

The Language of Ideology: Going 'Beyond' in Doha Assy's *104 Cairo*

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Subjugated and oppressed, women fail to feel socially integrated and seek to build subjectivities of their own that differ from already existing identities constructed through a heritage of stereotypes exaggerated by history, folklore and myths. Speculating on the negative effects of stereotypes on individuals' subjectivity, David Huddart writes: "Normally the problem with a stereotype seems to be that it fixes individuals or groups in one place, denying their own sense of identity and presuming to understand them on the basis of prior knowledge, usually knowledge that is at best defective" (25). In line with Huddart, Homi Bhabha believes that stereotypes are fake, forged representation of individuals as well as identities. He proposes that "stereotypes are figures of knowledge that appear, disappear and reappear with consistency even though almost everyone tacitly admits that they do not capture the 'truth' of the situation" (Greedharry 140). Consequently, there follows a need for a new type of knowledge and a different ideology of identity building that might be more empowering and supportive to females against the male ideology of stereotyping. In this respect, Bhabha suggests the ideology of going to 'a beyond area' of a new insight where a new subjectivity might be constructed. In light of Bhabha's concept of the 'beyond area', this research, is mainly concerned with the female's choice of a 'beyond space' in Doha Assy's *104 Cairo*. The study is further concerned with Bhabha's thorough speculation on the idea of hybridity; it poses the question raised by Bhabha: "How are subjects formed in between, or in excess of, the sum of the parts of difference?" (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 2).

Bhabha senses a liminal space outside the boundaries of time and space and suggests that within this space lies a potentiality for ridding oneself of the complexities and pretentious residues of culture as well as restrictions of time and place. Bhabha's concept of 'the beyond' is, thus, a call for a departure from the self to a beyond area and a going back to the self, time and space with a new spirit that inhabits the self once again. In Bhabha's theory, 'the beyond' is an imagined sphere and time wherein the individual might relieve himself/herself of all hindrances of a stable identity. Bhabha argues that:

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Being in the 'beyond' then is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell 'in the beyond' is also, as I have shown, to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense then, the intervening space 'beyond', becomes a space of intervention in the here and now. (*Location of Culture 7*)

Thus, identity building, in Bhabha's sense, is a matter of going out of oneself and one's time to 'the beyond' to watch over things with more insight before coming back in a new revised and reconstructed spirit. Bhabha's beyond is a timeless space that is related neither to the present nor to the past. However, this out- of-time flight can only acquire its meaning by a going back to the present. Bhabha reflects upon this process as he argues that:

The imaginary of spatial distance -to live somehow beyond the border of our times- throws into relief the temporal, social differences that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity. The present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future, no longer a synchronic presence: our proximate self-presence, our public image, comes to be revealed for its discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities. (*Location of Culture 4*)

Besides, Bhabha coined the term 'hybridity' in light of which he examines the diversity and difference of cultures and "what happens on the borderlines of cultures, to see what happens in-between cultures" (Huddart 4). He believes that the diversity of cultures is a benevolent fact though it has two inevitable problems: the fundamental culture's insistence on dominating the other culture and widespread intolerance (Rutherford 207-208). Multiculturalism revolutionizes the prevailing conditions and the character of the 'national population' that becomes the result of a bundle of differences. The differences of cultures can never be contained in a collective coexisting context and one universal concept (Rutherford 208-209). Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' draws heavily upon the fact that all cultures are "symbol forming" and "subject-constituting" (Rutherford 210). So what is needed, in Bhabha's opinion, is a middle ground or rather a 'third space' where new perspectives and values are created as a result of "negotiation of meaning" and "representation" (Rutherford 211).

Defining hybridity, Bhabha says: "Hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. The third space displaces the histories that

constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (Rutherford 211). In his "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences", Bhabha revisits the term as he refers to the creation of a counter discourse of hybrid expressions opposing to those of colonizers in a liminal space which he calls 'a third space' (209). Bhabha argues that "the very idea of pure ethnically cleansed national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood" (*Location of Culture* 5).

