



MAPPING HEGEMONY: DECOLONIAL KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL AESTHETICS IN SOUEIF'S *THE MAP OF LOVE*

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Abstract

This article analyses the strategies through which colonial hegemony is sustained through aesthetic forms of knowledge in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*. Using Walter Mignolo's framework of decoloniality, the study shows the persistence of coloniality within modern forms of historiography, geographic mapping, and narrative formation. Mignolo insists that there should be plurality in knowledge, as one central approach creates hierarchies that bring one side to the light and hide the other. Soueif explains how imperial powers operate through epistemic binaries that have been centred in European systems of knowledge. These binaries privilege Eurocentric ways of understanding, recording and acting on the history and knowledge. Amal's character is central to this intervention, who is narrating, mediating and repositioning the locus of enunciation. Through Amal's character, the author challenges the colonial way of representation by enacting a form of epistemic disobedience. The article argues that Soueif's use of aesthetics, archives, maps, translations, tapestries, journals, etc., as an epistemological practice, disrupts linear history, endorses border thinking and destabilises Eurocentric truths. In this regard, *The Map of Love* becomes a critique of modernity enforced by the colonisers. Moreover, it exposes the literary foundation of hegemony and insists on the persistent nature of the decolonial struggle through two different time periods: the colonial era and the postcolonial era.

Keywords:

Decoloniality; Coloniality; Political Aesthetics; Knowledge Production; Narrative Mediation; Mapping

1. Introduction

Colonial domination hasn't just relied on force, but it was a structured approach endured through systems of knowledge that shaped identities, histories and spaces (Mignolo, 2000). In *The Map of Love*, Ahdaf Soueif has revealed these systems and shown how they operate through aesthetic forms such as maps, archives, letters, and historical narration, etc. They seem neutral, but they are deeply rooted in dominant epistemology (Soueif, 1999). Walter Mignolo, through his framework of decoloniality, explains that this imperial rule remained in the systems of knowledge even after the end of formal colonialism (Mignolo, 2007). Soueif locates this power not in resistance but in the perception of it, how history is narrated and how these knowledges are controlled. This article argues that *The Map of Love* uses political aesthetics for decolonial practices by recentering and remapping the locus of enunciation to foreground epistemic plurality. This approach not only critiques the colonial modernity but also elaborates how literature is a mode of unsettling and reorientation against these hegemonic structures.

Mignolo's theoretical ideas about decoloniality break his link from Eurocentric epistemological disciplines. His concept of border thinking is a special treatment of his ideas about colonialism and subaltern knowledge. He defines border thinking as emerging from the experiences of those who live on the border, and living at the border is like having a different consciousness; one is conscious, and the other is the unconscious self. He draws on Frantz Fanon as an example,



particularly on his realisation that he did not know that he was a Negro until he saw himself being seen as a Negro. Frantz Fanon's concept of socio-genesis explains that subjectivity is formed by socio-historic forces rather than biology (Fanon, 1967). Mignolo adopts this concept to theorise border thinking as a new sort of consciousness that takes birth from colonial differences. He expresses the border thinking as a new consciousness, which is opposite to the territorial description as grounded in Western epistemology. These borders are constructed to protect epidemic territories, while the space beyond them is not a void but a different and new epistemic consciousness (Mignolo, 2000). Soueif's *The Map of Love*, as a critique of modernity, has emerged as this very new consciousness that understands the power play through which the nations are controlled.

2. Literature Review

Much of the scholarly discussion of Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999) has focused on its intervention in the history of colonialism, cross-cultural encounters and the politics of representation. Critics usually interpret the novel as Empire Writing Back because it's a counter-narrative to imperial control and it foreshadows the previously marginalised Arab voices in Western Epistemic discourses (Soueif, 1999; Hassan, 2003; Ashcroft et al., 2002). The novel has different aesthetic forms: archival records, personal letters and historical documents, which disrupt the power of colonial knowledge systems and undermine the assumed neutrality of historical narration.

According to postcolonial critics, *The Map of Love* takes part in a larger story of resistant literature which reclaims silenced histories by setting itself against the narrative reconfiguration. The idea of Orientalism elaborated by Said in 1978 is essential in such interpretations, especially in the establishment of the manner through which Western knowledge production shapes the East as an object of conquest. Based on Said, the text by Soueif reveals that the work of imperial power is not based on political domination exclusively but also aesthetic means such as maps, archives, and historiographic practices, which naturalise the colonial authority (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2002). These aesthetic forms are not neutral, but they serve as ideological tools to preserve hegemonic narratives.

