Adapting Shahrazad’s Odyssey: The Female Wanderer and Storyteller in Victorian and Contemporary Middle Eastern Literature

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University of Connecticut, 2013

This project traces connections between the concepts of travel and rewriting in women’s fiction in nineteenth-century Victorian literature and in Anglophone Middle Eastern writing. This study is the first to discover a strong link between travelling texts and the travelling women in fiction and to analyze the ways in which the travelling woman is molded by her previous exposure to stories. In this comparative project, I argue that travel can be understood as a metaphor for rewriting and the female wanderer as the reworked adaptation of Odysseus and Shahrazad figures and that the concept of adaptation can be read as a metatextual travel between past and present, Victorian and contemporary, nostalgia and progress. Moreover, I explore the ways in which rewriting empowers women writers who are traditionally considered outside of both the male canon and the travel experience in general. The first part focuses on two Victorian women writers, Olive Schreiner and Christina G. Rossetti, and their feminist responses to the Victorian admiration for ancient Greek culture. The figure of the fictional voyager within the Victorian tradition of masculine, colonial adventure stories merges with the protagonist of the female novel of development in *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and *Speaking Likenesses* (1874). As Schreiner’s novel re-visions the Victorian female *Bildungsroman*, Rossetti’s narrative stands out as a multi-faceted text by poking fun at traveling women, female development, and
the Homeric tradition imitated in the nineteenth century. The second part of my project discusses two Anglophone Middle Eastern writers, Ahdaf Soueif and Güneli Gün, who fuse the Western tradition of the Homeric epic with the story-telling tradition of *One Thousand and One Nights*. As Ahdaf Soueif’s Neo-Victorian *The Map of Love* (1999) embodies the idea that the concepts of writing and travel occur not only in a spatial and a cultural dimension but also in a temporal dimension, Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad* (1991) contributes to the motifs of travelling and rewriting through its adolescent protagonist who befriends Shahrazad and takes the lyre from Homer on her spatial, temporal, metatextual, and spiritual expedition to Baghdad.

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Adapting Shahrazad’s Odyssey: The Female Wanderer and Storyteller in Victorian and Contemporary Middle Eastern Literature

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of travel, usually considered a male prerogative, signals a sustained movement. It breaches boundaries, makes connections between different settings, time periods, and cultures. Bridging the gap between various places and people, the journey metaphor posits a sense of liminality as it focuses on at least two spaces: home and the new destination. Moreover, the metaphor of travel paves the way for the rewriting of social order by providing a fresh perspective different from the social conventions at home.

The idea of voyage presents an in-between, a liminal situation in which the voyager usually belongs to neither place and to both at the same time. It represents a position between a feeling of nostalgia for the point of departure and a sense of yearning for the destination to-be-reached. This space locates the concept of travel between a stasis of a nostalgic past and an adventurous, forward-looking present and future. Such liminality on the part of the traveler can be observed in one of the greatest travelers of literary history: Homer’s Odysseus, an epic hero who meanders between his feeling of nostos (nostalgia and homecoming) and kleos (aiming for glory and adventure). As an epic hero, he is caught between his positions as the head of a household and a kingdom (his past) and as the warrior who is ready to win more glory after the Trojan War (the possibility of glorious deeds during his wandering). Odysseus represents the in-betweenness of travelers in general and poses an example for future explorers. Following the case of Odysseus, travel literature displays a similar sense of simultaneity of retrospective and prospective aspects. While the travelers move forward to the new destination, they also need to

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1 The word nostalgia is the combination of nostos (homecoming) and algos (pain or grief). For Victorians, this coming together of pain and homecoming represents the grief for the glorious past as well.
carry the feeling of nostalgia with them. The concept of home and the feeling of nostalgia stand out as the necessary companions of the voyage.

In line with this liminal position between past and present, home and away, nostos and kleos, the concept of travel is connected to the tasks of revisiting the existing social order at home and re-visioning the new destination. As the travelers go to explore a new land, they engage in a metaphorical rewriting of the spaces traveled. Voyage gives us a re-definition of the travelled destination and a re-working of social rules at home upon encountering a new culture. In “Semiotics of Tourism”, Jonathan Culler argues that when tourists look for “authenticity” as they travel, they adore authenticity markers precisely because there is no such thing as authenticity in the new land (5). Likewise, in the distance travelled, there is no longer a discovery for the traveler since the new destination has already been visited by many other travelers. What a wanderer defines or experiences is a personal re-definition of the destination, the rewriting of the culture from a different perspective. In Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement, Caren Kaplan argues that travelers are prone to “the mythologized narrativizations of displacement” (2). Her emphasis on narration and mythologizing aspects of travel further strengthens the task of the traveler to re-conceptualize the places travelled while the traveler creates mythologized narrativizations just as the storyteller engages in a journey; she not only travels between previous stories and the contemporary ones she recounts, but also takes her readers on a metaphorical journey of make-believe. Similar to Odysseus’s power of storytelling, the power of Shahrazad (legendary protagonist of The Thousand and One Nights) takes her readers, Shahriyar and Dunyazad, on a journey through a fictional world. Both Odysseus and Shahrazad are literary tropes for the interrelation of the journey metaphor and the act of storytelling. Just like the rewriting of texts, then, the act of travelling is a palimpsest. The
experience of wandering resembles the process of rewriting since rewriting occupies a liminal space between the source text and its adaptation. In addition to the re-definition of the new destination, the wandering enables the traveler to look back at home from this new perspective, the new experience which he or she gains through his expedition. Home is no longer the place that the traveler has left behind. Due to “the mythologized narrativization” process that Caren Kaplan theorizes, it has become a new place for the traveler experiencing his or her nostos.

To turn this idea around, rewriting in literary texts functions in a similar way to the idea of voyage. An adaptation of a canonical text produces a personal point of view on the text rewritten. Similar to the concept of travel, intertextuality posits a liminal space. It not only displays a new – and usually a critical - view of the source text but also enables us to look at the source-text with different eyes. Adaptation of a canonical work, then, wanders between its home-text and the new text that it has travelled to. As in the case of a journey, the adaptation can never be regarded as a brand new discovery made by the writer but rather as a text that conveys one way of re-reading the source-text, the home. What makes the adaptation unique is that it presents another perspective and that it adds to the definition of the source-text.

In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders defines an adaptation as a conservative genre since it locates itself within the canon. Disregarding the question of fidelity between the source-text and its adaptation, she labels adaptation as “the expansion of the canon” (12). Moving beyond Sanders’ discussion of adaptation as a conservative genre, Bortolotti and Hutcheon offer a different definition of adaptation, which underlines transformation within the traditional and conservation classification. Making a connection between a biological adaptation and a cultural/literary adaptation, they state that a literary adaptation represents “a repetition with a change” (447). Similar to Culler, who claims the impossibility of authenticity, Bortolotti and
Hutcheon acknowledge the absence of authenticity and celebrate the numerous adaptations that are separate from the source but bring a change, “an expansion to the canon.” They state: “[T]he success of the replicator (narrator) is measured by its survival in its other versions and copies, by its persistence, abundance and diversity. The success of the vehicle is measured by its capacity to propagate the replicator that rides inside it” (452). As shown in the examples above, the terms “expansion” and “canon” are critical in the discussion of adaptation since their co-existence reveals the ambivalent nature of an adaptation. As the words “canon” and “canonical” represent the conservative aspect of an adaptation and show its ties with the home, the term “expansion” displays the distance that the writer has travelled. The concept of liminality is present in an adaptation as well as in the journey metaphor.

Both travel and rewriting represent a liminal space that situates them away from home and on the way to the new land and/or text. They are both works-in-progress, on-going projects that are stranded between two worlds, two texts. They both carry retrospective and prospective aspects. Incorporating *nostos* and *kleos* at the same time, they pay tribute to past, to home, to the canonical source text and look forward to the future, to the new land, and to the adaptation, which will eventually re-define what has been left behind. They are both palimpsests in which the new text and land is rewritten and re-visioned multiple times. As Frances Bartkowski suggests, “the journey, a strong motif in all storytelling, is already a rewriting of the journey into culture” (xix). Establishing a link between a child and a traveler, she argues that the concept of travel signals a learning process in the unfamiliar land. The voyager aims to adapt to the new environment and has to learn new social rules. Similarly, rewriting is a journey across different texts, time periods, and spaces. The concepts of voyage and intertextuality are intrinsically linked
to one another. As the travelers voyage through different lands and are stranded in limbo, they inevitably engage in acts of metaphorical rewriting.

In this project, I focus on the interconnectivity between the concept of travel and rewriting in women’s fictional works in the nineteenth-century Victorian period and in Neo-Victorian women’s Anglophone Middle Eastern literature that displays a re-visioning of social, cultural, and gender dynamics. I read travel as a rewriting of home, social order, gender constructions, and social rights, and as an inherently metatextual experience. Moreover, I explore the ways in which rewriting empowers women writers who are traditionally considered to be left out of the male canon and the travel experience in general. As I read travel as an act of rewriting, I also underline that rewriting signals a travel between two different texts, time periods, spaces, cultures, and writings. I started by thinking about the two strong literary figures (Odysseus and Shahrazad) and by realizing their similarities in terms of their non-conventional gender roles, their juxtaposition of travel and story-telling, and their legacy in the Western and Eastern canonical traditions. Both fictional characters have been influential through centuries and among different disciplines. Just as The Odyssey is a seminal text in world literature, The Thousand and One Nights has been one of the most popular Eastern texts that introduce the Western reader to the non-Western world.

My project analyzes the interaction of travel and storytelling and discusses how these two concepts are brought together in fictional works from the nineteenth century and contemporary Middle Eastern literature where the figure of the female wanderer fuses with the teller of tales. In this project, I argue that the female wanderer adapts previous forms of writing and of travelling and that the fictional motif of physical wandering goes hand in hand with the writer’s and the protagonist’s exploration of previous texts, through allusions to previous books and other
metanarrative techniques. In fictional female travel narratives, the concept of wandering is rewritten through engaging in a metaphorical travel among different texts. For the female wanderer, to tell her travels often leads into a metanarrative journey of writing that – consciously or unconsciously – rewrites the traditional epic and *Bildungsroman*. This study discovers a strong link between travelling texts and the travelling women in fiction in which the female wanderer is molded by her previous exposure to stories and the re-telling process functions as a fresh travelling experience that may lead to a new self. Furthermore, other elements such as power relations, race, and ethnicity have an influence on gender. I look at the relations between gender and different forms of power relations as well.

The scope of this study extends from nineteenth-century women writers in Britain to contemporary Middle Eastern (Anglophone) women writers. In the two parts, I explore women’s writing from these two geographically and chronologically separate parts of the world. My theoretical framework of an interdependent reading of travel and rewriting is revealed in both Victorian literature and contemporary Middle Eastern literature. Looking at the relations between the past and the present, nostalgia and progress and discussing the re-conceptualization of the classics, this project brings together these two different examples of literature to explore the concept of colonial and postcolonial history. In the first section, I discuss the Victorian period in regards to the anti-colonial undercurrents in women’s writing and in the next section, I explore postcolonialist movements of women’s writing from the Middle East.

Part 1 introduces Victorian women writers of the nineteenth century who explored a new era in women’s travel on account of the new modes of travel and changes in women’s economic status, among many other reasons. In addition, the Victorian interest in rewriting coincides with the proliferation of women’s travel and adventure stories. Bringing together these two trends, I
endeavor to discuss the composite figure of the female wanderer and the storyteller in Victorian literature as a re-visioning that underscores the interest in antiquity and adventure stories. To achieve this goal, I discuss Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* and Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*.

Part 2 provides more substantial links between spatial travel and textual travels and adds a third way of travel: travelling across time through narratives. Looking at the women writers from the Middle East, it discusses how Shahrazad becomes a strong trope – as influential as Odysseus – in contemporary women’s writing from the Middle East. Moreover, the second part further emphasizes the figure of the female traveler and storyteller through its combined emphasis on the contemporary reflections of Odysseus and Shahrazad. A similar idea of juxtaposing the past and the present – as in the Victorian woman writer – is found in contemporary Middle Eastern writers as well. I argue that contemporary women writers from the Middle East use forms, themes, and tropes from the Western tradition such as the *Bildungsroman*, the epic, and Odysseus, and blend them with concepts such as native language and local mythology in order to provide a bridge between the history of domination and the present day. This juxtaposition of Western and non-Western images and forms of literature enables hybrid texts in which the legacy of Odysseus fuses with Shahrazadic storytelling. To prove this argument, I explore Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* and Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad*.

The originality of this project is to re-vision the figure of the female wanderer and storyteller by establishing connections between travel and rewriting. Building on Karen Lawrence’s *Penelope Voyages* and David Adams’s *Colonial Odysseys*, it discusses the ways in which women writers view travel differently from men and how the concept of adaptation functions in multiple
ways that make these women eligible to write against the canon. Moreover, moving beyond Adams’s concept of a “Victorian Odysseus,” as the subject of male writers writing about colonization and adventure stories, I argue that the Victorian female Bildungsroman, another popular genre of the period, is the female response to masculine adventure stories of the period and to the period’s interest in the classical epic. Then, I move my argument to contemporary Middle Eastern women writers and argue how Soueif and Gün write back to the canon of Victorian women writers and fuse the Victorian concept of the travelling women with their ties in the Shahrazadic tradition.

As for individual works, the large body of criticism on Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm has not analyzed the relationship between the motif of travel and metanarrative techniques. My analysis of Schreiner’s novel will focus on Lyndall as a protagonist of the female novel of development and of the Commonwealth novel at the same time. I will look at the ways in which Schreiner and Lyndall travel among different texts and rewrite the concept of traveler. Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses has been interpreted from a feminist perspective or from a socio-historical perspective, but to date, travel has been of little concern other than for providing a link with Alice in Alice in Wonderland. The critics of Ahdaf Soueif tend to define her work as hybrid, as encompassing two cultures, and emphasize the feminist aspects of her work, disregarding the concept of travel and rewriting across cultures. On the contrary, the critics of Gün’s On the Road to Baghdad solely focus on the act of traveling and discusses about the different travels, metaphysical and metatextual, in the novel disregarding the Homeric intertexts that Gün underlines. Unlike previous criticism on this topic, this study carries out a discussion of the female wanderer as a rewriter of previous texts going through spatial, temporal and textual travels. Displaying the interconnections among textual, spatial, temporal and cross-disciplinary
travel, each of the works listed here are discussed in the light of a dialogue between travel and rewriting.

One of the reasons why this study focuses on fictional works rather than actual travelogues written by women is that despite extensive critical study on travel writing by women, little has been written about the figure of the fictional traveler: only recently has it become a new area of interest. In an article titled “Between Nowhere and Home: The Odyssey of Lucy Snowe” (2007), Shanyn Fiske discusses Charlotte Bronte’s novel *Villette* as a rewriting of *The Odyssey*. Basing her arguments on the Victorian interest in ancient Greeks, Fiske establishes many parallels between the two works. Tracing Bronte’s access to Homer, Fiske concludes that the homecoming traveler – rather than the adventure-seeker - attracted Bronte’s attention and the concept of *nostos* initially triggered her interest in Homer (15). Moreover, Sharon Locy reads *Jane Eyre* as a protagonist of a travel novel in her 2002 article “Travel and Space in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.” Both Fiske and Locy initiate a new reading of the Victorian female *Bildungsroman* by establishing links with Victorian curiosity about Homer. My contribution to their work will be as such: I will discuss Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* as an adaptation of female wanderers in the Victorian *Bildungsromane* that extend their arguments to Victorian children’s literature.

There is no clear-cut distinction between fiction and reality in travel narratives. In relation to women’s travel narratives, Heidi Macpherson underlines that women’s travel narrative is inevitably a process of rewriting and thus they are part of the writing process itself (193). Moreover, she argues that there is no real distinction between fictional travel narratives and “real” travelogues (207). As the metaphor of writing becomes an inseparable part of travel, it is not possible to distinguish between fictional travel narratives and metanarrative travelogues.
Besides, one of my definitions of travel, as an initiator of rewriting of social roles and order, opens up the possibilities of travel narratives focusing on cultural, educational, gender rights.

I. The Woman Question

The Woman Question that dominates the bulk of this project first starts with Victorian women writers. On the surface, the leisure of travel may seem to endow women, especially in nineteenth-century England, with a certain sense of freedom. Women’s travel writing of the nineteenth century may be regarded as different from the colonialist and masculine narratives of male writers and travelers (Mills 23). This is because in Victorian England, women were regarded as “the angels in the house”, and travelling to the outskirts of the empire incorporates a remarkable - and a rebellious experience.²

On another level, however, critics may question how liberating travel can be for nineteenth-century Victorian women or women travelers in general, when the field is dominated by male voyagers and writers and the discourse is inevitably masculinist and colonialist (Ciolkowski 338, Holland and Huggan 20). Travel may not really provide women a sense of freedom but rather teach them to work within the male canon and colonialist discourse. Women travelers are still bound by their relationship to male travelers and the male canon. In that sense, women’s travel experience and writing inevitably become conservative as they function within the pre-existing system. Since neither position – “yes, liberating” or “no, restricting” – gives a

² See Kingsley’s Travels in West Africa (1897), Bird’s The Golden Chersonese (1883), Innes’s The Chersonese with the Gilding Off (1885), Bird’s Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan (1891), Pardoe’s The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of Turks (1836), Power Cobbe’s The Cities of the Past (1864).
substantial response, we might look for other answers to the question about whether travel liberates women.

In *The Invisible Flaneuse*, Janet Wolff draws attention to the invisibility of women travelers of the nineteenth century. Labeling modernity and the experience of the modern as masculine, she states that a *flaneuse* cannot exist within male institutions (141). She writes: “There is no question of inventing the *flaneuse*: the essential point is that such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century” (154). However, in response to Wolff’s article, Elizabeth Wilson underlines that it is not only the *flaneuse* but also the *flaneur*, who is made invisible in modernity (110). She argues that as the *flaneur* leaves home and starts wandering, he loses his masculinity and his ties with the home, and the city writes itself over him (110). Emasculated, the *flaneur* is a defeated hero who no longer has strict sexual boundaries (Wilson 108). Building on Wilson’s argument, I suggest that the potency of the male traveler may be overwritten and rewritten by the places he wanders through. The emergence of this state of impotence paves the way, then, for the possible existence of a female wanderer. Through her emphasis on the emasculation of the male traveler, Wilson breaks up strict gender codes and allows women travelers to exist, but outside a strict gender code. Furthermore, she negates the authenticity of the masculine traveler and thus disables the possible “inauthenticity” or the imitative nature of the female wanderer. When there is no such thing as the “authentic” masculine traveler, there is no room for the female wanderer who imitates this inauthentic, asexual figure. As the male traveler is not strictly male, we will not evaluate the female traveler in relation to her male counterparts.

In line with the concepts of travel and rewriting, the female wanderer also stands in an in-between position in which she imitates the previous examples and exemplifies a unique figure at
the same time; in which she strives for emancipation by leaving home but also continues the
tradition of expedition; in which she, just like the male traveler, loses her femininity as she
leaves home and becomes an asexual figure no longer carrying strong gender codes. In *Penelope Voyages*, Karen Lawrence traces modern Penelopes, women who travel and write in the
nineteenth-century and twentieth-century British literary tradition. Defining travel as being
engaged in reading and writing at the same time, Lawrence underlines the double role (both the
object and the subject) of traveling women (20). She further states that travel imposes a sense of
belatedness on women (25). Establishing strong parallels between journey and writing, Lawrence
situates travelling women in this liminal position as well. Lawrence’s argument that travelling
women are belated can be extended to the women writers who might experience a similar sense
of belatedness among the male writers and feel a state of urgency to write and inevitably rewrite
the male counterparts. Similarly, rewriting has a parallel sense of belatedness and urgency. Since
traditionally women have been left out from the male canon, they have a sense of belatedness
and the urgency to catch up with what has been done before them.3

In “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision,” Adrienne Rich underlines that
women writers inevitably engage in a journey, which is an act of rewriting from the beginning.
She writes: “Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text
from a new critical direction – is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of
survival. ... more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of
the male-dominated society” (18). By defining women’s writing as “re-vision”, Rich sees the
rebellious side of women’s writing and perhaps gives it a deeper meaning than it actually has. It

is accurate that women’s writing provides – or has provided in the second half of the twentieth century - a break with the mythic past and the male canon. However, it still functions within the canon and women’s process of rewriting is also a conservative experience, an attempt to be read by a wider audience, to pay tribute to canon, and to become popular eventually. Just like the concept of travel, it stays in limbo, both traditional and revolutionary, nostalgic and progressive. It is this liminality in women’s writing that makes women’s writing the subject of this study. This act of reconceptualization connects to women’s writing and women’s revisioning of traditionally male genres.

II. Re-gendering the Male Genres of Epic and Bildungsroman

Literary history traces two important masculine genres about the wandering hero: epic and Bildungsroman. Traditional epic usually entails a physical journey in which the hero achieves a goal and gains kleos. By contrast, the Bildungsroman may or may not include a physical wandering but it depicts a metaphysical and a metaphorical journey - a journey to the self – by the protagonist. Writing an epic and a Bildungsroman have been conventionally considered to be male prerogatives. Here, I aim to explore how female epic and the novel of development function in the context of this study and what kinds of questions we should ask.

Epic is the most masculine, traditional and oldest genre of travel literature. In Approaches to the Anglo-American Female Epic 1621-1982, Bernard Schweizer underlines the fact that epic has been traditionally a masculinist genre (1). As one of the very few studies on the female epic,
Schweizer’s book explores the ways in which women re-write and re-gender the masculine epic. In line with the concept of travel and rewriting, Schweizer underscores a similar sense of liminal space in locating female epic writers. He writes: “female epic writers are engaged in a complex negotiation between validating traditional concepts of femininity – such as cooperation, nurture, intuition, and love – while attacking the evils of male dominance, female submissiveness, and prescribed domesticity” (13). Writing a female epic has a metatextual meaning that links the rewriting of the re-gendering of the traditional form. As female epic writers are still inspired by Homer (Schweizer 9), they also look for ways to reject the prescribed gender norms and male canonicity. Schweizer emphasizes both appreciative and critical aspects of the female epic as well: “The development of the female epic is marked by heightened tension between adherence to and rejection of traditional epic requirements regarding form and content” (Schweizer 4). One of the reasons why this study includes nineteenth-century Victorian women’s writing is that we have numerous examples of female novels of development and perhaps the first female epic of literary history, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh*. The nineteenth century posits a good starting point to discuss women’s rewriting of travel in the novels of development and nineteenth-century epic.

The second important genre that has a link to women’s rewriting of travel is the female *Bildungsroman*. If the female epic focuses on achievement and adventure, the female *Bildungsroman* has attracted more critics, since the form itself paves the way for a novel of awakening and of development (Abel et al. 12). Traditionally, the *Bildungsroman* entails a hero-in-the making and the process of *becoming* already diminishes the heroic value of the protagonist (Bakhtin 20). The lack of a fully developed heroic hero enables female writers to take advantage of this form and create their own response to the traditional male epic hero. Due to its form and

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5 Bernard Schweizer calls Elizabeth Barrett Browning the founding mother of the female epic form (6).
content, the novel of development has become popular not only among feminist critics who are interested in re-gendering the form but also among post-colonial and human rights theorists who emphasize the problematic meaning of (un)development for non-Western populations. For instance, in “Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The Bildungsroman and International Human Rights Law”, Joseph Slaughter defines human rights and the *Bildungsroman* as “mutually enabling fictions” in which “each projects an image of the human personality that ratifies the other’s vision of the ideal relations between individual and society” (1407). Laying out the similarities between human rights and the *Bildungsroman* in that they both envision a false sense of citizen in the nation-state, Slaughter is critical of Third World *Bildungsromane* as well since they “make legible the inequalities of this egalitarian imaginary” (1418). Slaughter’s definition of the *Bildungsroman* is pertinent to this study on the rewriting of travel literature and novel of development and on rights discourse.

Similar to the discussion of female epic, the main question – how to situate the female *Bildungsroman* – still remains at stake. One of the first questions that feminists try to find an answer to is whether a female epic or a novel of development exists. Lazzaro-Weis, for instance, does not necessarily interpret the female *Bildungsroman* as a specific genre. Rather than focusing on gender questions, she reads the female *Bildungsroman* as a genre reflecting the conflict between myth and modernity regardless of the gender of the protagonist (24). Unlike Lazzaro-Weiss, other feminist critics tend to label the female novel of education as an independent genre whose qualities differ from the traditional *Bildungsroman* (Maier, Midalia, Labowitz, Frye, Fraiman). Women re-define the genre and this experience proves to be...

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6 In addition to the critics who suggest that a female *Bildungsroman* carries certain qualities different from a male *Bildungsroman*, Nedal Al-Mousa focuses on the contemporary Arabic female *Bildungsromane*. In her article, she focuses on contemporary Arabic novels with a female protagonist. Despite the fact that she moves away from the
emancipating for women (Labowitz 7). It is potentially liberating and resists the male prerogatives (Midalia 16). To me, both arguments are equally conservative as they tend to focus on gender only, disregarding other factors such as ethnicity, race, and class. The question of the existence of female novels of education might be useful at the beginning. However, responding to this question either as “yes” or as “no” will eventually essentialize gender questions and will not allow us to move beyond gender-oriented questions.

As an attempt to move beyond gender-focused questions or black and white responses to the female *Bildungsroman*, Lorna Ellis and Margaret Butcher ask different questions. Ellis lists three stages of a novel of development – whether the protagonist be male or female –: 1) the development of the protagonist 2) self-reflection and thinking 3) the eventual integration of the protagonist into society (25-27). She states that this last feature of the *Bildungsroman*, integration into the society, underscores the genre’s ties to the tradition (27). In Slaughter’s terms, it becomes an “enabling fiction” offering a false sense of adaptation and integration. As long as the female protagonist is integrated and adapted into the society – usually through marriage - she is no longer regarded as an emancipated, defiant woman figure. However, Ellis also acknowledges the resistant and dismantling quality of the female *Bildungsroman*. By naming a female novel of development as a conservative and yet innovative genre and placing it in the liminal space, Ellis traces a pattern similar to the one that Schweizer finds:

This combination of terms – conservative and affirmative – is rarely used by scholars when considering novels about women. Yet the female *Bildungsroman* is both. Rather than portraying a utopian vision of personal fulfillment, the female *Bildungsroman*, like

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gender dyad a little bit, I think she still asks similar essentializing questions on gender and ethnicity, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.
the male version, adapts the protagonist to a society that seems at first, and often is, hostile to her or his dreams and expectations. … [B]y showing how fictional heroines can work within “the system”, female Bildungsroman offer a limited possibility for female autonomy while simultaneously critiquing the societal expectations that constrict women (Ellis 29).

Like Ellis, Margaret Butcher also asks a different question which does not easily lend itself to a “neither or nor” response. She attempts to move the genre away from the questions of gender, focuses on the idea of “expansion of the canon,” and adds more questions on ethnicity and power. She defines the female Bildungsroman as an extension of the male novel of education in that it is still a conservative genre. However, the female novel of development also triggers the evolution of the Commonwealth novel. She sees parallelism between the female Bildungsroman and Commonwealth novel (262). Since the male example displays the development of European history and Bildung as well, the female Bildungsgroman paves the way for emerging literatures and opens up new perspectives (255). The shift from the male to the female perspective motivates another shift of power and viewpoint from European to the Commonwealth. In that sense, similar to Ellis’s argument, Butcher’s ideas also situate the female novel of development as conservative and innovative at the same time. It is traditional since it is still bound by the canon but it is innovative in the sense that it brings up questions which will nurture the development of other critical questions.

Building on the argument of Schweizer, Ellis, and Butcher, this project explores two questions: 1) How does the female wanderer and storyteller make use of her voice in this liminal space? 2) How do different forms of travel function to bolster this liminality? Furthermore,
rather than focusing on gender in a void, I am going to discuss the role of gender and how it coordinates with other dynamics such as power, class, and ethnicity and analyze how the complex relationship between gender, age, race, and ethnicity works together to recall earlier examples of travelling and storytelling as well as create unique and contemporary works of stories on the road.

III. Chapters

This study consists of two parts in four chapters. Part 1, titled “Victorian Odysseys: Rewritings of Odysseus by Victorian Women” (Chapter 1 and 2), explores the ways in which nineteenth-century women authors rewrite the myth of Odysseus in a less explicit way than more explicit adaptations of Odysseus such as Tennyson’s dramatic monologue “Ulysses.” Highlighting the Victorian fascination with classical antiquity and Greek adventure stories, Part 1 suggests that women writers of the period (ab)used the epic by incorporating and adapting the figure of the female wanderer and a story-teller in two different forms: 1) in a female Bildungsroman by making connections between travel and coming of age and 2) in a children’s literature narrative through an ironic rewriting process. Following the two trends in Victorian literature, Chapter 1 analyses Olive Schreiner’s The Story of African Farm (1883) as a novel of travel and maturation and Chapter 2 discusses Christina Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses (1874) as an ironic re-working of The Odyssey and Alice in Wonderland. Despite the fact that chronologically Speaking Likenesses was published nine years before Schreiner’s novel, I start with The Story of an African Farm since I propose that the Victorian Bildungsroman rewrites the
conventions governing adventure stories and epic tales. In the second chapter, my intention is to build up another analogy between the Victorian novel of education and children’s literature.

In Chapter 1, my intention is to lay out the connections between Odysseus as a hero and its implicit re-workings by Victorian women writers. I start with a discussion of the interest in Greek mythology during the Victorian era. The admiration and fascination with Greek antiquity in the Victorian period showed itself in various works particularly in dramatic monologues. However, this chapter presupposes that this interest in Greek antiquity and urge for adventure stories reveal themselves indirectly in another popular genre of the period, namely the Victorian female *Bildungsroman*. Focusing on a single woman protagonist, the novels of maturation displace the ancient epic hero with a female wanderer – as well as a storyteller, writer and artist figure – and enable the maturation process through wandering. Among the examples of Victorian *Bildungsroman*, I discuss Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* as an adaptation of the colonialist, masculinist wanderer stories of the nineteenth century. As an anti-colonialist, feminist novel, *The Story of an African Farm* is relevant to this study for its re-definition of travel as a cross-cultural encounter and for its interpretation of human rights issues as well. In the discussion of the novel, Schreiner’s liminal position between England and South Africa plays a major role as well.

Chapter 2 looks at a second trend in Victorian literature, that is, the ironical adaptations of the epic of the male wanderer. Victorian children’s literature is heavily dominated by the existence of a female figure – usually an adolescent – who goes out for adventure and engages in

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7 See Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “Ulysses” (1833), “Tithonus” (1833), and “Lotos-Eaters” (1842); Augusta Webster’s “Medea” (1868) and “Circe”; and Amy Levy’s “Xantippe” (1881).
8 See Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1857), Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), Schreiner’s *Undine* (1929), *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Villette* (1853) and Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894).
9 In that sense, it can also be argued that the Victorian *Bildungsroman* indirectly rewrites the Telemachus figure.
a creative act – storytelling, writing, or imaginative dreaming. In Chapter 2, I suggest that the story of a female adolescent wanderer in Victorian literature coincides with the emerging interest in Greek heroes and adventure stories in general. I further claim that these ironic adaptations of the male epic hero stand out as narratives writing back to the male canon. By labeling them as ironic adaptations, I endeavor to mark the distinction between Chapter 1 and 2. As opposed to the strong emphasis on realism in Schreiner’s novel, the children’s adaptation of travel writing is heavily dominated by unrealistic events and an extreme sense of self-confidence that lacks self-consciousness and eventually turns out to be comical. The Victorian female Bildungsroman embodies a semi-critical admiration for the ancient Greek world and the Odysseus figure. The examples from Victorian children’s literature, however, include not only admiration but also a strong sense of criticism towards both the Odysseus figure and the figure of the female wanderer in Victorian novels. In that sense, the works and ideas relevant to the discussion in Chapter 1 implicitly criticize those in Chapter 2 through the use of pastiche, parody, and irony. Among the numerous examples of ironic re-workings of The Odyssey, this chapter focuses on Christina Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses, which emphasizes a rewriting and re-telling of the stories through the three wandering female adolescents. The three wandering protagonists in each individual story turn out to be adaptations of other well-known children’s books (Alice in Wonderland, The Dreadful Story of Pauline and the Matches and Little Red Riding Hood). The motif of wandering goes hand in hand with the travelling of similar stories across cultures. Furthermore, the figure of the woman traveler appears not only in the protagonists of the stories but also on the part of the listeners within the narrative: the children who listen to these three

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10 See Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking Glass (1871), Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses (1874), Webster’s Daffodil and Croaxaxicans (1884), Radford’s A Sea-Thrift (1904) and E.Nesbit’s Melisande.
stories told by the aunt. As the children listen to these stories of wandering told by their aunt, they experience a textual travel that prompts them to start writing.

Part 2 is titled “Travelling Across Time and Texts: Rewriting of Travel in Post-Shahrazadic Women’s Writing from the Middle East.” Focusing on how the myth of rewriting and travel is carried from the Victorian era to contemporary Egypt, Chapter 3 discusses *The Map of Love* (1999) by the Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif. In this chapter, I argue that Soueif’s Neo-Victorian novel creates new definitions of travel and adaptation that bridge the gaps between the two periods, the Victorian age and the contemporary. Moreover, the concept of the “postcolonial Neo-Victorian” serves as a bridge between the first two chapters and the last one in which Gün not only alludes to canonical Western works and writes in English but also questions concepts of domination, victimization, and power struggle. The links between travel and rewriting are more explicit in Soueif’s novel as the protagonists re-define themselves through rewriting and travel. In the final chapter, I discuss Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad* so as to supplement Soueif’s hybrid fiction and multi-functional definition of travel. Chapter 4 not only makes links to postcolonial women writers but also connects to Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* through its use of parody and pastiche. Although *The Map of Love* is written five years later than *On the Road to Baghdad*, I choose to discuss Soueif’s novel earlier in the project due to its significance in bringing together these two temporally and spatially distinct narratives.

Chapter 3 serves as the transition chapter between the Victorian period and the contemporary understanding of travel that extends through time, space and previous writing.

While there have been a number of neo-Victorian novels in British literature,¹¹ chapter 3 focuses on an Egyptian novelist, Ahdaf Soueif, who is interested in forming the fictional links between

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¹¹ For other examples of British neo-Victorian novels, see A.S. Byatt’s *Possession* (1990), and *The Children’s Book* (2009) and Sarah Walters’s *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999), and *Fingersmith* (2002). Chapter 3 focuses on a neo-Victorian novel by an Egyptian writer since it explores the travels between different temporality and spatiality.
the nineteenth century and the contemporary era, and between England and its former colonies. Chapter 3 analyzes *The Map of Love*, in which Soueif portrays the story of Anna, a British woman who travels to Egypt in the nineteenth century and marries an Egyptian man. Through her stay in Egypt, she starts to see her homeland from a different perspective and writes letters to her acquaintances in London. With her double consciousness formed through her knowledge and experience of two different cultures, Anna rewrites the concept of travel and the meaning of homeland. Her letters have a significant impact on Isabel, who describes Anna as “writing across time” rather than “writing across space or culture.” Chapter 3 discusses how *The Map of Love* rewrites the concept of travel and homeland and how writing becomes an overarching tool to bridge the gaps across time and space. Unlike the Victorian women who travel to distant lands for adventure and colonialist purposes, Anna never remains as an outsider, but rather becomes an insider as she writes her life in Egypt. In this chapter, I claim that writing emerges not only as a form of writing across geographies but also as a form of writing across time and cultures. With its frequent intertextual references, *The Map of Love* considers writing as a tool to bridge the gap between previous and current texts, between Victorian England and twentieth-century Egypt and America, between home and away. I argue that in this novel there is a strong link between allusions to previous writing and travelling across cultures.