The action of Doha Assy's novel *104 Al-Qahira* (*104 Cairo*, 2016) takes place in Cairo, set at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s when monarchy was overthrown in Egypt and no imperial English soldiers remained there. President Nasser alone was the character of the period, who dominated the political and historical scene. As the novel begins, Assy highlights the way Insherah, the novel's female protagonist, suffers an inner conflict that reflects a self-repulsion and a desire for identifying with a power that is bound to empower her. Insherah unconsciously revolts against her identity as a daughter of a prostitute agent, drug dealer and one who has suspicious relationships with British soldiers. She identifies instead with Nasser as an Arab national hero and calls him her father. She even calls herself Insherah Nasser instead of Insherah Awidah, to be modified later on, due to her teachers' critical remarks, to Insherah Nasser Awidah. Depicting her female protagonist as a self-repulsive individual, Assy seems to alert her readers to the need for a beyond space as that propounded by Bhabha.

104 Cairo starts with a supernatural spirit represented in the words of the dead woman Insherah commenting on her own well-to-do gracious funeral ceremony. In flashback technique, she comments on her death in a manner that sets death as her area of liberty, or rather, a 'beyond area'. In her post-death note, Insherah writes: "When you die, leaving your body, you become more liberated and more gratified. Little things that used to offend you, when you were still imprisoned in that body, stop to hurt. When you die you become liberated from man's great crisis: fear" (Assy 14). This shows that Insherah has finally discovered death as the perfect 'beyond' where one gains insight and builds an identity ready to be reborn, or to come back to life with a different vision and in a different outfit of intuition and awareness. This idea of rebirth is suggested in the 'virile power' that enables her to die several times. Insherah unfolds the secret of this supernatural power bestowed upon her by what she calls a night visitor who visited her for the first time when her grandmother was on her deathbed. As a little girl, she was terrified, her lips turned blue, her body was trembling, finding it quite difficult

to breath while her heart pounded in her chest. Attempting to soothe her, the visitor said in a very warm comforting manner:

You are powerful enough. Be assured that nothing evil will ever happen to you and however cruel what happens next, you will overcome it and turn it into your own benefit. Be reassured that you are powerful. I love you Insherah because you are just like me; you possess 'Virile' so you will be qualified to govern your body, people and the entire world. 'Virile' – remember the word, always repeat it; it is the source of your power in life. (Assy 106)*

The night visitor's words suggest that Insherah is gifted with 'Virile' (the English word is transliterated and used in the Arabic text), a power that is supportive and reassuring in face of hardships. This supernatural power frequently moves Insherah to a beyond area of momentary death where she is magically liberated from fear. She died about four to five times, before her actual death, until she was called in the neighborhood of Darb Shaghlán "the five-live Insherah" (Assy 15).

All female characters in the novel move to a beyond space some way or another. Insherah's grandmother symbolizes the need to go to a beyond area to find oneself. This is highlighted in Assy's description of Nargess's pleasure rubbing her own body:

sitting for hours rubbing her body and her pleasure increases as she sees the black scrubbed residue leaving her body. She feels excited as she watches the skin of her body turn red. Now she understands and comprehends what the grandmother was doing. Yea, an attempt to get rid of what is old, bad and painful, a persistent attempt for a prospective delivery and a restoration of the confidence lost by circumstances. She comes out of such a bath with a feeling that she is still a fresh rosy woman. There she rids herself of all sufferings in the form of a residue. She enjoys watching it as she pushes it away in the water until it disappears. (59-60)

The scrubbing process significantly symbolizes removing the old self waiting for a new one to be born. The black scrubbed residue is the stripped off old self that is the cause of grief and sorrow. The identity that Nargess seems to gain in her beyond space is that of a physician as well as a spiritual witchdoctor. On one occasion she listens to a voice warning her never to visit a doctor lest she should

* All translations of the novel from Arabic into English are mine.

lose her gift of healing power (Assy 77). She has her own magical inscriptions that prove to be greatly effective in healing serious cases and solving problems: diseases, sexual blocks, suitors for spinsters.