The recent scholarship has moved past the classical postcolonial readings to decolonial epistemology, with a more refined picture of the production of knowledge in colonial and postcolonial settings. Mignolo (2000, 2011) presents another idea, the coloniality of power, which states that colonial domination is maintained with the help of epistemic inequalities as a benefit of Western ways of knowing. *The Map of Love* can be viewed in this regard as an epistemic disobedience whereby Soueif re-aligned indigenous voices and other archives as an antithesis of Eurocentric mapping of history. The dependence of the novel on fragmentation and multiplicity of narrators is what Mignolo refers to as a colonial difference mode of thinking, a form of knowledge that develops in the colonial locations, and not in imperial hubs.

The political aspect of the aesthetics has been taken into critical consideration as well. Based on the theory of political aesthetics developed by Ranciere (2004), the scholars have proposed that literature is political when it repurposes what can be seen, said and recalled. In *The Map of Love*, Soueif upsets conventional historical sensitivities in a way that he preempts personal histories, especially those of women, which have not been enshrined in the official history of colonisation. The humanisation of historical trauma through these narrative strategies is accompanied by



questioning the hegemonic modes of representation that put the authority of the imperial over lived experience into the foreground (Hiddleston, 2014).

Gender also makes the decolonial intervention in the novel complicated. According to feminist commentators, by making women the guardians of memory and other forms of historiography, Soueif opposes the colonial and patriarchal systems of control (Malak, 2000). Female storytelling is a political aesthetic activity where repressed histories are rediscovered and rewritten. This kind of gendering of knowledge and opposition has put *The Map of Love* in a transnational feminist articulation that does not subvert Western feminist universalism. Although the novel contains a lot of postcolonial material, very little has been done on the systematic critique of hegemonic knowledge structures through the use of political aesthetics. The literature on colonial resistance, or even cross-cultural romance, is usually discussed separately, without the full consideration of the way in which aesthetics, like cartography, archival narration, and historiography, are epistemic control problems. This paper fills this gap by combining decolonial theory and political aesthetics in order to show that the novel by Soueif recreates the knowledge production itself in order to resist the hegemony of colonialism on the grounds of form, representation and epistemology.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Instruments of Colonial Knowledge: Maps and Travel Narratives

Aesthetics, maps and travelogues are usually considered neutral, but they are not neutral for orienting spaces. They are a major instrument of epistemic control and authority through which colonial power is encoded. Anna Winterbourne is a true example of this as she comes to Egypt with inherited British knowledge about Egypt in the form of maps, travel manuals and historical readings. In the novel, she reflects that whatever she has been reading in her books has not prepared her for what she witnesses in Egypt (Soueif, 1999, p. 12). This reveals the persistent dissonance between the lived reality and colonial representations. This disrupted relationship highlights the objectivity and biased nature of colonial representors (Mignolo, 2000). According to decoloniality, knowledge is geopolitically situated, and European modernity universalises its ways of knowing as global truths (Mignolo, 2000). Anna's letters and books that she used before visiting Egypt are examples of this universalisation. These books not only presented the country in a negative sense but also tried to create prejudiced sensibilities for the Egyptians from all classes. This is how they proved that these people are controllable, justifying their colonial practices. Soueif (1999) presents the contingency of this knowledge through her novel. She describes the limitations of Anna's understanding and shows how colonial knowledge and understandings are structured and imposed tactically.

Knowledge being geopolitical, the maps are very powerful symbols, as in the novel, maps are frequently defined as technologies of power. They set out territories, legitimised colonial control and erased local or regional viewpoints. Anna's interaction with Cairo and Nile is shaped by maps, and this reinforces the constructed colonial hierarchies of observer (Soueif, 1999). Mignolo (2007) argues that maps are central to the colonial matrix of power; it not only organizes the territory but also control the knowing of the peoples. Soueif's novel interrogates this system by comparing Anna's mapped Egypt with Amal's historically conscious perspective. This reveals the epistemic violence through historic literature crafting (Soueif, 1999). This juxtaposition, through which *The Map of Love* is performed, has a decolonial effect on knowledge itself. The novel predicts the epistemic power of the coloniser and, at the same time, demonstrates its insufficiency and bias. By



doing this, it is complying with the call of epistemic disobedience suggested by Mignolo (2011): that knowledge is not neutral, and that colonial epistemologies should never be accepted as truths in all other parts of the world. Through problematization of the inherited knowledge of Anna about Egypt, Soueif (1999) shows that the work of colonial power is not based on the military or political conquest alone, but a circulation and organisation of knowledge; a hegemony that is rooted in aesthetic and textual practices.