Chapter 4 discusses how post-Shahrazadic literature fuses with the Homeric legacy in contemporary Middle Eastern literature. Focusing on a novel from contemporary Turkish literature written in English, this last chapter not only deals with the ambiguous position of Turkey between the East and the West, tradition and modernity but also questions the concept of post-colonialism by analyzing a historical novel that chronicles the events right before the beginning of the expansionist policy of the Ottoman Empire. Narrating the journey of an
adolescent protagonist Hüri, *On the Road to Baghdad* displays different forms of travels – spatial, temporal, metatextual, and spiritual – which highlights both the novel’s and the Turkish culture’s links to Homer and the process of Westernization. Moreover, Chapter 4 also analyzes the strong legacy of Homer within Turkey’s long struggle with Westernization and discusses the ways in which using Western popular literary tropes such as Odysseus and writing in English provides an elevated position to a literary work within the Turkish literary culture. However, following the footsteps of Soueif, Gün also uses the Shahrazadic motif so as to balance her position as a Westernized Turkish writer writing in English by using motifs from Turkish mythology. Moreover, written as a mock-epic with a protagonist who becomes a picaro on the way and who matures through her travels, *On the Road to Baghdad* reconceptualizes Western genres and, perhaps, creates an “authentic” narrative – if it is ever possible – that blends different traditions and cultures.
In line with nineteenth-century interest in classical antiquity and in adventure stories, Victorian women writers show an admiration for Homer and other canonical figures such as Virgil and Dante from the epic tradition. Akin to Victorian masculine adventure stories, they re-formulate the ancient epic by incorporating and adapting the figure of the female wanderer and storyteller. The amalgamation of the traveler and the writer is highlighted through the figure of Odysseus, who - either intentionally or unintentionally - prolongs his *kleos* after the Trojan war and in the process recounts his travel adventures. A similar sense of thirst for adventure and interest in the discovery of the uncanny and the unfamiliar appears in the Victorian women’s literature. This fascination with the ancient world and with the unfamiliar, develops in two different genres: 1) A Victorian female *Bildungsroman* makes connections between a woman’s coming of age through travel and colonial adventure stories and appropriates the colonial-adventure epic genre of the nineteenth century 2) A children’s adventure story with an adolescent female protagonist puts an ironic twist on the self-fulfilling quest of colonial stories. Both popular genres not only imitate the classical period but also question and challenge existing narratives of the Victorian period. The Victorian female *Bildungsroman* and children’s adventure stories come into being with the help of two canonical and prominent books, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, which herald the emergence of a canon. Both writers paved the way for the adaptation of classical influences on the Victorians.
Before the publication of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1856), Charlotte Bronte’s two novels *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853) set the stage for an early appearance of a female epic. As Jane Eyre journeys through five different places, she not only undergoes a process of maturation but also finds a suitable home and experiences her *nostos*. Through the recounting of her experiences at Gatesfield, Lowood, and Thornfield, Jane turns her wandering into the basis for her career as a writer. Similarly, Lucy Snowe, the protagonist of *Villette*, travels in order to have a more established life. As she struggles to adapt in a different culture, she is analogous to Odysseus, who experiences similar needs to adapt during his voyage. The emerging criticism on reading Bronte’s female protagonists as adaptations of Odysseus further bolsters the idea. In an article titled “Between Nowhere and Home: The Odyssey of Lucy Snowe” (2007), Shany Fiske discusses *Villette* as a rewriting of *The Odyssey*. Tracing Bronte’s access to Homer, Fiske concludes that the homecoming traveler – rather than the adventure-seeker - attracted Bronte’s attention and the concept of *nostos* initially triggered her interest in Homer. Moreover, Sharon Locy reads Jane Eyre as a protagonist of a travel novel in her 2002 article “Travel and Space in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*”. Bronte’s two protagonists are, probably, precursors to Barrett Browning’s acclaimed novel.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1856) is considered to be the first female epic as well as an example of a *Kuenstlerroman* of the nineteenth century.\(^\text{12}\) Narrating the journey of Aurora Leigh, a writer-in-the-making, the book has epic dimensions through its classical allusions and emphasis on *kleos*. In “‘Aurora Leigh’: Epic Solutions to Novel Ends,” Herbert Tucker traces drawing an analogy between Aurora Leigh’s travels and those of Barrett Browning’s allegiance to Homer and Homeric epics. In line with Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, which Barrett Browning knew, *Aurora Leigh* set definitive rules for the formation of a female epic.

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\(^{12}\) See Dunn Bailey, Laird, and Tucker.
epic. Barrett Browning’s narrative paves the way not only for the female epic but also for the proliferation of other similar female adventure stories and the emergence of New Woman fiction. Calling Barrett Browning a “feminine of Homer,” Matz draws parallels between Homer and Barrett Browning and states that Barrett Browning views Homer as a rival and a master at the same time (30). Barrett Browning’s efforts to build on the male literary tradition and to gain the privilege allocated only to men is recognized by Alice Falk in “Lady’s Greek without the Accents: Aurora Leigh and Authority” (84). As the first example of a female epic, Aurora Leigh re-defines heroism within a feminine context and aspires to build on nineteenth-century epic tradition destabilizing the association between masculinity and epic. At the same time, Barrett Browning further challenges the epic by her inclusion of a woman writer with a male muse. In Epic and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Simon Dentith refers to Aurora Leigh as “novel-poem” and states: “The poem is to be seen as a generic combinatory, in which the genres act and react upon one another to destabilizing effect. Epic emerges with its own subversive capacity. … It is not therefore that the poem is straightforwardly an epic; more precisely, in it Barrett Browning draws upon some of the conventions of epic to enable her to reach beyond the constrictions imposed by the narrowly realist register indicated by the novel” (95). Dentith draws attention to the ambiguity of Barrett Browning’s narrative as an epic and an anti-epic at the same time. As an epic that resembles a novel or vice versa, Aurora Leigh juxtaposes the trends of the popular masculine epic and of the female Bildungsroman.13 On the one hand, it reinforces the classical epic tradition through its re-making of colonial stories. On the other hand, Aurora Leigh adds a contemporary color to the classical tradition and updates nineteenth-century adventures stories through its use of a female Bildungsroman.

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13 For a similar idea of blending of the two genres, see Machann.
In line with Odysseus’s blending of storytelling and wandering, Aurora Leigh’s journeys symbolically represent her search for a writing career as well. As she journeys, she looks for a home as a woman writer. The analogy between wandering and writing becomes explicit when, for instance, Aurora Leigh is reproached by her aunt as she discovers new books in her aunt’s library that support her love of literature. Upon her refusal of Romney’s proposal, she disagrees with her aunt who accuses of being thoughtless. While explaining her reason for that refusal, she uses the metaphor of walking:

“But I am born,” I said with firmness, “I,”
To walk another way than his, dear aunt.”
“You walk, you walk! A babe at thirteen months
Will walk as well as you,” she cried in haste, (233)

Then, Aurora Leigh sets off to London leaving her aunt, who “had lived a sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage, accounting that to leap from perch to perch was act and joy enough for any bird” (175-6). Similar to Odysseus, Aurora Leigh takes on different roles as she wanders: a writer, a self-supporting adult, an artist, a picaro, a woman. For instance, in Paris, she is a female picaro. Finally, in the last book, she returns to her mother’s land, to Florence. This symbolic travel to her origins takes her to a “motherland” in which she hopes to find help as a woman writer. Since this is a male writers’ world in which the creative gift is transmitted from the father to the son, her final destination to Florence can be considered as a metaphorical journey into the mother’s land where she can embrace the cultural gifts her father sought when her father married an Italian.
In “‘Hear the Voice of the [Female] Bard’: *Aurora Leigh* as a Female Romantic Epic,” Peggy Dunn Bailey underlines prevailing concepts of “reconstruction and revision” in Barrett Browning’s poem. In line with Barrett Browning’s attempt to re-conceptualize Homer and the heroic epic, she engages in a re-visioning of the self (Bailey 131-2). Furthermore, Holly Laird argues that Aurora Leigh’s/Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s reconstruction of the self reveals an interest in re-visioning the history of women’s writing and the emerging tradition of women novelists (276). Therefore, Barrett Browning’s act of re-visioning signals an influential chain of shifts: one shift occurs when Homer is rewritten from a female perspective whereas the second shift takes place when the women’s literary tradition becomes a prominent genre in which women writers of the nineteenth century are content to have found a maternal lineage with the help of writers Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Similar to *Aurora Leigh*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* mark the beginning of a new genre associated with the classical tradition. The story of a female adolescent who engages in a fantastical journey, gains *kleos*, and experiences a happy *nostos* becomes a popular theme in Victorian children’s literature. Victorian children’s literature is heavily dominated by the existence of a female figure – usually an adolescent – who goes out for adventure and engages in a creative act – storytelling, writing, or imaginative dreaming. Carroll’s *Alice* provides a substantial example of the ironic female wanderer figure and bears comparison to *The Odyssey* in terms of her obsession with eating, power relations, and fantastical elements. Mervyn Nicholson’s article on power relations based on patterns of eating compares several works such as the Alice books to *The Odyssey*. Underlining different eating habits and distinguishing between concepts of “eating” and “being eaten,” Nicholson argues that patterns of

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14 See Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874), Webster’s *Daffodil and Croaxaxicans* (1884), Radford’s *A Sea-Thrift* (1904) and E.Nesbit’s *Melissande*. 
food consumption rely on power structures (42). Alice’s adventures reinforce the evaluation of the classical epic tradition through a critical lens.

The fascination with Greek antiquity in the Victorian period showed itself in various genres such as dramatic monologues.\textsuperscript{15} This interest in Greek antiquity and urge for adventure stories reveal themselves particularly in the genre of the Victorian female \textit{Bildungsroman} following the lead of Bronte and Barrett Browning.\textsuperscript{16} Focusing on a single woman protagonist, the novels of maturation displace the ancient epic hero with a female wanderer – as well as a storyteller, writer and artist figure – and enable the maturation process through wandering.\textsuperscript{17} As an example of the female epic tradition of the nineteenth century, I discuss Olive Schreiner’s \textit{The Story of African Farm} (1883) as a female \textit{Bildungsroman} that conforms to and complicates the epic tradition as well as adventure stories. In Chapter 1, I build up connections between Odysseus as a hero and its potential adaptations by Victorian women writers.

Chapter 2 looks at the second trend in the Victorian literature, that is, the ironical adaptations of the male epic hero. In Chapter 2, I suggest that the story of a female adolescent wanderer in Victorian literature coincides with the emerging interest in Greek heroes and adventure stories in general. Chapter 2 discusses Christina Rossetti’s \textit{Speaking Likenesses} (1874) as an ironic re-working of \textit{The Odyssey} and of \textit{Alice in Wonderland}. Among the numerous examples of ironic re-workings of \textit{The Odyssey} for young readers, I focus on Christina Rossetti’s \textit{Speaking Likenesses}, which emphasizes rewriting and re-telling of stories through three wandering female adolescents. The protagonist in each story turns out to offer an adaptation of other well-known children’s books (\textit{Alice in Wonderland, The Dreadful Story of Pauline and the}

\textsuperscript{15} See Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “Ulysses” (1833), “Tithonus” (1833), and “Lotos-Eaters” (1842); Augusta Webster’s “Medea” (1868) and “Circe”; and Amy Levy’s “Xantippe” (1881).
\textsuperscript{16} See Barrett Browning’s \textit{Aurora Leigh} (1857), Gaskell’s \textit{Mary Barton} (1848), Schreiner’s \textit{Undine} (1929), \textit{The Story of an African Farm} (1883), Bronte’s \textit{Jane Eyre} (1847), \textit{Villette} (1853) and Caird’s \textit{The Daughters of Danaus} (1894).
\textsuperscript{17} In that sense, it can also be argued that the Victorian \textit{Bildungsroman} indirectly rewrites the Telemachus figure.
Matches and Little Red Riding Hood). The motif of wandering goes hand in hand with the travelling of similar stories across cultures. Furthermore, the figure of the woman traveler appears not only in the protagonists of the stories but also on the part of the listeners within the narrative: the children who listen to these three stories told by the aunt. As the children listen to these stories of wandering told by their aunt, they experience a textual travel that prompts them to start writing.
Rewriting of the Wandering Epic Hero in Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm

Women’s travel narratives in Anglophone literature have been canonical since at least the nineteenth century. The popular and acknowledged genre of women’s travel writing and the figure of the female wanderer coincide with the peak of imperialism in England. Broadly speaking, travel writing by nineteenth-century women writers serves two main purposes: First of all, women sought the opportunity to travel to the outskirts of the empire and continue the colonial legacy. Secondly, these travelogues underlined the British interest in Orientalism – regardless of whether the new destination was part of the empire or not - by exoticizing the places traveled. In addition to the colonies, Middle Eastern cities were intriguing for women travelers. In their study and critical reception of these travel narratives, scholars have emphasized their intersections with empire and gender relation.

The concept of the female wanderer carries significant implications in Victorian England. First of all, the travelling woman challenges Coventry Patmore’s popular phrase “The Angel in the House.” The female voyager proves that she is not constrained to social conventions and that she may be involved in a masculine activity. Secondly, the figure of the colonial, masculine traveler abundant in Victorian adventure stories is re-worked as the travelling woman. When the figure of the wandering woman adapts the colonial, masculine figure, however, she provides

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18 For a canonical example before the Victorian age, see Lady Mary Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters (1761).
19 For examples, see Mary Kingsley’s Travels in West Africa (1897), Isabella Bird’s The Golden Chersonese (1883) and for a different relationship with the empire see Emily Innes’s The Chersonese with the Gilding Off (1885).
20 See Bird’s Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan (1891), Pardoe’s City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of Turks (1836), Power Cobbe’s Cities of the Past (1864), Martineau’s Eastern Life: Past and Present (1848), Duff Gordon’s Letters from Egypt (1902) and Blunt’s A Pilgrimage to Nedj (1881).
21 See Mills, Pratt, Blunt’s Gender, Travel and Imperialism, Birkett and Fawley.
22 For masculine, colonial examples, see Ballantyne’s The Coral Island (1858), Stevenson’s Treasure Island (1882), Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines (1885) and She (1887).
an alternative perspective that reflects an anti-colonialist position. Thirdly, the concept of re-working is also found in Victorian female *Bildungsromane* in which the protagonist goes through a period of maturation with the help of her travels. The Victorian woman traveler signals the rewriting of ancient epic tradition and the epic hero as seen in Homer’s Odysseus, who must prove he is, himself, the same; by contrast, the female waderer and storyteller undergoes a maturation process that enables creative change.

Chapter 1 focuses on the Victorian interest in the ancient Greek culture and colonialism and discusses how this interest is adapted in the figure of the female wanderer. As Victorian women travel, they bend the rules of propriety by going out to exotic places and seeing different worlds. Women’s travel writing becomes inevitably a rewriting of masculine travelogues. As the travelling woman encounters the other, she adapts herself to the new circumstances. As an example of the Victorian *Bildungsroman*, I discuss how Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* adapts an ancient epic and popular adventure stories. Schreiner’s novel re-defines of travel as a rewriting of social roles, re-classifies gender as an ambiguous category, and focuses on human rights as a re-visioning of the colonial agenda and its emphasis on metanarrative. Moreover, as the first example of New Woman fiction, Schreiner’s novel adapts Victorian colonial adventure fiction such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Rider Haggard stories (Richardson 3). Women writers integrated into Greek traditions into travelogues and novels of development. Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* remains unique among other similar writers and novels because Schreiner explores multiple protagonists in the novel. Laying out the groundwork provided by feminist, anti-colonial, Marxist, and queer criticisms of the novel, I build a fresh reading of the novel that shows how Lyndall, Waldo, and Gregory are distinctive

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23 See Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), Charlotte Bronte’s *Villette* (1853), Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1857), Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Mona Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894) and Olive Schreiner’s *Undine* (1929).
travelers in that they rewrite the colonial, masculine figure, whose travel becomes a vehicle for the metatextual aspects of the novel.

I. Victorian female Bildungsroman in an age of Victorian interest in ancient Greece and colonialism

Victorian scholarship has been marked by two interests: colonialism, which coincides with the interest in progress and industrialization and the attention to ancient cultures. As colonialism and thirst for adventure signal a forward-looking perspective, the Victorian interest in Greek models underlines an admiration for the past. On the one hand, the Victorian period is fascinated with the future, which is evident in the emergence of industrialization, the immense construction of railroads, the discovery of new lands and cultures, and the building of modern architecture. Colonialist and adventurous ambitions coincide with the interest in the future and other possible opportunities. In line with colonialism and adventure, the large corpus of travel literature or masculine travelogues ranging from adventure stories to emigration narratives emerges in the nineteenth century. Adventure novels become a significant part of colonialist activities in Victorian England (Brantlinger 30). The figure of the courageous and capable hero who sets sail to the outskirts of the empire dominates the literary arena and he becomes a cult figure (Brantlinger 38). Since the concept of travel, I propose, involves an act of looking forward, the quest for adventure and the eagerness to leave the familiar land are pertinent to the Victorian interest in the future. The urge for travel signifies how the male traveler is not obsessed with the familiar land and not haunted by the past or present; but rather, he is eager to go out and explore new traditions and lands. In addition to industrialization, development of trade,

24 See also Carlyle.
construction of railroads, new scientific achievements, the period’s imperialist expansions also indicate a break with the past and hint at the futuristic perspective of the era.

On the other hand, the era witnesses a nostalgic turn backward to ancient Greek and Roman culture, in contrast to the popularity of modernity and new prospects. The study of Greek and Latin and the interest in classical literature increase in nineteenth-century Victorian England. A deliberate attempt to imitate Greek forms and writing dominates the period. The best examples of this curiosity and inspiration are revealed in the dramatic monologues of Alfred Lord Tennyson, the poems and the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and critical works by Matthew Arnold. In an attempt to explain the Victorian interest in ancient Greek civilization, Shanyne Fiske points out that the Greek culture serves as a model for the Victorians and the knowledge of Greek language and culture is seen as a mark of a higher social class by the Victorians (Heretical 7-9). Secondly, she finds that a majority of male writers such as Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, and A.C. Swinburne define themselves and their writings in relation to the Greeks (17). Thus, the curiosity about the classics is acknowledged as a mark of high intellectual activity as well as an indication of social class. Moreover, Isobel Hurst adds a third dimension in order to explain the Victorian admiration for the Greeks. Acknowledging the study of the classics as a sign of class and intellectual engagement, Hurst defines this interest as a realm allocated solely to male writers and critics of the period (1-2). The study of classical culture is a privilege assigned to the intellectual and male members of the aristocratic class.

Among various Greek writers and philosophers that attract writers of the Victorian period, Homer far exceeds others. Richard Jenkyns states that the admiration for Homer outstrips the appreciation of Shakespeare in the Victorian period (193). Homeric epics become

26 See Burkert.
part of the undergraduate curriculum in the era (Jenkyns 201). Similarly, in Colonial Odysseys, David Adams reflects this Victorian curiosity about Homer by arguing that Victorian adventure novels carry masculine and colonalist undercurrents and actually mimic The Odyssey. The model of ancient Greece revives at the peak of the British colonial power in the nineteenth century, because it “evokes the same exoticism and confidence as empire” (Adams 20). The interest in the ancient tradition recalls imperial endeavors for critics and writers of the nineteenth century. Juxtaposing retrospective (the interest in the past) and prospective (colonial ambitions) aspects of the Victorian society, Adams also mentions the concept of rewriting. In the book, he points out parallel links among Odysseus, Victorian adventure stories, and British imperialism. Adams states: “British alliance with Greek civilization and admiration of Greek primitivism, contradictory though they may seem, both serve to encourage and legitimize Britain’s imperial endeavors. The encouragement and legitimization are acts of denial not merely in relation to the colonies but in relation to Western culture” (20). The proliferating colonial odyssey novels in the nineteenth century aim to mimic Homer and to prevent a sense of disenchantment for the British imperialist ideology. Adams argues that the pursuit of the classics finds a new venue and becomes a propagandistic site for the expansion of colonial interests in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, Adams makes a distinction between centripetal and centrifugal heroes of the traditional epic. Centripetal and centrifugal heroes represent home-seeking and adventure-seeking heroes, respectively. According to David Adams, unlike Aeneas or Dante, Odysseus wants to return home and experience some adventure at the same time. Adams calls Odysseus a centrifugal and a centripetal epic hero whereas Vergil’s Aeneas and Dante are centripetal heroes.

As Adams brings together these two clashing marks of the Victorian period, namely colonalist

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27 Adams defines colonial odyssey novels as colonial masculine adventures novels, which implicitly rewrite Homer’s The Odyssey. In the book, David Adams gives Henry Rider Haggard’s She, and King’s Solomon’s Mines, and Robert Louis Stevenson’s Treasure Island as examples of colonial odyssey novels.
adventure stories and the interest in past, he underscores certain features of this emerging literature. Perhaps, the common words that could define these adventure novels and ancient epics could be masculine, colonial, adventurous, the exotic, the other and the feeling of nostalgia for the home. Traditionally, the wife/fiancé of the male adventurer takes a passive role as she stays at home, lives with the familiar, and represents the familiar and the home.28

The Victorian novel of development works in two ways. First, the genre reflects the Victorian admiration for the past through its adaptation of a pre-dominantly male genre and re-working of a physical adventure. Since the female protagonist usually goes on a journey as in the cases of Lucy Snowe, Jane Eyre, and Aurora Leigh, she is the emerging Victorian epic heroine. In subsequent New Woman Fiction, novels of development present a protagonist who rewrites both Odysseus and Telemachus, two strong, male epic heroes, since she not only voyages through the novel but also grows up. Because the first four books of The Odyssey focus on the journey of Telemachus, Homer’s epic is also an early version of a story of maturation and growing up at the same time.

Secondly, in addition to the nostalgic view of past, the protagonist of the Victorian female Bildungsroman focuses on the prospective aspect and goes through not only a physical journey but also a mental voyage in which the theme of development is completed. Perused within the dominant ideas of the nineteenth century, novels are more concerned about the future than the past: the female protagonist usually leaves her home for a better education (Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre); she wants to enter a good profession and become a writer. The act of writing pinpoints a similar ambiguity in the position of the protagonist. On the one hand, she is inevitably rewriting the male canon and the past. On the other hand, she records these records for

28 On the surface level, Penelope’s case seems to be similar to the stereotype. However, deep down, she also stands out as a heroine who has agency and cunningness to rule out the suitors in The Odyssey.
the future and inscribes those encounters that demonstrate her agency and originality. The female wanderer figure embodies various roles. For instance, throughout the novel, Jane Eyre performs many different roles: the orphan girl, the traveler, the adolescent and later the adult woman, the storyteller, the artist, the governess, and finally the wife. Her role in the novel is more complicated and diverse than that of men in novels of masculinity and colonialism. In that sense, the Victorian female *Bildungsroman* is the feminist response to the colonialist adventure stories of the period, the female re-working of the male epic and its nineteenth-century colonialist adaptations.

The feminist agenda in the female *Bildungsroman* and the revolution in women’s status in the nineteenth century coincide with the concept of “The New Woman” in the late years of the era. In her introduction to *New Woman Strategies*, Ann Heilmann defines one of the most remarkable characteristics of the New Woman fiction as “its challenge to and subversion of the conventional dichotomies between literature and political writing, art and popular culture (1-2).” Labeling the breakdown of genre distinctions as a form of subversion, she discusses how the genre adapts and challenges male genres. She gives “formal hybridity, textual instability, gendered multivocality” as three significant traits of the genre (3). Coming from the feminist tradition of mid-century and influential in the feminism of the early twentieth century, New Woman fiction stands in a liminal position between past and present. Depicting the personal and intellectual development of a woman who usually travels, New Woman fiction is derived from Victorian female *Bildungsroman* through its adaptation of form and content. At the same time, it is a source text and an inspirational narrative for early twentieth-century feminists including Virginia Woolf. It subverts previous writing, yet it is promising for future feminists as well. With
its focus on instability and subversion and its challenge to patriarchal notions, New Woman fiction is also about self-reflexivity.

New Woman fiction’s liminal stance between past and present, adaptation and source text is discernible in its relation to the female Bildungsroman as well. First of all, it extends the female novel of development since it depicts women in search for freedom and in the process of a transformation. However, unlike the best-known examples of the Victorian novel of development, New Woman fiction does not necessarily accept marriage as a significant means in this development. In the case of Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and Aurora Leigh, marriage or partnership and conformity offer a solution to the wandering and partially aimless heroine. However, in the later examples of female novels of development such as Mona Caird’s The Daughters of Danaus, and Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm and Undine, the institution of marriage does not necessarily provide a happy ending. Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm is often considered the first New Woman novel (Bauer 100; Brantlinger 65) and has also been read as a female Bildungsroman (Dyson 91; Esty 416). Furthermore, the novel’s liminal position is reinforced by its anti-colonialist challenge to imperialist travel fiction.

In New Woman and Colonial Adventure Fiction in Victorian Britain: Gender, Genre, and Empire, LeeAnn Richardson argues that colonial adventure fiction and New Woman fiction are two interchangeable genres of the Victorian era in that they reveal the close interrelation between imperialistic endeavors and gender politics during colonialism (2). She further claims that since both genres contest the imperial view of patriarchy and marriage through the help of colonial travel and the new woman’s journey to non-feminine realm, colonial fiction and New Woman writing support one another and write against the traditional colonial and patriarchal view (12). Labeling The Story of an African Farm an adaptation of Haggard’s adventure novels, Richardson
outlines the parallelism between two popular sub-genres of the period. As an example of a New Woman Fiction, Schreiner’s novel debunks the paradigmatic patriarchal and colonial novel and re-defines colonialism through its anti-colonial agenda. Building on Adams, Brantlinger, and Richardson’s criticisms, I argue that experiences of the Victorian female voyager, whether a woman going through a physical journey or experiencing a metaphysical maturation as seen in Victorian *Bildungsroman* and New Woman Fiction, foreground the period’s dual viewpoint between the retrospective tradition of the Victorian curiosity about the ancient tradition and the prospective ambition of discovering new lands. Aligning closely with the male genres of the nineteenth century, the figure of a female wanderer and storyteller stands out as an amalgam of different genres of the Victorian era: an adaptation of a classical epic, a feminist version of colonial adventure stories, an emancipated voice that appears in the New Woman Fiction, a process of maturation achieved through *Bildungsroman*.

II. Olive Schreiner’s novels: The Female *Bildungsromane* in Epic Disguise

Several aspects of Olive Schreiner’s biography make her the focus of this chapter. First, her biography and her life of travels are relevant to a study of travelling women. Born in South Africa in one of colonies of the British Empire in 1855, Schreiner began her life with an awareness of colonization. Dividing her life as a wandering woman between South Africa and England, Schreiner perhaps did not have a clear sense of home and away (Monsman, “A Child” 5-6; Burdett 13). In her twenty-six-year stay in South Africa, she also voyaged through the country as a governess (Meintjes 27). At the age of twenty six, she travelled to England for the first time in 1881 while she was still working on the final version of *The Story of an African*
After her stay in England and journeys to Europe – Switzerland, France and Italy –, she returned to South Africa in 1889. As the South African daughter of a German father Gottlob Schreiner and English mother Rebecca Lyndall, Schreiner had to deal with multiple consciousness and nationalities. She found herself in this ambivalent position between the colonizer and the colonized, between Britain and South Africa. Spending her life between different cities of South Africa, Britain, and Europe and writing at the same time, Schreiner herself exemplifies a nineteenth-century female wanderer and storyteller similar to her protagonists. Indeed, Schreiner’s fiction has been interpreted as bearing autobiographical elements (Clayton x; Monsman, Olive 45).

Secondly, her position as a woman activist who reacted to patriarchal and colonial conventions characterizes her as a forerunner of a human rights activist (Heilmann 123). Having a broader understanding of all beings and caring about “planetarity” – to quote from Spivak –, Schreiner is considered to be the first anti-colonialist, feminist woman writer of her times and a proto-human rights activist: “Her most notable contribution to first-wave feminism was her conceptualization of the essential correlation between the imposition of gender, race and class hegemonies, an insight which resulted in her firm commitment to universal human rights” (Heilmann 123). Regarding gender, class and race as social constructions that support one another, Schreiner has a holistic understanding of the world.

Moreover, Schreiner’s interest in Greek culture makes her particularly pertinent to this study. In her theoretical and fictional works, she displays her acquaintance with the ancient Greek culture and her appreciation of the Greek culture and philosophy. For instance, she included translations from Plato’s Symposium in Woman and Labour (Sanders 77). In addition to
the allusions in the theoretical works, Undine names her two pets after two renowned Greek philosophers, Socrates and Diogenes, in *Undine*.

Last but not least, Schreiner’s position as a writer of “New Woman fiction” in the late Victorian period is significant in this study. Schreiner has a unique stance between Victorian values and Modernity, between canon and non-canon. On the one hand, she has been read as a canonical writer of Commonwealth literature and a significant (anti-)colonial writer (Ogede, “An Early” 251; Ross 239). Like her contemporaries, she follows the tradition of New Woman fiction. On the other hand, Schreiner’s deliberate attempt to surpass her contemporaries and the period is emphasized in several critical works (Sandwith 361). She has been considered “ahead of her time and out of place” (Visel 122). Being a fervent opponent of patriarchy and colonialism and a writer from South Africa placed her out of the Victorian canon. The era she was writing in provided intersections of clashing ideas and demands: Schreiner was trapped between late-Victorian and early Modern, the end of colonialism and beginnings of anti-colonialism, British literature and the Commonwealth novel. Furthermore, her novels “offer a bridge between nineteenth-century British women’s writing and the emerging literature by post-colonial African women” (Visel 122). She was a contradictory writer who defied the existing canon and initiated the emergence of a new canon, the anti-colonial novel, at the same time. Building on previous criticism, I claim that this ambiguity in Schreiner’s writing career and life augmented her writing. Together with her travels between South Africa and England, her unique and liminal position in and out of the canon enabled her to write about protagonists who are torn between two lives, two periods, and two cultures. As Schreiner meanders between canon and non-canon, Victorian and modern, colonial and anti-colonial, her protagonists wander between tradition and modern, past and future, home and away as well.
In her three female Bildungsromane, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), *From Man to Man* (1926), and *Undine* (1929), Schreiner portrays journeys and lives of four female wanderers: Lyndall, Rebekah, Bertie, and Undine, respectively (Bradford 14). Portraying socially-alienated women, Schreiner is said to write semi-autobiographical figures in these three novels as well. In *Undine*, the protagonist is a little child who has to compromise in order to be integrated in the society. However, unlike Jane Eyre or Lucy Snowe, Undine does not upgrade her social status. Rather, selling her body to Mr. Blair, she engages in an unhappy marriage. Her journeys to find the meaning of life do not really help her. Similarly, Rebekah in *From Man to Man* is thrust into an unsatisfactory marriage with her husband.\(^{29}\) Aiming to become a writer, Rebekah moves away from her husband whereas her prostitute sister, Bertie, wanders aimlessly. Among four protagonists of Schreiner, Undine and Lyndall have become popular for a comparative study among the critics.\(^{30}\)

After looking for several publishers in Britain, Schreiner finally signed a contract with Chapman and Hill for the publication of *The Story of an African Farm* in 1882 (Meintjes 48). The novel was first published in 1883 under a male pseudonym Ralph Iron (van der Vlies 237; Meintjes 49). In a letter written to Havelock Ellis on February 25 1884, she explains her thoughts on the book as such: “I had no definite idea when I wrote the story that I should ever come to England to publish it. It was just one of the many stories I had been making ever since I was five years old, and its kind reception at the hands of the critics here surprised me much, and a letter such as yours I value much indeed” (Schreiner *Letters* 35). Despite her low expectations and distrust in Lyndall’s story, the novel became a success after the publication.

\(^{29}\)One practical difficulty the critics face is that the later novels were published posthumously without the supervision of Schreiner. After her death, her closest friend and mentor Havelock Ellis found the first draft of *Undine*, which Schreiner gave him even before the publication of *The Story of an African Farm* (First and Scott 82).

\(^{30}\)See Monsman’s *Olive Schreiner’s Fiction: Landscape and Power* for a comparative study of Undine’s and Lyndall’s journeys and Lewis’s *White Women Writers and Their African Invention* for an analogous study of the idea of motherhood in Undine and Lyndall.
As the title suggests, *The Story of an African Farm* opens on a farm in South Africa and narrates the story of the farm people - the farm owner Boer Tant’ Sannie, the German overseer Otto and his son Waldo, Tant’ Sannie’s step-daughter Em and Em’s cousin Lyndall. In the first part of the book, a stranger named Bonaparte Blenkins arrives at the farm and disrupts the harmony among its inhabitants. Claiming to descend from Napoleon’s line, Blenkins woos Tant’ Sannie, entices her with his lies and causes the death of Otto by falsely convincing Tant’ Sannie that Otto is a liar. Replacing Otto and becoming the headmaster of the school for Waldo, Em, and Lyndall, Blenkins settles in the farm until his scheme of taking over the farm is revealed. The second part of the novel opens four years later when Waldo, Em and Lyndall have grown up and their lives have taken them apart from each other.

As the novel focuses on Lyndall over several years, it seems to follow the generic plot of a novel of development in which the female adolescent goes on a journey and returns as an adult, a self-conscious woman as in the classic cases of Jane Eyre and Aurora Leigh. In “The Feminist as Romantic,” however, Mandy Dyson claims that *The Story of an African Farm* does not have the structure of a *Bildungsroman*. Comparing the novel to the other typical female novels of development, she writes: “There is no marriage to cap this tale of development. The endorsement of society which marriage brings to the end of the usual *Bildungsroman* is not to be offered here; rather, the opposite will be true” (91). Just as Dyson refutes the usual plot of a development due to Schreiner’s refusal of marriage and societal integration, Jed Esty refutes the development plot because of the colonial theme in the narrative. According to Esty, the colonial plot disrupts the

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31 The names in Schreiner’s novels are usually symbolic. Her male pseudonym Ralph and the characters Waldo and Em are reminiscent of her admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson. With the figure of Bonaparte Blenkins, Schreiner creates an ironic twist on Napoleon Bonaparte. Similarly, Lyndall’s name is also symbolic. In both *From Man to Man* and *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner uses her mother’s first and last names, Rebekah and Lyndall respectively.
idea of development and makes it impossible for “a development” to occur (408).\textsuperscript{32} In the colonial plot, the idea of progress embedded in the process of \textit{Bildung} is no longer available. The notions of disillusionment and alienation in late-Victorian anti-colonialist novels are incompatible with the personal development of protagonists of the Victorian \textit{Bildungsroman} (Esty 410). Another reason why Esty refuses to call \textit{The Story of an African Farm} a novel of development is that the multiple stories of development – Waldo’s, Em’s, and Lyndall’s – take place at the same time (416). This multiplicity of stories and developments disrupts the linearity of a canonical \textit{Bildungsroman}. Moreover, Waldo’s maturation complicates the problem whether the novel is a female \textit{Bildungsroman}. Both Dyson and Esty argue that the traditional \textit{Bildungsroman} plot does not thoroughly correspond to Schreiner’s novel. While the novel depicts the stories of three children from adolescent to adulthood, it challenges marriage as a social institution and colonialism as a marker between superior and inferior. As a feminist and an anti-colonialist novel, \textit{The Story of an African Farm} does not conform to the structure of a \textit{Bildungsroman}. However, it does have a unique place both in the canon and out of the canon since it reminds us of a novel of development and rejects conformity to the genre at the same time. It is precisely this critical adaptation of the genre conventions that makes the novel so original and so productive for this study of travel and metanarrative.