Likewise, Insherah's suggested beyond area of momentary death is one of enlightenment, wisdom and supernatural knowledge. Assy skillfully describes Insherah's recurrent move to her beyond space of repeated death in a ritualistic manner that gives the process an ideological significance. Assy writes:

She has her own special rituals she forces everybody to accept. She even makes them believe that, like the moon, she has her own tide and ebb. She hides behind those crescents three nights in the middle of the month when the moon is full. She takes a bath, puts perfume, gives up work, talks to nobody and eats nothing except for water and some little bread with salt. She spends all the nights staring at the sky, talking to the moon, sending her messages to Ibrahim. Everybody gets used to such a withdrawal, which is occasionally interrupted by fainting bouts, as she falls dead, as everybody believes, then rises; hence her fame as the-five-live Insherah. This makes everybody believe that somebody summons her, in a momentary death, to other anonymous worlds ... yet definitely coming back more animated and able to adjust. (53)

Assy describes Insherah's move to the beyond as fresh and vital, as it frequently occurs. She renders a detailed account of the physical and psychic transformation Insherah experiences. Insherah abruptly undergoes a complete terrible blackout and senses a heavy stillness; she experiences muscle contraction and everything is frozen as if she falls dead in a deep hole, after which she gradually starts to see. She sees herself as though she were flying above her body and overhears a voice saying: "you are liberated from your body. You are now like an ethereal mass" (Assy 54).

The author elegantly elaborates the world of the beyond as inhabited with individuals and highlights the type of insight gained there. Insherah perceives a silver line coming out of her body, humans who are different in shape with some fins among fingers and toes. She sees others who are giants hiding in deep caves. She meets "Elsadeyat", women with different shapes and ages who have neither beauty nor luxury. She finds women who look like her mother, grandmother and her neighbor, a fact that actually suggests their move to a beyond space waiting for a prospective rebirth (Assy 54). Meditating upon the flight-to-a beyond experience, Insherah always asks herself: "Where do these worlds come from? And is there actually someone who summons me in momentary death?" (Assy 54).

Similarly, Manal's choice of a beyond space gives her insight into the true nature of man. Supported with the magical incantation Insherah prepared for her, using a female dog, to powerfully appeal to every man she meets, Manal moves to a beyond space of multiple sexual relationships with a variety of men. Manal's experience provides her with a new vision that turns her from a weak female, oppressed by her well-to-do husband and his domineering mother, to an extremely powerful female with a commanding sexual appeal. She comes back to reality with a new insight believing man not as easily led, as commonly thought, by his sexual desire. Man is rather obsessed with a desire for woman manipulation; however, he is a fighter who always craves for a hard-to-attain woman. Manal says:

Do not be like idiots believing that what moves him is his sex drive; it is the fake idea propagated by men in order not to be understood by us. It is the fake idea we believe and reduce ourselves to being dolls and puppets that they can move with threads in their hands so that we dance to them whenever they like. They are then filled with confidence that it is the way we possess them. We forget that man is a being with a fighter's instinct. Do fighters like to spend their lives moving puppets? (Assy 164)

This is why Manal reasoned that a woman's skill is to keep herself sexually attainable to a man for one night only, or else she might lose his interest in her. She says to Insherah: "No man, however great, refuses the first night. A woman should not be unwise enough to ask for a second one. I need nothing more except that night when he comes to me with love, desire and yearning. The scene has to end with that night" (Assy 164). Unlike Manal, Insherah keeps a romantic view of man. Manal says "Your problem, Insherah, is that you romantically judge men; you deal with them in light of songs, movies, your grandma's words and your mother's advice. Come with me to bed to learn the true nature of man! When he is completely bare you can see reality!" (Assy 164).

Ghada is Assy's another female protagonist who seeks new insight into life that is only obtainable in a beyond space. She is the nearest replication of Insherah who is as benevolent as her. This might explain the reason Insherah chooses to leave her diary to Ghada. Like Insherah, Ghada is obsessed with a love of a man who deserted her. Adel's message to Ghada reflects her need of a beyond space where she might learn a lot of superior values other than the seemingly ideal ones imposed upon her. Adel says: "I am waiting for that moment when you feel yourself like a human being aware of values other than those dictated upon us, values that are truer and more instinctual, values of love and surrender to our emotions" (Assy 154).