3.2. Narrative Mediation and the Locus of Enunciation

The narrative structure is one of the most drastic decolonisation interventions of *The Map of Love*, especially the role of Amal as the mediator, reader, and narrator of colonial history. Instead of letting the letters of Anna Winterbourne pass on as transparent historical evidence, Soueif subjects them to the postcolonial consciousness of Amal in the present. This is not just a formal mechanism, but a mediation that is intended to reposition the locus of enunciation, which is one of the central ideas of decolonial thought expressed by Walter Mignolo (Mignolo, 2000). To Mignolo, the issue of who speaks and where is the essential determinant of how knowledge is created, disseminated and sanctioned.

The letters are already within a colonial system of epistemology, although her motives are empathetic. Her experiences during her visit to Egypt are influenced by her positionality as a British woman who tours an occupied territory, and her writings are influenced by the assumption of imperial modernity, historical interest, ethnographic reportage and the need to make the unknown understandable (Soueif, 1999). Nevertheless, these letters do not have an independent authority in the novel. They are repeatedly interrupted, contextualized and reflected on by Amal, as the narrator, and this brings focus to the silence, misinterpretation and omissions. By so doing, *The Map of Love* rejects the imperialism of colonial discourse as historical fact in and of itself.

The reflective voice of Amal is an example of what Mignolo (2000) refers to as border thinking, a type of knowledge that results from the colonial difference and does not subscribe to imperial universalism, as well as reductionist nationalistic discourse. It lies in between the past and the present, Arabic and English, colonial archive and lived memory. Amal lives in an epistemic borderland because by doing so, she can critically read the letters of Anna without dismissing the letters altogether. Her hesitation in narration, which is signified by hesitations, as well as self-questioning and ethical contemplation, is contrasted with the confidence of the imperial historiography. The difference between the narrative time of this aesthetic deceleration serves as a decolonial tactic, presupposing uncertainty as a possible and even required epistemic position.

Soueif supports this change in epistemology by Amal being clearly conscious of historical asymmetry. Amal uses this realisation many times in her thoughts as she is reminded of the fact that history has been written mostly by those in authority, a fact that also repeats the criticism that Mignolo made about Western modernity, which claims to be universal, a claim, however, which hides the Eurocentric nature of its origins (Mignolo, 2007). By preempting the awareness of Amal, the novel questions the tendency to assume that historical information expressed by colonial archives is impartial and neutral, revealing instead the ideological circumstances within which historical knowledge is created.

More importantly, the intervention by Amal is not meant to put colonial rule in the same position as a new totalizing story. She does not identify herself as an epistemic master, but her narration is full of uncertainty, emotional engagement, and moral accountability. Such denial of the narrative



closure is indicative of Mignolo (2011) stating that decoloniality is not the reversal of hierarchies, but the delinking with the logic of epistemic domination itself. The voice of Amal does not, therefore, play the role of epistemic disobedience by simply denying any form of colonial texts, but it is rather a critical form of engagement that reveals the boundaries of the text, leaving the space of other ways of knowing open.

The Map of Love is a political form of storytelling by virtue of its stratified narrative form. The novel shows that hegemony works with narrative authority, that is, who is allowed to tell history, and how he is so framed to do so. Soueif reinstates the locus of enunciation away from the colonial archive to a postcolonial mediator that ultimately sketches a decolonial aesthetic practice that disrupts the epistemic underpinnings of colonial modernity. Narrative mediation, therefore, becomes one of the key places of intersection between the political aesthetics and the decolonial knowledge.

3.3. Archives, Letters, and Knowledge as Colonial Matrix of Power

The archive in *The Map of Love* does not serve as an unbiased storage of the past, especially as the letters, journals, and historical documents. Rather, Soueif reveals the archive as one of the main locations where the colonial power acts epistemologically. Through his/her foregrounding of private letters as historical material and at the same time challenging their authority, the novel dramatises what Walter Mignolo describes as the coloniality of knowledge, i.e. the processes by which some types of knowing are given credibility, and some are sidelined or deleted (Mignolo, 2000).