The liminality of the novel genre is reinscribed in Schreiner’s treatment of gender, race, and class issues. Critics of \textit{The Story of an African Farm} underline porous boundaries in categories of gender, race, and class. The novel shows how accomplishing this task of border-crossing is next to impossible for subjects in the colonial context. The metaphor of travel figures

\textsuperscript{32} Esty’s argument refutes Margaret Butcher’s juxtaposition of \textit{Bildungsroman} and Commonwealth novel as depicting a sense of development, which was discussed in the introduction. See Butcher.
the porous boundary between the past and the present, home and the new destination, the familiar and the other, childhood and adulthood.

The best-known criticisms of the novel focus on the feminist aspect of the narrative. Re-thinking the strict categories of gender, the feminist criticism of *The Story of an African Farm* concentrates on the rewriting of gender roles. Cherry Clayton discusses how gender polarities are questioned and how gender becomes a fluid category in Schreiner’s fiction (53, 56). Given the circumstances of characters in the novel, Gregory and Waldo are often defined as feminized and Lyndall and Tant’ Sannie are described as masculinized women or androgynous characters (Burdett 39; Waterman 50; Ogede, “An Early” 255; Berkman 136-145; Heilmann 139-145; Dyson 97; Levy 173). As Lyndall goes away from home twice, she is more masculinized than Waldo or Gregory. In the novel, Lyndall reverses roles of the male and the female; the adult and the child (Waterman 44). Schreiner plays with conventions of travel and presents Lyndall as a masculinized woman traveler who changes after the journey. In that sense, she is rewriting masculine, colonialist narratives of the period.

The re-definition of the body in *The Story of an African Farm* is another popular topic among the scholars along with the discussions of the re-visioning of gender categories. Drawing attention to the female cross-dressing of Gregory in the second part of the novel, Heilmann indicates how Schreiner aims to rewrite the body and challenges conventions of a female or a male body (124). Along with Heilmann, Hannah Freeman suggests that the eradication of the body in its physical form works together with Schreiner’s anti-colonialist ideas:

[Lyndall’s] bodily dissolution is a fantasy through which Schreiner challenges colonial hegemony and explores the possibilities of eradicating physical characteristics, such as
race and gender, which limit personhood. In the dissolution of Lyndall’s body, Schreiner offers a metaphor for a more fluid, emergent, and symbiotic relationship between people and the South African landscape, an alternative to the abusive, hierarchical, colonial structures put in place by nineteenth-century Victorian empire. (19)

In line with Lyndall’s dissolution, Gregory’s transformation of the body is remarkable in the discussion of gender roles. Because Gregory’s body transforms, he becomes less masculine and hierarchical. With the help of his cross-dressing, he turns into an alternative voice to the masculine, colonial adventure stories of the period.

Combined with the feminist criticism on Olive Schreiner and *The Story of an African Farm*, critics of Schreiner tend to connect their feminist criticism to other issues of concern such as nature, race, class, and age (Stanley 658). Schreiner’s broader understanding of the universe leads her to combine the local with the global and the victimized woman with the other disadvantaged groups of her time such as farmers, children, and Boers. As a feminist and a writer “ahead of her time,” Schreiner thought that the social construction of gender and the repression of women were inseparable from other threats to groups such as South Africans, the impoverished, children, and nature. In line with her keen interest in woman’s emancipation, Schreiner also cares for other suppressed groups and shows concern for the deterioration of ecology. For instance, Andrew McMurry reads *The Story of an African Farm* as an eco-feminist novel in which the oppressions of women and nature are similar (440-442). Nature, as well as women, is threatened by colonialism and industrialization. Moreover, Schreiner has a certain class and race consciousness and works to eradicate the distinctions between the British and the South African, the rich and the poor (Clayton 48; Coetzee 4; Chrisman 2). In “*The Story of an*
African Farm and the Dynamics of Woman-to-Woman Influence,” Nancy Paxton points out that Lyndall rejects marriage not only because she wants to be emancipated but also because she considers marriage as an economical pact between the husband and the wife: “Because Lyndall lacks the money and property that makes these women [i.e. Tant’ Sannie, Trana and Em] attractive to colonizing men, she must find a source of value and self-worth beyond her beauty and sexual appeal” (Paxton 572). David Waterman discusses how Schreiner objects to the victimization of children by adults as in the case of Blenkins’s beating of Waldo and aims to balance the adult and the child (44-45). Furthermore, Deborah Shapple underscores Schreiner’s ambivalent position between colonialism and post-colonialism. She writes: “The Story of an African Farm reflects the ambivalent position of a second-generation colonist hoping to become post-colonial” (80). Overall, as the protagonists travel across porous boundaries, they adapt to new ways of being. Building on previous scholars, I find that the interrelatedness of travel and writing correlates to the ambivalent positions of race, gender, and age in Schreiner’s writing.

III. The Metaphor of Travel and Travelling Writers in The Story of an African Farm

The metaphor of travel has been a dominant theme in Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm. Despite the fact that the farm is at the center of the novel, it welcomes travelers, storytellers and returners throughout the novel. Critics have not yet reached an agreement on this idea. Simon Lewis argues that the novel lacks a metaphor of travel: “The book opens and closes on the farm, with no metropolitan penetration of and withdrawal from colonial space, no confirmation of the traveler’s preconceived notions of what s/he expected to be able to ‘discover’

33 In “Tragic Vision in Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm,” Ode Ogede underlines that the novel is set between dream and reality (31). This idea, I suggest, is another example of Schreiner’s ambivalent writing.
and classify” (Lewis 97). However, Lyndall and Waldo have been acknowledged as travelers at the same time by multiple critics (Anthony 10; Bradford 14; Monsman, “A Child” 9). Finding a mid-way, Horton and Lewis define Schreiner’s writing, particularly *The Story of an African Farm*, as both travel literature and not travel literature at the same time (Horton 28; Lewis 99). Moreover, Cherry Clayton suggests that Schreiner reverses the male quest novels of Haggard, as she aims to rewrite the male epic and quest stories (25). Schreiner’s novel posits an in-between space between travel and non-travel, epic (masculine) and non-epic (feminine), *Bildungsroman* and anti-*Bildungsroman* at the same.

As a novel of travelling protagonists, *The Story of an African Farm* includes two kinds of wanderers. There are “strangers” – Bonaparte Blenkins, Gregory, Waldo’s stranger, and Lyndall’s stranger - who come to the farm from a far place and disrupt the harmony of the farm (Tigges 195). The farm represents the unfamiliar, the new land for them. Secondly, there are “farm inhabitants” – Lyndall, Waldo, and Gregory in the second part – who leave their home and go on an adventure just like Odysseus. In this case, the farm represents home, the familiar. As strangers enter the farm, the strong breach between farm dwellers and strangers – except for Gregory who refuse to adapt - occurs.

In the first part, the only traveler, Bonaparte Blenkins, arrives at the farm (47-8). Despite the fact that Tant’ Sannie and Lyndall do not believe in him and his stories, Tant’ Sannie takes him in upon Otto’s request. As a teller of tales and lies, Blenkins makes up stories about his past, his ancestry, his sick wife, and his travels. Like the Odysseus who tells his adventures in the prosperous land of Scheria, he takes a rest in the cultivated farm and makes up his own adventures: “I … have been in every country in the world, and speak every civilized language, excepting only Dutch and German. I wrote a book of travels – noteworthy incidents” (55). Later
on, he narrates certain anecdotes, which the reader finds out to be false at the end of the first part. By no means can Blenkins be compared to an epic hero. Unlike Odysseus’s adaptation to the land of Phaiakians, Blenkins changes the order of the farm and attains undeserved power by becoming the headmaster and the overseer and beating Waldo through a false conspiracy. As a fake epic hero, he turns into a caricature, a comic figure when he narrates his stories on the farm reminiscent of Odysseus’s rest in Scheria. He becomes an ironic epic wanderer whose stories prove to be fictitious.

Similar to Blenkins, Lyndall’s unnamed stranger who arrives at the end of the novel creates a deprivation on the farm. Convincing Lyndall to abandon the farm and elope with him, he snatches her from the farm leaving Waldo and Em without Lyndall. He shatters the stability of the farm. As Lyndall’s secret lover and the father of her child, the stranger changes the course of Lyndall’s life and the established life on the farm. However, due to Lyndall’s constant refusal of marriage, he remains a stranger and like Blenkins, he is never adopted and welcomed into the farm.

Waldo’s stranger appears only in the second chapter of the second part where Waldo and Em are seen as grown-ups. Unlike Blenkins and Lyndall’s stranger, he does not harm inhabitants, but rather his conversation with Waldo opens up a new way of thinking for Waldo, which eventually might have led him to travel. After recounting the story of the hunter, Waldo’s stranger leaves Waldo with a set of questions on stories and the search for truth. At the end of his storytelling, the stranger states:

‘The whole of the story is not written here, but it is suggested. And the attribute of all true art, the highest and the lowest, is this – that it says more than it says, and takes you away
from itself. It is a little door that opens into an infinite hall where you may find what you please. (168)

In an attempt to search for truth and to discover “the infinite hall,” Waldo “leaves home and tastes life.” The outsider leads Waldo to travel and adapt to new circumstances. As a traveler, Waldo’s stranger precipitates the uneasiness of inhabitants in the farm.

Among the second group of travelers, Waldo’s ambiguous journey for a better future stands out. Unlike the epic heroes, he does not seek adventure, nor does he truly know where he goes or why he leaves. His travel is triggered by the stranger and his story. His journey is rather disappointing for him (Lewis 98). Similar to colonial adventure stories of the period, he believes in stories and narrated lives and engages in a search for truth. Moreover, he is closer to a figure of a writer-in-the-making in that he attempts to write. However, Waldo’s motives for a journey are far from ambitions of an epic hero. Unlike Odysseus and protagonists of the colonial adventure fiction, he lacks a strong sense of kleos and is considered as an aimless wanderer. His motive for wandering is initiated by the stranger; however, he is happy to experience his nostos and re-unite with Lyndall. When Waldo describes his aims for travel, he states: “I will travel first – I will see the world – then I will find work” (217). Lyndall, however, underlines the mismatch between his motives and his intention for an expedition: “That is no plan; [Lyndall says] travel – see the world – find work! If you go into the world aimless, without a definite object, dreaming - dreaming, you will be definitely defeated, bamboozled, knocked this way and that” (217). With this statement, Lyndall draws a boundary between herself and Waldo as figures of travelers.

Having a definite plan and motive for leaving the farm, Lyndall is the most significant and apparent traveler in this novel. She is the only travelling woman in the novel as Tant’ Sannie
and Em never leave the farm. Her travels are part of her Bildung as well. Journey is a necessity, rather than leisure for Lyndall since she does not have the monetary means as Em does. In a conversation with Em, Lyndall explicates why finding a way out of the farm is significant for her:

‘And you think that I am going to stay here always?’ [said Lyndall]

The lip trembled scornfully.

“Ah, no,” said her companion [Em]. “I suppose some day we shall go somewhere; but now we are only twelve, and we cannot marry till we are seventeen. …

“And you think I am going to stay here till then?”

…

“But why do you want to go Lyndall?”

“There is nothing helps in this world,” said the child slowly, “but to be very wise, and to know everything – to be clever.”

“But I should not like to go to school!” persisted the small, freckled face.

“And you do not need to. When you are seventeen this Boer-woman [Tant’ Sannie] will go; you will have this farm and everything that is upon it for your own; but I,” said Lyndall, “will have nothing. I must learn.” (41-2)

Knowing that she has to find her own money, Lyndall has to look to the future (Lawson 120). In the novel, Lyndall goes away twice. When she comes back from the boarding school, her sense of alienation and in-betweenness is revealed: “Lyndall was tired after her long journey, and had come to her room early. Her eyes ran over the familiar objects… she looked about among the old
familiar objects; all was there, but the old self was gone” (184). Lyndall’s homecoming after the boarding school makes *The Story of an African Farm* a female *Bildungsroman*. However, in her second voyage, the Victorian *Bildungsroman* plot no longer exists. Lyndall refuses social integration and marriage with the stranger, gives birth to a child out-of-wedlock, and never returns home after the second voyage. Rather, her story is narrated posthumously by the feminized Gregory.

Among the wandering protagonists of the novel, Gregory Rose stands out as a unique traveler in that he can be classified both as a stranger and as a farm dweller. As the new man in the charge of the farm and later Em’s suitor, he arrives at the farm as a stranger like Blenkins and Lyndall’s stranger. However, different from two strangers, he does not disrupt the harmony of the farm, but rather he adapts to the new setting. In the novel, Gregory engages in two kinds of travels. First of all, he is an outsider looking for a new home. Inhabitants of the farm are reticent towards Gregory because of their previous experience with Bonaparte Blenkins. However, as a traveler, Gregory is able to adapt to the conditions in the farm, plans to marry Em and later on falls in love with Lyndall. His stance changes from a stranger to a familiar inhabitant as he lives on the farm. Through the end of the novel, he engages in a second type of travel: as an inhabitant of the farm, he leaves his “home” in order to look for Lyndall, who eloped with the stranger. In that sense, as a traveler, Gregory stands in this ambiguous place: He is neither a stranger and a threat like Blenkins nor a home deserter like Lyndall or Waldo. Rather, he is both a centripetal and a centrifugal hero at the same time. Among the six travelers in the novel, I argue that Gregory is the most Homeric one since he experiences two types of journey incorporating both sides of Odysseus – a homecoming and a glory-seeking epic hero. Gregory arrives at the farm as a stranger, thirsts for adventure and goes after Lyndall and finally lives through his *nostos* when

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34 This part is comparable to Jane Eyre’s stay in Lowood or Aurora Leigh’s stay with her aunt at Leigh Hall.
he returns without Lyndall. His homecoming, however, ends with a deprivation – the deaths of Lyndall and Waldo. Gregory cannot restore the old order in the oikos but has to adapt to the new circumstances: farm life without Waldo and Lyndall. Living in the border and being exposed to the other, Gregory has a weaker sense of masculinity. As Elizabeth Wilson’s argues in “The Invisible Flaneur,” departing from the masculine homeland exposes male travelers to more feminine qualities, leaving them emasculated (108). The concept of wandering provides both heroes with a license to act in the way they want to. As Odysseus weeps and longs for his home in Calypso’s island, Gregory brings forth his femininity through his cross-dressing. Just like Odysseus, he is both a centripetal hero who finally returns home and re-unites with his friends and a centrifugal hero who is ready for adventure. A similar shift of cross-gender shift occurs in Aurora Leigh. In “Masculinity in Four Victorian Epics: A Darwinist Reading.” Clinton Machann underscores a shift of gender roles between Aurora Leigh and Romney and draws attention to Barrett Browning’s “androgynous poetic vision” (66). As the first male muse of the poetic tradition, Romney crosses the boundaries of gender distinctions and stands out as an antithesis to the protagonists of colonial adventure fiction. Following her pseudo-literary ancestors, Homer and Barrett Browning, and attempting to write an epic, Olive Schreiner applies an analogous shift of gender roles in The Story of an African Farm when Gregory cross-dresses as a woman and nurses the masculine Lyndall. In the cases of Odysseus, Romney, and Gregory, their journey – their being away from the Fatherland – locates them in this androgynous position liberating them from the boundaries of gender roles.  

Fluid gender roles in The Story of an African Farm have been a popular topic among critics of Schreiner. Building on Wilson’s argument, I propose that this fluidity is made possible

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35 When Odysseus cross-dresses as a beggar upon entering Ithaca, he destabilizes his role as a king. Despite the fact that it is not directly related to gender boundaries, he changes his social class through his disguise.
and visible through these expeditions. Without the existence of travel metaphors which foster open-mindedness, the novel would have become a different narrative: Lyndall would have trusted men, Waldo would not have waited for Lyndall at home writing letters to her, and Gregory would have to feign a fake masculinity towards Em. Without the existence of liminality in the travels of Waldo, Lyndall and Gregory, Schreiner could not have created this challenging attitude towards gender, race, and class. In Schreiner’s novel travel is a crucial metaphor that brings the structured nature of gender and race into daylight.

The metaphor of travel and the fluidity it creates has an impact in the novel’s metatextual aspect. The novel utilizes some metatextual devices such as parody and irony in its representation of characters (Monsman, *Olive* 79). For instance, Bonaparte Blenkins is apparently a comic figure and the parodic representation of a masculine, colonial man (Monsman, “Olive” 589; Clayton 54), and Tant’ Sannie comes out as a parody of a Boer woman as well (Levy 174). Moreover, Waldo’s unfinished letter in Chapter Eleven is a metanarrative and self-reflexive experience since he recounts his travels to Lyndall after his *nostos*. The reader acquires knowledge of his travels after his homecoming.

In line with metatextuality, *The Story of an African Farm* underscores acts of reading and writing/storytelling as well. Drawing attention to reading and writing, the novel carries a sense of self-consciousness. For instance, secular books are considered to be threatening by Tant’ Sannie and Blenkins and to be entertaining by the children. Waldo is scolded and punished for reading secular books such as *Political Economy* (Schreiner 111). Waldo’s stranger also tells a story to Waldo, which changes his perspective and drives him to wander. After Lyndall’s storytelling, Em and Lyndall discuss the ending of a particular story:
“It is rather a nice story,” said Em; “but the end is sad.”

“It is a terrible, hateful ending,” said the little teller of the story, leaning forward on her folded arms; “and the worst is, it is true. I have noticed,” added the child very deliberately, “that it is only the made-up stories that end nicely; the true ones all end so.”

(44)

As the children pass their time through storytelling and listening to stories told by Otto and Lyndall, the novel underscores the significance of storytelling and fiction blended into it. Moreover, truth and fiction become inseparable as they enjoy fictional stories, Biblical miracle stories and they hear about Blenkins’ lies (Lawson 112).

The act of (re)writing happens to be essential as the characters travel. On the surface level, the novel follows the traditional gender grouping of the female storytellers and male writers. While Waldo and Gregory are the main writers of the novel, Lyndall tells stories to Waldo and Em. However, deep down, Lyndall, the creator of stories, seems to have more authority than Waldo and Gregory, who both write autobiographical accounts of their travels. Lyndall is a writer as well but her authorship is not as foregrounded as the letters of Waldo and Gregory. For instance, she informs us that she started writing plays when she was away at the boarding school (187) and Em reveals Lyndall’s only letter to Gregory but the reader never has the chance to read the letter (249). The reader is denied access to the writings of Lyndall though she is the main storyteller. The concept of writing becomes significant when the characters are away from the farm. As Waldo leaves, Lyndall promises to write to him:

36 Just like Lyndall, Olive Schreiner was also interested in storytelling and was remembered narrating stories to other women (First & Scott 82, Clayton 26)
“Will you write to me?” he asked of her.

“Yes; if I should not, you can still remember, wherever you are, that you are not alone.”

(226)

Writing maintains the bond between Waldo and Lyndall when they are away from the farm. When Waldo returns to the farm and learns that Lyndall has been away from the farm for about a year, he decides to write a letter to her (252-3). In his unfinished letter to Lyndall, Waldo narrates his adventures like an epic hero. The letter remains incomplete when Em comes into the room and reports the bad news:

“Waldo, dear,” she said, putting her hands on his, “leave off writing.”

He threw back the dark hair from his forehead and looked her.

“It’s no use writing any more,” she said.

“Why not?” he asked.

She put her hand over the papers he had written.

“Waldo,” she said, “Lyndall is dead.” (266)

The act of writing becomes meaningless when the traveler will not return to home. The idea of journey and the act of writing are juxtaposed and become mutually dependent one another in this novel. Moreover, Waldo’s interest in writing bolsters the reversal of gender roles. As he plays the role of a man who waits for his travelling beloved and writes letters to her, the societal norms of gender are turned upside down.
In line with the act of storytelling, the concept of listening stands out as a significant moment in the novel. As one of the few non-travelling characters of the novel, Em is assigned to listen to the rest of the characters. In “Forms of Dependence,” Cherry Clayton underscores the different listeners of the novel: “Internal storytelling meets with different kinds of listening, suggesting in their variety that the story needs a true, attentive listener to be complete. Em is an interested listener, prompting the plot by her queries; Waldo is generally a good listener, and responds with his story, …; Lyndall is often an impatient one; Gregory Rose a non-comprehending one” (27). Each character is assigned a different role of listening in the novel. However, Em never leaves the farm and is the sole witness of their evolving friendship and maturation over time. In the novel, she is the proof of Lyndall’s maturation and Waldo’s travels since she, together with the reader, realizes transformations that the protagonists are going through.

By creating characters who are either good listeners or good writers, Olive Schreiner plays with procreative and creative capabilities of her characters (Heilmann 6). Portraying childless mothers like Lyndall, Tant’ Sannie and Undine, she celebrates the creative abilities of women over their procreative capability. However, for her, creativity does not necessarily mean originality. As Waldo’s stranger also suggests in the novel, the stories are inexhaustible reproductions of previous stories: “All true facts of nature or the mind are related. Your little carving represents some mental facts as they really are, therefore fifty different true stories might be read from it” (169). Bearing in mind that nothing is really original, she believes that originality lies in the change of perspective, which is made possible through wandering. As a Victorian adaptation of an adventurous epic hero, Gregory turns into an authentic character with his mimicking.
In her letter to Havelock Ellis on February 25, 1884, Schreiner writes: “There is too much moralizing in the story, but when one is leading an absolutely solitary life one is apt to use one’s work as Gregory used his letters, as an outlet for all one’s superfluous feelings, without asking too closely whether they can or cannot be artistically expressed here” (35). Gregory’s superfluous letters to his sister become meaningful. In relation to the three writers in the novel, Schreiner plays with the conventions and creates Lyndall as a strong, masculine woman, who never narrates her life story.37 In contrast to Lyndall, Waldo and Gregory write their emotions and feelings in epistolary form. The metaphor of travel helps Waldo and Gregory re-work their understanding of gender and rewrite their lives in a less masculine form. As Gregory travels, he becomes less masculine and loses his Englishness. He no longer represents the figure of the colonizer unlike Blenkins who is argued to be the ironic colonizer, the Englishman of the novel.

In *The Story of An African Farm*, Waldo and Gregory, as followers of Odysseus, represent the emasculated traveler who lives outside the domain of this land, as discussed by Elizabeth Wilson. The fluidity of gender roles and the ambiguity of Odysseus’s homesickness bear similarities to Lyndall’s, Waldo’s and Gregory’s voyages in the novel. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus takes a more feminized position as he weeps for his household and land whereas Penelope is witty enough to pacify the suitors by her own means. Interestingly, contrary to the social gender roles, both Waldo and Gregory experience their *nostos* whereas Lyndall never returns home and gains more *kleos* than the other two. Moreover, both men become emotional on their homecoming while Lyndall is not delineated as a weak, sentimental woman. Rather, her story is romanticized by Gregory through his recounting of Lyndall’s travel. Unlike the blending of the traveler and the storyteller figure in Odysseus, Schreiner offers three alternative characters who are reminiscent of ancient epic heroes: a feminized male who travels and narrates his own

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37 According to Lerner, Lyndall’s masculinity is akin to Jane Eyre’s masculinity (70-71).
travels (Waldo), a transvestite who travels but narrates the story of another traveler (Gregory), a masculinized female who travels but whose story is recounted and re-told by others (Lyndall). *The Story of an African Farm*, presents a set of simultaneous epic heroes, just as its narrative presents heterogeneous set of letters, parables, and stories.

Along with multiple protagonists and re-worked epic heroes and multiple narratives, *The Story of an African Farm* utilizes different forms of temporality with its focus on “time travel.” The disruption of time prevails in the narrative (Murphy 4). The second part of the novel opens with a chapter called “Times and Seasons,” which seems to be out of place. Moreover, the constant ticking of the clock in the first chapter signifies a time consciousness. Written in first person narration with the probable speaker being Waldo, the first chapter of the second part disrupts the linearity of the narrative. The disruption of time is related to the narrative’s focus on the past and the future; its admiration of the epic and its unique reply to the canon. Moreover, Schreiner’s novel uses a similar sense of multiple and disrupted temporality as seen in *The Odyssey*. As Odysseus switches into past and narrates his adventures in the land of Phaikaans, Gregory recounts his journey to search for Lyndall on his homecoming. The narrative is stuck between the past, the present, and the future. As Lawson also argues, “In *African Farm* Schreiner refuses to look back to the Garden that never existed, but turns toward a future she cannot discern but for which she passionately cares” (111). Since it is a novel about travelling characters, it focuses on the future. Travelers leave the farm for a better future: Waldo for a good job, Lyndall for a union with the stranger and Gregory for a re-union with Lyndall. However, the future does not offer anything new as they are disillusioned at the end of the journeys. *The Story of an African Farm* carries a different time consciousness, a blending of past, present and future and a re-telling of past from a new angle.
In addition to the non-linear temporality in *The Story of an African Farm*, the novel also stands in a liminal time period between Victorian era and Modernity. In the article “Napoleon and the Giant,” Malven van Wyk Smith distinguishes the two different parts in this novel: “[The first part] is broadly Dickensian, in the most melodramatic and exuberant sense of that term. … If the first part owes much to Dickens, the second part broadly anticipates Virginia Woolf, who, of course, would later acknowledge her debt to Schreiner” (152). As the first part blends drama with farcical, caricature characters like Blenkins, the last section reflects proto-feminist ideas paving the way for early twentieth-century feminism. According to van Wyk Smith’s argument, *The Story of an African Farm* is an intertextual novel that is inspired by previous novels and a novel that influences future novelists. The novel, then, wanders through different time periods and cannot be located in a single canon. As a New Woman fiction, it also stands in this place between Victorian female *Bildungsroman* and the first-wave feminism.

In “Writing the Self on the Imperial Frontier: Olive Schreiner and the Stories of Africa,” Gerald Monsman underlines the Homeric intertexts in Dinesen’s and Schreiner’s writing. He juxtaposes eating habits of Cyclops and Laestrygonians and the concept of consuming in *The Odyssey* with the consumption of land in Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (141). Moreover, he further suggests that the inequality between Polyphemus and Odysseus (the colonized and the colonizer) is parallel to the similar unequal relations in the novel. In addition to Monsman’s Homeric interpretation, I argue that Homeric intertexts and the re-conceptualization of Odysseus are enabled with the help of three travelers - Lyndall, Waldo, and Gregory – in *The Story of an African Farm*. Different from the dual female protagonist theme in *From Man to Man* and *Undine*, *The Story of an African Farm* centralizes a female protagonist, who experiences a constant shift of gender boundaries and role reversals with Waldo and
Gregory. Instead of two females, Schreiner makes use of Waldo and Gregory as addendums to her adaptation of the traveler-writer figure in colonial adventure stories. Instead of a single writer-travel protagonist, who has malleable gender boundaries, Schreiner uses a triplet or rather a quadruplet, in which she can reflect the complexity of her modern epic heroine. The Victorian adaptation of the female wanderer and storyteller stands at the crossroads of multiple genres – epic, New Woman Fiction, *Bildungsroman* – and of multiple concepts – travel, maturation, gender. As Lyndall represents the masculine woman who travels, Waldo stands out as a writer figure and his travel is neglected. As Lyndall become more masculine, Schreiner’s dual female protagonist plot is replaced by Gregory and Waldo. As Waldo and Gregory engage in writing, Em complements them when she stands out as the listener of the novel.

In *The Story of an African Farm*, the concept of travel liberates the wanderers and gives them an opportunity to rewrite their scripted gender, race, age and class so as to become original. Standing in limbo, this novel of travelers bolsters its liminal position through its use of metatextuality. As a reworking of many previous texts - colonial odyssey novel, ancient epic, and a Victorian *Bildungsroman*, the novel does not believe in an adaptation from a single source. Even the making of a single all-achieving hero plot is no longer valid for *The Story of an African Farm*. Schreiner invalidates the possibility of a capable and admirable epic hero through her inclusion of multiple protagonists and displaying the complexity of the new fiction she is proposing. Celebrating the idea of travel and rewriting as the bearers of change of perspectives, *The Story of an African Farm* is Schreiner’s reply to the dominating narratives of the canon.

CHAPTER 2
Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*: Different Forms of Travel in Victorian Children’s Literature

The Victorian period, the “Golden Age” of children’s literature, witnesses a proliferation of fantasy and a retelling of adventures. The prevailing plot in fantastical adventures is a quest by a child or adolescent, similar to quests by epic heroes such as Odysseus or Sindbad, although it is also often ironic. Highlighting the fascination with Homeric epics, Richard Jenkyns states that “The Victorians encountered Homer even in the nursery” (194). Of course, Charles Lamb’s translation and adaptation from Chapman’s *Odyssey* for a juvenile audience in 1808 has a significant legacy for Homer’s presence in children’s literature. In *Children’s Literature from Aesop to Harry Potter*, Seth Lerer labels children’s literature as “re-tell[ing] a history of the conventions of interpretation and the reception of texts in different historical periods” (3-4). It inevitably involves an act of re-telling since children’s literature turns conventions and limits of normalcy upside down. The interest in Greek classics is implicitly displayed in the figure of the female wanderer in the Victorian children’s literature.

This chapter traces a similarity between the Victorian female *Bildungsroman* and children’s literature in that they frequently embrace a female wanderer who engages in a quasi-epic adventure with realistic as well as fantastical dimensions. The Victorian figure of the female wanderer and storyteller in the *Bildungsroman* adapts Greek epic models not only to express admiration for the classics but also to expose the condition of women and colonial subjects in the nineteenth century. Similarly, Victorian children’s narratives plunge into fantasy reminiscent of the classics and, with subtle irony connect ancient Greece to nineteenth-century Britain.
As in the *Bildungsroman*, Victorian children’s texts by women center on the figure of an adolescent female wanderer whose journey is metatextual, with ironic intertextual references to schoolroom classics about male voyagers who recount their adventures, such as *The Odyssey* and *The Arabian Nights*. Similar to Odysseus, there have been a number of female travelers in fairy tales and classical mythology. Among these examples are Medea, Psyche, and Little Red Riding Hood. However, unlike Odysseus, they rarely tell their stories on their return. Their experience of travel does not include a retrospective aspect. In this project, I focus on the women travelers who tell their stories at the same time fusing the figure of Odysseus with Shahrazad. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* books signal the beginning of female wanderer figure in Victorian children’s literature. Carroll’s Alice provides a substantial example for the ironic female wanderer figure and bears some parallelism with Homer’s epic in terms of an obsession with eating, power relations, and fantastical elements. Mervyn Nicholson’s article on the power relations based on patterns of eating compares several works such as Alice books and *The Odyssey*. Underlining different habits of eating and distinguishing between the concepts of “eating” and “being eaten,” Nicholson argues that patterns of food consumption relies on power structures (42). Similarly, as stated in the previous chapter, Gerald Monsman discusses the Homeric intertexts of food and consumption in Victorian texts. Focusing on Dinesen and Schreiner, he displays a different reading of anti-colonialism and power relations, which is based on the consumption of land (141). Not only Carroll is inspired by former texts but also his Alice books inspired numerous adaptations in the second half of the nineteenth century. Among these various adaptations of Alice books, this chapter focuses Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874).
Chapter 2 discusses the role of children’s literature on building up the figure of the female wanderer in three parts. The first part discusses links between the Victorian Bildungsroman and children’s literature through their use of the female wanderer. Building on the claim that both Victorian novels about women and children’s literature written by women are similar in some ways, the first part reviews the common ground between two writings by establishing the connections with the previous chapter. In this chapter, I argue that Rossetti’s narrative also pokes fun at the Victorian Bildungsroman in that it depicts ironic figures who aim to grow up. The second part focuses on Christina Rossetti and her children’s book Speaking Likenesses, which stands out among the other examples of the Victorian period. It explains the reasons why I particularly choose Speaking Likenesses among other narratives such as Carroll’s Alice books or other similar fantasy literature. Finally, the last part lays out a more detailed discussion of Speaking Likenesses and the different modes of travel in the narrative. Focusing on four different forms of travel within the narrative, this part also establishes the link between these different forms of travel and rewriting. The forms of rewriting are closely linked with the forms of travel in the narrative. Through its use of the motif of travel, Speaking Likenesses re-works not only the Homeric tradition but also the Alice tradition of the nineteenth century. Different from the Alice adaptations, it blends the female wanderer figure with the storyteller. Moreover, by alluding to Shahrazad and the storytelling tradition, Rossetti’s text fuses the Western canon with a canonical text from the non-Western world. Therefore, by weaving the threads between two different traditions, two literary cultures, and two figures, it locates itself as a metatextual narrative that defies the canonical literature. Similar to Schreiner’s book, Speaking Likenesses stands in the mid-way between tradition and modernity, canon and non-canon.
I. Victorian Children’s Literature: An Ironic Adaptation of A Female Bildungsroman

Two well-known genres of the Victorian Era, female Bildungsromane and children’s fantasy literature, are said to bear resemblances. As critics argue, both genres incorporate a literal or a metaphorical journey and include fantastical elements (Honig 8; Talairach-Vielmas 1). In Victorian adult novels written by women and about women, Edith Honig points out that novels carry fairy tale qualities and fantasy becomes the key tool to “break the angelic image” in the Victorian society (3-4). The fairy tale tradition, in a way, is rewritten in the epic form reminiscent of the masculine epic stories of nineteenth-century imperialism. Similarly, in The Story of an African Farm, the characters escape into the dream world so as to avoid reality. Although fairy-tale elements do not show a significant appearance in the novels of Schreiner, Waldo’s vision of an optimistic future, Gregory’s unrequited love for Lyndall, and Em’s dream world pave the way for unrealistic and uncanny events in the novel. In her list of novels, Honig argues that there are four types of women in Victorian novels: mothers, spinsters, girls, and magical women, who, one way or the other, make use of fantasy. In that sense, they are similar to protagonists of children’s fantasy literature (Honig 8). In a similar way, Talairach-Vielmas discusses that no real distinction between Victorian sensation novels and children’s fantasy literature exists (1). Discussing examples from both genres comparatively, she argues how the two genres work together to challenge the objectified position of the women and to resist Victorian commodity culture (Honig 7). With the adaptation of the female storyteller figure, both

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38 For a discussion of the use of dream allegory in The Story of an African Farm, see Ogede (1980).
39 In “Introduction: Literary Fairy Tales and the Value of Impurity,” U.C. Knoepflmacher claims that Bronte’s Jane Eyre and Woolf’s To the Lighthouse are two major examples of novels that bear fairy tale qualities. They have an impact on the popularity of adaptations and translations of fairy tales (23). A similar argument has been frequently made for Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre. See Notsu and Sullivan.
genres defy stereotypical images and re-work through the re-location of the canon. Talairach-Vielmas approves of the concept of re-working in general. Building on her focus on the storyteller figure, I claim that the re-working of the female wanderer figure is as impactful as the storyteller in the challenging of Victorian paradigm of the angel in the house.