Ghada, the Muslim girl, is deeply loved by Adel, the Christian aristocrat who is willing to give up his religion for her sake. However, she is obsessed with her love for Hatem, her former secret husband who, finding himself torn between her and his wife and children, has left her. Yet, now, she accidentally knows that he proposes to marry Manal, and is willing to do his best for her. Being informed by Insherah of her secret incantation to help Manal out of her agony, Ghada asks Insherah for a similar spell that might help her bring Hatem back. She, therefore, seeks a supernatural beyond, created by Insherah, like that of Manal. However, Insherah, believes it to be a fake beyond that rather suits such opportunists like Manal and Hatem. Insherah says, "Such things we make for weak persons to save them from suicide and murder" (Assy 236). The beyond recommended by Insherah to Ghada is a realistic one; she is a near-to-perfect character who just needs a beyond space where she can truly see through herself and understand her potential powers. This beyond is a momentary psychological journey through herself to come back to reality with a self-knowledge that situates her as a highly cultured attractive benevolent woman with a variety of alternatives. Insherah says: "You have all choices; Adel Hedra adores you; he loves you and wants to marry you. He is neither deceiving you nor spending time. Manal's way is fairly easy. You are beautiful and she can help you and the desert is there with a lot of dogs" (Assy 237).

Nahid, is a self-repulsive female protagonist looking for a beyond wherein she might find herself and gain insight. Feeling sexually rejected, Nahid, in a state of psychic collapse, comes out to the servant, the cook and the driver nearly naked. She confidently behaves as if in full clothes. Her gone-astray-behavior testifies to an equal out of line choice of a beyond space that follows no social codes and reflects a hysterical state of ethical and social indifference. Nahid's choice signifies a need for a feminine sexual identity that reassures her as a female with a strong sexual appeal. Contemplating Nahid's case, Assy writes: "Nahid has become fragile, losing confidence in her femininity as well as in herself. She does not feel herself a sexually appealing female with a body desired by a man; hence, she comes out to men naked without the least feeling of shyness" (Assy 172).

To help her, Insherah suggests a supernatural imaginative beyond space wherein Nahid is loved and desired by a supernatural being. Insherah advises her to surrender to the king of demons who loves and adores her dearly and is, therefore, responsible for her being sexually repulsed by men. Believing her to be his possession, he prevents any man from having a sexual affair with her, including her husband. In such a fake beyond, Nahid starts drinking excessively until she starts hearing an illusionary voice saying: "Please love me dear, I have always loved you, I miss you and never desire a woman but you" (Assy 178). Nahid is filled with the ecstasy of being sexually desired; she spends a fancy night

with an equally fancy character; she hysterically performs a striptease and has a sexual affair with him (Assy 180).

Nahid's selected beyond is an imaginative space suggested and created by Insherah. There, Nahid meets an equally imaginative being, Shehab, who meets her sexual requirements and makes her feel a true female. Only in this beyond, she gains her identity as a full woman. There she, for the first time, practices sex freely, stripping herself of all restrictions. Her sexual practices take the form of rituals, the thing that bestows upon sex a divine therapeutic quality. Experiencing the true meaning of sex there, in her beyond area, as the type of insight she acquires, is a sort of a healing power. Nahid's beyond area of sex offers her therapeutic sexual knowledge and self-confidence that alter her view of things. This is skillfully illustrated by Assy as she compares Nahid's submissive nature before going to a beyond space to the powerful Nahid coming back from her beyond area. Assy writes: "So many times she thought of divorce yet she was fragile and defeated. She had no power to fulfill her wish. She had tolerated this pain and psychological stress for years and had never reasoned why she was weak and could not also reason why she was now powerful. What should an illusionary ritual with an illusionary man add to her?" (223). Nahid's beyond recommended by Insherah proves to be a successful space that liberates her from her need for a man, as well as from her weakness.

On a more general level, *104 Cairo* is a perfect example of Bhabha's concept of hybridity or rather the 'third space' where new symbols and meanings emerge; a space that is not a place of culture difference but rather of cultural representation and reproduction. Though the novel's major argument is not about a colonizer/colonized relationship, the idea of colonialism is there. This is exemplified in Assy's reference to the colonial history of Egypt that goes back to Napoleon Bonaparte's military campaign to Egypt as well as British colonialism, and the reference to the contemporary colonization of Palestine. This suggests a reading of the novel in light of Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' or the 'third space'. All the characters are to be dealt with as colonized individuals who are transformed and who gain new insights in what Bhabha calls a 'third space'.

