that are responsible for creating the abstract image

of a bildungsroman novel arise from gender differences and the West-East dichotomy, specifically orientalist representations of the 'other'. We see how the iconic image of what the genre can be and has been for a long time, i.e. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, has been transformed as it traveled, into an abstract formation of another possibility of the genre, i.e. Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*. Soueif's novel is an abstract constellation, a product of ruptures in the tradition created by gender appropriating and culturally translating the genre, turning it into an recognizable yet distinctly different shape when compared to its antecedent. As a result, its abstract nature shifts Asya's potential of coming of age as a woman from the real world to a complicated, unrealistic possibility existing only as an image that exists in her thoughts—a "portrait" of a liberating coming of age journey.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The question of who or what was first is not relevant, it is a moot point. Instead we ask who or what is next? In this study the bildungsroman ship docked in Egypt in 1992, but it has by no means dropped its anchor. The question that should be asked now is how far has the bildungsroman genre journeyed after Soueif's novel in 1992? How many years and miles has it traveled and where has it landed to merge with other literary traditions? The significance of this study lies in how it has opened up the bildungsroman discourse; by starting from multiple beginnings and tracing the continuities of a genre that travels along multiple non-linear paths, this study creates a new type of continuity, one in which the bildungsroman tradition now has seemingly limitless potential for travel. I have demonstrated how one can trace a female coming of age in the Arab world back to a male coming of age in Europe seventy-six years earlier and even further back across several centuries, making it almost certain that there exist even more undiscovered connections. The bildungsroman is no longer limited to a certain country, gender or even century, its tradition can span millennia and all manners of human condition.

In this study, we have seen the bildungsroman in **global perspective**, in **motion**, and in **constellation** and through these terms we have understood how a genre can bridge disparate cultures. The aim of this study is to relocate spatially and chronologically the bildungsroman tradition from an exclusively western scene outwards towards a global scene, to challenge narrowly defined national canons by analyzing the bildungsroman as a

genre in motion, and to read Soueif's novel alongside Joyce's bildungsroman to better understand the evolution of a coming of age tradition and its cultural translation across space and time. Though Soueif deliberately writes Joyce out of her novel, in this study I bring him back in, by directly juxtaposing his iconic bildungsroman with Soueif's female bildungsroman, in order to illustrate the complexity of the routes of the bildungsroman and the travel of ideas. By drawing on the similarities and the differences between two cultures through the analysis of two coming of age novels we challenge scholarship that has failed to take into consideration the exchange of influence among different cultures on different continents. Taking the case of medieval Islam as an example, we recognize that scholars for many years have mostly ignored the longstanding and mutually sustaining connections among Islamic Golden Age, modern western, and modern Arab literary culture. Eloquently put, "the encounter between East and West does not seem to have produced bridges of understanding and communication. On the contrary, it seems to have led to brutal aggression and appropriation" (Attar 129). Scholars have practiced a form of literary amnesia by condemning Islam and using the space of literary scholarship for critiques of religious, political and patriarchal oppression in their own societies and in the Arab world, rooted in Islamic traditions. This amnesia fails to take into consideration the literary culture of the Islamic Golden Age and its influence on European and modern Arab literary culture. The proposition that the Arab world had played a critical role in the making of the modern west has been at large challenged by literary scholars who are in no means necessarily willing to dismantle the western ideology that has embraced cultural supremacy over the Arab world and allowed them to legitimize their position as cultural and literary makers of the world. In addition to medieval Islam and the Arab world, other cultures emerging out of

the periphery are also seen as marginal and their literary production less discussed in light of its own unique qualities and contribution to literary fields and genres as a whole, but rather mainly discussed as the producer of inferior literary forms, forms attempting to reach their superior western prototype, but not yet able to attain such status. It is vital to see multiple worlds as shaping forces of a literary genre in order to dismantle the notion of center and periphery and read forms emerging outside the west as “unique”, or as we saw in Soueif’s novel, different by kind and not just by degree.