In relation to children’s literature and its link with adult novels, U. C. Knoepflmacher argues that there are two types of readers, namely adult and child, in the Victorian fantasy literature (“Balancing” 500). The Victorian fantasy literature is written for two different readers and by the adult writer who is interested in looking at his or her past and childhood. Emphasizing Victorians’ interest in nostalgia and their retrospective ambition, Knoepflmacher writes: “It is no coincidence that the self-divided Victorians who found themselves ‘wandering between two worlds’ in their Janus-like split between progress and nostalgia should have produced what has rightly been called ‘the Golden Age of children’s books’” (497) (my emphasis). Therefore, it is this double readership and perspective that pave the way for children’s fantasy literature written for adults and children at the same time. Moreover, Knoepflmacher’s argument on the retrospective aspect of children’s literature highlights the Victorian interest in looking back and in trying to understand the past as well. The Victorian children’s literature is one of the vehicles in which the Victorians attempt to balance between the adult and the child, realism and fantasy, past and future, nostalgia and progress, ancient Greece and nineteenth-century England. It becomes a means in which the two worlds – ancient Greece and Victorian England - are bridged. In this act of juxtaposing two worlds, the Victorian children’s literature has close links with the retrospective aspect of looking at the past and rewriting of the previous fairy tales. In line with Knoepflmacher’s argument, it is also no coincidence that the Victorian fantasy literature has contemporary adaptations of well-known fairy tales as seen in E.Nesbit’s *Melisande* or Anne
Thackeray Ritchie’s *Cindrella* as well as remodeling of contemporary literature as seen in the numerous *Alice in Wonderland* adaptations of the period.\(^{40}\)

Therefore, Victorian children’s literature becomes crucially important in this study through several reasons. First of all, Victorian fantasy literature is almost indistinguishable from adult fiction and the female *Bildungsroman*. Secondly, due to its strong emphasis on its retrospective and nostalgic revision of the past and childhood, it stands out as the distinguished genre for the purpose of this study, which explores constant wanderings between previous writings and their adaptations as well as the journeys of heroes. Finally, through its continuous travel between the past and the present and tendency towards adaptations, Victorian children’s literature represents an outstanding example for an interaction between travel and rewriting, between ancient Greek mythic heroes and nineteenth-century women of the Victorian era. It is for these purposes that I utilize Victorian children’s literature as my example to discuss interactions between rewriting and travel.

The Golden Age of children’s literature during the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a proliferation of works with child protagonists, girls with distinct identity and agency, and fantastic journeys that foster their independence. In his introduction to *Secret Gardens*, Humphrey Carpenter gives a general outline of the golden age of children’s literature by briefly mentioning distinctive examples from nineteenth-century Britain.\(^{41}\) By making a further link with the Victorian novel and the children’s literature, he claims that the emergence of adult novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* in the mid-nineteenth century has to do with the changing image of the child during the period (9). In the Golden Age of children’s literature, the

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\(^{40}\) Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* become so popular that the period witnesses numerous adaptations of Alice, which will be explored further in this chapter.

\(^{41}\) Carpenter also claims that in addition to the best examples of children’s literature in England, *The Wizard of Oz* by Frank Baum made a turning point in North American literature (16). For an Odyssean interpretation of *The Wizard of Oz*, which discusses Dorothy as nineteenth-century American adaptation of Odysseus, see Hudlin.
child is no longer seen as the immature adult. With the help of popularity of Carroll’s Alice books and their impact on the new form of the child, children’s narratives and fantasy literature become significant and influential genres (Carpenter 10). The child protagonist in Victorian literature has her own identity and agency. Thanks to her fantastical journeys, the adolescent heroine becomes independent and resembles the protagonist of the Victorian female Bildungsroman.

Going along with Honig and Knoepflmacher, Julia Briggs argues that the children’s books written by Victorian women writers are actually written for adult women and children (“Women” 223). She claims that a strict sexual division between stories written for boys and girls rather than a generational division between stories written for adults and children dominates the Victorian children’s fantasy literature (238). There is no real distinction between stories written for women and girls but rather examples of female Bildungsroman and children’s literature bear similar characteristics in the Victorian period. They are comparable to each other in terms of their use of fantasy, creativity, and their target audience.

Concepts of wandering and adaptation are two crucial traits in the Golden Age of children’s literature. The motif of wandering takes the form of a fantastical and an imaginative journey usually in the mind of the female protagonist. In Alice in Wonderland, the idea of journey is not linear but rather it is an aimless wandering that includes fantastical elements. The linearity of the journey is disrupted when Alice, for instance, metamorphosizes, experiences adventures with talking animals, and encounters the rabbit in a rush. Disruption of shape, logic, space, and time in the adventures of Alice serves as a model for the forthcoming narratives. In Through the Looking-Glass, the motif of wandering is further strengthened when the narrator speaks out Alice’s main purpose at the beginning: “Of course the first thing to do was to make a
grand survey of the country she was going to travel through” (148). Moreover, the theme of delay, which is obvious with the rabbit’s watch, coincides with the sense of belatedness in modernity.42 From Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* onwards, the Victorian children’s literature witnesses the emergence of the figure of the female adolescent wanderer and adventurer. The legacy of Carroll’s books legitimizes and popularizes the female wanderer figure. Using the words “adventurer” and “traveler” interchangeably, Roderick McGillis claims that the adventurer or the traveler always goes through a subversive experience by challenging social expectations (“Fantasy” 18). After going through a new fantastical experience, the figure of the female wanderer adjusts herself to new circumstances. McGillis writes: “[T]here will be Wonderland, the zany, the mad, the anarchic ‘other’ world where above-ground certainties, social niceties, rules of decorum and, adult preoccupation with hierarchy, prestige, and justice are turned upside down” (“Fantasy” 20). A new world order created and rewritten for the adventurer predominates the narrative. Therefore, the motif of wandering always involves elements of fantasy, as in *The Odyssey*, and a state of open-mindedness for the re-establishment of social rules and for the adjustment to the new other world. In other words, as the traveler goes on an adventure, she not only *adapts* to the new uncanny world but also *rewrites* the conventions of her own society by bridging the gap between her old familiar world and her newly-familiarized world. As she travels, she rewrites herself as the bearer of new social constructions as well.

This close link between the motif of wandering and the process of rewriting brings out the second trait of Victorian children’s literature; that is, the use of rewriting and metatextuality. Carroll incorporates intertextual elements with ironic echoes of nursery rhymes and school

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42 The theme of belatedness and the disruption of temporality in *Alice in Wonderland* are analogous to the disruption of linear time and narrative in *The Story of an African Farm*. 
geography. Themes of transformation and metamorphoses have been prominent in fantasy literature and provide links between Alice books and *The Odyssey*. For instance, Alice’s baby pig has a resonance to Circe. Moreover, the opening line “What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?” further reveals the metatextual aspect of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (9). In the Golden Age of children’s literature, the Victorian quest for nostalgia and a mythic past is replaced by a fantastical quest done by a usually female wanderer. As the Victorians want to re-create the past, they make use of metatextual tools in their narrative. Similarly, the emphasis on looking at the past in children’s literature in Knoepflmacher’s argument coincides with the retrospective aspect of looking back at the previous texts as well. In “Retelling Stories across Time and Cultures,” John Stephens discusses the cultural significance of remodeling of fairy tales. Arguing that remodeling takes place within a certain culture, Stephens values the intercultural aspect of fairy tales. He writes: “[T]raditional stories are thought to facilitate intercultural communication by bringing out the similarities between various world cultures, and hence to affirm the common humanity of the world’s peoples” (94). The Victorian fantasy literature aims to bridge this gap between the past and the present by utilizing metatextual techniques and by adapting from well-known fairy tales and contemporary examples of children’s literature. These two significant characteristics of Victorian children’s literature, the quest for adventure and the metatextual narrative, work together and support one another.

The new figure of the female wanderer in nineteenth-century literature first appears in Carroll’s two Alice books. *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* have strong impacts on not only changing the traditional child image but also challenging social conventions by making the protagonist wander through the unfamiliar land. Among various similar books of Victorian literature, Alice has a certain legacy as the leader of the figure of the female wanderer.
She stands out as the first female Odysseus and rewrites the conventions of a male epic in nineteenth century, being a children’s book and an ironic counterpart of *Aurora Leigh*. The first edition was published in 2000 copies and Alice books quickly become a part of Victorian commodity culture. This new female figure, who challenges the old world and rewrites a new one, becomes so popular and canonical that imitating Alice turns into another trend (Feldman 113; Sigler, “Authorizing” 355). From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, literary and later cinematic adaptations of Alice have pervaded the literary arena.\(^\text{43}\)

The wandering hero and the theme of metatextuality go hand in hand in these Alice-like or Alice-inspired books of nineteenth-century children’s literature. This emerging figure of the female wanderer dominates the Golden Age of children’s literature. In *Alternative Alices*, Carolyn Sigler lists five notable nineteenth-century examples of Alice adaptations: *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869) by Jean Ingelow, *Amelia and the Dwarfs* (1870) by Juliana Horatia Ewing, *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) by Christina Rossetti, *Behind the White Brick* (1879) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, and *Wanted -- a King; or, How Merle Set the Nursery Rhymes to Right* (1890) by Maggie Browne. Rossetti’s, Browne’s, and Ewing’s books are more apparent adaptations of Alice in which the female protagonist goes through a fantastical, imaginary journey. Certain allusions to Alice, including the fact that the Birthday Queen of *Speaking Likenesses* resembles the Queen of Hearts of *Alice in Wonderland*, underline the fantastical aspects of Rossetti’s narrative. However, in the case of Ingelow and Burnett, the Alice allusion is more elusive. In *Mopsa the Fairy*, it is a male hero rather than a female who experiences a journey and *Behind the White Brick* is the short fantastical journey of a girl who goes behind the fireplace brick. What is common is these five adaptations is the motif of wandering blended with uncanny adventures.

\(^{43}\) See Sigler, *Alternative Alices*. 
Seth Lerer underscores “queer” as the key word for Carroll’s Alice (195). With the help of numerous parodies and language games in the Alice books, Carroll aims to extend boundaries of normalcy (196). In a similar fashion, what brings together nineteenth-century Alice adaptations is their defiant stance towards conventions and normalcy. Just as in the Alice books, these adaptations follow the defiant path through their use of imagination, parody, and word games. However, they carry on this disobedient attitude towards their source book as well.

In addition to Sigler’s list of Alice-inspired fantasy literature, I would add Augusta Webster’s *Daffodil and Croaxaxicans* (1884) and Dollie Radford’s *Sea-Thrift* (1904). Webster’s book narrates the story of Daffodil who suddenly finds herself in the land of Croaxaxicans and has trouble with their queen who is reminiscent of both Queen of Hearts and Red Queen in Alice books, and Queen Victoria. It also gives a new perspective on the Victorian girl-model with its eccentric and rebellious protagonist Daffodil. Moreover, Dollie Radford’s *Sea-Thrift* follows similar traits. Different from the other adaptations, *Sea-Thrift* foregrounds storytelling as a means of healing the sick protagonist. With the help of stories, she magically heals at the end of the narrative, in a manner reminiscent of Shahrazad’s survival through stories. Other Victorian rewritings of fairy tales include *Cindrella* by Anne Ritchie Thackeray (1868), *Melisande* by E.Nesbit (1901), and *All My Doing or Red Riding-Hood Over Again* by Harriet Louisa Childe-Pemberton (1882). Although none of the three works are adaptations of Alice, they are representative of a trend in Victorian children’s literature: the rewriting of fairy tales in order to bridge the gap between the past and the present. Among these numerous examples, I will discuss Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* since it displays journeys of three female wanderer figures not only through its adaptation of Alice but its re-working of fairy tales such as “The sad story of Pauline and the Matches” and “Little Red Riding Hood” and its allusion to *The Arabian*
Different from other Alice adaptations of the Victorian period, the theme of rewriting in Rossetti’s narrative does not appear to be directed to a single source. But rather, it focuses on different forms of adaptations and blends together its form (rewriting) with its content (metaphor of travel). By bringing together adaptations of both contemporary and past texts, *Speaking Likenesses* deserves an irreplaceable stance among other examples listed above.

II. Christina Rossetti’s Children’s Books: Alice adaptations with a twist of Shahrazad

Although unknown to the general reading public, Rossetti has a number of children’s books and narratives, which are not as canonized as her poetry. Rossetti today figures in all anthologies of Victorian poetry, but she is often read as very feminine with an emphasis on her spirituality. The best-known examples of her children’s narratives are *Goblin Market*, *Sing-Song* and *Speaking Likenesses* although *Speaking Likenesses* did not become popular until U.C. Knoepflmacher’s anthology *Forbidden Journeys* (Briggs, “Speaking” 213). Her children’s narratives are never simple stories, but rather they become complex with her inclusion of fairy tales, symbols, and nursery rhymes (McGillis, “Simple” 229). Very few critics really acknowledge *Goblin Market* as a children’s book (McGillis, “Simple” 209; Connor 443). In the less canonical works for children such as *Nick, Hero, Prince’s Progress* and *Maude*, Rossetti brings together elements of fantasy and realism as well. Following the post-Alice tradition, Rossetti is interested in the female odyssey in *Hero, Speaking Likenesses* and partly in *Goblin Market* and *Maude*. In addition to the female wandering heroines of *Speaking Likenesses* (Flora, Edith and Maggie) and of *Hero* (Hero), Laura and Lizzy in *Goblin Market* go on an adventurous
and tempting journey, which ends up depriving them. It is through this travel that they actually change. Odyssean intertexts abound when Laura and Lizzy encounter different forms of temptations on their journey. *Goblin Market* opens with the sounds they hear in the market:

“Morning and evening/ Maids heard the goblins cry/ ‘Come buy our orchard fruits,/ Come buy, come buy:/ Apples and quinces,/ Lemons and oranges,/ … /Taste them and try” (1). The idea of temptation is apparent from the beginning and it even leads to a breach of sisterhood between Lizzie and Laura when Laura is enticed by the market: “Till Lizzie urged, ‘O Laura, come;/ I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look:/ You should not loiter longer at this brook:/ Come with me home” (7). Despite the fact that no hierarchical relation between Lizzie and Laura exists, this breach of sisterhood and Laura’s disobedience are similar to that of the disagreement between Odysseus and his men when, for instance, Odysseus’s crew opened up the Aeolus’s sack and they linger on the land of Lotus Eaters. The journey metaphor in *Goblin Market* is more apparent when the idea of enchantment is involved. As in an epic, the idea of wandering works together with *kleos*. The fact that Laura and Lizzie engage in travel makes them vulnerable to possible threats in this journey. Similarly, in *Maude*, the protagonist Maude becomes crippled and cannot wander anymore after an accident on a journey. Just like Laura and Lizzy, she is deprived of her adventurous spirit and youth.

With the wandering female heroines mentioned above, Rossetti’s interest in the concept of wandering and the post-Alice tradition becomes apparent. However, unlike fantastical, magical and happy-ending stories of the post-Alice tradition, Rossetti’s narratives carry resentment and pessimism that blends the adventurous journey with a realistic home-coming.44 The sense of resentment in Rossetti’s books is also found in Schreiner’s novels as well. Different

44 Despite the fact that the hero in *Prince’s Progress* is a male wanderer, he comes back home with a similar sense of realism and pessimism as he sees the dead princess.
from Odysseus’s happy re-union with his land and family, Schreiner’s protagonists - as well as Rossetti’s - accomplish their return with a similar sense of realism. In Rossetti’s odysseys, the journey is never completely a fantasy, but rather it is a fantasy that wanders toward realism. It is a journey that ends with deprivation, loss of innocence and childhood. In her children’s stories about travel, Rossetti contests the stereotypical Victorian image of the child as being “innocent” and “ naïve.” When Laura and Lizzy return home, they lose their innocence and go through an awakening. Likewise, Maude is no longer a child associated with play, happiness, and innocence. Roderick McGillis, for instance, compares Laura’s awakening – but with an emphasis on spirituality - to that of Odysseus (“Simple” 211). His argument not only underlines the stages of development but also emphasizes Goblin Market’s ties with the theme of wandering. Rossetti’s children’s literature – especially Speaking Likenes ses – is an example of this post-Alice and post-Homeric tradition of the Victorian era. However, different from other post-Alice adaptations, it is written with a sense of realism in mind. The journey starts in the fantasy world but ends in the realistic world. Like Homer’s Odysseus and Schreiner’s Gregory, Rossetti’s Flora, Edith and Maggie represent an adventurer and a home-seeker traveler. In that sense, they are both centripetal and centrifugal heroes in David Adams’s phrase.

Rossetti’s major inspiration in her writing career is her interest in classics, Greek mythology, Greek philosophers, and Dante (Bellas 18). Similar to her Victorian contemporaries who admire past writers, Rossetti has an immense admiration for Dante and is interested in Dantean intertextuality. As Bellas discusses, her poetry reflects the double side of the Dantesque

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45 Rossetti’s relationship with the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood leaves an important imprint on her writing. Though she, as a female poet, is never accepted in the brotherhood, she is referred to as “the Queen of Pre-Raphaelites” or “the high-priestess of Pre-Raphaelites” (Bellas 30; Smulders 2). Despite Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s efforts to make her become a member of the brotherhood, the group declines to acknowledge a female member into the brotherhood. But she contributes several poems to the journal of the movement, The Germ, and Bellas notes that there are some major common elements between her poetry and that of the brotherhood (30).
world: “[R]eaders are urged to see the actual world as imperfect and transient, as a place of corruption and sorrow. At the same time, they are urged to envision another world, perfect and eternal, a place of ideal beauty, spiritual love, peace, and joy” (19). She reconciles the realistic with the spiritual (Bellas 31). As the concept of childhood represents innocence and perfection or an idyllic naivety, pessimistic events haunt the child protagonists, female wanderers, of Rossetti. She depicts two different worlds and reconciles them in her writing. In a similar way, with her Dantean intertextuality, she claims to bridge the gap between Dante and her contemporaries aligning with the Victorian trend of reconciliation of the past and the present.

In addition to her interest in the Western canon through her allusions to the classical tradition and her attention to religious books such as the Bible, Pilgrim’s Progress and Confessions, The Arabian Nights is Rossetti’s favorite book as well (Bellas 17, Katz 15). Later in her career as a poet, she starts to grow an interest in children’s fantasy literature and storytelling (Bellas 91; Smulders 91). Her interest in writing children’s narrative starts suddenly and relatively late in her career (Kooistra 91). In “Muse from Nowhere,” Wendy Katz underlines Rossetti’s interest in fantasy literature and The Arabian Nights. She does not particularly write about fantasy, but rather focuses on the conflict between fantasy and didacticism; flesh and spirit (Katz 14). Blending her interest in the classics of Western literature and fantasy, Rossetti creates a world of imperfect childhood in which conventions of both adulthood and childhood are no longer valid.

Rossetti’s interest in Dante, fairy tales, folklore and classical mythology works together with her interest in intertextuality. In relation to the major influences on Rossetti, Constance Hassett discusses ancient (Homer and Dante) and contemporary (Letitia Landon and Felicia Hemans) influences on Rossetti’s writing in Christina Rossetti: The Patience of Style. Hassett
argues that Rossetti has some Homeric threads in “The Lowest Room.” In relation to the Homeric intertextuality in the poem, Hassett writes: “To read ‘The Lowest Room’ as merely a hymn to domesticity is to accept the ending and miss the poem. It is to overlook the elder sister’s HomERICALLY normed restlessness with the modern woman’s lot … The epic portrayal of meaningful womanhood is a painful thing for her, inseparable from its impossibility, and the cause of what she calls ‘Old Homer’s Sting’” (99-100). Further on, she notes that when the poem is included in her 1875 collection, her brother and critic Dante Gabriel Rossetti also realizes how “The Lowest Room” is reminiscent of Homeric epics and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh*, which is an example of a female epic of the Victorian period (Hassett 100-102).

*Speaking Likenesses* was written in 1874 with the title “Nowhere” for Macmillan. It was the first book that made Rossetti return to Macmillan after working with other publishers (Kooistra 126). Later on, she changed the title to *Speaking Likenesses* since the title reminded of Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* (1872) (Briggs, “Speaking” 215). In her letter to Alexander Macmillan on July 24, 1874, Rossetti writes: “And then I really must adopt ‘Speaking Likenesses’ as my title, this having met with some approval in my circle. Very likely you did not so deeply ponder upon my text as to remark that my small heroines perpetually encounter ‘speaking (literally speaking) likenesses’ or embodiments or caricatures of themselves or their faults” (19). This concept of “likenesses” is what defines the narrative as a whole. With its allusions of *The Arabian Nights* and the classical tradition, *Speaking Likenesses* exemplifies a mosaic of past voices.

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46 Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* satirizes British customs in colonial New Zealand. According to Patrick Brantlinger, it is one of the first anti-colonial satires of the Victorian period (30).

47 Samuel Butler also satirized the Victorian fascination with Homer (Jenkyns 215). In his satirical book, *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897), he proposed a female possible author for Homer’s epic (Turner 185). Furthermore, Frank Turner states: “Although *The Authoress of the Odyssey* may seem an odd book, it nonetheless fits directly into the context of Victorian Homeric commentary and criticism… Unlikely though it may seem, it was Butler’s mode of realism that helped to carry the Homeric epics into the mainstream of twentieth-century literature” (184-5).
The prevailing concept of “likenesses” inevitably harks back to the popularity of the post-Alice tradition in the Victorian period. In relation to the publication of Speaking Likenesses, Kooistra argues that Rossetti starts writing juvenile literature for marketing purposes (92). In her other letters, Rossetti insists Speaking Likenesses to be published for Christmas in 1874. In her letter to Alexander Macmillan, Rossetti writes: “Thank you cordially for my book which pleases me much, & of which your gift of 6 copies was most welcome. I only hope the public appetite will not be satisfied with 6 or 60, but crave on for 600 or 6000 at least!” (“Letters” 30). Unlike Olive Schreiner who is surprised at realizing success – in terms of publication - of her novel, Rossetti writes Speaking Likenesses for a buying public and envisions it as a follower to the new trend of post-Alice books. Moreover, in a letter dated January 26, 1875, Rossetti explains her joy in the recent sales of the book: “I am pleased to hear of more than 1000 ‘Speaking Likenesses’ having been disposed of: truth to tell, I had feared the reviews might this time have done me a very real injury with the buying public; but for me, such a sale is certainly not bad” (Rossetti “Letters” 38). Different from her other books, she clearly wrote for a reading public, who has been enjoying Carroll’s Alice and similar books so far. Kooistra further underlines Rossetti’s clarity about attempting to write a popularity book and her children’s books became a part of consumerist culture of the Victorian period (133). As a new contribution to the post-Alice tradition, Speaking Likenesses reaches a wider audience and attempts the popularity of post-Alice narratives of the time. By no means, then, does Rossetti want to write an original literary work, but rather she deliberately follows the Alice and the Homeric tradition so as to approach their popularity.48 Luckily, more than thousand copies were sold within two months of the publication (Kooistra 127). One of the reasons why she uses adaptations and allusions is also

48 Though popularity is not a concern for Schreiner, she also follows the tradition of post-masculine stories of the Victorian imperialism. The concept of writing after a well-established tradition, either the post-Alice tradition or the female remodeling of colonial adventure stories, brings together Schreiner and Rossetti.
linked to her concern for the reading public and the popularity and canonicity of previous canonical narratives.

*Speaking Likenesses* opens with an elderly aunt who, upon the request of her five nieces, sits down and tells three stories to them. However, she not only knits as she tells but also asks her nieces to engage in a kind of labor as they hear her stories. The first story is about an eight-year old birthday girl, Flora, who gets prepared for a wonderful birthday party. As an adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*, Flora’s story deals with a girl, who finds herself in the uncanny world of moving furniture, talking animals and a frustrated queen. The second story is the rewriting of “The tragic story of Pauline and the Matches” from *Der Struwwelpeter* (1845) by Heinrich Hoffman. Unlike Flora, Edith, the protagonist of the second story, does not go through a physical or a fantastical journey. With the help of talking animals, she attempts to accomplish a task, which ends in failure. The last story, the story of Maggie, is the Victorian adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* (Briggs and Butts 144). It is a sad winter story in which Maggie goes on a journey to deliver a package and returns to her warm home. The book ends with Maggie’s homecoming without referring back to the aunt and nieces.

In the last two decades, the majority of the critics of *Speaking Likenesses* focus on the feminist aspect of the book (Talairach-Vielmas; Knoepflmacher, “Avenging” and *Ventures*; Briggs, “Speaking”; Silver; Despotopoulou; Smulders). The centrality of female protagonists who in many instances must thwart or resist an antagonist who impedes her journey has attracted a number of critics to this book. Knoepflmacher reads the antagonisms in the text as a manifestation of Rossetti’s resistance to Lewis Carroll. But these antagonisms, I suggest, can also be read as central to the Odyssean journey itself. Both male and female antagonists test the heroine, as Odysseus was tested by Polyphemus and Circe or the sirens. The specificity of each
girl’s tests allows us to see Rossetti’s goals in adapting her plots from writers like Carroll. Despite the fact that each critic focuses on a different aspect of the book, all of them briefly touch upon the feminist undercurrents in the narrative. Given the fact that the narrative is filled with female characters who attempt to accomplish a task and few boys who represent a threat to the girls, feminist readings have become popular.

In addition to the feminist readings, Anna Silver, Claire Senior, Nina Auerbach and Ulrich Knoepflmacher make connections between Rossetti’s interest in spirituality and the journeys that take place in the narrative. They read Speaking Likenesses as a spiritual text in which the characters go through a symbolic mystical travel. In the preface to the anthology, Auerbach and Knoepflmacher interpret the three wanderers as going through a Dantean intertextual journey; that is, Flora finds herself in hell, Edith represents purgatory, and Maggie reaches heaven (319). Building on their Dantean approach to Speaking Likenesses, Anna Silver underlines the religious journey that they go through and compares the three girls with their eating habits, appetites, and restraint of carnal and sexual desires. In a similar manner, Claire Senior claims that the final story stands out among others as Maggie is a representation of a good Christian and embodiment of Rossetti’s spiritual life (84). Moreover, she suggests that Maggie’s story is a rewriting of Pilgrim’s Progress reminding us not only the spiritual aspect of the text but also pre-dominance of metatextuality in the text (84).

Maggie stands out not only as a spiritual character but also as the only poor girl coming from lower class in the Marxist criticisms of Julia Briggs and Anna Despotopoulou. Focusing on the class consciousness in the narrative, Briggs suggests that the girls represent the two nations of Benjamin Disraeli: Flora and Edith as the rich and Maggie as the poor (“Speaking” 217). Underlining aunt’s insistence on labor and productivity, she claims that the strong class
consciousness in Rossetti’s narrative is representative of the Victorian period: “Speaking Likenesses should take its place not beside Carroll’s Alice, whose world of play without learning it criticizes, but rather beside those other central Victorian classics whose fantasies were associated with social conscience” (229). In a similar manner, Despotopoulou suggests that Rossetti resists middle-class values since the poorest girl stands out as the most well-behaved and independent one among Flora and Edith (416-7).

In addition to the feminist, Marxist and religious criticism of Speaking Likenesses, Kooistra and Kaston point out that the narrative cannot be fully interpreted without the illustrations done by Arthur Hughes. Kooistra argues that Hughes’ illustrations strengthen Rossetti’s ties with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and increase the commodity value of the book (126, 133). Andrea Kaston also underscores the illustrations; however, unlike Kooistra, she does not claim that the illustrations necessarily commodify and popularize the narrative. Rather, Kaston argues that it is the illustrations that mark a clear-cut distinction between Speaking Likenesses and other popular children’s books of the time. Kaston writes: “In examining these illustrations, we find that Rossetti and Hughes borrow from both realism and fairy tale throughout their work, they not only blur the boundaries between these two realms at given moments, they also encourage the reader to look again and to reconsider whether these boundaries are ever completely stable” (316). Kaston’s argument contributes to my discussion of the constant travel between realism and fantasy; previous and contemporary texts. With the help of illustrations, Speaking Likenesses stands out as a good example of children’s work that blends realism with fantasy.

Last but not least, Speaking Likenesses is interpreted as a derivative work that constantly adapts previous texts. U.C. Knoepflmacher defines Speaking Likenesses as “an antagonistic
work” (Ventures 357; “Avenging” 311). In both “Avenging Alice” and the Rossetti chapter in Ventures into Childland, Knoepflmacher interprets Flora’s story as an adaptation of Alice. Looking at the friendship and interaction between Carroll and Rossetti throughout the article, he lays out an analogous perspective in relation to Alice. Likewise, Wendy Katz points out how influential Alice books and Carroll become on Speaking Likenesses. However, unlike Knoepflmacher, she acknowledges the influence of The Arabian Nights, Mopsa the Fairy and picaresque novels on the use of fantasy and the motif of wandering in Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses (15, 16, 19). Both Knoepflmacher and Katz make an interesting point by acknowledging that Speaking Likenesses is by no means an original work. Moreover, Salerno also claims that the use of subversion represents the core of the narrative by emphasizing the unoriginality of Speaking Likenesses (77).

Speaking Likenesses is a metatext that deliberately feeds on other texts for the purposes of popularity and recognition. However, a complex web of intertexts ranging from fairy tales to the ancient classical tradition, from topical novels of development to The Arabian Nights makes the core of Rossetti’s text. The motif of journey and its four different forms in the book necessitates its re-conceptualization. By incorporating different forms of travel, the motif of travel is rewritten just like the stories and fairy tales adapted within the book. Besides, with the help of storytelling and intertextuality, not only the journeys of three protagonists but also the fictional wandering of the nieces are revealed. Not only is the idea of travel rewritten but also the concept of rewriting and storytelling stand out as forms of fictional wandering among stories. The Homeric interpretation of the wandering figure might seem to be far-fetched in Speaking Likenesses. However, as an admirer of Dante, Rossetti incorporates clear Dantean intertexts in Speaking Likenesses. As Dante takes Vergil as a predecessor and Vergil openly imitates the
Homeric tradition, Rossetti’s intertextual narrative has probably been inspired by the Homeric tradition. Besides, the attention to the ancient epic tradition in the nineteenth century further justifies Rossetti’s possible roots in the Homeric tradition.

III. From Fantasy to Realism: Rewriting of Travel in Speaking Likenesses

In line with the critics who interpreted the three protagonists as going through a spiritual journey, the metaphor of travel by itself becomes a significant motif in Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses. In relation to the female wandering figure, Wendy Katz argues that Rossetti’s narrative teaches a lesson and imitates Victorian picaresque novels in which “the child picaro enters a visionary Vanity Fair, deals with successive trials of hunger, cold, weariness and isolation, and leaves the fantastical experience to return home to stability, constancy, humility, and charity” (19). The picaro ends up leaving the uncanny, adventurous fantasy world and returns to the limits of normalcy. In Speaking Likenesses, the emphasis on learning a lesson and coming back home having learned the lesson seems to be the main idea of the text. The protagonist has to return home so as to complete the journey. In addition to Katz, Kooistra states that the book re-introduces the female wanderer figure of the post-Alice books but aims “to return the little female traveler – and the child audience – from ‘the Land of Nowhere’ to ‘Somewhere’ closer to home” (129). He accepts that the narrative is an adaptation of Alice but also underlines that different from the post-Alice tradition, the stories of Rossetti are the stories of home-coming. Kooistra’s reading of the book as a story of home-coming, or search for a home, goes hand in hand with the Dantean intertextuality that Auerbach and Knoepflmacher
provide in relation to the three protagonists (319). The fact that the three heroines are centripetal figures and strive to experience *nostos* makes them post-Homeric heroes as well.

*Speaking Likenesses* opens with a dedication to Rossetti’s mother “in grateful remembrance of the stories which she used to entertain her children” (v). The emphasis on storytelling strikes from the beginning. The opening lines of the book are like a call for all the girls who wish to wander among stories: “Come sit round me, my dear little girls, and I will tell you a story” (1). Asking them to bring work with them, the elderly aunt aims to engage the nieces in work and storytelling and begins narrating the story of Flora on her eighth-year birthday.

Flora’s story begins in an idyllic atmosphere. On her eighth birthday, she is described as a healthy and a beautiful girl and she is woken up with a soft kiss from her mother: “she woke up a sense of sunshine, and of pleasure full of hope” (4). After the description of a beautiful day, Rossetti then gives a long list of her presents and preparations for the big birthday party she will be having with her friends (4-5). However, the picture-perfect atmosphere turns to be upside down when the uninvited guest Serena comes with Flora’s cousin and the food at the table is not as tasty as it looks (6,8). Dissatisfied with her birthday party and the story that her sister Susan tells, Flora walks down the alley towards darkness. This is the turning point in the narrative where established notions of normalcy and conformity are no longer valid for Flora; she will encounter the uncanny world of creatures. Suddenly, she finds herself in the world of moving furniture, a birthday party full of staring boys and girls, an assertive birthday queen, wild and

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49 Rossetti’s dedication to her mother parallels to Olive Schreiner’s tribute to her mother with the names of her protagonists, Rebekah and Lyndall.

50 A similar visual temptation is apparent in the opening of *Goblin Market*. Fruits and other sweet temptations are visually described at the beginning of the poem.
cruel playmates, and a large party table forbidden to her. She suddenly becomes the intruder in “A Mad Tea-Party” (Carroll 60).

As Flora goes into this new world, she has to adjust herself to the new circumstances: “Of these remarkable details some struck Flora in the first few minutes after her arrival, some came to light as time went on” (18). In the case of Flora, travel signals an encounter with the other and the uncanny world. Suddenly, she turns into an intruder just like Blenkins and Lyndall’s stranger in Schreiner’s novel. Losing her confidence and assertiveness in her own birthday party, Flora acts differently in this fantasy world. Her encounter with the other situates her in a new position in which she is ‘othered’ by the majority: “Every single boy and every single girl stared hard at Flora and went on staring: but not one of them offered her a chair, or a cup of tea, or anything else whatever. She grew very red and uncomfortable under so many pairs of staring eyes” (22).

With the imagery of the reflections of mirrors in the party room, her birthday party in the real world is juxtaposed to this similar uncanny birthday party in the fantasy world (24). “She is displaced from the center to the periphery” (Briggs, “Speaking” 220). As Rossetti also suggests in her letter to Alexander Macmillan, Flora encounters her speaking likeness with the image of the spoiled, assertive birthday Queen, who is also a reflection of the Queen of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland or the Red Queen in Through the Looking Glass. As she keeps repeating “You shan’t, they’re mine” and “it’s my birthday, and everything is mine,” the reader is reminded of the spoiled Flora before entering the fantasy world. Because she is not allowed to eat any of the food on the table, “[t]he birthday Queen, reflected over and over again in five hundred mirrors, looked frightful … [and] Flora’s fifty million-fold face appeared flushed and angry” (26). After the birthday party, boys and girls play two weird and cruel games called Hunt the Puncushion, in which they stick needles to the pincushion, that is, Flora, and Self Help, in which “the boys were
players and the girls were played” (36). Once again, Flora has to adjust to this new code of game and rewrite the rules of the game. Her voyage in the fantasy land comes to an end when all the other guests of the party build a house around Flora increasing the nightmarish aspect of her dream (40).