The novel depicts different eras of Egypt's history when the country was a place of culture diversity and difference. It refers to Napoleon Bonaparte's military campaign to Egypt and the Armenian family of Bebrian, Aram Anoush and Hagop (Assy 23-24). However, Assy's novel portrays a state of coexistence between cultures exemplified in Insherah's intimate relationship with the Bebrians, her coming to terms with their life style, as she gets used to their national dishes. Besides, Aram Anoush used to tell Insherah stories like 'Cinderella' and taught her some handicrafts. Similarly, Assy depicts Bebrian singing an Egyptian folk song (23). This coexistence signifies that the novel

keeps up with Bhabha's process of cultural hybridity that "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Rutherford 211). The newborn meaning is one of keeping borders among different cultures yet keeping a sort of negotiation that enables forms of culture exchange. This is made clear in Hajop's sudden death as he cannot bear the idea of leaving Egypt according to Nasser's orders. Egypt is thus depicted as a melting pot, or a third space, where all cultures melt.

Assy's intrusive insertion of Diana Spencer's funeral scene in the novel is greatly suggestive and symbolic. Historically, the relationship between England and Africa has been based on colonialism. This suggests that the reference to Princess Diana can be taken on two levels: the individual and the national. As a British princess, Diana is known for having left her actual life and moved to a beyond space of her own choice; a beyond area of a forbidden love for an Egyptian Muslim. Diana's 'beyond space' is at the same time Bhabha's 'third space' where both the colonizer and colonized gain new insights that weaken the claim of the former and empower that of the later. This love bond suggests hybridity as it offers a breach of the colonial myth propagated by colonialists setting themselves as superior to their colonized people. In her beyond area of love or rather her 'third space', Diana seems to have gained too much forbidden insight to be allowed to stay alive. Her insight has been one of the inevitability of hybridity, the falsehood of social ranking and religious pretensions, and the need to strip oneself of all cultural pretensions and enjoy just being a human being. She has also sensed the falsehood of the barriers laid by colonizers to set them as superior to colonized people. Her forbidden knowledge has simply sent her to death. Therefore, alluding to Diana's funeral, Assy seems to criticize Bhabha's call for a going to a beyond area; she obviously suggests that sometimes the insight gained in the beyond/third space is a sort of forbidden knowledge that condemns us to death. Still the fact remains that a certain area of benevolent knowledge needs to be left vague and obscure because once we intrude we are not allowed back to actual life, where the new gained insight, as propounded by Bhabha, has its true meaning.

On a more profound level, alluding to Diana's case, Assy seems to set Insherah as another Diana Spencer. As a representative of colonized Africa, Insherah is meant, by Assy, to be a mimic of Diana, a representative of British colonization. According to Bhabha, mimicry is "an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas. This exaggeration means that mimicry is repetition with difference.... In fact, this mimicry is also a form of mockery, and Bhabha's post-colonial theory is a comic approach to colonial discourse, because it mocks and undermines the ongoing pretensions of colonialism and empire" (Huddart 39). Mimicry, as proposed by Bhabha has a double function: it reveals the

inconsistency of colonial cause and destabilizes its power as well (Bhabha, "Mimicry" 129). In this respect, Assy's idea of mimicry is meant to dismantle colonialism's superiority, the fact that alludes to Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity'. In the novel, the ideal female representative of a colonial country, England, is stripped of her power by showing the potential replication of her figure in Africa, a formerly colonized area. Insherah, the almost illiterate uncultured woman, is given more power and agency than Diana. She is depicted as manipulating the fate of all female characters in the novel and as an inspiration for Diana herself.