Though scholarship on the Arab bildungsroman is lacking, it is my hope that this study adds to the bildungsroman discourse a new and different perspective on the Arab world and its literary production, as well as recognizes its participation in Joycean studies, bildungsroman studies, and feminist gender studies. Borrowing Edward Said’s words “cultures and civilizations are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simply delineated description of their individuality” (348-349) and I add, literary discourse can also be interrelated and a novel can participate in multiple discourses which allows us to further see its significance as an object in travel. It is my hope that this study illustrates how tracing the continuities and ruptures of a genre across disparate geographical locations and time can open literary studies and help us, in James Clifford’s words, learn about “cultures and histories different from [our] own, enough to begin to know what [we’re] missing” (39).

While scholars frequently cite their admiration for Joyce’s work, few comparative studies have been undertaken. Among the other works of the English literature canon, Joyce’s iconic bildungsroman has been placed on a pedestal (which is precisely why Soueif writes him out because elevating Joyce’s novel inherently makes other works of the genre

less significant), cited often for its unique literary structure and form, and its novel thematic explorations. At initial glance, placing a canonical text like *A Portrait* in light with a text from the periphery like *In the Eye of the Sun* could be seen as diminishing the former and overshadowing the latter, but what I hope this study shows is that reading texts in relation to one another, regardless of their disparate mileage and dates, can inform readers' understanding of the texts. Overlaying both novels into one constellation does not dim any of the respective stars but instead they shine brighter in their juxtaposition. Placing them in one constellation allows us to see how the bildungsroman genealogy has evolved and traveled and has taken shape within both novels. Reading them together opens up the space for a more worldly comparison when discussing bildungsroman novels, where we are no longer limited to the European male experience and all manner of person are entitled to a coming of age, allowing for the recognition of more texts as bildungsroman novels and a more widespread discussion on the breadth of the genre. Also, reading these texts together changes our reading of novels of previous bildungsroman traditions; as we begin to recognize strands of previous authors and previous works in the new texts we read, it encourages a deeper analysis and understanding of our readings.

The first and second chapters of this study give the basis for placing Joyce's *A Portrait* alongside Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*, providing historical context and proposing connections between the texts (with the possibility for far more connections that couldn't possibly all be mentioned and are beyond the scope of this study) in order to prove that this comparison is not at all far fetched, and is even appropriate given the complicated genealogy illustrated. Then, in the third chapter of this study I engage in a close reading of two texts separated by decades and seas. I demonstrate that the overlaps between these two



texts relate to the protagonists' sexual awakening, the quest of coming of age as free artists, historical and political contexts, and language and form, whereas the ruptures arise from the gender differences and the West-East dichotomy. The only points of rupture between the experiences of the two protagonists are defined by limitations that we as humans have put on ourselves. One, we view the two genders as different, and therefore treat them as such, giving rise to the disparity of the experience between Stephen and Asya. Two, the West-East dichotomy is another man-made construct, again based on differences perceived by our desire for superiority. When we remove these limitations placed by society on the two characters, we are able to reconcile the ruptures between the two novels and realize that Stephen and Asya's experiences are quite alike. Ultimately Stephen and Asya are inherently similar in their desires, emotions, and actions, and the differences in their coming of age are not due to differences between their character but differences imposed on them by society, by human construct i.e. gender and West-East dichotomy. We can propose that if two such disparate characters can be brought close together then so can other individuals, outside of literature, be related to one another, further bridging cultures and continents to ultimately make the world a smaller, interconnected, and possibly better place.

This study stands as testimony to the universal nature of literature, that no two novels of the bildungsroman genre are so dissimilar that they are incomparable, widening the possible discourse between other texts of the tradition. Taking Asya Al-Ulama's own words, "Art is and—and should be—at the service of Society" (Soueif 94) and by recognizing the bildungsroman genre as a form of art, we begin to see how literary

traditions are “at the service of society” as they cross borders and become agents of literary and cultural exchange.

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