Throughout this adventure, Flora encounters the unfamiliar, adjusts herself to the new environment and learns a lesson. Her adventure-seeking part diminishes and she turns into a home-seeking wanderer, or a centripetal hero as David Adams describes. From a Homeric epic heroine, she becomes a Dantean hero in which the homecoming story overshadows the adventure-seeking part (Adams 26-7). After breaking the walls of the brick house, she is happy to be back at home: “Such dear familiar sights and sounds told Flora that she was sitting safe within the home precincts” (47). Unlike Schreiner’s Lyndall, she is comforted by the familiar surroundings on her homecoming. Therefore, for Flora, the feeling of familiarity and the loss of discomfort is what matters at the end of the travel.

The case of Edith and her expedition are apparently very different from that of Flora’s and Maggie’s. Unlike the other two protagonists, she neither goes on a fantastical journey nor walks through a forest to complete a task. One reason why Knoepflmacher labels her situation as being in purgatory is that she is in a dubious and static situation where she literally stays but goes through a maturation process. Upon the request of the nieces, the aunt starts telling the story of the frog, which cannot boil the kettle; the story that Susan narrates to the kids at the birthday party in the first story. In line with Flora’s story, Edith’s story opens with an idyllic beginning in which the table is set with lots of food for an afternoon party: “The loving mother had planned a treat her family. A party of friends and relations were to assemble in the beech-wood, and

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51 *Self-Help* is the name of Samuel Smiles’s book published in 1859. Being a book about education and nationalism, *Self-Help* carries ideas that support the British imperialist expansion (Brantlinger 40-41). Rossetti probably pokes fun at Smiles’s book by using the title as the name of a play for children.
partake of a gypsy-tea” (52). As the servants and the cook are busy with preparing the food for the party, Edith takes out the kettle into the woods so as to light fire and boil water for tea.

Unlike the physical or imaginary explorations of Flora and Maggie, Edith is the most static character. Her only short physical wandering is when she goes to the forest and attempts to light a fire with her animal friends. In the case of Edith, the beech-wood, although it is by the side of the house, represents the adventure-seeker/home-deserter side of Edith. Being in the purgatory, she does not really complete her journey. Unlike Flora, she does not utilize her imagination in this journey nor does she abandon home completely. It does not turn out to be a world of fantasy. Also, Edith does not really encounter the temptations and dangers that Maggie meets on her journey in the forest. Given that the beech-wood is right by her house, Edith does not go further away home.

Accompanied by a group of animals - a dog, a cat, a cockatoo, a squirrel, two pigeons, a mole, a toad, two hedgehogs and finally a frog -, Edith has two failed attempts of striking matches. Edith’s journey is linked with her maturation process as well. In that sense, she is closer to the protagonists of the Victorian female Bildungsroman where women go through a process of growing. However, as an ironic reading of the Victorian Bildungsroman, Edith’s story does not end in achievement: “Edith’s situation had now become, as it seems to me, neither pleasant nor dignified. She had volunteered to boil a kettle, and could not succeed even in lighting a fire. Her relations, friends, and other natural enemies, would be arriving, and would triumph over her” (60). Due to her failure at the end, she has to re-adjust and re-define herself as a girl or an adolescent. Edith lives through neither the hellish nightmare of Flora nor the utopic heavenly home-coming of Maggie. The didactic tone in Edith’s story hints us about the possibilities of a revision made by the aunt on purpose in order to teach a lesson for her nieces. However, Edith is
revealed as the incapable little girl who cannot even light a fire and her position becomes more ironic when we keep in mind the capable and mature protagonists of the female *Bildungsroman* such as Aurora Leigh, Jane Eyre, and Lyndall.

Out of the three wandering heroines of Rossetti, Maggie is the most Homeric one in that she goes on a physical journey full of temptations and returns home. As Despotopoulou and Briggs argue, she is the outstanding one as the only poor heroine of the narrative. Helping her adoptive grandmother Old Dame Margaret in her shop, Maggie volunteers to go to doctor’s house to take the parcels that doctor’s young ladies left behind (74). Despite her grandmother’s reluctance to send her into the dark woods, Maggie is motivated to take the journey in order to see the Christmas tree in the doctor’s house. However, her voyage includes a set of temptations and risks. As she sets out from the shop with her basket and red cloak, she encounters the cold weather that “nipped her fingers and ears, and little pug-nose” (75). At first, she sees a group of girls and boys playing a game. They are the children of the birthday party who play “Hunt the Pincushion” and “Self Help” in the first story (78). As she successfully by-passes them, she meets the “Mouth-Boy,” who begs for food from her basket (84). Despite his insistence for taking the food in Maggie’s basket, she refuses to give him any and indicates that she is also hungry but also honest enough not to eat from the basket (86). Maggie’s encounter with the Mouth-Boy is reminiscent of a similar haunting and animalistic imagery that Rossetti uses in *Goblin Market*. Similar to Maggie, Laura and Lizzie are harassed by the merchants: “The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste/ In tones as smooth as honey,/ The cat-faced purr’d,/ The rat-paced spoke a word/ Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard:/ One parrot-voiced and jolly/ Cried ‘Pretty Goblin’ still for ‘Pretty Polly;’/ One whistled like a bird/” (3-4). However, as Maggie succeeds neglecting the Mouth-Boy and other possible sexual and threatening
temptations, Laura and Lizzie fall victim to them. Despite being “[h]ungry and tired, [Maggie] lost all spirit, and plodded laggingly forward, longing for her journey’s end, but without energy enough to walk fast” (Speaking 87). Finally, as she is about to finish her tiring and wearisome journey, she encounters a group of sleeping people but at the last moment defers taking a nap as she remembers the parcel in the basket. However, as she arrives at the doctor’s house, she is disillusioned by the brief “thank you.” Unable to see the Christmas tree and abandoned outside the doctor’s house, Maggie now has to take the journey back home. On her return journey, she realizes that the playing children, the Mouth-Boy and the sleepers are gone. Moreover, she rescues a pigeon, a kitten, and a puppy and becomes a surrogate parent for the dying animals just as her caring grandmother did for her. Just like Flora, she is welcomed back in her house:

Then at last once more she mounted a door-step and rang a door-bell, but this time they were the familiar bell and step of home. So now when the door opened she was received, not with mere ‘Thank you,’ but with a loving welcoming hug; and not only what she carried, but she herself also found plenty of light and warmth awaiting all arrivals, in a curtained parlour set out for tea. (94-5)

With the homecoming of Maggie, Speaking Likenesses ends without referring back to the aunt and her nieces. When she accomplishes the task and returns victoriously, the frame tale becomes redundant since the home-coming of the epic heroine is sufficient for an ending of the book. The bond between Maggie and her foster grandmother is highlighted once she is at home. Her homecoming is stressed through the re-uniting of her surrogate family. Similarly, in Goblin Market, Rossetti closes the journey of Laura and Lizzie through her emphasis of the sisterhood,
which is recovered despite the breach: “But poison in the blood:/ … / Would tell them how her sister stood/ In deadly peril to do her good,/ And win the fiery antidote:/ Then joining hands to little hands/ Would bid them cling together,/ ‘For there is no friend like a sister/ In calm or stormy weather;/ To cheer one on the tedious way,/ To fetch one if one goes astray,/ To lift one if one totters down,/ To strengthen whilst one stands’” (16). Similar to the homecomings of an epic hero and Maggie, Laura and Lizzie re-unite through sisterly bonding, though it is not clear whether they are related through blood.

In contrast to Flora and Edith, Maggie stands out as a Homeric hero since her journey scheme displays parallels to the epic hero. First, she willingly goes for a quest and looks for adventure. Despite the home-seeker aspect of Odysseus, his deliberate stray from home and thirst for adventure are apparent when he boldly tells his real name to Polyphemus and listens to the Sirens. Secondly, Maggie overcomes the temptations: the children playing “Self Help”, the Mouth Boy, and the sleeping people. The second and the third distractions of Maggie are analogous to the greed of Cyclops and the drowsiness of Lotus-Eaters in the *The Odyssey*. Finally, she finishes the task and returns home victoriously like a Greek soldier who won glory at Trojan War. As Flora and Edith become aware of an unfamiliar uncanny world, Maggie actually lives through it. Maggie’s story is the most realistic one since she is the poorest girl among the three protagonists. Since her living conditions and life style are different than Flora’s and Edith’s, she becomes the idealized utopic hero who defeats the obstacles. Out of these three travelers, Maggie is the only one who is rewarded for her sense of duty (Marsh 422). As Auerbach and Knoepflmacher further state, “Maggie’s joyful return to her grandmother’s warmth is less a conventional happy ending than a celestial welcome” (322). The grandmother welcomes Maggie and together with the animals she has saved and they make a happy family.
The fact that the story takes place in Christmas time emphasizes the motif of building a family. In a similar way, Odysseus rebuilds his family by recovering Penelope and his son. As a paradigm of a Homeric heroine, Maggie is analogous to Gregory in Schreiner’s novel. Despite the fact that Gregory does not return victoriously due to the death of Lyndall, he has similar child-like aspirations and thirst for *kleos* at the beginning of his journey. However, unlike Maggie, his *nostos* does not end in success and a happy re-union with his *oikos*.

In addition to the imaginary journey of Flora, Edith’s journey towards maturation and Maggie’s physical journey in the forest, a fourth type of journey in *Speaking Likenesses* occurs when five nieces wander through the stories as the aunt narrates them. With their comments and questions about the stories, they help the aunt rewrite the stories, lessening her authority as the storyteller. Moreover, the aunt does not allow them to sit idly and listen. She demands them to be active story-listeners and to embark on this metaphorical journey together with her. As they ask her to tell – or rather rewrite – Susan’s story, she replies: “I will try, on condition you all help me with my sewing” (49). As she takes them to three different settings, the nieces are willing to voyage through the lives of Flora, Edith, and Maggie.

The readers of Rossetti can be compared to Em in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*. Just like Rossetti’s readers, Em listens to the stories of Lyndall, Waldo, and Gregory. She is the only female adolescent figure who stays at home and chooses to be a less active character of the novel. The fact that she never travels does not locate her in a less mature position. As the title of Chapter 7 suggests, “Waldo goes out to taste life, and Em stays at home and tastes it” (223). Having lost her two best friends and her fiancé, Gregory, Em has to travel – although statically – so as to adapt herself to the new circumstances. Her position as a traveler is
very different from the other six travelers (Bonaparte Blenkins, Waldo’s stranger, Lyndall’s stranger, Gregory, Waldo, and Lyndall) since she listens to the stories narrated by the voyagers.

In *Speaking Likenesses*, there are four modes of travel that challenge the concept of wandering. With Flora, the journey starts in a fantasy land. However, as we end up with Maggie’s story, the realistic tone of the story reveals. Through Maggie, the reader also completes her journey from fantasy to realism. The reader, then, - just like the nieces - goes through a metaphorical journey of listening and contributing to the stories. Through the expedition of the audience, the metatextual aspect of the narrative is revealed. As the aunt asks them to engage in any kind of labor (sewing, mending etc.), they foreground their creativity more than feminine procreativity. Not only do the nieces work as they listen but also they contribute to the story with their comments and questions and rewrite it at the same time. For instance, they are the ones who point out that the playing children that Maggie encounters in the forest are the cruel children of Flora’s nightmare (78, 81).

In addition to this, the nieces/readers are demanding. They have the power to partially control and divert the stories. Despite the criticism on the pre-dominance of the aunt as the storyteller, I argue that the nieces have some part of the control as the burgeoning writers of the tales (8, 49, 70). For instance, after Flora’s story, they demand their aunt to tell the story of the frog that Susan tells – but we do not hear – to the attendees of Flora’s birthday party. When she objects that she does not know the story, the nieces tell her to try as if they already know that she will make up the stories anyway:

“Oh, but you know it, Aunt”
“No, indeed, I do not. I can imagine reasons why a frog would not and should not boil a kettle, but I never heard any such stated.”

“Oh, but try. You know, Aunt, you are always telling us to try.” (49).

Likewise, they ask for a winter story after the story of Edith telling that both Flora and Edith stories are similar (70). Thus, upon the request of the readers, the storyteller narrates a very different story from the other two. In that sense, the readers/nieces share the authority to narrate and rewrite the story with the aunt. Their exploration among the stories is never an idle journey but a creative one. Similarly, Em in *The Story of an African Farm* manipulates the way Waldo writes and has him stop writing a letter to Lyndall (266).

Just as in *The Story of an African Farm*, the strong juxtaposition between creative and procreative capabilities of women in *Speaking Likenesses* takes place. As the aunt aims to bolster the creativity of her nieces, the procreative abilities seem to diminish. Smulders claims that the elderly aunt has no longer her procreative capabilities (121-122). Given that the readers are also still adolescents, they foreground their burgeoning power of storytelling as opposed to their procreativity. Throughout *Speaking Likenesses* and *The Story of an African Farm*, the creativity and the act of retelling trumps the procreative powers of the protagonists. The emphasis on orphanhood and adoption in both narratives hint at the lack of direct mother-daughter relationship between the aunt and the nieces in *Speaking Likenesses*. Except for Flora’s, we do not see the mothers of the characters. The final story underlines that the blood relationship is not necessary as Maggie is adopted by Dame Margaret and she adopts the orphan animals on her way back home. Likewise, the three children Em, Waldo, and Lyndall are motherless in *The Story of an African Farm*. *Speaking Likenesses* uses this emphasis on non-blood relations and
applies them to the stories as well. As there is no real mother-daughter relationship in the book except for Flora, there is no definite pre-text and adaptation relation as well. For example, instead of a mother-daughter relationship, there are relations between aunt-nieces, adoptive grandmother-orphan granddaughter, nurse-girl, sister-sister. The relations are more diverse but are in no way weaker than the mother-daughter relationship. I suggest that this idea is also apparent in the narrative’s treatment of previous stories and the storytelling tradition. For instance, Flora’s story might be considered as an adaptation of Alice or any other post-Alice adaptation. The intratextual references in the stories underline their similarity to them and difference from them.\footnote{In the first story, Susan narrates the story of the frog who cannot boil the kettle reminiscent of Edith’s story. In the last one, Maggie encounters the playing children of first story. In Old Dame Margaret’s shop, we find Flora and Edith’s toys.} The aunt gives a quotation from *Arabian Nights* and assuming the role of Shahrazad, she promises that “each story [is] … more beautiful than the other” (72). Likewise, the stories are not direct adaptations of *The Odyssey* or a Victorian *Bildungsroman*. However, with different modes of wandering and four types of wandering female heroines, *Speaking Likenesses* carries Dantean and Homeric intertexts. Although there are no direct allusions to *The Odyssey*, the narrative carries an anti-epic undercurrent by teasing the voyager figure. Discussed within the framework of the Victorian era, *Speaking Likenesses* is the ironic adaptation of the reworked wandering female figure of the Victorian novel as well.

In *Christina Rossetti Revisited*, Sharon Smulders claims that *Speaking Likenesses* is full of irony. Laying out the ironic references in the play such as Flora’s and Edith’s stories and the game “Self-Help” as a parody Samuel Smiles (116), she underlines that this ironic aspect is linked to the rewriting and storytelling. Smulders further highlights that the use of irony is connected to the metatextual aspect of the story. As Flora encounters her speaking likeness embodied in the spoiled birthday queen, Edith’s extreme confidence at the beginning shatters
when she cannot even strike a single match. The fact that nothing really happens in Edith’s story makes it more ironic subverting the reader’s expectations (Smulders 119). With her red cap and basket, Maggie turns out to be an ironic adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* in her homecoming story. Likewise, the nieces correct and edit the stories of the aunt by limiting her authority as the teller of tales. Ironically, they become the storytellers as they gain power and recreate the narratives.

*Speaking Likenesses* should not only be read as a post-Alice book but it has definite allusions to the other Victorian classics (Briggs, “Speaking” 229). The female voyager in this case is not only the mock-epic heroine, who teases the classical epic tradition, but also the ironic rewriting of her contemporary female wanderers. Rossetti approaches this newly emerging wandering figure in a mocking way. For instance, as Flora’s idyllic beginning pokes fun at Alice, Edith’s strange situation becomes funnier. *Speaking Likenesses* is reflective of the Victorian enthusiasm for Greek culture, adventure and expedition. As the interest in the female epic tradition and female wandering heroes emerge among Victorian women writers, Christina Rossetti ventures to write her “small and local narratives” – in Lyotard’s terms. Her four little wandering heroines not only mock the wandering classical epic heroes but also present an alternative to the emerging genre of the Victorian female Bildungsroman. In that sense, *Speaking Likenesses* is not only critical of the canonical epic but also doubtful about an epic’s Victorian adaptations. Defying classical literature and questioning the topical debates about it, *Speaking Likenesses* stands out as a text, which utilizes rewriting to be able to demonstrate other possible forms of travel and wandering heroes; as a text, which aims to reconcile the continuous wandering between nostalgia and progress and the source text and its adaptation.
PART II

Travelling Across Time and Texts: Rewriting of Travel in Post-Shahrazadic Women’s Writing from the Middle East
My discussion of two Victorian texts in Part I addresses questions of colonialism and imperialism, set within the frame of gender. Thus, in *The Story of an African Farm*, Olive Schreiner raises the question of anti-colonialism within the boundaries of New Woman Fiction and precipitates a new post-colonial fiction narrating not only the dream of possible decolonization of South Africa, but also the possible liberation of women living in a patriarchal society. Though more subtle than Schreiner, Christina Rossetti touches upon the question of colonialism with her word-play on Samuel Smiles’s book *Self-Help* and her re-visioning of colonial adventure stories. She incorporates her anti-colonial and anti-imperialist position by creating a mock-epic in *Speaking Likenesses*.

In Part II, I turn to “Anglophone postcolonial” literature, a term that covers a vast geography (South Asia, Caribbean, West and South Africa, Australia, and the Middle East) and includes a large number of canonical writers such as Amitav Ghosh, J.M. Coetzee, Derek Walcott, Wole Soyinka, and Chinua Achebe. In *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989), Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin argue that the Anglophone post-colonial authors inevitably “write back” to the empire with or without substantial reference to previous writers and coin the term “writing back” as a sibling term for “adaptation.” Defiance about British imperialism enables a re-assessment of the colonial cultural and literary tradition. The concept of the writing back to empire signals a challenge to the canonical texts; at the same time, however, it displays a sense of allegiance to and familiarity with the British cultural tradition.

Critics have been drawn to the male writers of the postcolonial world, many of whom deliberately allude to canonical works of the Western tradition. Out of the five male canonical Anglophone writers listed above, Walcott, Achebe, and Soyinka compose literary works that

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53 See Carstensen, Deckard, Mehigan, Jeifo, Thieme.
deliberately allude to other canonical works from the Western tradition. In addition to the globally acknowledged *Omeros* (1990), Walcott’s lesser-known play *Pantomime* (1978) reverses the relationship between Robinson Crusoe and Friday by utilizing the Hegelian master-slave dialect and making them appear dependent on one another. Similarly, Soyinka pays his due respect to the ancient Greek tradition with *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) and the allusion to William Butler Yeats’s poem “Second Coming” is apparent in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

Amitav Ghosh, however, writes back to the empire by raising general questions about colonialism, displaying various forms of travel and cross-cultural encounters, and foregrounding the act of writing as a savior for victims. As in the cases of the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and Nirmal in *The Hungry Tide* (2005), writing provides a venue to announce atrocities to the world and draw attention to the victims of colonialism. Moreover, in his latest ongoing Ibis trilogy, Ghosh travels back in time and writes Neo-Victorian novels in *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *River of Smoke* (2011).

In Ghosh’s postcolonial novels, the act of writing works together the idea of travel and re-visiting the colonial past.

Within the tradition of male postcolonial writers from the Anglophone world, J.M. Coetzee has a unique and controversial place due to his ambiguous position as a white male writer in pre- and post-apartheid South Africa. Re-conceptualizing Joyce’s *Ulysses* through the eyes of a fictional woman writer Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee presents a female traveler and a writer figure in *Elizabeth Costello* (2003). As a re-writer of previous texts, Elizabeth Costello loses her belief in literature and puts more emphasis on humanitarian action; she gives lectures

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54 Together with Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love*, Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* is acknowledged as one of the first examples of postcolonial Neo-Victorian fiction in Heilmann and Llewelyn’s anthology *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century 1999-2009.*
rather than writes fictional works. The last chapter “At the Gate” is akin to Kafka’s *Before the Law*. In this dream-like lesson without a lecture, Costello arrives at a gulag-like camp where she is asked to make a statement about what she believes. As the writer of many novels and speeches, she finds it hard to write a statement. Finally, she defines herself as such: “I am a writer, a trader in fictions. [...] I maintain beliefs only provisionally: fixed beliefs would stand in my way. I change my beliefs as I change my habitation or my clothes according to my needs” (195).

Strong references to the power of literature and the impact of storytelling in creating an equal world dominate Coetzee’s novel. Labeling herself as the “secretary of the invisible,” Costello defends her position as embracing all beings: “I am open to all voices, not just the voices of the murdered and violated. … If it is their murderers and violators who choose to summon me instead, to use me and speak through me, I will not close my ears to them, I will not judge them” (204). Through the help of her travels, she underlines her position as a writer who establishes connections among texts, human beings, and other species.

By taking the role of a woman writer and reading the lectures in the novel - as if he were Elizabeth Costello the writer -, Coetzee destabilizes the text’s gender dynamics. As Elizabeth Wilson discusses in “The Invisible Flaneuse,” the traveler, who is away from his or her home, will eventually have fluid gender boundaries as the traveler, possibly a colonialist, and will no longer have strong affiliation to the Empire, masculinity, and colonial ambitions. According to Wilson, “in the labyrinth, the flaneur effaces himself, becomes passive, feminine” and no longer

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55 Elizabeth Costello is renowned for her adaptation of Molly Bloom in Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Her most famous book *The House on Eccles Street* is the life of Molly Bloom. Coetzee probably modeled the figure of Elizabeth Costello on the Irish writer Peter Costello, who wrote a fictional novel on the life of Leopold Bloom. See Costello, Peter. Rather than writing original stories, Costello reworks a former text that had adapted another text and underlines the inevitable influence of texts. Moreover, Elizabeth Costello’s famous novel makes links with the Homeric text. As a woman writer and traveler, she sets an example to the amalgam of Odyssey and Shahrazad figures discussed in this study.
has strict gender codes of masculinity and femininity (110). In a similar fashion, the symbiotic relationship between Costello and Coetzee is highlighted in the novel reminding us of the possible interchangeable relationship between Odysseus and Shahrazad. Building on Costello’s belief in sympathetic imagination, Heather Walton argues that Coetzee claims to share a similar bond with Costello. In relation to Coetzee’s writing from the perspective of a woman, Walton writes:

> Literature does truth differently and it cannot manifest its revelations without fault. … Yes, when a man writes as a woman, he employs imagination rather than experience and they are not the same. Yes, authors achieve their ends by borrowing, impersonating, mirroring and metamorphosis. But it is substitution, miscegenation and artful deceptions that constitute every literary text. This is what literature is. (286)

Coetzee’s novel *Elizabeth Costello* and his challenge to strict gender boundaries presents a unique perspective – a viewpoint that questions a strictly-defined-by-gender attitude and paves the way for a re-visioning of the relation between writing and gender within postcolonial male writing. A similar destabilization of gender roles occurs when Gregory attempts to behave in the way Lyndall acts through his cross-gender dressing in *The Story of an African Farm*, or when Odysseus cries for Penelope and is soothed by Calypso in *The Odyssey*, or when Shahrazad takes the upper hand and controls actions of Shahriyar in *One Thousand and One Nights*. In line with the canonical male writers from the Anglophone world, by destabilizing the gender roles through the act of travel, women writers from the Anglophone world respond not only to the male writers but also to the texts that are rewritten against the canon.
The figures of Odysseus and Shahrazad have also been influential for women writers from the Middle East as they engage in writing in the period of post-canonicity and post-classicism. Their work, however, received much less attention. The Homeric tradition in the post-Shahrazadic period provides the link between the colonial and the postcolonial world adapting the Western allusions to a familiar realm. Similarly, Shahrazad becomes a tool to reclaim a local voice for Middle Eastern women writers. By establishing a loose link between the two legendary figures, Susanne Enderwitz draws attention to the Odyssean undercurrents in the story of Sindbad in *One Thousand and One Nights* (262). Moreover, she claims that Shahrazad has embodied multiple roles: the heroine, the narrator, and the woman. These multiple roles allow her to find a large group of followers and admirers among contemporary writers (262). Malti-Douglas also foregrounds the significance of the translations made by Western writers as one of the reasons for Shahrazad’s popularity. (“Shahrazad” 41). Similarly, women writers writing in the post-Shahrazadic tradition embrace an intercultural dialogue and stress the acts of writing and journey.

The second part of this study focuses on the reworking of the figures of Odysseus and Shahrazad from the perspective of Anglophone postcolonial literature written by Middle Eastern women writers. As in Part I, this section includes two chapters: one on Ahdaf Soueif and the other on Güneli Gün. Egyptian Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love*, a Neo-Victorian postcolonial novel, questions colonialism by alluding to the tradition of women travelers in the Victorian period. Written in the form of a *Bildungsroman* and a female epic, *The Map of Love* connects to the Victorian female novel of development genre, and thus to Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*. Turkish-American writer Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad*, a mock-epic and a picaresque novel, emphasizes the act of “writing back” with her allusions to Shahrazad and
Homer along with other allusions to writers from the Western world and references to traditional Turkish culture. Narrating the travel of an adolescent girl who listens to stories along the way, *On the Road to Baghdad* parallels Victorian children’s stories written in the post-Alice tradition, thus speaking to Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*.

CHAPTER 3

Haunted by the Past: Spatial, Temporal, and Metatextual Travel in Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love*
As a writer interested in nineteenth-century canonical European literature, Ahdaf Soueif emphasizes rewriting and the act of re-visioning the past by bringing together two historical periods in *The Map of Love*. She challenges the conventional definition of travel by adding a third dimension, travel through time: the characters in the present travel through reading letters and memoirs into the past, where another layer of travel also takes place. Moreover, Soueif introduces metatextual travel, in which writing becomes a vehicle. This chapter includes three sections: The first part gives theoretical and informational background on Neo-Victorian writing and questions why Neo-Victorian criticism only focuses on novels from the British isles. Despite the fact that Neo-Victorianism re-examines a period in which imperial endeavors were at their peak, critics have scarcely mentioned Neo-Victorian adaptations appearing in former colonies. The second section discusses Ahdaf Soueif as a hybrid, Westernized writer from the Middle East, as Amin Malak foregrounds her Anglophone education and her interest in Victorian novels and highlights her as a forerunner of Arab-Muslim feminist discourse (3, 23). As a reincarnated Shahrazad educated in the West, Soueif stands in a unique position between the two geographies: England and the Middle East. The final section provides a discussion of *The Map of Love* as a narrative that proposes a unique definition of metatextual travel.

I. The Neo-Victorian Fiction

Neo-Victorian is a literary and cultural sub-genre that reworks the Victorian and the Edwardian periods from a nostalgic perspective. This aesthetic and literary movement starts with the publication of two canonical novels: Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John

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56 See Malak (2000).
As Rhys’s novel gives the voice to “the mad woman in the attic,” it opens up new possibilities of thinking and displays undiscovered perspectives. Yet, becoming as canonical as Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* pays tribute to Bronte’s novel by making it even more popular and canonical than ever. The postmodern aspect of the novel starts with the narrative technique. Enabling multiple narrators to speak, the novel paves the way for the proliferation of voices and stories. In “Breaking the Master Narrative: Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*,” Ellen Friedman writes: “Having cast doubt on the credibility of the quest, the hero, the heroine, and the villain, Rhys succeeds in breaking the quest narrative that shapes Bronte’s novel. Rhys delegitimates this master narrative, and by implication, master narratives in general” (122).

Rhys’s novel has been influential in abandoning the master narratives of colonialism and patriarchy. The most-acknowledged criticism on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, underscores nineteenth-century literature as being part of the colonial process (243). Spivak further suggests that the readings of postcolonial novels are always bound within the reach of European novel. Therefore, Spivak tries “to extend, outside of the reach of the European novelistic tradition, the most powerful suggestion in *Wide Sargasso Sea*: that *Jane Eyre* can be read as the orchestration and staging of the self-immolation of Bertha Mason as ‘good wife’” (259). Spivak’s reading of three woman’s texts enables an expansion of the canon and the tradition.

57 The books cited here are the three recent core books on the criticism of Neo-Victorian fiction. Louisa Hadley’s *Neo-Victorian Fiction: The Victorians and Us* (2010) is a critical study on Neo-Victorian writers from Britain and Australia. After giving a historical background, Hadley devotes each chapter to a number of writers and their individual novels. Different from Hadley’s approach, Jeanette King discusses only female writers writing about the emancipation of women in *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (2005). Despite the fact that both writers cite Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the first example of Neo-Victorian fiction, they exclude the novel in their Anglo-Australian-oriented perspective. Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewelyn’s book *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twentieth Century* (2010), however, is unique in that it not only presents critiques of Neo-Victorian novels from the post-colonial world but also analyzes how the Victorians are challenged in the twenty-first century and moves beyond the existing criticism on Neo-Victorianism in the twentieth century.
Written three years after *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Fowles’s novel bolsters a sense of nostalgia and pays tribute to the nineteenth century by displaying a narrative that occurs in two different time periods. Adapted from Claire de Duras’s *Ourika* (1824), *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* offers double consciousness for two time periods and foregrounds the rivalry between *nostos* and *kleos*. After the emergence of the concept of Neo-Victorianism with the novels of Rhys and Fowles, A.S. Byatt and Sarah Waters, two contemporary British writers, follow the trend and create a large number of novels in Victorian settings. Writing novels that are placed between the nineteenth century and the contemporary moment, Byatt and Waters are the two current leading Neo-Victorian figures from England.

Following the works of Neo-Victorianists writing in the 60s and 70s, contemporary writers and popular culture also focus on this nostalgic perspective directed to the Victorians as well. Writing about the Victorians has turned into a new trend in the late twentieth, and the early twenty-first century. Julie Sanders also convincingly suggests that rewriting the Victorians has become a strong trope in the theory of adaptation. Today, contemporary fascination with the Victorians has dominated not only the literary arena but also the cinematic realm with contemporary movies representing the era, the latest being Jean-Marc Vallee’s *The Young Victoria* (2009) and Cary Fukunaga’s *Jane Eyre* (2011). Moreover, the artistic movement extends from the BBC adaptations of Victorian novels to the emerging of Victorian style furniture and clothing; and the flourishing of popular magazines such as *Victorian Homes* and *Victoria*. With its taste, aesthetics, style, and literature, the period has been revitalized in the last decades of the twentieth century.

59 Sanders devotes an entire chapter to the examples of Neo-Victorian fiction and film in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (120-137).
The beginning of the Neo-Victorian phenomenon dates back to the second half of the 1960s. However, critics such as Simon Joyce, Fiona Tolan, and Louisa Hadley also underscore the correspondence between the revival of Victorianism and the conservative Thatcher era in the 1980s. The re-installation and revival of Victorian values of prudence, conservatism, and austerity coincide with the values of the Thatcher era (Joyce 4; Tolan 9). Queen Victoria is re-born as Margaret Thatcher in the conservative atmosphere of 1980s (Hadley 3). Thatcher’s nostalgia for a romanticized past and advocacy of compulsory heterosexuality, family, welfare state, and stabilized economy are reflected in her promotion of the Victorian values as antitheses to the values of the 1980s (Mitchell 48). Moreover, the passing of the Local Government Act in 1986 made her notorious in aligning with the homophobic ideas of the nineteenth century (Mitchell 48).60 One of the significant movements of the Thatcher period focused on the teaching and analysis of history (Hadley 24). Similar to Victorianism, Thatcherism was preoccupied with history and re-conceptualizing the past. In the 1980s, there were two groups in disagreement on the teaching of history. Hadley writes: “The traditionalist camp recalls attempts to align history with scientific methodologies in its focus on facts and adoption of an evidential approach to the past. By contrast, the ‘new history’ camp emphasizes skills such as interpretation and empathy that … align history with a more imaginative, and therefore literary approach to the past” (24). Inspired by the discussions between the two groups, the Thatcher era precipitated a new fiction interested in an imaginative representation of the past. Besides, Thatcher’s interest in conservatism and laissez-faire economy fueled this interest and directed the writers to the nineteenth century, the century that values of the Thatcher period found a similar match.

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60 The Clause 28 of the Local Government Act “prevents local authorities from promoting homosexuality particularly as a pretended family relationship” (Mitchell 48). Moreover, Thatcher herself becomes the emblem and the protector of family and heterosexuality.
In order to come to terms with the past, the Neo-Victorianists hold double consciousness for an idealized but flawed past and a hopeless but corrective future. In *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century*, Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn draw attention to the double purpose of Neo-Victorian adaptations. They write: “Appropriating the dead writers of the nineteenth century in ways that imply they are only figments of a shared cultural imagination opens up new possibilities but also additional dimensions and tensions in relation to the authentic as presented in the Neo-Victorian text” (20). Adding a new color to the original Victorianism, the adaptations not only provided different perspectives but also fostered the re-emerging of the Victorian ideology. Just as the Victorians valued *nostos*, contemporary Neo-Victorian writers are interested in experiencing a sense of homecoming and uphold a similar concept of nostalgia. In her definition of the Neo-Victorian novel, Dana Shiller underlines two important aspects, retrospective and prospective, of the genre. The Neo-Victorian novel “is motivated by an essentially revisionist impulse to reconstruct the past by questioning the certitude of our historical knowledge” and “manage[s] to preserve and celebrate the Victorian past” (541). Basing her arguments on Shiller’s definition, Louise Hadley stresses the dual plot in neo-Victorian fiction as well (4). The double time periods and plots, as seen in *The French Lieutenant’s Wife* and *Possession*, place the texts and movies in a situation where they show an interest in the past and in the present (Hadley 6). The double consciousness (the nostalgic look into the past and the prospective ambitions for the future) is also adapted from the Victorian period as well as historical events and literary texts.

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61 In their introduction to *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction*, Rosario Aras and Patricia Pulham underline the fact that nostalgia was a key term for the Victorians (xiii-xiv). Simon Joyce names this nostalgic perspective as “the disease of looking back” (2). Both the Victorians and contemporary writers have carried this sense of nostalgia and cannot dissociate themselves from the past (Joyce 2).
In opposition to the critics such as Hadley and Tolan who label the Neo-Victorian adaptations as conservative, Kate Mitchell highlights the creative and constructive power of the adaptations. Mitchell writes: “[N]ostalgia is granted a subversive function, disrupting and diverting the gaze of traditional histories. Rather than falsify and trivialize the past, it produces multiple stories, at least some of which challenge and critique official historiographies and other dominant images of the past” (6). This subversive nostalgic act precipitates a re-conceptualization of official history and enables an open discussion for a colonial past. Moreover, supporting Mitchell’s argument, Dana Shiller attaches a stronger role to the Neo-Victorian adaptations from contemporary culture:

Neo-victorian fiction … is not simply a pastiche of popular mental images of Victoriana: corsets, overstuffed furniture, and highly polished silverware designed to satisfy contemporary nostalgia for a more opulent look. … The texts … emphasize the textualization of the past, demonstrating the great extent to which the late twentieth-century sense ‘Victorianism’ comes to us already emplotted by the nineteenth-century novel (545-6).