In "The Second Coming of Diana", Jane Caputi associates the myth of the Goddess Diana with the one created about Princess Diana Spenser (103). Caputi argues that "The turning of Princess Diana into a modern myth reflects a yearning for a return of female divinity, concomitant with an already occurring re-visioning of human possibility and the making primary of such values as compassion, tolerance, nurturance, an end to oppressive racial distinction, soul, Eros, community, and female sovereignty and becoming" (Caputi 103). In line with Caputi, speculating upon the charitable character of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, Derek Stanovsky argues that "the images of these women saturating the media are images of compassion and care, of women whose lives were devoted to giving aid and comfort to those suffering"(149). Like Diana, Insherah's case is a mythical one that identifies her with Goddess Diana as well as Diana Spenser. Like the witchdoctor Insherah, Caputi argues, "Diana was labeled the 'Queen of the witches' and 'Goddess of the heathen.'" (107).

Insherah is ironically a messenger of love and compassion, as described by the night visitor. When asked by Insherah about his own reality, the night visitor says: "I am one spirit of Soumati's who are appointed to search for humans who possess a love of goodness, the ability to fight and a sense of giving. We are instructing spirits whose role is simply to provide them with knowledge and the method of following the cause of goodness because they are the ones who would save humanity from destruction" (Assy 181).

Contemplating the Earl of Spencer's speech in Diana's funeral, one might find enough affinity between the British princess Diana and the cosmopolitan Insherah, as described by Nahid (Assy 136). He says: "Diana was the very essence of compassion, of duty, of style, of beauty. All over the world she was a symbol of selfless humanity. All over the world, a standard bearer for the rights of the truly downtrodden.... But your greatest gift was your intuition and it was a gift you used wisely" (qtd.in Scott 9). Furthermore, after her death, Diana was identified by visual artists with Virgin Mary (Caputi 104). Like Diana, Insherah is given a divine significance by identifying her with Jesus (Assy 183). The night visitor has once claimed that Insherah possesses a supernatural influential power that is bound to help her save humanity from destruction; it is the power of

compassion. He says: "You possess a true supernatural power, a great one that is the power of compassion.... Jesus used to cure people with the power of compassion" (Assy 183). This message identifies her with Diana as well as with Jesus and bestows upon her a divine quality like that possessed by saints and pastors.

Unlike Diana's civilized and cultural methods, Insherah's are no more than magical incantations she learnt from her grandmother Nargess. The night visitor describes Insherah as a mythological character, 'the Alouba'. Towards the end of the novel, he comes to her in the form of an amazingly fairly beautiful lady who looks like her grandmother Nargess. However, she tells her that she is Insherah not Nargess, the fact that astonishes Insherah who believes herself not as pretty as the-night-visitor lady. Then, suddenly the-night-visitor pretty lady is transformed into a fairly aged woman with many scars on her face and a seriously bent back that almost touches her knees. Yet, her face looks shiny with a mysterious feminine look. The elderly woman's figure is then transformed again into a pretty lady. Insherah identifies herself more with the old woman rather than with the pretty lady who says:

This aged woman is the Alouba inside you; it is the insight you possess. Do you know her? Myths say that an elderly woman living in a cave used to collect bones, gather them, and when a wolf's bones were complete, she sat beside singing. The more she sings, the more bones are covered with flesh. She then sings again more loudly and beautifully until the soul comes in and the more the soul crawls into, the more her scars disappear and she becomes younger and prettier until she turns into the pretty woman you admire. (Assy 216)

The-night-visitor pretty lady claims that, like the Alouba, Insherah used to sing for suffering hurt hearts to help them recover their souls. This is why she is always seen by others as a beautiful lady. Nahid, Manal, Ghada are representatives of the suffering souls that are helped and rescued by the Diana/Insherah persona.

Throughout the course of the novel, a variety of further identities are bestowed upon Insherah by the night visitor the fact that identifies her more with Diana. Besides being an Alouba, she is a physician as well as a spiritual witchdoctor. Stripping the idea off its fictional exaggeration as well as its supernatural element, Insherah is evidently a benevolent persona who, like Dina, has her own charitable activities even in the field of medicine and nursing. The night visitor has once given her the identity of a surgeon who manages to help her nephew recover from a serious brain cancer. She dreams that she suddenly

gets up and moves the boy's head then hugs him kissing his head. She gets up in the morning filled with a belief that he recovers and all signs of cancer utterly disappear. The night visitor then comes calling her 'Doctor Insherah' and says: "God was an aid to you in helping your nephew recover and you greatly succeeded; however, it will not be the last time" (Assy 75).