The letters of Anna Winterbourne, at first, seem to provide an alternative to the official colonial historiography. Their own manner, their heart, and their seeming sympathies with Egypt appear to put them out of imperial language. But Soueif is opposing romanticising such documents as being inherently subversive. Anna's writing of Anna is still anchored in epistemic presuppositions of imperial modernity, in the assumption that observation, documenting and preservation of the text provide access to the truth of the past. This assumption is representative of what Mignolo (2007) notes through the rhetoric of modernity that frames Western systems of knowledge production as universal, objective, and morally progressive.

The formal aspect of the novel makes this assumption difficult by denying the letters the option to remain autonomous. They need translation, contextualization and interpretation, and that is done by Amal. The narrative reliance itself highlights the instability of the archive. The letters are not, on the contrary, self-explanatory, but fragmented, incomplete, and contingent historically. The fact that Amal struggles to assemble them reflects the larger postcolonial issue of having to interact with colonial archives, which preserve and disfigure indigenous histories at the same time.

The way in which Soueif treats archival material is in line with what Mignolo (2000) argues, namely, the fact that archives are not innocent since they are created in connection with certain power relations. Colonial archives, especially, are influenced by what Mignolo refers to as the geopolitics of knowledge, which places more emphasis on the European-centric viewpoint, reducing the colonised subjects to the status of items of description, as opposed to objects of interpretation. In *The Map of Love*, Egyptian voices are frequently found in an oblique form, in the form of letters written about them, of translations, or of retrospective narration, which points out the asymmetrical circumstances in which historical knowledge has been documented.



However, the archive is not abandoned in the novel. Instead, it carries out an epistemic refunctioning, altering archival fragments to become the location of critical interaction as opposed to truth. The example of Amal, who regularly reads, can be interpreted as an epistemic disobedience by Mignolo (2011), a denial of established knowledge structures without questioning them. The fact that the letters do not tell everything but rather hide it, as Amal questions it, undermines the assertion by the archive of wholeness and unity.

This is also an aesthetic disruption. Formally, Soueif organises the novel on the basis of discontinuity and temporal displacement, gaps in the narrative, and carries out the fragmentation of colonial history. These aesthetic decisions oppose the linear and teleological accounts of imperial writings with respect to historiography. In place of an unbroken flow of history to modernity, *The Map of Love* focuses on fracturing, dislocation and unresolved tension. By doing that, the novel concurs with the decolonial criticisms of historical advancement as a myth which justifies colonial domination (Mignolo, 2007).

Moreover, the fact that the letters are intimate makes it harder to distinguish the personal and the political. Although the private writings of Anna make the colonial encounters human, it also shows the extent to which the colonial power relations go well into the realm of affective relationships. The structures of empire do not avoid love, sympathy, and cross-cultural intimacy; however, they are influenced by them. This observation supports the point made by Mignolo (2011) that coloniality does not just have to remain in institutions, but it exists in subjectivity itself, the way people perceive, feel, and tell the world.

The Map of Love, with its critical approach to archival forms, shows that hegemony is not maintained only due to political oppression but also due to the control over historical knowledge and its forms of representation. Defining the archive as an unstable and disputed location, Soueif folds an aesthetic of decolonialism, which does not idealise or dispose of colonial documents, but rather exposes them to a process of prolonged epistemic criticism. The novel, therefore, alters the archive from a colonial tool of power to a place where other histories can also be imagined.

4. Discussion

4.1. Decolonial Aesthetics and Epistemic Reorientation

As the analyses above show, *The Map of Love* enforces the colonial hegemony not only using political domination but by means of aesthetic and epistemic forms, such as maps, letters, archival documents and narrative mediation. This observation echoes the arguments put forward by Walter Mignolo that coloniality is resilient even after the fall of the imperial regime as an unyielding architecture of knowledge and representation (Mignolo, 2000). The novel by Soueif does not simply represent the history of the colonial era; it questions the epistemic processes that have manifested the writing of that history, its aestheticisation, and naturalisation. Among the most important interventions made in the novel is the revelation of the illusion of colonial transparency, in which the assumption of knowledge being neutral, observational and universally available. Throughout the letters of Anna Winterbourne, it is clear that she wants to know Egypt by being there and also by sympathising with it (Soueif, 1999, pp. 72–74). Nevertheless, the story shows that this knowledge is still limited by imperial epistemology. According to Mignolo (2007), new Western knowledge systems are disguised under their geopolitical creation, representing themselves as absolute and universal knowledge. Although it is ethically driven, Anna cannot get out of this epistemic structure, and, therefore, it cannot be fully colonial.