In addition to the appreciation of nostalgia, Neo-Victorianism has close relations to popular culture. As the genre of adaptation is notoriously known as a selling genre, adapters of the Victorian period aspire to become popular by alluding to works from another canonical period.\(^2\) Therefore, in the context of adaptations in general and the Neo-Victorian literature in particular,

\(^2\) Just as Rossetti is interested in the numbers that her book would sell, Neo-Victorianists deliberately choose the nineteenth century as their subject matter since writing about a popular topic brings more attention and guarantees the popularity of the book. In a similar way, Souef explicitly expresses that with The Map of Love she intends to write a best-seller (Burnett 102).
reworking the past is also about taking the present and the future into consideration. In *Victorian Afterlife*, John Kucich and Dianne Sadoff highlight that Neo-Victorian tendencies have strong marketing strategies and aims (xi). Dealing with a popular topic guarantees the sales and meets the demands of a larger reading public (Heilmann and Llewelyn 24, 27). The aspiration to have good sales and marketing strategies goes along with the idea of gaining *kleos*, as seen in the Victorians and the Homeric epics. As the Victorians are torn between *nóstos* through their glorified past and *kleos* through their colonial endeavors, the Neo-Victorianists are divided between their respect and admiration for the nineteenth century (*nóstos*) and for their materialistic and “symbolic capitals (*kleos*).”

The popularity of Neo-Victorianism among British and a few Australian writers has dominated the literary arena. The conservative values of the Victorian period still continue with the exclusion of postcolonial writers writing about the nineteenth century from the Neo-Victorian sub-genre. It is ironic that a popular trend that focuses on re-imagining a historical period marked by colonialism fails to popularize postcolonial Anglophone literature. The examples of Neo-Victorian novels from the former colonies have not been acknowledged for a long time. Only recently, has the term “postcolonial Neo-Victorian fiction” been endorsed in Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn’s anthology *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* published in 2011. The second chapter of the anthology has a subsection on postcolonial Neo-Victorian fiction including brief plot summaries of Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999), and Kate Pullinger’s *The Mistress of Nothing* (2009), respectively. Intrigued by nineteenth-century British culture and Egyptian tradition, Ahdaf Soueif stands in an intermediary position between writing back to the empire

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63 The term of symbolic capital is used by Bourdieu. See Bourdieu.
64 Kate Pullinger’s novel gives voice to Lucy Duff Gordon’s maid Sally, who is impregnated by Gordon’s Egyptian guide Omar and is sent back to England by Gordon for her disloyalty.
through her use of trope of Neo-Victorianism and securing her position among the contemporary women writers from the Anglophone Middle Eastern world. In *The Map of Love*, she balances both positions through a variety of characters who mature as they travel, by juxtaposing British and Egyptian historical figures from the period, and through her re-claiming of Shahrazad as a storyteller.

II. Ahdaf Soueif: A Neo-Victorian Writer from the Middle East

As the term Anglophone suggests, Anglophone Middle Eastern writers use the language of the Empire. In her introduction to *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, Layla Al Maleh explains why Anglophone Arab writers\(^{65}\) choose to write in English: “The writing of these authors differed greatly from that of their predecessors … in that they seemed to grow more out of the European tradition than the American literary scene of the time. Their works mostly reflected their British educational and intellectual formation, a phenomenon that inhibited the rise of a distinctly Arab-English style or register.” (7). A few lines later, she further claims that Arab writers are influenced by the Western culture as well: “The writers were not only inhibited by the English language that they used so reverently but also by Western culture in general, consequently seeing themselves and their people through the eyes of the Europeans, and presenting mostly a folkloric picture of life in the Arab world” (7). The term “Anglophone Middle Eastern literature,” not only signifies a choice of writing in English but also manifests a Western-oriented education that these writers have undergone.

\(^{65}\) Anglo-Arab and Anglophone Arab Literature are the terms used by the critics discussed in this study. However, I use Anglophone Middle Eastern writers or literatures highlighting a geographical space rather than an ethnic identity.
Al Maleh also focuses on women writers when she argues that the Anglo-Arab literature from the 1970s until present was mainly diasporic and feminist (14). Ahdaf Soeif, Fadia Faqir, Leila Aboulela, and Nawal al-Saadawi are the examples of writers who use the English language and have undergone a Western education. The experience of diaspora is also a result of their education in the West as these women writers were away from their homeland usually pursuing higher degrees in Britain (Al Maleh 14). The distance provides them a new venue to write and reconcile their educational agenda and experience in travelling away from their homelands. According to Al Maleh, “Distance from country of origin granted them breathing-space to reclaim their own narratives after they found freedom in hybridity and choice in acculturation. Literary and political activism was particularly attractive to them, perhaps because they found in the diaspora a site of absolute freedom, a free political and intellectual community that could accommodate the non-conformity of their views” (14). As Elizabeth Wilson also states the liberating aspect of voyage, the act of travelling combined with an educational purpose gives the writers from the Arab Diaspora a sense of freedom and an intellectual community.

In her introduction to *Contemporary Arab Women’s Autobiographical Writings*, Nawar Al-Hassan Golley situates Arab women’s autobiographical writing in the tradition of self-writing: “Arab women’s autobiographical writings are embedded in a long literary tradition of writing the self in Arab culture. Such writings relate directly to the relationship among self, society, and history; to established social values; and to the possible modes of personal, political, and intellectual exploration” (xxvi). Moving beyond Golley’s definition and her re-location of Anglo Arab women writers within the canon, I argue that placing women in the long tradition of male writing is no different than finding a place within the canon. As Anglophone Middle Eastern women writers seek to write about themselves, they inevitably refer back to their male
predecessors. Therefore, the acts of “writing to the canon” and “establishing a feminist tradition” go hand in hand. As Julie Sanders also argues, their struggle and writing against the canon is linked to their allegiance to the canon.

For women writers from the Middle East not only the language, the travel experience, and the valued tradition of *One Thousand and One Nights*, but also Shahrazad, the legendary storyteller of *One Thousand and One Nights*, serve as strong forces of inspiration. They have adopted the figure of Shahrazad as their literary sister since she is the epitome of a storyteller, a possible heroine of an early version of a *Bildungsroman*. In *Women’s Body, Women’s Word*, Fedwa Malti-Douglas argues that Shahrazad has a strong legacy in both the Western and the Middle Eastern writing (4). Similarly, many male and female writers from the Western and the non-Western world have reworked the legendary figure and twisted her situation according to their needs. Malti-Douglas further argues that “[a]ll of these views of Shahrazad and the frame have one overriding characteristics in common: they are prefeminist and pre-gender conscious” (13). However, as seen by the popularity of Shahrazad’s interpretations as a cunning, sexual, and feminist figure, women writers from the Middle East claim the right to fit Shahrazad into their own needs. Suzanne Gauch also agrees with the strong legacy that Shahrazad has maintained in the literary tradition. In *Liberating Shahrazad*, she lists the different forms that Shahrazad has taken throughout history:

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66 For Western male writers, see Alfred Lord Tennyson’s “Recollections of the Arabian Nights” (1830), Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade” (1845), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *New Arabian Nights* (1882), John Barth’s *Chimera* (1972) and *The Tidewater Tales* (1987). For a female writer who alludes to the figure, see A.S. Byatt’s *The Djinn in the Nightingale’s Eye* (1994).


68 For an eroticized reworking of the Shahrazad figure, see Richard Burton’s translation published in 1885.
Over the years, Shahrazad has evolved from chaste beauty to wily seductress, from prisoner to liberator and back again, her character shaped by European rivalries with the Ottoman Empire, colonial incursions into Islamic regions, anticolonial struggles, decolonization, globalization, and international terrorism. Despite many efforts, no one has been able to trace either her origins or those of her stories back to a single place and time. … Shahrazad’s history alone, therefore, everywhere belies the Orientalist contention that the Islamic world was a static and unchanging place. Now, in the postindependence era, new writers and artists, many of them from the Arab and Islamic worlds, reject the authority of those European translators and scholars who sought to embody Shahrazad as undifferentiated Oriental or Muslim woman, their work foregrounds Shahrazad … as a speaking agent whose stories have never ended and whose resolve had only increased in the face of both rising fundamentalisms and proliferating Western media images of Arab and Muslim women as silent, oppressed, exploited, and uneducated victims. (xi)

As Gauch argues, she has been very influential in both the Eastern and the Western world. Within the context of Anglophone Arab women writers, Shahrazad has become a symbol for storytelling and provides a venue for freedom. Moreover, since the narrator of One Thousand and One Nights has been popular among Western male writers, women writers from the Middle East regard her as a tool to write back to the Western male canon and to find a place in the tradition.
Ahdaf Soueif is one of the Anglophone writers who are interested in Shahrazad. Just as Shahrazad becomes a symbol for women writers from the Middle East, Soueif embraces the post-Shahrazadic tradition to emphasize the significance of storytelling and re-stating an alternative narrative. By highlighting Soueif’s link to Shahrazad figure, Susan Muaddi Darraj describes two protagonists of Soueif’s two best-known novels as being the contemporary adaptations of the literary figure. According to Darraj, Asya, the protagonist of *In the Eye of the Sun*, is a “literary cousin of Shahrazad” whereas Amal, one of the four protagonists of *The Map of Love*, is “a reincarnation of Shahrazad” (98, 102).  

Soueif’s novel *In the Eye of the Sun* narrates the story of an Egyptian woman who has a Westernized husband and pursues a degree in England. Dissatisfied with her Egyptian husband, Asya has an illicit love affair with an Englishman. Combining her adaptation of the nineteenth century and the use of the trope of Shahrazad, Soueif harmonizes her hybrid background and upbringing.

Ahdaf Soueif was born in Cairo in 1950 into a middle-class family. Her mother was a well-known professor of English literature at the American University in Cairo. Her life, similar to her protagonists, is marked by travels. Soueif moved to England when she was four and her mother was pursuing a Ph.D. degree in English. Until her early teens, Soueif was exposed to British literature and later on showed interest in the Victorian period (Burnett 99-102). She was first educated in Egypt but then, following her mother, she went to London to get a Ph.D. in English.

As a hybrid writer meandering between two cultures and two languages, Soueif is particularly significant in this study. First of all, she explicitly expresses her interest in female travelers. In an interview with Paula Burnett conducted at Brunel University in London on

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69 Emily Davis also names Amal “a modern day Shahrazad.” (23).
70 For a discussion of Asya’s travels, see Sinno.
February 28, 2000, Soueif expresses how she is fond of writing about travelling women and travel writing by women:

And then there’s a genre that I really am very interested in, which is travel writing, done by women, English women, mostly Victorian, and of course they are very varied, from people with very set, very colonial attitudes to people who were very broad-minded and opened themselves up to the culture they were coming to see, like Lucy Duff Gordon who ended up living there until she died. And you can see them changing as you go through the letters, you see a different character evolving, and I really like that whole genre. (102-3)

Lucy Duff Gordon, a Victorian traveler, has been a source of inspiration for Ahdaf Soueif. After living in Cape of Good Hope in what is now South Africa for several years, Gordon traveled to Egypt in 1862 and stayed in Egypt in a seven-year self-imposed exile. As a Victorian woman and a storyteller, she was interested in discovering the Greek heritage in Egypt. In her letters and journal entries, frequent allusions to the ancient Greece exist in Duff Gordon’s letters. For instance, when she describes the two Nubian women and their dresses, Gordon writes: “They are dressed in drapery like Greek statues, and are as perfect, but have hard, bold faces, and, though far handsomer, lack the charm of the Arab women” (62). Following her contemporaries, Gordon displays an admiration for the ancient Greek culture. In one of her journal entries, she mentions the Homeric elements that she has discovered in the Egyptian tradition: “There is the Homeric element in the religion here, the Prophet is a hero like Achilles, and like him directed by God – Allah instead of Athene” (147). Moreover, she compares herself to Odysseus. In a letter written
to her close friend Alick, Gordon composes: “I feel like the much travelled Odysseus, and have seen ‘villages and men,’ unlike him, however ‘my companions’ have neither grumbled nor deserted, though it is a bad business for them, having received their money at the rate of about twenty days’ pay, for which they must take me to Cairo” (326). In addition to her obsession with the ancient Greek culture and her tendency to become a female Odysseus, she also establishes similar connections between herself as a writer and the figure of Shahrazad (44, 47, 58, 78, 130, 307). When describing her situation, she alludes to *The Arabian Nights* and feels as if she lives the same experience. Some of the examples are as follows: “Dearest Mother. I write to you out of the real Arabian Nights” (44), “It is the reverse of all one’s former life when one sat in England and read of the East … and now I sit in the middle of it all, in the real, true Arabian Nights” (58), “If anyone tries to make you believe any bosh about civilization in Egypt, laugh at it. The real life and the real people are exactly as described in the most veracious of the books, the ‘Thousand and One Nights’” (78). As a woman traveler and storyteller showing an interest in both Odysseus and Shahrazad, Lucy Duff Gordon is the forerunner of Olive Schreiner and Christina Rossetti. Her juxtaposition of the Victorian era’s admiration for Homer and interest in the Orient makes her a precursor of the figure of the female wanderer and storyteller.

Similarly, Soueif’s unique juxtaposition of the Victorian period and the Middle East allows her to re-claim and liberate Shahrazad from her exoticized interpretation in the West. In her collection of essays called *Mezzaterra*, she categorizes Lucy Duff Gordon as located on this common ground occupying a liminal space between the West and the East (6). Adopting herself into the Egyptian culture, Gordon passes for an Egyptian woman. In “Navigating the Mezzaterra: Home, Harem and the Hybrid Family in Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love,*” Catherine Wynne
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contests Soueif’s definition of Gordon’s embracing Egyptian culture. Wynne suggests that Gordon’s tolerance for an intercultural union has its limits:

However, it is through the story of her maid – a story that is silenced in the published letters – that Gordon reveals her class and racial allegiances. When Sally Naldrett bore a child to Gordon’s servant Omar, Gordon packed maid and child back to England and retained her Egyptian servant. … Despite Gordon’s Arab ways and Arab character she refused to countenance the hybrid family. The son of Sally and Omar exposed the limits of Gordon’s intercultural encounter. By dismissing her maid, however, Gordon relinquished her English life and chose to ally herself with her Egyptian servant. Indeed, by disciplining Sally, … Gordon was policing the boundaries of the empire and purging her Egyptian home of the more visceral dimensions of cultural interaction. (60)

Similarly, Soueif establishes strong parallels between Lucy Duff Gordon and Anna when, for instance, Anna is not happy with her maid Emily’s reluctance to embrace Egyptian culture (96). Several critics discussed Soueif’s interest in Lucy Duff Gordon and Catherine Wynne particularly appreciates Soueif’s using Gordon’s letters in the novel. What attracts Wynne most is Soueif’s adaptation and appropriation of Gordon’s letters into the Egyptian context. Wynne writes: “Soueif’s point that English literature could only be truly appreciated and enjoyed after the departure of Britain as an occupying power offers an optimistic perspective, raising the question of how former colonised countries can relate to the history, literature and culture of empire” (65). Soueif has a unique way of looking at Neo-Victorianism. She not only appreciates the colonial culture and travelers like Lucy Duff Gordon and Anne Blunt but also displays her
own critique of the period through her characters. By formulating a genre “postcolonial Neo-Victorian,” she contributes to the canon and re-defines the Neo-Victorian genre at the same time.

Secondly, Soueif’s choice of language becomes important in this study. As a writer between two cultures and languages, Soueif mainly writes in English incorporating few Arabic words. On her use of English in writing, she states: “It was not a choice… I had assumed that I would write in Arabic. And I didn’t. The sentences kept coming in English, and what was happening was that dialogue came to me in Arabic but narrative came in English. … I don’t know why this happened. There could be several reasons. But one is that I was in England when I first learned to read” (99). In another interview with Jamal Mahjoub, she also underscores that she was surrounded by her mother’s library filled with books of English literature: “I went to London when I was four because my mother was doing a Ph.D. in English Literature. … We were there for three years. … I must have read all of English Literature before I was sixteen. I started reading Arabic fiction and poetry and so on in my teens, but I think my literary language had already chosen me by then” (Mahjoub 58).

Last but not least, Soueif is best-known for her keen attention to nineteenth-century literary tradition, especially Victorian women writers. In another interview, she lists George Eliot, Lev Tolstoy and Gustave Flaubert as the major novelists who influenced her (Massad 88). She explicitly states that she feels closer to the nineteenth century (Burnett 110). In her novels, her characters rework protagonists from the nineteenth century. For instance, Asya in In the Eye of the Sun (1992), is an Egyptian version of Madame Bovary (Davis paragraph 8). Moreover, Geoffrey Nash shows parallels between In the Eye of the Sun and George Eliot’s Middlemarch (67). Soueif explicitly states that she feels closer to the nineteenth century: “So I think what I

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71 For a review of Soueif’s use of two languages (writing in English and including Arabic words), see Albakry and Hancock; Butros.
would say is that I’m not bothered about whether I appear modern or not. I don’t mind being part of the nineteenth century, if you like. I like big novels that actually take you into a world, and give you all the details, and make you feel like you really know the characters” (Burnett 110).

Soueif’s curiosity about Victorian woman travelers and travelogue combined with her interest in contributing to the Middle Eastern feminist literary tradition places her in a significant position in this study. In *The Map of Love*, she synthesizes both traditions by creating a harmonious example of “postcolonial Neo-Victorian fiction,” a term coined by Heilmann and Lleweyn.

**III. The Map of Love as a postcolonial Neo-Victorian novel**

Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* tells the story of four travelling women whose lives intersect. The novel opens with an American woman Isabel Parkman, who finds an old trunk that contains the journals and personal belongings of her great grandmother, Anna Winterbourne. Determined to learn more about Anna, Isabel first finds a distant cousin in the US, Omar, and then travels to Egypt to meet Omar’s sister, Amal. *The Map of Love* has four traveling female protagonists: 1) Anna, a British widow, who travels to Egypt in the nineteenth century and marries an Egyptian man, Sharif al-Baroudi; 2) Isabel, her American great granddaughter, who traces Anna back to Egypt; 3) Layla, Sharif’s sister and Anna’s sister-in-law; and 4) Amal, an Egyptian woman, who is the granddaughter of Layla.

In *The Map of Love*, Soueif portraits the stories of four women protagonists who travel and (re)write at the same time. There is a complex geometry of relationships among two Egyptians, two people of British descent, two from the nineteenth century and two from the twentieth century. Set in two centuries, *The Map of Love* portrays Anna Winterbourne, a
Victorian woman who travels to Egypt like Lucy Duff Gordon. Through her stay in Egypt, she starts to see her homeland and colonial endeavors from a different perspective. A century later, her letters and journals are found by her great granddaughter Isabel, who journeys to Egypt to find out about Anna’s expedition. Focusing on different time periods, spaces, and writing styles, *The Map of Love* is a novel that is rooted in two different literary traditions; a Victorian romance and a travelogue, and a contemporary novel raising issues of cosmopolitanism, rewriting, and cross-cultural encounters. Anna’s writings have a significant impact on Isabel, who describes Anna as “writing across time” rather than “writing across space or culture.” In a letter written to Amal in Egypt, Isabel writes: “If people can write to each other across space, why can they not write across time too?” (468). With its four different protagonists who are connected through journals written across time, space and culture, *The Map of Love* re-defines the concept of travel by providing different forms of voyage such as temporal, spatial, and metatextual. In addition to the spatial and temporal travels that Isabel and Amal go through, the characters also experience cross-cultural and metatextual travels. The act of travelling works together with the concept of rewriting as the novel reassesses previous readings and challenges them.

The first traveler Isabel sets out as an American woman interested in an exotic story in the Orient. Disillusioned with her life in Europe and her ex-husband, Amal first shows reticence to Isabel’s enthusiasm. Isabel is a stranger, an intruder like Blenkins and Lyndall’s stranger in *The Story of an African Farm* and Flora in *Speaking Likenesses*. However, as Amal discovers Anna’s journals, she grows an interest in her non-Egyptian relatives whereas Isabel falls in love with her non-Western relative Omar, Amal’s brother. As Isabel stays in Egypt and travels to small villages with Amal, she learns Arabic and cross-dresses as an Egyptian woman (165-6). Moreover, she emphasizes her Egyptian heritage through her name, which is the Western form of
the Egyptian goddess Isis (McDonald 166). Building a sisterly solidarity with Amal, who she hopes will become her future sister-in-law, Isabel reads Anna’s journals and re-imagines her journey. Tracing back her great grandmother’s route in Egypt, Isabel engages in a metanarrative experience, palimpsestous moment in which she overwrites Anna’s journey.

The second traveler, Amal, has recently retreated back to Cairo after living in Europe for years and has no intentions of travelling until Isabel arrives with the trunk. She writes: “It was later, much later, when the need to return was upon me and I yearned for the great, cool hall of our house in Tawasi” (119). At the beginning, she thinks that Anna is looking for a story in the Orient, an exotic experience: “I cannot help thinking that when she chose to step off the well-trodden paths of expatriate life, Anna must have secretly wanted something out of the ordinary to happen to her” (109). However, as Amal wanders through Anna’s journals, she changes her limited views on Anna’s travel to Egypt and feels much closer to her as if she is her mother: “I translated for [Isabel] passages from the Arabic newspaper cuttings. We spoke of time and love and family and loss. I took the journals and papers into my bedroom and read and reread Anna’s words. I almost knew them by heart. I hear her voice and see her in the miniature in the locket: the portrait of the mother she so much resembled” (11). On a visit to the family house in rural Egypt, Isabel and Amal take a journey. On their way to the large family house, they establish stronger bonds. Fed with up travelling, Amal takes the journey for Isabel’s sake. However, as time passes, she is interested in tracing Anna as well and joins Isabel in her metanarrative voyage. When they arrive at the family house, Isabel, who has never lived in the house, feels at home whereas Amal is more reticent about her own homecoming though she actually lived in the house as a child but vaguely remembers it. As Isabel lives her fake nostos that replaces that of
Amal’s, Amal, however, chooses to read the house as if she is perusing a description of a house in a novel.

In their spatial and temporal journey in reading Anna’s voyage, Amal and Isabel found a dubious relationship with Anna. On the one hand, they build up tangible connections with her. Fascinated with the past and Anna’s journals written from Egypt, Amal translates them to Isabel and starts writing her own book reflecting on Anna’s writing: “That is the beauty of the past; there it lies on the table: journals, pictures, a candle-glass, a few books of history. You leave it and come back to it and it waits for you – unchanged. You can turn back the pages, look again at the beginning. You can leaf forward and know the end. And you tell the story that they, the people who lived it, could only tell in part” (234). Building on a real figure, Amal acknowledges Anna’s existence as a writer and a traveler. On the other hand, Isabel and Amal talk about her as if she is a character from a novel and interpret her actions as if they are the members of a book club. As Davis also suggests, Amal enjoys reading Anna as if she is a protagonist in a British novel (27):

“How’s Anna doing?” Isabel asks.

“You’re out of touch,” I say.

“I am not. You said she’d gone to Egypt – come to Egypt. I’ve read the Alexandria bit.”

“Well, she’s in Cairo now, and she’s very much with the English set. The Agency and all that. The British embassy. She wants to learn Arabic.”

“Who’s she going to get to teach her?”

“I don’t know yet. James Barrington knows Arabic.”

“Has she found what she’s looking for – the Lewis stuff?”
“Only a little bit; in the Bazaar. But not really, no.”

“Will she? Find it?”

“I don’t know. I hope so. But she stays a long time, so she must have.”

“So, there’s a scene in the Bazaar?”

“Yes, complete with donkeys, and little old artisans and street cries and a frightened, disapproving lady’s maid and urchins yelling for baksheesh – “

“You’re making fun of me.”

“Only a little. And nicely.”

“You know, you are terribly like your brother.” (83)

Amal is haunted by Anna’s journals and her travels to Egypt. In *Spiritualism and Women’s Writing*, Tatiana Kontou underscores the dominance of ghost images and spirituality in Neo-Victorian fiction. Giving voice to the dead, she suggests: “They [Neo-Victorian fiction writers] tap into and construct an ‘afterlife’ that enriches our understanding of nineteenth-century society and culture; they alter our relationship with the past” (Kontou 5). Neo-Victorianism re-reads the past and builds up more tangible connections with the ghost images. Just as the Neo-Victorian novel has double consciousness of time as suggested earlier, it is also situated in an intermediary position between the material world and the haunting images of the past. Following Kontou, Kate Mitchell underlines how the Neo-Victorian narrative focuses on images of haunting:

As we shall see, a great many contemporary historical fictions that return to the Victorian era are preoccupied with images of ghosts and metaphors of haunting, especially

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72 The idea of meandering between the material world and the spiritual world is also discussed in relation to Olive Schreiner’s novels. See Ogede (1980).
positioning the fictional text as medium of the past… The ghost becomes a useful metaphor for charting a position for these novels between the positing of history as Presence, a locus of univocal meaning, and the ironic subversion or negation of the very possibility of historical knowledge. (35)

Similarly, Amal is preoccupied with a ghost image, Anna, who lived in a century apart from her and grew up in a different culture. In a way, she follows the path Anna traveled and traces the same interest in ghost images since Anna’s original intention was to understand her husband’s death.

The protagonist and the third traveler Anna Winterbourne’s expedition is originally intended for Sudan where her first husband Edward Winterbourne witnessed the atrocities done in Sudan by the British colonial officers. When her first husband dies of depression, she decides to take this voyage in an attempt to understand how her husband suffered in Sudan. Similar to Amal, she is haunted by a ghost and travels for his sake. However, on her way to Sudan, she stops in Cairo and realizes that Egypt is no different than Sudan when it is under Lord Cromwell’s colonial rule. In Egypt, she remembers Frederick Lewis’s harem paintings that she used to see at South Kensington Museum. Kidnapped by political agitators and released upon the realization that she is a woman, Anna finds herself in the house of her future husband, Sharif al-Baroudi, and thus her second journey within Egypt starts. Her experiences in Egypt and in the al-Baroudi house are the ventures of an orientalist traveler who searches for the image of the Orient at the beginning. In one of their conversations between Sharif and Anna, Sharif asks: “You came to look for that world you saw in your museum. And you have found it?” Anna replies: “In your house, monsieur” (216). However, later on, from an orientalist traveler, Anna transforms into a
voyager who tries to understand the local culture. At the beginning of her expedition, she gives a biased perspective when she is fascinated by the souks and the view of Cairo: “It is exactly as I have pictured it; the merchandise so abundant, the colours so bold, the smells so distinct – no, I had not pictured the smells – indeed could not have – but they are so of a piece with the whole scene: the shelves and shelves of aromatic oils, the sacks of herbs and spices, their necks rolled down to reveal small hills of smooth red henna, lumpy ginger stems, shiny black carob sticks, all letting off their spicy incensy perfume into the air” (my italics) (67). As a traveler looking for an exotic story, she is interested in knowing more about the culture: “I am hoping to learn a little more of native life here, although I must say I have no idea how to put that hope into actual form. But I feel it would be a little odd to come all the way to Egypt and learn nothing except more about your own compatriots” (71). Later on, Anna explains how travelling to Egypt has transformed her perspective of the Orient. Because she has to adapt to a new culture, she is forced to rewrite her previous perceptions of Egypt: “I would have remained within the world I knew. I would have seen things through my companions’ eyes, and my mind would have been too occupied in resisting their impressions to establish its own” (212).

During her stay in Egypt, Anna loosens her ties with her country and gender role. As time passes, she no longer wishes to join the meetings of Cairo society (69-70). She takes a more critical stance to the British Empire. Moreover, she cross-dresses as a man when she travels twice within Egypt. In the first short visit, she passes for a British man who wanders in order to have an exotic experience. In her second travel, she cross-dresses as an Egyptian woman since Sharif al-Baroudi does not allow her to travel alone in the desert. As she travels, strict gender roles are invalidated. Similar to Lyndall in *The Story of an African Farm*, she meanders between femininity and masculinity. After her return, she feels at home at the al-Baroudi house and no
longer enjoys spending time with her English friends: “As for our earlier return to the old Baroudi house, it was so like a homecoming that tears of joy were in my eyes” (235). Similar to Isabel, she experiences her own nostos and feels alienated from the British culture: “I am grown less and less comfortable with my British friends. Mr M and Mr. W both hold sympathetic opinions, indeed the former said only yesterday that we were ‘emasculating’ the Egyptian upper class to ensure they would be unfit to rule” (248).

Sharif’s sister Layla, the fourth narrator and traveler, lived in France with her husband and returned to Cairo after his death. Similar to Amal, she does not wish to leave Cairo. Rather, among the characters who trace metanarrative experiences, she narrates Anna’s travels from her own perspective. Interestingly, Layla’s journals are never discovered by Amal and Isabel but they are only accessible to the reader. For instance, the reader has access to the two different accounts of Anna and Layla’s first encounter thanks to their journals (134-5). Her travel experience is narrated indirectly and her narration is overshadowed by those of Amal and Anna. Layla serves as a foil to create an omniscient reader, who, hopefully, challenges the existing stories provided by Anna and Amal and reassesses the novel. In a sense, Layla appears as the pseudo-reader, who is asked to take an objective perspective. She appears as the pseudo-traveler imitating the position of the reader, who meanders among various stories and cultures. Similar to Em in Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm and the nieces in Rossetti’s Speaking Likenesses, Layla serves as a backdrop against the roles of the readers as they peruse the novel.

Under the shadow of the four strong women, two strong men, Sharif al-Baroudi and Amal’s brother Omar, play minor roles in The Map of Love. Despite the fact that Sharif is a strong political figure defying the British rule in Egypt, he takes a subordinate role in this female

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73 Amin Malak suggests that Anna’s journals and personal belongings in the trunk also travel together with the characters so as to enhance the theme of temporal travel (Muslim 138).
epic. Later on, at the end of the novel, he is re-born when Isabel and Omar name their son Sharif. Similar to Soueif’s paying homage to Duff Gordon and Shahrazad as her sisters, Isabel and Omar pay a similar tribute to their relative. Omar is set as a contemporary counterpart to Sharif reminiscent of the sisterly solidarity between Anna and Amal. Sharif and Omar complement each other mirroring the female solidarity among four women from different backgrounds and time periods. As a political activist and a writer of books on the Palestinian conflict, Omar is a figuration of Edward Said, whom Soueif admires (Davis p.9). Both Sharif and Omar share a fraternal solidarity in their political views and activism. The gender-divide in *The Map of Love* overcomes the generational gap among the characters. The century gap is bridged when Omar’s beliefs parallel Sharif’s and his son is named after Sharif.

In line with the four travelers, *The Map of Love* has four different narratives and narrators: 1) Anna’s journals 2) Amal’s rewriting and reflecting on Anna’s journals 3) Isabel’s story and 4) Layla’s account only accessible to the readers. The novel embodies a multiplicity of travelers, writers, narratives, and forms of journeys. In addition to the spatial travel that all characters go through (Anna’s and Isabel’s journeys to Egypt, Amal’s and Layla’s voyages to Europe), the characters experience temporal travels as Amal and Isabel go back in time to discover their roots. Faten Morsy highlights Soueif’s role “as a re-writer of history,” and states: “Lady Anna’s diaries and her correspondences with her friends back in England highlight her roles as a traveler/translator as she transforms or translates the cultural and political world of Egypt through her letters” (35). Thanks to her letters to her best friend and former father-in-law in England, Anna provides us with a panoramic view of British colonialism from the perspective of a Victorian woman. Presenting a British woman whose views on colonialism change not only through her first husband’s experiences in colonial Sudan but also through her travels and
passing for an Egyptian in the Middle East, *The Map of Love* stands out as a postcolonial novel – in terms of time frame – about the emergence of anti-colonial and independence movements in Egypt. In addition to the critique of British colonialism, the novel also foregrounds Egypt’s struggle to gain independence from the Ottoman imperial rule at the turn of the century. The historical events give the country no choice but nationalistic independence movement. With historical references to Lord Kitchener and Sudanese relations, Lord Cromwell’s rule in Egypt, Queen Victoria, Khedive Ismail Pasha, and Qasim Amin,74 *The Map of Love* challenges the official history. As Mariadele Boccardi puts it, Soueif traces history through the female members of an Anglo-Egyptian family, who happen to live side by side with historical characters (201-3).

As a postcolonial Neo-Victorian novel, *The Map of Love* places itself in a strictly historical context focusing on two important moments in history: the emergence of anti-colonial movements in the British colonies and the aftermath of colonialism in the pre-Islamophobic period of the twenty-first century. At the beginning of the novel, Anna’s first husband Edward travels to Sudan as if he is a character from Victorian adventure colonial stories: “‘He believed he was doing the right thing.’ And also, she thought, he wanted action, adventure, purpose, a mission… ‘I told him, though. I told him this was not an honest war. This was a war dreamed up by politicians, a war to please that widow so taken with her cockney Empire’” (30). In that sense, the purpose of his expedition is similar to those of the characters in Haggard’s novel as discussed in Chapter 1. When Anna’s first husband returns to England from Sudan he is depressed by the brutality he witnesses in Sudan. Anna writes: “Edward became much agitated and retired to his chamber. … It is now eight weeks since Edward returned from Soudan, and, I would have thought, time enough for him to grow well again, for all that ails his body, I now fear that worse

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74 Qasim Amin is an Egyptian intellectual who fought for women’s emancipation and Egypt’s independence from the British Empire. Amin Malak also argues that his ideas on his book *The Liberation of Women* are very close to the Victorian emphasis on the education of women (*Muslim* 143).
is a sickness of the spirit” (27-8). After Edward’s death, when she stops in Cairo, she writes: “My thoughts tonight keep turning to my dear Edward, for four years ago he made this very journey and saw the same shore that I have seen today and disembarked at the very port” (62).

The novel makes references to British colonial rule in Egypt, Lord Cromer and Ahmed Urabi Pasha’s nationalist revolt. Looking at the Victorian imperial period with a critical eye, Soueif takes a similar critical stance towards the village uprisings in Egypt in 1990s.