The novel, then, is nothing if not the account of mimicry of a second Diana of Egyptian origin; it is rather a fantastical resurrection of Diana, in a different age and a different atmosphere, out of her beyond area, death, to suggest an imaginative altered prospective insight she might have acquired. Every description of Insherah in the novel identifies her with Diana. This is also greatly supported by the great affinity Assy establishes between Diana's funeral scene and Insherah's. Stripping both characters of social, cultural and religious pretensions and giving them to their instinctual human forms, they are nothing but one. Diana's funeral, witnessed by Insherah, Nahid, Ghada, Manal and Shaimaa, prepares the readers for a similar glorious one held for Insherah at the end of the novel. Assy's skillful identification of the two females with completely different social, cultural, religious, historical backgrounds suggests the perfect beyond space propagated by Bhabha, a beyond of no dictated pretensions where a human being has to see himself/herself merely as a human being. Here lies the needed insight.

Insherah's rejection of Ashraf's love testifies the insight gained by her and suggested to the Diana coming back from the beyond area of death. Though the actual Diana Spencer surrenders herself to an impossible hybrid love that should inevitably lead to her downfall, the fictional Diana comes with the wisdom that a forbidden love is the forbidden knowledge that is not allowed on earth. This is why Insherah rejects Ashraf's love despite his being her archetype of ideal manhood as reflected in the following words of hers:

He looked at her in a way that made her feel something incredible was taking place. The world around her disappeared, everything was gone and all details vanished. Nothing was clear to her except him surrounded by a flash of a warm glare that penetrated every bit of hers. For seconds she felt a flood of light creeping into her till she became a hovering entity with no weight and mass. She saw him; her eyes saw as if God was carving, from scratch, man archetype. Her eyes were following him formulated before her. Everything was finished until she smelled the scent of true masculinity testifying to his perfection and life was instilled in him. (Assy 204)

Though only then she feels relieved of Ibrahim's painful memory, Insherah decides not to meet him again; she is satisfied with the influential love feelings

and has no more expectations or demands. Assy here suggests an insight gained by the Diana/Insherah persona, the idea of a 'therapeutic love' as Insherah calls her love for Ashraf. Love is not a material physical affair; it is rather a sort of feeling with a healing power that helps life to go on. This idea is best illustrated as Insherah says:

Still you don't understand Nahid. I fall in love and need nothing further. I call my love for Ashraf 'a therapeutic love'. I'll take that special moment in my arms and live with till I die. I do not like to have this feeling of joy distorted. I fall in love and I am satisfied and filled with such moments of love that will give me a living soul. Once again, I will love everything; I will love Hassan and my kids. (Assy 213)

Insherah's beyond space, like that of Nahid, is a benevolent one that gives her insight into therapeutic love and helps her to build an identity exemplified in the identity of the Alouba. She is cured of her painful love to Ibrahim and is able to carry on.

Furthermore, Assy highlights types of insight gained by Insherah in her beyond space; insight came to her in the form of subsequent theological and secular messages carried by the night visitor about life and man-God relationship as well as messages about her own supernatural power, man-present state of alienation and the importance of transcending human limitation. The first message revealed to her is about death as the real world where humans get rid of fear, the most significant human defect. The visitor says: "Now your grandmother would move to the real world, one that is more liberated and cheerful. She would be liberated from the most important human deficiency, fear. You have to feel happy for her ... people are filled with fear when they feel weak and needy" (Assy 106).

The second message is concerned with the importance of the present moment, the dire consequences of one's being alienated from the present and being rather tied either to the past or to the future. The night visitor advises Insherah to be constantly tied to the present as the only time possessed by the individual. Assy writes: "oppression occurs because the past gives us an identity and the future carries a salvation promise. Both are illusion. Real subjugation is to live on memories and expectations"(56).

The third message being that God loves humans despite their instinctual sinful nature; she herself is loved by God, and this is why she has to gratefully keep God's love by developing the good side of herself. The night visitor reminds her of the sum of money she once found when her brother Sayed refused to get her a new dress to attend Nagwa's wedding. She was told then that God loved her and

sent her money with which she bought several dresses. She consequently, as the night visitor claims, has to believe that she is a good person as God never loves wicked people (Assy 181-82).