The Map of Love practices what Mignolo (2000, 2011) calls border thinking, a social generative form of knowledge production that arises out of the meeting of imperial and subaltern epistemologies instead of dismissing the colonial knowledge altogether. This is best expressed by the story of Amal as the narrator of the story. Amal reads the letters of Anna with precaution and concern, knowing that they are influenced by this passion and by the historical ban (Soueif, 1999, p. 18). Her narration doesn't try to correct the colonial archive from within but re-orient it from a plural epistemic horizon. Intimacy and affect in the novel also make the aesthetics of colonial hegemony more difficult. The title, *The Map of Love*, in itself points to some other cartography, one that is in direct opposition to the imperial cartography. Whereas the territory and power of colonial maps attempt to be fixed, the role of love in the novel is a relational force and destabilising. The state of epistemic conditioning on which colonial perception is based is highlighted by the fact that Sharif Pasha states that Europeans see what they are taught to see (Soueif, 1999, p. 164). Such instances, according to Mignolo, are indicators of a decolonial challenge to the epistemic transparency of modernity (Mignolo, 2007).

This emotional aspect conforms to a great deal to the concept of decolonial aesthetics that Mignolo introduces as a re-tuning of sensibility, opposing the universalising assumptions of the Western aesthetic and epistemic regimes (Mignolo, 2011). The disjointed narrative form of Soueif, his use of mediated forms of storytelling and the preference of memory over the authority of the historical records all oppose the linear time of imperial historiography. The novel anticipates the plurality of history and epistemic humility instead of providing a counter-history that would substitute one dominant history for another. The narration made by Amal ultimately makes history an open, dialogic process as opposed to a closed narration. The idea that history is never finished, never done speaking is her summary of the decolonial view of the past as she sees it in the novel, as conflicting and as continuous (Soueif, 1999, p. 360). This point of view is reminiscent of Mignolo (2011), who insists on decoloniality being a constant journey of epistemic vigilance and re-thinking.

Put collectively, *The Map of Love* becomes an example of a literary work that questions the colonial hegemony even at the level of knowledge creation. Its political influence is not merely the ability to oppose but its ability to remake the narration, experience and interpretation of the colonial past. The novel is involved in a greater intellectual initiative of decolonising aestheticism through which it tries to sever the tether of epistemic hegemony of Western modernity and to leave space to plural and border-based forms of knowing (Mignolo, 2000, 2007).

4.2. Gender, Intimacy, and Decolonial Resistance

The concept of gender and intimate relationships is where the colonial power is crossed with the epistemic power in *The Map of Love*. The depiction of Anna Winterbourne by Soueif and the encounters of Amal with Sharif Pasha, as well as the way in which the former and the latter deal with the Egyptian society, is an example of reproduction, resistance and problematization of the colonial hegemony in domestic and affective spaces. To Mignolo (2011), coloniality exists as a result of political or economic domination as well as through epistemic and social hierarchies, such as domination of gendered subjectivity. This can be seen in the novel in the way women are differentially placed in both the colonial and postcolonial epistemological orders. As a British woman in Egypt, Anna is a kind of liberal cosmopolitanism that is limited by imperialist ideology. Her feelings, especially towards Sharif Pasha, are personal and epistemic: she wants to know Egypt



through intimacy and closeness, but her perception is still clouded with British beliefs about culture, morality and civilisation (Soueif, 1999, pp. 54–56). Soueif stresses the issue of self-consciousness of Anna regarding her positionality: she says that she can see what she has been taught to see, that her interpretation is formed by cultural and political prisms (Soueif, 1999, p. 164). Although Anna is true in her love, it is also a representation where colonial subjectivity will operate.

The experience Amal undergoes, on the contrary, is a decolonial performance of intimacy and agency. She bargains her relationships, romantically, family-wise, and intellectually in the frameworks of colonial history, with a critical sense of the epistemic and social constraints of the past. The way Amal narrates the letters of Anna and reflects personally on them can, on the example of the former, be referred to as border thinking, where the subject matter argues between the two epistemic frames without placing them in subordination to each other (Mignolo, 2000). Placing her emotional experience in a parallelogram with historical criticism, Amal commits a kind of personal and political resistance. The gendered spaces in the novel, home, letters, and private meetings, are also used as political spaces. Soueif often creates major decolonial moves in domestic or intimate environments, showing how colonial authority is everywhere, even in the most seemingly personal of locations. As an illustration, the ethical role of knowledge mediation is highlighted by the fact that Amal has to balance between the truth, loyalty, and historical responsibility at the same time when she is meditating about how to interpret and communicate the letters that Anna wrote (Soueif, 1999, pp. 178180). Such incidents explain why anti-colonialism struggle is not limited to social and political spheres but rather entrenched in the daily affective and intellectual work (Mignolo, 2011).