In addition to the spatial and temporal travels with references to historical figures, the protagonists also experience metatextual travel making allusions to fictional works and travelogues by shifting the boundary between fact and fiction. Soueif writes back to the tradition of travel writing when she reads an excerpt from Anna’s Thomas Cook book (209). With her allusions to Lucy Duff Gordon’s Letters from Egypt and Anne Blunt’s Pilgrimage to Nejd, Soueif pays tribute to the Victorian woman travelers who reflected a female view of the Orient and were supporters of Arab nationalism (Luo 85-86). Interested in Gordon and Blunt, Anna quotes from both travelogues and compares her experience to those of Gordon and Blunt. She writes: “At the Agency certainly they do not believe an Englishwoman should go about unchaperoned. But I have never heard of any harm befalling a lady travelling alone – and I cannot help feeling that the letters of Lady Duff Gordon give a truer glimpse into the Native mind than do all the speeches of the gentlemen of Chancery” (107). In addition to the travelogues, Amal alludes to Shahrazad as she reworks Anna’s journals. Writing a Neo-Victorian novel with fictional characters from the Middle East, Soueif shifts the conventional description of journey and quotes from Victorian women travelers and adapts Odysseus and Shahrazad. The metatextual travel combined with the epic proportions of the novel reminds the reader of the Homeric undercurrents in The Map of Love.
In line with the Homeric undercurrents in The Map of Love, the metaphor of weaving and the use of tapestry are especially significant in this context. The weaving motif and the tapestry signify the Penelope metaphor for Anna. As Anna weaves the tapestry, which depicts the family triangle Osiris, Isis, and Horus, she implicitly alludes to the family triangles of Odysseus, Penelope, Telemachus; Sharif, Anna, Nur; and finally to the closing triangle of Omar, Isabel, and baby Sharif completing the full cycle. By using the family symbol from Egyptian mythology, Anna not only displays her clear allegiance to Egyptian culture but also, as a Victorian woman, pays her due respect to the ancient Greek culture with Osiris-Isis (brother-sister, husband-wife) mirroring Zeus-Hera and with the weaving metaphor imitating Penelope who is waiting for her husband. In that sense, Anna is the female Odysseus who travels to new lands and is excited about the feeling of *kleos* and as a Penelope who waits for her husband’s return and weaves at the same time. Just as “Mabrouka and Hasna are stretching it [the tapestry] and sewing on the backing,” the three-piece tapestry stands out as a metaphor for pieces of texts and allusions – from Homer to *One Thousand and One Nights*, from Haggard’s adventure stories to Lucy Duff Gordon’s travels – which are being sewn together in Soueif’s novel (475).

In line with the three-piece tapestry motif, Soueif stitches together two popular genres of the period in her adaptation of the Victorian female *Bildungsroman*. Similar to Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*, Soueif’s novel narrates the stories of four women, each of who undergoes a transformation. Just like Lyndall, Em, and Waldo in Schreiner’s novel, Anna, Layla, Amal, and Isabel change and mature as they travel. Adapting the popular genre of Victorian *Bildungsroman*, Soueif writes her Neo-Victorian version of the coming-of-age novel. Similarly, through the stories of women who experience heroic adventures during their travels and encounters, the novel exemplifies a postmodern epic. As Susan Muaddi Darraj also argues, the
four sections of the book (A Beginning, An End of a Beginning, A Beginning of an End, and An Ending) “hint at the epic proportions and tremendous historic scope of the tale about to unravel” (101).

In line with its emphasis on travel and re-writing and its attempts to adapt epic and Bildungsroman into the contemporary context, The Map of Love focuses on the concept of literal, temporal and cultural translations. In his article, Wail S. Hassan foregrounds the emphasis on different forms of translations present in the novel: “The Map of Love is a paradigmatic translational novel because it enacts a poetics of translation on several levels – plot, theme, language, and discourse. The novel, in effect, offers a map of translation practices: from literal to literary translations, from domesticating to foreignizing translations, and from epistemically violent translations that pursue the will to power to the extremes of forgery and sacrilege to loving translations that surrender to the experience of alterity” (757). Building on Hassan’s article, I argue that a correlation between the different forms of travel and different forms of translations exists in The Map of Love and these forms of literal, temporal, and cultural translations are made possible thanks to the different forms of travels the characters go through. For instance, because Anna enjoys reading Duff Gordon’s travelogue, she is intrigued by Egypt and tries to translate Gordon’s travelogue into her experience of travel. As Sabina D’Alessandro argues, “Anna’s journey functions as a cultural translation and transformation where cross-cultural relationships become the vehicle for a transcultural vision of the Other” (406). Moreover, as Amal is fascinated by Anna’s description of Egypt and her hometown, she literally translates Anna’s journals to Isabel since Anna starts writing in Arabic later on and adapts them to the contemporary setting. In the case of Soueif, the process of translation is more complicated than those of Anna and Amal. Because Soueif is interested in narratives and travelogues of the
nineteenth century, she translates the aura of the period across time, space, and culture. However, as she translates, mimicks, and rewrites Victorian travelogues of adventure stories, she needs to confront and respond to the colonial past as well.

In *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth Century Suffering*, Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben establish an analogy between Neo-Victorian fiction and coming to terms with a colonial past. In their introduction, they claim that “Neo-Victorian literature lends a voice for the voiceless, speaks for the speechless, where historians can only speculate as to what such persons might have said or sounded like, emphasizing the purely theoretical nature of their representations” (19). Moreover, they underline “the ethical duty” of the writer to respond to the past atrocities and “bear after-witness” to Britain’s imperial past (22). Adding a brand new dimension to the Neo-Victorian fiction, Kohlke and Gutleben underline – perhaps for the first time – the colonial past associated with the Victorian era. Despite the emphasis on the revival of history, values, and cultural traditions, the Neo-Victorian movement seems to neglect the colonial past and its consequences. Interestingly, Neo-Victorianism has placed emphasis on women’s emancipation, gender relations, and victimization; however, until up recently, not much attention is given to the Neo-Victorian writer’s ethical duty to “*bear after-witness.*”

In *The Map of Love*, Soueif fulfills the writerly duty described above by writing a Neo-Victorian novel about a Victorian traveler who questions the British Empire and by giving voice to those living in a former colony. Moreover, through her re-conceptualization of Victorian travelogues, adaptation of colonial masculine stories of the nineteenth century, and her contempozorizing the Victorian female *Bildungsroman*, Soueif defies the three canonical genres of
the colonial period. As an after-witness, she performs an additional ethical duty when she responds to the past and comes to terms with her version of history of British colonization.
Combining East and West, Homer and Shahrazad in Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad*

Just as Neo-Victorian postcolonial literature, exemplified by Ahdaf Soueif, rewrites the plots of Victorian imperialism such as voyages of conquest, narratives of self-construction, and the liminality between nostalgia and progress, so too for contemporary postcolonial writers in what Westerners call the Middle East, Ottoman imperialism functions as a legacy that needs to be rewritten. We have seen how Ahdaf Soueif uses a double cross-generational narrative about the recovery of stories and the weaving of a legacy that can be reclaimed, blending Western storytelling with Shahrazadic storytelling, in order to lay to rest the traumas of the Victorian period. Similarly, contemporary author Güneli Gün uses time travel to juxtapose layers of Western and Eastern literary traditions, and uses story-telling to address the violence that marks rivalry between competing empires across the centuries. Gün’s novel has a different chronological reach, which permits greater use of Shahrazad. The play with chronology in both these novels fosters a dialogic relationship between periods, enabling the post-colonial moment to “write back” to the past.

The concept of reconciliation with a traumatic past appears as a significant – though subtle – motif in Neo-Victorian literature. It is through Heilman and Llewelyn’s anthology that the concept of *postcolonial Neo-Victorianism* emerges. With her keen interest in the nineteenth century and the past, Ahdaf Soueif precipitates the birth of the term *postcolonial Neo-Victorian*. Moreover, by incorporating the motif of Shahrazad, she blends Neo-Victorianism with post-Shahrazadic period. This chapter complements the previous chapter on Soueif’s *The Map of Love* in that it raises questions about Ottoman imperialism different from nineteenth-century colonialism. In this section, I argue that Güneli Gün’s novel *On the Road to Baghdad*, as a
Turkish-American narrative, is situated in a liminal space between tradition and modernity, Western and Eastern literary traditions. Similar to *The Map of Love*, the novel entails different forms of travels revealing writer and traveler figures and stands out as a novel that deconstructs the Homeric tradition and includes post-Shahrazadic elements such as metanarrative travel and the power of women storytellers. The hybrid Turkish literary tradition, situated between West and East, influenced by both traditions sets the context for Gün’s experimental narrative form. As I shall show, Gün’s novel includes different forms of travels and travelers that complicate the dialogic structure and weave together different forms of social critique. The final section of this chapter traces the distinctively Turkish-Ottoman traditions that permeate Gün’s novel, endowing its protagonists with exceptional strengths, and especially animating the narrative with the magical transitions and time-travel of oral tales. This recent work, I will show, can serve as a culmination of the twentieth-century development of women’s narratives about travel, gender bending, and story-telling; it promises to give birth to a new generation of politically aware, wittily feminist works that inherit the mantle of Virginia Woolf.

I. West vs. East, Homer vs. Shahrazad: Traditions that Meet in the Turkish Novel

The key terms applied to the modern Turkish novel are hybridity and unoriginality. Critics writing on the modern Turkish novel draw attention to the fact that the novel originated as a form adapted from Francophone culture (Gürbilek 606; Evin 14, 41). As the amalgamation of two different traditions, Eastern and Western, the Turkish Republic and its cultural institutions are highly marked by the concepts of biculturalism and hybridity. The term “unoriginality”

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75 Before the introduction of the novel as a Western and a new genre, Turkish literature was mainly based on poetry. The emergence of modern Turkish literature starts with the introduction of the novel as a Western genre and the Westernization process sanctioned by the late Ottoman emperors.
emerges as a positive term for the French influence on the Turkish writers. Similar to the Victorians aspiring to be familiar with ancient Greek culture, Ottoman and Turkish intelligentsia were proud of the adaptation of the novel as a genre. As a genre imported from Europe, the first examples of the Turkish novel lessened the impact of the long tradition of Arabic and Persian intertexts. However, the impact of the remarkable Arabic and Persian cultural influence on the development of the modern Turkish literature cannot be neglected. Homer, a leading figure of Western literature, a poet born in modern day Turkey, was acknowledged under the Republican period as an ancestor in conjunction with the country’s Westernization process. Similarly, Shahrazad, a significant figure for the Middle Eastern story-telling tradition, has become a predominant inspiration in the Turkish literary tradition as we can see in such works as Musameretname and Muhayyelat. Therefore, in the emergence of the modern Turkish novel, post-Homeric and post-Shahrazadic traditions have served as back-drops complementing the movement’s intercultural dialogue between Western and Eastern literary productions. Nüket Esen states that the dichotomy between the West and the East has always been a recurring theme in the modern Turkish novel (323).

The Turkish novel emerges in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and evolves, according to Azade Seyhan’s Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context, over roughly three different phases. According to her, the first era witnesses the import of the novel as a new and a Western genre in conjunction with the innovations authorized in the late Ottoman Period. The emergence of the early Ottoman/Turkish novel extends from the late eighteenth century to 1923, the founding of the Turkish Republic. Influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution, the modern Turkish

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76 Seyhan’s book is the first comprehensive study about the modern Turkish novel. For earlier studies, see Ahmet Evin and Robert Finn. Unlike Evin’s and Finn’s criticisms, Seyhan focuses on the novels that are originally written in Turkish and are also available in English translation.
novel aims to bridge the gap between the Ottoman literary culture and the West and to eradicate the sense of belatedness (Seyhan 24). The second phase, the Republican period, extends approximately from 1923 until the 1960s and emphasizes a nationalist and a Westernized perspective. Finally, in the last period, Seyhan includes writers who are influenced by modernist and postmodernist movements and by writers such as Calvino, Marquez and Borges (165). Interestingly, for her section on the postmodern Turkish novel, she uses the subtitle “Shahrazad’s Progeny: The Modern-Postmodern Will to Fiction.”

This evolution of the modern Turkish novel – as defined by Seyhan – fits Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad*. Gün’s novel exemplifies three phases of the modern Turkish novel. For the first phase of the modern Turkish novel, the key word is adaptation. The adaptations and translations of canonical works monopolized nineteenth-century Turkish novels. Adaptations of *The Decameron, The Heptameron, Canterbury Tales, The Odyssey, and One Thousand and One Nights* in the nineteenth century are relevant to Gün’s creative imitation of different texts and genres since she mockingly undertakes what we might think of as jazz renderings, with syncopated themes and variations. She not only uses a frame narrative as in *The Decameron* and *Canterbury Tales* but also uses a strong female protagonist, an adaptation of Shahrazad, who experiences adventures through her travels. Gün’s creative imitation of past works aligns her with the canonical works from Western literature; however, her juxtaposition of different time periods destabilizes a linear narrative frame, making her adaptation more unique. The second period, marked by works by secular nationalists known as Kemalists, is important thanks to a group of nationalist writers called Blue Anatolianists, who claim Homer as a Turkish writer. Though Gün does not follow a nationalistic discourse in her novels, she calls herself a female Homer and builds up her narrative using allusions to the lyre, which she seemed to have
borrowed from Homer. Gün’s protagonist Hürü, similar to Odysseus, encounters with monstrous opponents and digresses from her path. The last period to which Seyhan points, in which the postmodern novel is influential, of course is that in which Gün herself is writing, as her allusions to Marquez and Borges and her metanarrative strategies demonstrate.

The first examples of the Turkish novel as adaptations, translations, and inspired works from Europe mark the first period that starts in the early nineteenth century (Evin 14). The modern Turkish novel is an imitative, a plagiarizing, and a belated genre (Seyhan 7-9). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Turkish novel was looking for a father, an original source (Gurbilek 600). The metaphor of an orphaned son prevails in the period, called The Tanzimat, the reorganization of the Ottoman Empire with the importation of technological innovations from the West. In relation to The Tanzimat period, Ahmet Evin establishes an analogy between the Tanzimat and the Augustan period of the British and the Neo-classical movement of the French:

[The Tanzimat novel] recalls an attitude prevalent among the French neo-classicists and English Augustans even while it sums up the basic position held by the literary Westernizers among the Tanzimat intelligentsia. … European literature had to be imitated because, like European science, it was based on rational principles. This train of thought also explains the fascination of the early Turkish novelists with realism, which they viewed as embodying the antithesis of all the characteristics found in the classical and popular traditions of Ottoman literature. (40)

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77 Jale Parla applies a similar metaphor of fathers and sons, interpreting the Turkish novel as the orphaned son of the European role models. See Parla (1990).

78 The Tanzimat literally means re-organization. The first phase starts in 1839 and ends in 1876 and the second period falls between the years 1908 and 1918. All reforms were oriented towards the West. Beginning with the Tanzimat period, the term “modernization” almost equals to “Westernization” within the Turkish and Ottoman contexts.
The idea of imitation emerges with the translation of the first novel into Ottoman Turkish. Yusuf Kamil Pasa’s *Tercume-i Telemak* (1862) (*The Translation of Telemachus*) - an adaptation from Francois Fenelon’s *Les Aventures de Telemaque* (1699) – exemplifies the first modern novel in Ottoman Turkish. Tanpinar claims that Yusuf Kamil Pasa’s translation signals a growing interest in ancient Greek mythology and culture during the nineteenth century (262). This translation became so popular that it was published again three years later and then a second version appeared in 1863 by another writer Sinasi (Evin 42). Evin underscores the significance of the first example of the Turkish novel as such:

> Although the translation was intended as a political treatise much in the same vein as the Ottoman mirrors of princes, *Tercume-i Telemak* was far more vivid and therefore engaging than the moral stories in the Ottoman tradition. Because of these qualities and the order of imagination that the work reflected, it had an influence on the literary innovators. … Yusuf Kamil Pasa chose to translate the book because it communicated so well the ideas of the Enlightenment which impressed the Turkish intelligentsia. (Evin 43)

Reclaiming Homer and re-conceptualizing his work as “Turkish” mark the nineteenth century beginnings of the modern novel. During the *Tanzimat* period not only Western genres – the novel and *Bildungsroman*, in particular - were adapted into the Ottoman Turkish literature but also the period’s fascination with ancient Greek culture was also imported from Europe and North America. A similar idea is also apparent in Soueif’s *The Map of Love*. As an Egyptian woman educated in the West, Soueif displays a corresponding relationship with Homer as she claims

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79 For an example of nineteenth-century American interest in the classics, see Winterer.
Homer as her predecessor particularly with her allusions to the weaving metaphor and to Homer through her references to Lucy Duff Gordon. Although allegiance to Homer seems far-fetched in the cases of *The Map of Love* and the modern Turkish novel, the bard still holds value in the Middle Eastern literary tradition. As the Victorians in the nineteenth century showed an interest in ancient Greece and particularly Homer, their fascination with Homer was also adopted by the Ottoman literary culture as a part of Westernization process. The strong influence of ancient culture in the case of the Victorians and of contemporary French literary culture among the Ottoman intelligentsia paved the way for an identity formation. Disguised under the Westernization process, nineteenth century French novels enabled Ottoman writers to build up a Western identity diminishing the value of Arabic and Persian literary traditions.

The Republican period, the second phase, starts with the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and Kemalist reforms that are directed towards the Westernization process. In “The Wounded Tongue,” Jale Parla highlights the drawbacks of the language reform during the Kemalist regime and underscores how literature - as well as other cultural institutions - was affected by the language reform:

> The elimination of Persian and Arabic vocabulary from the Turkish language made texts written in the Ottoman script inaccessible to the modern Turkish reader. Texts transcribed into the modern alphabet were altered, with the consequence that the transcriptions failed to represent the original works. … It was meant to encompass all social and cultural practices, from bureaucratic correspondence to the language of education in secondary

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80 Tanpinar also underlines the pre-dominance of the ancient Greek and Roman traditions in nineteenth-century Ottoman literature (xli).
81 Kemalist reforms, sanctioned during Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s presidency, include the abolition of the Caliphate, strong imposition of secularism, the prohibition of clothes bearing religious symbols, women’s suffrage rights, the replacement of the Arabo-Persian script with the Turkish language in Latin script.
schools and universities. … Moreover, adherence to purified Turkish as opposed to Ottoman Turkish came to be regarded as a sign of being for Kemalism, thus for cultural nationalist homogeneity, territorial unity and autonomy, progress, modernity, and contemporaneity. Endorsing purified Turkish became directly related to the new identity designed for the Turkish people to secure the consolidation of the nation-state. (28)

In the Republican Period, the Turkish novel was regarded as an educational tool in the nation-building process (Esen 325). Educational endorsements and morals within didactic novels always prompted the embracing of the Western values of modernization and progress and promoted Western values over Ottoman ideas. In line with Westernization reforms, a nationalist literary group, called Blue Anatolianists, claimed Homer as Turkish since he lived in the borders of modern day Turkey. The three main writers of the group, Azra Erhat, Sabahattin Eyuboglu and Cevat Sakir Kabaagacligil, known as the Fisherman of Halikarnassos, wrote books on celebrating natural beauties of Anatolia claiming the peninsula as the cradle of Western civilization. The group takes its name from Erhat’s book Blue Anatolia (1960), a travel book narrating an odyssey conducted around the Aegean shores of the peninsula, the islands on the Aegean sea and the bays frequently described in Homeric epics. Writing about characters from Greek mythology and locating them within the borders of Anatolia through archival research, the group members not only proudly displayed Anatolia as the place to live but also satisfied the Kemalist reading public, who is happy to be the ancestors of Homer, the father of Western literature. In addition to the Blue Anatolianists, two women writers, Erendiz Atasu and Ayla Kutlu are the two leading Republican writers. In their novels, they emphasize Western ideals

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82 Moreover, Erhat’s translations of The Odyssey and The Iliad are still the most popular and the most-read translations of Homer in Turkey.
such as woman’s emancipation, secularism, and Western education. They also adopt the female *Bildungsroman* as a genre to highlight the ideas of freedom and maturation in the women’s rights movement.  

Finally, the postmodern novel has brought together writers from Western and non-Western worlds. Both Azade Seyhan and Nüket Esen list Orhan Pamuk, Latife Tekin, Nazli Eray, and Aslı Erdoğan as the precursors of the postmodern Turkish novel (Seyhan 168, Esen 329). In line with the postmodern tradition emerging in Turkish literature, Nüket Esen has found a sister trend, magical realism, among Turkish writers: “[After the military coup d’etat in September 1980], the themes of an unjust social order and exploitation that had been prominent in novels of previous periods lost their strength. Trying to change the world became a futile effort, and so writers in Turkey started developing a new kind of narrative, one they found in translations of such writers as Marquez, Borges, Eco, and Calvino” (329). Latife Tekin and Nazli Eray, two prominent women writers, are the two leaders of a politicized magic realism. Güneli Gün praises works by Turkish women novelists such as Tekin and Eray as precursors of the Turkish postmodern novel (“The Woman” 275). As she acknowledges Tekin’s introduction of magic realism into Turkish literature, Gün subtly gives credit to herself as an admirer of Tekin and a borrower of magic realism. Gün writes, “Although it is hard to know whether Tekin has read Garcia Marquez and company, one suspects she must have come into contact with magic realism somehow and found it a good thing to borrow. … Magic realism provides the so-called Third World writer with a pole with which to vault over a couple of hundred years of European

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83 *Tepegoz*, a famous Turkish folktale in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, is the Turkish version of the story of Polyphemus (Birkalan-Gedik 205; Seyhan 33). Tepegoz, an ogre who has only one eye on the forehead, is very strong and able to kill many people. Finally, he is killed by a javelin, which sharply strikes at his only eye. The story of Tepegoz is either influenced by Homer or they come from a common source. *The Book of Dede Korkut* is the most famous epic of the Oghuz Turks.

84 For specific novels, see Pamuk’s *My Name is Red*, Tekin’s *Dear Shameless Death* and *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*, Eray’s *Orpheus*, Erdogan’s *The City in Crimson Cloak*. 
and North American realism in its many guises” (Gün “The Woman” 278). The modern Turkish novel has been strongly influenced by the West to such an extent that some of the great writers such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar were ignored during the Republican period due to their interests in Eastern culture, Islam, and Sufism (Parla 31). The precedence of Homer, who stood for the values of Westernization eclipsed Ottoman and Turkish cultures’ long history with Eastern traditions.

In addition to the Western and Homeric influence, Shahrazad serves as a strong source of inspiration especially for Turkish women writers. Following the arguments of Malti-Douglas and Gauch about Shahrazad’s strong legacy in Middle Eastern culture, I argue that Shahrazad has also been a very influential figure in the Turkish tradition as a part of her canonicity and popularity among Middle Eastern women writers. According to Gün’s historical note at the end of On the Road to Baghdad, Ottoman Turks probably discovered One Thousand and One Nights during the reign of Selim I after his frequent invasions of Persia and the Arabian peninsula (362). As On the Road to Baghdad narrates the events during the reign of Selim I (1512-1520), Gün traces the journey of the written volume of One Thousand and One Nights from the eighth-century Baghdad of Harun al-Rashid to the period when the fictional Shahrazad appears in the court of Selim I.

Similar to the Shahrazadic legacy among Arab-Muslim women writers, the Turkish literary tradition has strongly associated itself with the stories of Shahrazad. In Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel, Ahmet Evin lists One Thousand and One Nights as an

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85 Though Tanpinar is acknowledged to be one of the influential writers, his most popular two novels were not translated into English until recently. A Mind at Peace (1949) was translated in 2011 and The Time Regulation Institute (1962) was translated in 2012.

86 One Thousand and One Nights was introduced to the Western world through Antoine Galland’s translation published in 1706 following work in Istanbul as an appointed assistant to the French ambassador (Birkalan-Gedik 206).

87 The Kemalist propaganda emphasized dissociation with the Ottoman cultural heritage and the Arab-Muslim world.
important source for Ottoman literature (37). In her article “Five Works from the Beginning of
the Turkish Novel in the Ottoman Period,” Gonca Gökalp lists first five novels and their
similarities between canonical texts.\textsuperscript{88} Muhayyelat by Aziz Efendi is a novel written in a similar
vein to One Thousand and One Nights (186) and in his introduction, Aziz Efendi states that he
translated One Thousand and One Nights and was very much influenced by the book as he was
writing the novel (Gökalp 187).\textsuperscript{89} Gonca Gökalp labels another early Turkish novel,
Musameretname as imitating the Western tradition of frame narrative as found in The
Decameron and The Canterbury Tales (195-7).\textsuperscript{90} Highlighting the Turkish hybrid tradition of
borrowing from the West and the East, Ahmet Evin underlines that the novel is stimulated by
both The Decameron and One Thousand and One Nights at the same time:

On the one hand the very title of the work recalls the meddah stories fashioned after The
Thousand and One Nights and narrated on subsequent nights in coffeehouses during the
fasting month. On the other hand, as has been suggested by a critic, its claim to present
original stories based on contemporary experience and the choice of ten as the number of
stories point, in a quite different direction, towards The Decameron, as a possible source
of influence. (Evin 50)

In line with Evin’s argument of hybridity, Birkalan-Gedik also underlines the multicultural
nature of One Thousand and One Nights and pinpoints two stories coming from Turkish folklore

\textsuperscript{88} The article is originally written in Turkish and the original title is “Osmanli Donemi Turk Romaninin
Baslangicinda Bes Eser.”
\textsuperscript{89} Muhayyelat literally translates as Imaginations and was published in the late eighteenth century. In addition to
Gokalp, Nuket Esen and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar draw attention to similarities between Muhayyelat and 1001 Nights
as well (324 and xlii, respectively)
\textsuperscript{90} Musameretname literally translates as “Night Tales.” The novel uses the frame narrative technique and recounts
the lives of people narrating stories to each other at night.
The modern Turkish novel lies at the crossroads of Western and Eastern literary traditions. Despite the fact that novel is imported as a Western genre and is associated with the Francophile atmosphere in the late eighteenth and later the nineteenth centuries, *One Thousand and One Nights* has been influential in bolstering the oral tradition of storytelling in the early Turkic traditions. Moreover, it revives the ties with the Middle Eastern tradition, which was suppressed from the nineteenth century until the late twentieth century as a part of the Westernization/modernization project within Ottoman/Turkish geography.

II. *On the Road to Baghdad*: Spatial, Temporal, Metatextual, and Spiritual Travels

Güneli Gün, a Turkish translator and writer, migrated to the US at the age of eighteen after receiving a Western-oriented education at American Girls College in Turkey. In her childhood memoirs, she mentioned her mother’s concerns about her education in Turkey: “My mother was worried sick that I was not getting properly educated at the village school where the first, second, and third grades sat in the same classroom being taught by a single teacher. It was the law of the land that every child, rich or poor, had to attend the nearest public elementary school so that we would all acquire a national identity that was ‘Turkish.’ … She regretted that while I was being formed into a proper little Turk, I wasn’t learning the stuff that would launch me into the greater world” (Gün “On Quarantine” 139). In line with her mother, her Westernized father wanted her to have their education in the US as well: “France was not Western enough to suit him, he was disgusted with Germany, England no longer counted, but America was the magnet, the True West! If his children managed to get truly Westernized, then they could truly be instrumental in Westernizing Turkey” (Gün “On Quarantine” 139-140). Reflecting her

91 “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves” and “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp.”
parents’ Kemalist “modern” views, she settled in the US and wrote novels in the Western tradition.

Not only Gün’s education first in Turkey and then in the US but also her diglossic writing is analogous to that of Soueif. In her novels *Book of Trances* (1979) and *On the Road to Baghdad* (1981), she originally writes in English rather than her native Turkish and uses Turkish words in italics or literally translates Turkish sayings, which sound meaningless to a non-Turkish speaking reader. Both Soueif and Gün hybridize the language in the same way destabilizing Western reader’s assumption of power. Moreover, Gün, as the translator of two Orhan Pamuk novels, *The Black Book* (1994) and *The New Life* (1998) was criticized for writing in English and using idiomatic phrases both in her novels and her translations from Pamuk. As a response to the critics, she writes: “American diction constantly crosses over class lines, which is what makes it so refreshingly democratic and self-renewing; but I use it simply because I happen to be an American” (Gün “Something” 14). She defends her strategies as a translator as well as her language play in her translations.

Many of the narrative devices that are fully developed in *On the Road to Baghdad* appear in *Book of Trances*, a magical realist novel about a large family that weaves together different generations. This first novel centers on gender ambiguity and transformations, the kinds of themes characteristic of fairytale magic and myths. Gün also uses “trances,” the suspended state of vision sought after in the Sufist tradition, to materialize the creative theme of the artist, a metanarrative device to which she will return in the next novel. *Book of Trances* opens with a large map of the family tree reminding us of Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.\(^\text{92}\) As the first section focuses on the story of two brothers and their households, House of Zaman (House

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\(^{92}\) The Marquez allusion is also apparent from Gün’s dedication to Marquez “for providing the yeast” in the opening of the novel (1).
of Time) and Castle of Mekan (Castle of Place), the second part narrates the story of the feudal lord Aga and his three sons and one daughter, Zülüf Girl, who is raised as a boy. This liminal state of being between a girl and a boy is also extended to Zülüf Girl’s ambiguous gender role. Her brothers call her “my brother” further complicating gender dynamics and revealing Gün’s interest in narrating cross-gender issues. The ambiguity in Book of Trances is also a reflection of Gün’s ambivalence as a Turkish-American writer, writing in English but alluding to Turkish myths.

Published just two years later, Güneli Gün’s On the Road to Baghdad follows the Turkish girl, Hürü, from her home in Istanbul. The novel takes place in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries during the reign of Ottoman ruler Selim I, the father of Suleiman the Magnificent. The novel is divided into four sections. The first section, “Departure: Call to Adventure on the Road to Baghdad,” opens with a Turkish family living in Istanbul. On a decision to go on pilgrimage, Hürü’s parents leave Hürü and her half-brother Mahmut Jan behind. When Hürü is sexually abused by Imam, the head of the local mosque, with the help of her school teacher, Hürü is dismissed from school and her brother decides to take her to Baghdad

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93 The full title of the novel is On the Road to Baghdad: A Picaresque Novel of Magical Adventures, Begged, Borrowed, and Stolen from the Thousand and One Nights. The allusion to the Shahrazadic tradition is apparent from the title.

94 The Ottoman rule in Anatolia started in 1299 with the foundation of a principality by Osman I in Anatolia. The principality first started as a small kingdom with surrounding Turkic tribes. However, this small kingdom became an empire between 1453 and 1683, approximately between the conquest of Constantinople and the second siege of Vienna. Mehmet, the Conqueror and Suleiman, the Magnificent are the two leading emperors of the Golden Age of the Empire. It is during these imperial expansions, multicultural reforms, and territorial expansions to the East and the West that the Empire turned into a multicultural, multiethnic and multi-religious society. Gün’s novel reflects this multicultural and hybrid atmosphere from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth century onwards.

95 Hürü’s father comes from a Turkic tribe (Karaman) and his Turkishness – as opposed to the people from Arabic and Persian origins - is emphasized throughout the novel. Karamanogullari is the name of the strongest Turkish principality in Anatolia. The founder, Mehmet I of Karaman, is known for his use of Turkish language and his campaign to rid of Arabic and Persian words from the Turkish language, which has been influenced by Arabic and Persian since the Muslim contact with the Turkic tribes in 751. He is the forerunner of an unadulterated Turkish language and the symbol for people of Turkic descent.
so that their parents agree on a verdict about her future and Hürü’s journey starts. ⑨⁶ When Mahmut Jan abandons her in the Konya plain, Hürü is helped by the green sage, becomes a fool in Selim I’s court and takes the lyre. ⑨⁷ The second section, “Initiation: Wonder Journey back to Eighth Century Baghdad and The Book of a Thousand and One Nights,” narrates Hürü’s adventures when she is transported back in time, to the reign of Harun al-Rashid, the legendary Caliph of the Abbasid Period. Encountering characters from One Thousand and One Nights such as Harun al-Rashid, his wife Lady Zubaida, and his son Amin, Hürü gets the opportunity to listen to their stories and compare them with the stories as they are told by Shahrazad. The third part, “Return: Hürü is Snatched back into Real Time and Life Waiting to be Lived,” focuses on the polemical relationship between Shahrazad and Hürü as sisters and rivals at the same time. In an attempt to save Shahrazad and Shahriyar, Hürü marries Selim but is betrayed by him and Shahrazad. The last section, “Freedom to Love: Facing the Terrible and Wonderful Music of the World,” narrates Hürü’s journey of homecoming and her loss of her son on the way back home. These four sections come to a full circle at the end; however, each one also signals a different type of a journey reflecting on the different kinds of female plots that have been available and further places them in dialogue with each other. As the second and the third sections bring together other powerful women such as Shahrazad, Lady Zubaida, Lady Amine, and Lady Safiye along with Hürü, the first and the last sections mainly focus on Hürü and her relationship to other men, Turhan Bey, Hürü’s brother, the Imam, Shahriyar, Selim the Grim, who are shadowed by the dominance of women.

⑨⁶ At the beginning of the novel, Hürü appears as a victim of a patriarchal society. She is condemned from society when the Imam sexually abuses her. However, as a part of her Bildung process, Hürü is finally going to get her freedom as the title of the last section “Freedom to Live” shows. Her name Hürü is the root of the Turkish word “Hür,” which translates as “free.”

⑨⁷ Konya is a city located in the middle of Anatolia in modern day Turkey. It is symbolic in the novel. Konya is also a historical city in which the great Persian poet and mystic Rumi lived, founded his sect Sufism, and distributed his unorthodox ideas from there. Rumi is highly influenced by his mentor and best friend, Shams. Konya symbolically represents Hürü’s fourth type of journey, the spiritual journey.
On the Road to Baghdad focuses on a less-known historical “pre-Suleimanic phase,” as Talat Halman calls it, that did not draw much attention in the Western world (xiii). The deliberate mention of these specific periods, the reigns of Selim I and of Harun al-Rashid, highlights an enthusiasm in the Eastern world. In addition to the eighth-century period of Harun al-Rashid, Gün underlines the cultural encounter between Ottoman Turks and the Arab civilization during the early sixteenth century. In her historical note, she states that thanks to Selim I’s conquests of the Muslim world, Ottoman Turks discovered the One Thousand and One Nights text in the early sixteenth century (362). Therefore, bringing together eighth-century Baghdad with sixteenth century Istanbul, Gün not only pays tribute to original sources of One Thousand and One Nights but also foregrounds metatextual links between the original book and its re-discovery by the Turkish world.

In line with the previous texts discussed within this study, On the Road to Baghdad is an example of a Turkish female Bildungsroman as it depicts the maturation of Hürü as she has to go through certain stages of personal development. Gökalp also traces the emergence of Bildungsroman and picaresque novel and concludes that both genres have been adapted and are popular in the very early Turkish novels such as Temasa-i Dunya and Cefakar u Cefakes (198). In addition to the genre of Bildungsroman, the novel also exemplifies an epic, or rather a mock epic. On the Road to Baghdad takes the form of an epic with an epic-like hero who wanders and goes through achievements and narrates well-known stories from Turkish epics. In the story of

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98 Suleiman I, known as Suleiman the Magnificent, is one of the two well-known emperors of the Ottoman Period, the other being Mehmet the Conquerer. Suleiman’s reign lasts from 1520 until his death in 1566. He expands the Empire till the Vienna border and was interested in conquering Europe. In contrast to Suleiman I, his father Selim I, known as Selim the Grim, was not known in the Western world and he was interested in expanding the Empire towards Eastern lands. He had numerous disagreements with Shah Ismail I (1502-1524), the founder of Safavid dynasty. Selim the Grim conquered the Mamluk Sultanate and became the Caliph (the first Ottoman Caliph) of the Arab World. Unlike his son, his interests focused on Eastern religions, Sufism, Islam, and the Middle East.

