

"Arab Nationalism" and "National Identity" have long been chief concerns in the Arab world. It goes without doubt that Western colonisation, which plagued most Arab nation-states, has the greatest impact on bolstering Arabs' nationalist sentiments and reformulation of national and communal identity. Although every Arab nation-state sets its own denominators for its foundation, shared history, religious moral values, and the Arabic language remain the indisputably revered national unifiers and signifiers of the Arab identity. Arab national discourse, outstandingly male-dominated, applauds these constituents which are supposed to stand for a homogeneous authentic Arab identity. Yet, while projecting man as the unsurpassed national hero, this discourse looks at women merely as the nation's boundary markers, as symbols or, at best, bearers and transmitters of national culture. However, with the advent of a feminist trend in the Arab world- a trend which coincided with the rise of nationalist resistance movements- iconic female figures staggeringly inscribed their names in the contemporary male-led Arab literary agenda. While being concerned with giving a voice to the silenced subaltern women, some of those postcolonial feminist Arab women writers go further towards reimagining a new construction of the national identity and community which undoubtedly disrupts the conventional definition of an Arab "imagined community". On those grounds, the present thesis, entitled *Gender and the Nation in the Novels of Ahlam Mosteghanemi and Ahdaf Soueif*, attempts to offer two different alternative feminist narrations of the nation which, in a way or another, counteract the Arab hegemonic patriarchal national discourses. By comparing and contrasting the writers' novels: *Dhakirat al-Jasad* and *Fawda al-Hawas* by the Algerian writer Ahlam Mosteghanemi and *In the Eye of the Sun* and *The Map of Love* by the Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif, I aim at demonstrating the extent to which those writers are conformists or not to the Arab conventional conception of national identity and community in its relation to gender politics. Though in her novels, Mosteghanemi seeks to reclaim a pure Algerian Muslim Arab national identity, she is certainly intent to speak out her heroine's female-self and cultural agency and hence her conformism is partial. Conversely, Soueif, in her artistic output, pushes aside all historical, moral and linguistic frontiers deemed to mark Arab national identity. Unlike her Algerian contemporary, Soueif's national map incorporates the Western Other while her pen draws unconventional scenes relating to Arab woman's sexuality