A fourth message forced upon Insherah's mind by the night visitor is that due to his human limitation, man falls short of understanding the true meaning of virtue. Ironically, receiving the way he once compared her to Jesus and saints, Insherah reminds him that she is a sinner who has sexual affairs with men. However, the night visitor pulls to pieces her own pre-beyond idea about virtue saying that virtue has other implications:

You are a human being rather than an angel. What you say is nonsense; all you say is due to the limited knowledge of human mind and its conceptions about virtue. Yet the soul has other implications. The soul is empowered through suffering; it is purified, elevated and becomes more capable of giving and communicating. What you consider a sin is actually suffering and what you consider a vice is humiliation and oppression. (Assy 183)

A fifth message is that making a choice is man's virtue; man has to make a choice and here lies his/her power. When Zouba asks Insherah to help her, with one of her magical incantations, to marry Waleed, the gangster, the night visitor says: "Do not blame her for her choice; it is hers and it is satisfying enough that she has the power to choose" (Assy 176-77). Thus, the Diana figure, resurrected in the Egyptian female Insherah, is suggested a new insight in her beyond of death. Every time she goes back to reality after a brief period of momentary death or daydream- encounter with the night visitor, Insherah shows a new gained insight. Her insight is more mature and wise than that of the real Diana. However, her actual death gives her more insight; she gains a clearer vision of enduring happenings, listens to the sounds, talks of inanimate objects and gains insight into their language. She can hear her doll, Om Ahmed, her oil pan and her scissors crying over her death. She is also aware of stories people tell about her after her death, of those who wrote a PhD thesis about her life and those who tried to write her life story. Her death has greatly liberated her so that she becomes able to freely speak out things as never before (Assy 15-16).

To sum it up, Assy's novel skillfully proves to be a highly sophisticated artistic text that critically applies and follows Bhabha's theory of the beyond space, hybridity and his mimicry technique. The novel as a whole is meant to be an analogy between a British cultured Alouba princess, Diana, and an almost ignorant, simple Egyptian one, Insherah. The novelist suggestively and symbolically builds the analogy with variations in time, social state, culture, and

religion. The fictional resurrection of Diana shows that the resurrected British Diana, replicated in Insherah, is suggested, within the boundaries of a literary text, with a different type of insight. This is clearly illustrated in the difference between the two Dianas' attitudes towards love. Unlike Diana Spencer, the resurrected fictional Diana comes out with the insight that sometimes love is a sort of forbidden knowledge that cannot comply with reality; in other words, when love proves to be forbidden for some social, religious or even political reasons, one has just to allow its therapeutic power to cathartically work to help life go on. It has only to be kept within the limits of emotional satisfaction and filling oneself with joy and ecstasy. Thus, Diana Spencer is resurrected to live in the beyond/third space of *104 Cairo* to gain insight and to help dismantle, through the mimicry technique, the myth of the colonizer's superiority over the colonized.

In Assy's novel, every female character chooses a beyond that complies with her needed insight. Their beyond spaces vary between momentary bouts of death and day dreams (Insherah), a ghostly beyond peopled with demons (Nahid), a beyond area within the self (Ghada) and a beyond area of a symbolic bed where one-night- sexual relationship is practiced with a variety of men (Manal). Assy's suggested moral here is that what judges the success or rather the failure of choice is the type of the gained insight that proves to be enough therapeutic and its accessibility back in reality. Though the characters in the novel prove to have gained the needed insight, still it is a type of insight that merely qualifies them to go through life armed with the required type of knowledge, however it just helps them to build fake fragile identities.

Besides, Assy's novel is a macrocosm beyond or a supernatural area created to give her female protagonist as well as all females in general a chance to gain a multiple-faced insight and to go back to real life to build their identities. The beyond created by Assy blurs the edge of the divide between life and death and calls upon those who died some years ago, like Diana, to come to her beyond to reason their own past mistakes committed due to a lack of insightful vision of the matters of things. It is a hybrid beyond that blurs the edge of the divide between historical eras, religions and cultures.

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