Interactions between love and desire, as well as ethical responsibility, find an intersection point in the novel and generate what can be termed a decolonial affective politics. The interventions of Sharif Pasha are educative: he criticises the interpretations of Anna, reminding her that close involvement does not ensure epistemic clarity, that the colonial power not only forms the law or the policy, but also the perception (Soueif, 1999, p. 266). Thus, emotional and relational dynamics are not neutral; they are interconnected with knowledge production and negotiating colonial hierarchies. The way Amal negotiates these dynamics is an indication of a deliberate action of attaching to the epistemic aspects of gender and intimacy, which does not contradict the lesson of Mignolo that power, knowledge and social subjectivity are indeed entangled (Mignolo, 2007).

In addition, the way of gender as presented by Soueif is also a challenge to the conventional postcolonial narratives that are centred on nationalism or anti-colonial struggle. The novel expands the decolonial critique by making the affective and intimate the focus of the epistemic intervention. The gendered relationships have been presented as the spaces that reproduce, resist, and re-think coloniality, and this accentuates the aesthetic project of the novel, to expose how power works so subtly and to practice types of resistance that are as relational and ethical as they are cognitive.

To sum up, the novel shows that gender and intimacy cannot be separated from colonial epistemic set-ups. *The Map of Love* preempts both the ethical and political obligations of affective engagement through Amal and Anna, respectively, and reflective mediation and constrained cosmopolitanism. The role of love, within this context, is not only an individual process, but also a political practice: a place where the colonial hegemony may be criticised, negotiated and, possibly, undermined. The story by Soueif brings the decolonial venture of Mignolo to the personal



relationship sphere, showing the impossibility to separate the intimate space from the epistemic and political space of coloniality and decoloniality.

5. Conclusion

Through the subtle approaches of narration chosen by Soueif to narrate *The Map of Love* prove that colonial power is not the issue of political or military dominance, but functions at an even deeper level, that of epistemic, aesthetic and affective dimensions. This paper has demonstrated that maps, letters, archives, and narrative mediation are places of colonial knowledge production, whereas the narrative structure of the novel performs what Mignolo (2000, 2011) refers to as border thinking, a form of knowing that does not reproduce the universality of Western knowledge. This relationship between gender, intimacy, and epistemic power is presented through the discussion of Anna Winterbourne and Amal as narrators. Anna represents the difference in liberal cosmopolitanism and the epistemic limits of the colonial ideology, and Amal is an example of such epistemic mediation, which is an epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011). Soueif, through the character of Amal, highlights that the knowledge production should be ethical and questions the alleged objectivity of colonial archives. The domestic and the intimate, which are usually ignored in the context of the colonial power, are shown as the key arenas where hegemony is both replicated and challenged.

Besides, aesthetic strategies in the novel, fragmented chronology, mediated narratives, and layered narratives prove de-colonial reorientation of sensibility. Soueif destabilises the imperialist totalizing logics of historiography by establishing spaces where more than one point of view exists, where historical silences are not overlooked and where colonial epistemology is subject to critical inquiry (Mignolo, 2007). Love, memory and relationality within the text are not just literary devices but are also political and epistemic tools, which disclose the way in which coloniality creates the perception, emotion and subjectivity. This article has endeavoured to show that *The Map of Love* is part of the decolonial project, and through the synthesis of colonial knowledge, narrative mediation, and gendered intimacy, this article has proposed that coloniality continues to dominate knowledge, affect, and historiography. The case of the novel by Soueif shows that decolonial practice, in addition to being a powerful criticism, is also a reconstruction of the history, relations, and cultural memory narratively and ethically.

Finally, the novel also emphasises the significance of taking literary texts as a place of colonial and decolonial epistemology manifestation, demonstrating that narrative, affect, and aesthetics cannot be divided from the overall political and epistemic aspects of coloniality. In this perspective, *The Map of Love* thus represents the ability of literature to perform decolonial interventions in form and content, and this can be used as an example in future studies of decolonial literature.

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