99 Gün’s interest in this particular historical period is in contrast to Soueif’s interest in the Victorian period. Soueif rewrites a popular period and writes about a popular tradition whereas Gün brings into daylight a less popular historical period.
Lady Safiye, there is a strong reference to the wolf story reminiscent of the most famous Turkish epic Ergenekon (189).  

On the Road to Baghdad centers on the metaphor of journey. According to Nasrin Rahimieh, the novel foregrounds not only the journey of Hürü but also witnesses Gün’s challenging journey to write in English and compose a Turkish novel for a Western audience (5). Likewise, Gönül Pultar underlines that On the Road to Baghdad is predominantly a road novel that underlines the metaphysical journey in the Sufist tradition (58). In line with the previous texts discussed in the earlier chapters, On the Road to Baghdad encompasses multiple types of journeys. Similar to The Map of Love, On the Road to Baghdad displays spatial, temporal and metatextual travels. For instance, Hürü’s spatial journey is accomplished when she returns to Istanbul. She leaves from Istanbul, stops at Konya, a symbolic city for Sufists, arrives at Baghdad and meets her sister Shahrazad, and then returns to Istanbul. The temporal expedition takes place when Hürü is abruptly transported to eighth-century Baghdad: “Time opened and dilated, sucking Hürü away. Just before she lost consciousness of experiential time, the last thing she heard was Abd-es-Samad asking her to bring back from Baghdad something good to eat” reminding us that food is a leitmotif of the epic voyage (97). Once she arrives at her final destination Baghdad, then she engages in a time travel. Needless to say, the temporal travel overlaps with the metatextual travel when Hürü suddenly finds herself in the house of Shahrazad (223). Upon entering into the house of Shahrazad, Hürü is scolded by the storyteller herself:

100 Ergenekon is the name of a legendary valley and the name of an epic from Turkic mythology. According to the legend, the Turks were originally trapped within mountains in the valley of Ergenekon for 400 years until a blacksmith arrived and magically melted the mountains. Once they were free, a wolf named Asena according Chinese sources or Bortecene according to Turkic sources led them the way to freedom and guided them to establish the first Turkic tribe, Gokturk, which literally translates as Sky Turks. Wolves are considered to be sacred animals in the Turkish legends and today, they are the symbols for extreme nationalists in Turkey. Today, Asena and Bortecene are the two famous names for the children of extreme Turkish nationalists and the extreme nationalist political party uses a wolf for its emblem.
You’re the sneak who’s been reading my manuscript on the sly! And I know just who you’re spying for, too! You can tell that Al-Masudi that his version is only an interpolation. Mine is the authentic account. He doesn’t even know the difference between authoring and scribbling. (225)

Shahrazad herself thus raises the issue of authenticity that haunts the theory and practice of adaptation. Hürü’s three layers of journeys intersect. First, in her spatial journey, she starts in multi-religious Istanbul, goes through Konya, a city famous for its unorthodox Muslim believers, and then Baghdad, a city which lives its Golden Age of Islam. From her spatial travel, she experiences her temporal travel, which is linked to the main metaphor of travel, the metatextual travel. Because she is transported to eighth-century Baghdad, she is able to meet Shahrazad and she finds herself in the fictional world of One Thousand and One Nights. Without her spatial travel to Baghdad, Hürü could not have experienced her temporal travel, thus could not have met her fictional sister Shahrazad in her metanarrative voyage.

The three forms of travel, spatial, temporal, and metatextual, in On the Road to Baghdad are similar to the different forms of travel that Amal and Anna go through in The Map of Love. Hürü’s mystic journey starts when she rests at Konya, a symbolic city for the disciples of Rumi. Gün’s novel, as Kader Konuk also argues, displays a spiritual journey revealing the influence of Sufism and the Mevlevi order on Gün’s writing: “On the Road to Baghdad deals with Hürü’s inner journey through her own body and her spirit. … The confrontation with pregnancy, motherhood, madness and death are important stages of spiritual growth, which the adult Hürü ultimately conquers by virtue of the fact that she does not close herself off from the knowledge of mystical Sufism. Hürü regards the task of finding herself as an eternal process – an idea which
is integral to Sufism” (Konuk 92). Along with the metaphor of the friendship between Rumi and Shams, Hürü’s spiritual journey into mysticism is revealed (56). She becomes a Sufist dervish when she takes refuge in spiritual retreat and suffers at the loss of her son. Originally a male sect, the Sufi tradition appears in her journey as well. Going to the revised stages of the tradition, Hürü further debunks stabilized gender roles when she becomes a pseudo-dervish at the end of her travel. The mystical journey adds a fourth dimension to the predominant concept of expedition. In each of these of self-realization Gün’s heroine revised the patterns of development of the Bildungsroman.

Güneli Gün ties together different aspects such as Sufism, Homer, *One Thousand and One Nights* by bringing together elements from Western and Eastern traditions. In her historical note for the novel, Gün underlines the difficulty of amalgamating three different languages and cultures - Arabic, Persian, and Turkish - in the novel:

Since Turks, Arabs and Persians live in roughly the same area of the world, and they practice roughly the same religion, their ethnic qualities are blurred so much in the Western Mind that often they are thought to be identical. … The author makes an attempt to distinguish these differences by identifying the sources of some of the Arabian Nights tales.

Although these amalgamations seem blurred for the Western reader, these differences are distinguished in Gün’s novel. The emphasis on Hürü’s Turkic origins and her adaptation into a Persian and an Arabic culture takes precedence in *On the Road to Baghdad*. In line with the tradition of a modern Turkish novel, *On the Road to Baghdad* brings together elements from
different sources. The novel’s multicultural aspects reveal through its allusions to Homer, John Barth, and Shahrazad. The metaphor of adaptation works at different levels. Similar to the scheme of the modern Turkish novel, Gün’s narrative borrows not only from the Eastern traditions but also the Western literary tradition. References to Homer and the lyre exemplify Gün’s interest in composing a Westernized narrative. Regarding Homer as her ancestor and a strong literary trope, she becomes the female bard. Her allusion to Shahrazad further places her in an ambiguous position between the West and the East. The title reveals the main allusion to *The One Thousand and One Nights*, which is also discussed by all critics of the novel (Kadir, Kocaöner-Silkü, Konuk, Pultar and Rahimieh). Among modern authors to whom Gün alludes, Halman draws attention to parallels between *On the Road to Baghdad* and Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* (xvii). Direct references to Homer, Orpheus, Sappho, and Apollo within the novel highlight its allusive quality (93, 93, 146, 338, respectively). In a witty Turkish transposition of his name, the writer Jann Baath appears from the bookshelf and tells Shahrazad that he is interested in re-telling her stories (243). Jann Baath is actually John Barth as spelled in Turkish pronunciation. John Barth is a very influential figure for Güneli Gün. When she was doing her Ph.D, she worked closely with him. The book that the writer Jann Baath mentions is Barth’s novella *Dunyaziad*. She is also influenced by Barth’s essay “The Literature of Exhaustion.” Djelal Kadir also argues that Gün writes in the feminist tradition of Virginia Woolf by creating a female picaresque figure that alludes to Woolf’s novel *Orlando*, whose protagonist switches gender(271): The metamorphosis that Orlando unwittingly goes through is reflected in Hürü’s willingly transforming into a boy in the house of ladies. In that sense, Virginia Woolf serves as a strong influential literary sister for Gün, who not only alludes to her so as to emphasize her narrative’s Westernized façade but also utilizes Woolf’s re-imagination of traditional gender

\[101\text{ See Barth.}\]
roles and boundaries. In “Contemporary World Writers,” Gün suggests that all fiction is incestuous highlighting an organic bond between precursors and successors. Similarly, her novel exemplifies an in-between space between the East and the West. As Rezzan Kocaöner-Silkü argues, there are strong binary oppositions between the Christian and the Muslim, the East and the West, Istanbul and Baghdad within the novel (Kocaöner-Silkü 320). Hürü’s family is proud of living in Istanbul, which represents modernized and Westernized faces of the Ottoman Empire. Upon arriving at Baghdad, Turhan Bey’s [Hürü’s father] description of Baghdad in contrast to Istanbul unfortunately falls short of his original expectations:

[Turhan Bey] decided the city of Baghdad was like an ancient whore whereas Istanbul, although once widowed, was still a wholesome matron a man could take to his heart as well as his marriage bed. Baghdad was just too old and too used; the paint on her face peeling everywhere, toothless, sagging, the suggestive words in her mouth so foul they turned off a man instead of inspiring him with longing (31).

Similarly, Gönül Pultar also calls the novel “bi-cultural” representing “an amalgam of two [Turkish and American] cultures” (43). As Pultar also suggests, the novel brings together mythic and folkloric elements from the Turkish and the Anglophone literature. When Hürü disguises herself as a boy and enters the palace of Selim I, a reference to Turkish picaro Keloglan (Bald Boy) becomes apparent. The green sage, who rescues Hürü several times is not only the Turkish
folk tale figure Hidir but also has been interpreted as the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Pultar 51-2).  

*On the Road to Baghdad* entails three female traveler and writer figures, which helps to complicate the canonical works such as *The Odyssey* and *One Thousand and One Nights*. The more varied travelers and writers are, the more complicated Gün’s novel becomes. Instead of using a single protagonist who travels and writes – i.e. Aurora Leigh, Shahrazad, Jane Eyre, Odysseus - , Gün utilized this multiplicity of characters by creating a unique narrative and throwing light on Shahrazad’s companions. With Gün’s inclusion of multiple storytellers, the roles of Dunyazad and Shahriyar in *One Thousand and One Nights* become significant. Hürü goes through multiple processes of her journey - spatial, temporal, metatextual, and spiritual. Her individual travel starts from Konya, the homeland of Rumi, where she is abandoned by her brother and ends in Baghdad. However, once in Baghdad, she voyages back in time to the reign of Harun al-Rashid. On her homecoming, she stops at Konya, loses her child and then returns to Istanbul. Hürü evolves as a writer as she journeys. According to Halman, Gün’s two important qualifications, her experience as traveler and as a writer, are manifested through Hürü (xiii). Her Bildung, which is achieved through multiple journeys, is also extended to her capabilities as a writer and a story-teller. She transforms from a stuttering adolescent girl into a full-fledged adult bard: “It is in this new realm of existence that she stops stuttering, becomes a minstrel, and makes the final painful journey back to her origins, her language, and her culture” (Rahimieh 11). As the story evolves, Hürü becomes a bard and a composer of türkü (316). Türkü, which literally means “of the Turk”, is the name for Turkish folk songs originally sung by anonymous bards. Hürü composes several türkü through the end of the book.

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102 Keloglan, literally translates as The Bald Boy, is the legendary picaro figure in Turkish folktales. He comes from a lower class family and he is the emblem of naivety and cunningness at the same time. He is a poor adolescent who wanders but rescues people from trouble by using his wits.
Hürū’s qualities as a bard abound when she symbolically overtakes the lyre from the Treasury. At the beginning of her journey, right before she is transported to eighth-century Baghdad by Abd-es-Samad, she re-claims the lyre:

“What’s this?” Abd-es-Samad said, fingering the lyre which remained mute … “Is this thing really what I think it is? I had no idea that the Stone-Born Lyre existed in the Treasury.”

“Goes to show,” Hürū said, “not even Abd-es-Samad knows everything!”

“But the Stone-Born Lyre appeared only two times before!” cried Abd-es-Samad. “Once back in time immemorial, it was in the hands of a man-god whose singing soothed even the savage beasts, but incited housewives into savagery. Tore him to bits, they did, those mad mothers! That’s how Orpheus bit the dust. The second time around, the Lyre awoke in the hands of a blind bard, centuries ago, whose voice became immortal. Homer. Know him?”

“Don’t know any Homer,” Hürū said, “but I’ve got the Lyre.”

“I must have the Stone-Born Lyre!” Abd-es-Samad bellowed, turning purple from covetousness. “You are still but a child, Hürū. … So, let me have the Lyre, Hürū girl.”

“Cut it out!” Hürū said. “You know my name’s written on this Lyre.” (93)

As a stubborn, demanding female bard, Hürū reclaims the lyre bestowed to her from her ancestors. At the beginning of the novel, she stands as a girl who is interested in reading books with a particular interest in history (126). Moreover, she is interested in fiction since she loves
listening to her grandmother’s stories (6). Once she meets Shahrazad, she confesses how she
memorizes her tales. However, interestingly, she claims not to know Homer. Her ironic response
to Abd-es-Samad “Don’t know any Homer” further strengthens her power as a female bard.
Rejecting the existence of “The Bard,” Hürü foregrounds her feminist side. In her afterword to
the novel, Gün also underscores Homeric allusions in the text and foregrounds Hürü and herself
as female bards, perhaps similar to Barrett Browning’s highlighting of Aurora Leigh as the
female Homer. Gün writes: “Necessity forced Hürü to free her tongue and unlock her
imagination,” Gün writes, “The girl had gall! Not only did Hürü equal her fate, she transcended
it – like her mentor and friend, Shahrazad of the Thousand and One Nights fame. Because Hürü
– let’s get on with it, shall we? – Hürü was the girl who dared to seize the lyre that had belonged
to Orpheus and then to Homer” (360).

In addition to her roles as a traveler and a writer, Hürü stands out as a mother when she
gives birth to Selim the Grim’s son Karajuk in the last section of the novel, which foregrounds
the plot of maternity. We discover the problematic nature of that plot, as in Lyndall’s loss of her
child in The Story of an African Farm. However, later on, motherhood is contested when she
exchanges the lyre for her son: “Perhaps the time was right to return the Stone-Born Lyre to the
source, for such things could not be kept. With all the power in her forearm, Hürü flung the Lyre,
still vibrating, into the middle of the lagoon. … “Here take your Lyre!” Hürü commanded the
unseen guardians of the place. “And give me back my son!” (349).

In addition to Hürü, the second writer figure is Shahrazad who confesses that she has no
interest in travelling: “She’d rather ponder than go travelling abroad” (229). She appears as a

103 Inevitably, all critics of On the Road to Baghdad, respectively Djelal Kadir, Rezzan Kocaoner-Silku, Kader
Konuk, Gonul Pultar, and Nasrin Rahimieh foreground the Shahrazadic allusion, which is also apparent in the
novel’s title. Kadir and Konuk also highlight the allusion to John Barth whereas Pultar and Kocaoner-Silku
underline Sufist references. However, none of the critics mention Homeric allusions in the novel.
writer of stories living in the reign of Selim I who meets and falls in love with Selim when he
conquers the Muslim Holy Land around 1516. In *One Thousand and One Nights*, Shahrazad is
the writer – rather than teller - of stories and she deliberately takes her readers on a metanarrative
travel. Rather than a traveler herself, Shahrazad guides various travelers and her guidance is
reminiscent of the storyteller aunt in Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*. Gün places Shahrazad in
sixteenth-century Ottoman period simply because it dates back to a time when Selim becomes
the first Ottoman Caliph (a new Harun al-Rashid figure) and discovers *One Thousand and One
Nights*. In the third section, Shahrazad and Hürü meet in Baghdad and become rivals when Selim
has an affair with her. As the presumed character in *One Thousand and One Nights*, Hürü
contemplates that Shahrazad deliberately erased Hürü from her book due to her love for Selim
(275). However, when Shahrazad travels to Istanbul to see Hürü, they become surrogate sisters
and their solidarity is further strengthened when Shahrazad sacrifices herself – together with
Hürü – for Karajuk (349).

In addition to the sisterhood established by Hürü and Shahrazad, three ladies of Baghdad,
namely Lady Zubaida, Lady Amine, and Lady Safiye, engage in a similar concept of sisterhood,
story-telling, and travel. Among the three ladies of Baghdad, Lady Zubaida, Harun al-Rashid’s
wife and a possible source of inspiration for Shahrazad, is the first story-teller, who narrates her
sea voyage with her sisters (132). As Hürü listens to Zubayda’s story, she muses about the
relativity of time and the relation between the past and the future. As a character coming from
the future, Hürü is able to make links between the periods of Selim I and Harun al-Rashid.

In addition to the three women travelers and writers, two strong male figures – both
writers and travelers – offer possible comparison to Sharif al-Baroudi and Omar in *The Map of

\[104\] According to Hürü, she should have appeared in the section where she encounters Abd-es-Samad and the Three Ladies of Baghdad.
Love by Soueif. Harun al-Rashid and Selim I are not only strong political and historical figures - one being the most remarkable king and Caliph of the Abbasid Gold Age and the other being the first Caliph of the Ottoman Empire who highlights Muslim inclinations in the Ottoman Empire – but also the powerful and misogynist husbands of Lady Zubaida and Hürü, respectively. Mirroring the century gap between Sharif and Omar in Soueif’s The Map of Love, the relationship between Harun al-Rashid and Selim I exemplifies a similar gap. More important, Gün celebrates these men as creative writers. Just as Harun al-Rashid’s interest in poetry is famous in the Muslim world, Selim I is best-known for his poems. What makes their poetry memorable is the idea that poems characterize social power for the Caliphs. Gün thus gathers narrative threads about masculine models of agency as well as feminine models. Shahriyar, however, meanders between two historical figures in Gün’s version, where he is transported to sixteenth-century Baghdad and shares his wife with Selim I, an act that he completely shuns in the original book. Thus, Gün adapts her historical model. In contrast to the sisterly solidarity among Hürü, Shahrazad, the three ladies of Baghdad and Gün, the novel emphasizes two Good Brothers from the Turkish mythology, Hidir and Ilyas. As Hidir - the green sage who saves Hürü - is known to help travelers on the road, Idris assists sea voyagers who are in dire situations.

III. On the Road to Baghdad: A Cross-Cultural Text at the Crossroads

On the Road to Baghdad stands out as a novel incorporating masculine women, who set out for travel. These travelling masculine women are contemporary reflections of pre-Islamic Turkish nomadic tribes in which women had the leading role in the tribe and have masculine features such as riding a horse (Hussein 1). As an example of one of these strong traveler
women, Gün introduces Hürü’s mother, Gülbahtar, as an Amazon: “At the celebration of Spring on the Anatolian shore one day, he [Turhan Bey, Hürü’s father] beheld the lady called Gülbahtar gallop on her horse along the walls of Boghaz Kesen Castle. An Amazon, if he ever saw one; natural, joyous, a head taller than himself. This girl wasn’t, obviously, the sort whose father gives her away. She’d have to be won” (10). Coming from a family of Turkic origin, Hürü follows the trend and suddenly finds herself in the household of three masculine women, Lady Zubaida, Lady Amine and Lady Safiye, in which no male members are allowed (112).

As Elizabeth Wilson discusses in “The Invisible Flaneuse”, the traveler, who is away from his/her home, will eventually develop fluid gender boundaries and will no longer display strict gender codes of masculinity and/or femininity (110). Similar to Schreiner’s Lyndall, Hürü also loosens her ties with femininity and cross-dresses as a young boy at the beginning of her journey (39), becomes the Bald Boy in the palace of Selim I (45), then decides to become a woman again so as to woo Selim (248), and finally takes the position of Hidir when Shahriyar threatens to kill her in the Konya lagoon (294). Cross-dressing appears as necessity for a woman traveler in Gün’s novel. As Shahrazad puts it, “[Hürü] had to put on masculine attire, obviously, because she’s been on the road. That’s how she’s been able to arrive in Baghdad intact, body and soul” (247). In line with Olive Schreiner’s socially-alienated and masculine women protagonists as seen in Lyndall in The Story of an African Farm, Rebekah and Bertie From Man to Man, and Undine in Undine, Gün is interested in unconventional and masculine women as seen in Zülüf Girl and Perizade in Book of Trances and Hürü, Gülbahtar, Shahrazad and the three ladies of Baghdad in On the Road to Baghdad.

Later in the novel, Hürü not only crosses-dresses as a young boy and is admitted to the house of three ladies of Baghdad but also is forced to marry Lady Safiye as she falls in love with
this young “boy” (208-220). Highlighting homoerotic undercurrents in the novel, *On the Road to Baghdad* foregrounds liminal gender roles that are produced through the exigencies of travel. Similar to Gregory’s cross-dressing in order to help Lyndall, Hürü also cross-dresses to save herself and becomes a woman again in order to rescue Shahrazad and her book.\(^\text{105}\)

In the female *Bildungroman* motif differs from the male version in which woman’s body, in spite of the blurring of gender lines, retains a critical function. The loss of maternity becomes one of the costs of this generic model of travel. In addition to Hürü’s emancipation and growing up, like Lyndall, she also stands out as a mother who has lost her baby and been obliged to exchange her procreative capabilities for her creative capabilities. As Lyndall and Undine are deprived of their children, Hürü wanders aimlessly when she loses her son, Karajuk, a possible heir to the Ottoman throne. After her son’s death, she needs a home to return to and completes her homecoming at the end of the novel (326). This story of homecoming is reflective of the traditional narrative closure. Similar to Odysseus, Undine, and Maggie in *Speaking Likenesses*, Hürü is both a centrifugal (adventure-seeking) and a centripetal (home-coming) and hero at the same time.\(^\text{106}\) With her journey, her search for home, and personal development, Hürü’s *Bildung* is written in a tradition drawn from the Victorian female *Bildungsroman*. Two moments of maturation and coming of age occur in the novel. Once Hürü discovers her pregnancy and the illegitimate affair between Selim and Shahrazad, she says, “No longer a child, in me I carry a child” (266). This moment of maturation in Hürü is analogous to the idea of maturation in a Victorian female *Bildungsroman*. The Victorian heroine does not usually become pregnant except in fallen women novels. Also, the ideas of “losing one’s virginity” and “pregnancy”

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\(^\text{105}\) In her article, Gönül Pultar argues that the concept of passing in the American context, as seen in Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, is adapted to the Turkish context as a form of cross-cultural and cross-gender passing in the novel (53).

\(^\text{106}\) Lyndall does search for a home as well. As she does not feel at home in the farm, she is also a centrifugal and centripetal hero in a different sense.
appear on the margin of Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.” Thus, Lyndall’s affair with her stranger in *The Story of an African Farm* is closely associated with her Bildung process. Similarly, although still an adolescent, Maggie in Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* decides to adopt her pet children on her return from the doctor’s house, which is a signal for her journey into womanhood and awareness. The second significant moment of maturation occurs when Shahriyar kills Karajuk. In her story narrated in epic proportions, Hürü stands out as an epic heroine as well. Her encounter with the beggar in her homecoming is reminiscent of the story of Odysseus, who cross-dresses as a beggar upon entering Ithaca. Moreover, her story is evocative of pre-Islamic Turkish epics in which strong women figures travel along with men. Hürü’s travel, as an adolescent going to mock adventures, is written in the form of a mock-epic. In addition to her allegiance to Odysseus, Hürü’s story of development is in line with the story of Telemachus as well.

The mock-epic aspects in both *Speaking Likenesses* and *On the Road to Baghdad* are reminiscent of the writers’ interest in composing a creative adaptation of the epic form. The fact that both narratives tell stories of female adolescents who travel and experience ironic events at the same time further destabilizes their places in the canon. As an adaptation of a traditionally male genre, a mock-epic with female protagonists complicates this gender binary. Out of the four travelers discussed in *Speaking Likenesses*, Hürü is analogous to each one of them. Just like Flora in *Speaking Likenesses*, Hürü becomes the intruder and turns the order upside down when she enters into the house of three ladies and is acknowledged as the first male admitted to this feminine world. Moreover, there are moments when her journey becomes static and her maturation is highlighted as happens with Edith.
Furthermore, the strange use of food consumption in *Speaking Likenesses* and *On the Road to Baghdad* further highlights both texts’ ironic stance to controlling women’s body. Despite the blurring of traditional gender roles throughout the texts, the consumption of food further abides by the traditional gender roles – males devouring food and females controlling their appetites – displays the writers’ critique of traditional gender roles. *On the Road to Baghdad* emphasizes strange eating habits that resemble the food consumption in the stories of Flora and Edith in *Speaking Likeness*. Flora, Edith and Maggie control their consumption of food by contrast to the Mouth-Boy, in a critique of common assumptions about food consumption. Similarly, in *On the Road to Baghdad* the male characters such as Abd-es-Samad, the candymaker, and Selim are prone to devouring and overeating while female characters such as Hürü, Lady Zubaida, Lady Amine may suffer from anorexia or control their desires, which underlines Gün’s critique of traditional roles.

Last but not least, Hürü takes the position of five nieces when she meets Shahrazad for the first time and is spellbound by her stories. The urge to transmit stories from one generation to another is apparent when Hürü/Gün carries on the legacy of Shahrazad and grandmothers re-tell the legend of Hürü and her mother to granddaughters at the end of *On the Road to Baghdad*. This self-reflective moment accelerates when the readers become Hürü:

“Gee, Grandma!” the girl protested. “Shahrazad is only a figure of literary tradition. A figment. And I don’t know anything about this Hürü character. Who was she anyway?”

“Yourself,” the old lady admonished. “Pay attention!”

…
“Now I will tell you the end of the Good Sisters’ story. But when the time comes, you must tell it to one of your granddaughters. Tell it to the one who understands. Promise me now.” (352-3)

The story-telling tradition in *On the Road to Baghdad* is analogous to that of Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*. Carrying on a family tradition, Hüri “remembered her grandmother’s stories, true stories that happened under a big sky, on lands that stretched for miles where the winds blew recklessly unimpeded. She still heard in her head her grandmother’s ballads of heroes who’d become as gods; her lyric longings for a person, a campsite, a distant home; her praises of this creation, of God, of valor, honesty and justice; her satiric verses on the shortcomings of mankind, and most poignantly, her laments” (6). Similar to Rossetti’s aunt who narrates stories to the nieces, Hüri stands out as one of pseudo-nieces who follows her aunt Shahrazad. Forming a sisterly solidarity with Shahrazad, she gives her due respect to the tradition of story-telling. As Hüri reveals how she has learned stories from her grandmother, Rossetti also pays her due respect to her mother. *Speaking Likenesses* opens with a dedication to Rossetti’s mother “in grateful remembrance of the stories which she used to entertain her children.” *The Map of Love* and *On the Road to Baghdad* specify the female tradition of storytelling and incorporate that motif within the narrative. At the same time, Soueif and Gün are writing neo-Victorian novels, which suggests that they are consciously adapting models offered by writers like Schreiner or Rossetti.

The concept of travel and writing back in Middle Eastern Women’s writing appear analogously in both Gün’s novel and *The Map of Love* shaping a dialogue between two periods and between two cultures. As Anna writes a journal that is applicable to the future and Amal re-
visits her British relative from the past, Hürü enjoys a back-and-forth travel binding the Abbasid era in which Shahrazad recounts her stories and the Ottoman era in which Shahrazad’s stories are introduced to the Turkish reading public. As characters in both *The Map of Love* and *On the Road to Baghdad* can write backward and forward, they also engage in a temporal travel that necessitates a metatextual voyage. As Abd-es-Samad says in *On the Road to Baghdad*, “Sometimes we have to go back in order to move forward,” (86). This movement within a liminal position between the past and the present - expressed in an ironic language in *On the Road to Baghdad* - places both texts in a similar vein to the Victorian texts discussed in this study. However, this concept of shuffling back-and-forth gains another dimension in Soueif’s and Gün’s novels in that both texts also involve an act of reconciliation with the past. In the case of Soueif, temporal travel enables the characters to “bear after-witness” – in the words of Gutleben and Kohlke – to the colonial past and come to terms with it through journal keeping and travelling. The concept of “bearing after-witness” plays a less significant role in the Turkish context in that sense Ottoman Turkey did not officially undergo a colonialist rule. However, Gün twists this reconciliation with the past in order to reconceptualize Turkey’s struggle in the modernization and Westernization process. Gün’s insistence on going to back to eighth-century Baghdad and fifteenth-century Ottoman Empire provide significant clues to her critique of Turkish Westernization as the eighth century was the Golden Age of the Abbasid dynasty and the fifteenth century one of the very few moments in which the Ottoman rulers directed their attention to Eastern civilizations and cultures.

Despite the fact that colonialism and postcolonialism in the historical context do not apply to the Turkish context, the Ottoman Empire’s ambiguous roles as a colonizer and then the colonized bring together the two works. Starting with the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth
century, the Ottoman Empire launched a history of conquests by subjugating several lands in Europe and the Middle East. Despite the fact that the Ottoman imperial rule was different from Spanish and British colonialisms, the Empire left a long legacy and history of colonization with imperialistic powers. In the context of neo-Victorian historical novels, the dominant international role of European imperialist conquests and rule intersected with a sharp decline in the power of the Ottoman Empire, which in the nineteenth century was unable to compete and fell under European colonial influence.

Gün has built on the legacy of Homeric texts and Victorian women’s writing as it connects to Schreiner’s emphasis on women’s emancipation, Rossetti’s stress on adolescent mock-epics written in post-Alice and post-Homeric style, and Soueif’s highlighting of cross-cultural and cross-textual voyages. Gün’s tracing of One Thousand and One Nights within the Turkish context in a novel written in English strengthens her position in the hybrid modern Turkish canon, influenced by different sources and literary traditions. In line with modern Turkish canon’s hybrid form of bringing together Western and Eastern traditions, Gün creates a hybrid novel that promises to have stemmed from Western tradition such the Homeric epics and Victorian women writers and that traces the Arabo-Persian roots from the Ottoman Empire as well. On the Road to Baghdad, a novel of epic travels and storytelling for survival, exemplifies Turkey’s ambiguous position through its journey to modernization.
CONCLUSION

What unites these two different geographical locations and time periods is the writers’ interest in reconciliation with the past and in composing a new narrative through a creative adaptation of previous texts. Blending imitation with uniqueness, the four texts discussed in this study exemplify a new genre that revisions canonical texts such as *The Odyssey* and *One Thousand and One Nights* and centers on an emerging female protagonist. On the surface, these
texts might not appear to be closely related. However, deep down, they all initiate the emerging
of a female traveler-writer, who, through her writing and journeys, moves beyond the boundaries
of gender, race, nation and class. Moreover, her liminality between the past and the present both
at the spatial and temporal level and at the textual dimension further contributes to the metaphor
of travel, which, I argue, works together with the concept of adaptation.

Victorian women’s writing appreciates and critiques two mainstream topical trends of the
period: The Homeric influence and the appreciation of the classical period and colonial
adventure stories that foreground the imperial ambitions of the time. As the former implies a
nostalgic look into the past, the latter reflects the British Empire’s interest in progress and
colonization. Women’s writing takes on a very challenging role when it replies to the canon and
displays its allegiance to it at the same time. The concepts of travel and writing - reminiscent of
the male genres, epic and Bildungsroman, respectively – further bolsters this ambiguous position
in and out of the canon. Thanks to their travels narrated in epic format, women protagonists of
the period also precipitate the figure of a developing writer and foreground the trope of a “writer-
in-the-making.” Victorian women’s writing enables the coming together of two distinctly
masculine genres and through this combination develops a unique voice.

The two canonical works, Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s
Aurora Leigh, set the tone for this newly emerging narrative through their writer protagonists on
the road. What differentiates Schreiner’s and Rossetti’s texts from these model narratives is their
emphasis on multivocality. The Victorian texts I focus on in this study entail multiple
protagonists, who not only go through an epic journey but also transform due to this travel. The
existence of multiple protagonists, Lyndall, Em, Waldo, and Gregory in The Story of an African
Farm; and Flora, Edith, Maggie and the five nieces in Speaking Likenesses enables the reader to
encounter a variety of travelling women and to locate this figure of the female wanderer and the
traveler within a larger framework. Both Bronte and Barrett Browning open up a new venue for
Victorian women writers to express their interest in ancient Greek culture as well as to create a
sub-canonical within the nineteenth century tradition of male cannon. Moving beyond Bronte and
Barrett Browning, Schreiner and Rossetti bend this framework further and compose
multidimensional protagonists with their flaws and errors and incorporate their criticism of the
colonial endeavors as well. This new framework not only paves the way for modernist texts
which twist traditional gender roles and racial categories but also precipitates a questioning of
colonialist travels conducted in the nineteenth century. Moreover, this multivocality in *The Story
of an African Farm* and *Speaking Likenesses* initiates the birth of this composite figure of the
female wanderer and storyteller and further provides links to the multidimensional protagonists
of contemporary Middle Eastern women’s literature.

This study’s focus on Schreiner and Rossetti among other Victorian women writers and
texts should not lead the reader to assume that they are the sole examples of this tradition. Mona
Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus*, Olive Schreiner’s *Undine* and *From Man to Man*, Dollie
Radford’s *The Sea-Thrift*, Augusta Webster’s *Daffodil and Croaxxicans*, Jean Ingelow’s *Behind
the White Brick* are some of the examples that fit into this new sub-genre and the emerging
composite protagonist that *The Story of an African Farm* and *Speaking Likenesses* provide. It is
this multi-dimensional aspect of this figure of the female wanderer and storyteller in these
particular works that enables this study to compare these two distinct geographical regions and
time frames. This complicated protagonist, who feeds on other travelling and writing
protagonists in the texts, initiates a modern multi-dimensional character, which may have had an
impact on Soueif’s and Gün’s interest in creating women traveler-writers who need other women
protagonists, travelers, and writers to affirm their position. They exist with the help of other characters – mostly women – and create a sisterly solidarity.

As the Victorian women writers adapt and twist two topical trends of the time, a number of contemporary women writers from the Middle East engage in a similar blending of two cultural and literary traditions. Similar to the Victorian women’s engagement with the traditional genres, women writers from the Middle East are inspired by Western genres such *Bildungsroman* and Victorian women’s travelogues. This constant back-and-forth between the past and the present in Victorian literature reveals among contemporary Middle Eastern writers through their emphasis on writing in English and having access to canonical Western texts. This multidimensional traveler-writer figure that Schreiner and Rossetti create further turns into a hybrid figure not only through her female helpers and sisters but also her access to canonical texts and mythological elements from Western and Non-Western cultural traditions. As Soueif’s allusions to the travelogues of Lucy Duff Gordon and Anne Blunt as well as to Egyptian mythology and Shahrazad make *The Map of Love* a hybrid narrative, Gün’s references to Homer and John Barth in addition to Turkish folktale characters and *One Thousand and One Nights* destabilizes Western reader’s expectations of familiarity.

Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* and Güneli Gün’s *On the Road to Baghdad* serve as sequels to Victorian women’s literature in that they adapt this composite figure and invest it with cross-cultural elements. They are simply two examples from a large pool of writers who use similar strategies in their narratives. Assia Djebar’s *A Sister to Shahrazad*, Fatma Mernissi’s *Dreams of Trespass*, Ulfat Idilbi’s *Grandfather’s Tale*, Ahdaf Soueif’s *In the Eye of the Sun*, Nawal al-Saadawi’s *A Daughter of Isis* all use the metaphor of travel in conjunction with the
concept of storytelling by alluding to Shahrazad. The interested readers of this study might look at similar texts, which trace this traveler-writer figure.

The analytic framework my study has constructed connects the first examples of the traveler-writer figure to the later multi-dimensional figure, which takes shape through the existence of other characters. This modern narrative elaborates cross-gender, cross-racial, cross-class dimensions already manifest in Victorian women’s writing. Through heightened instability of gender roles, revisioning of racial categories and class distinctions, this composite figure adapts and transcends its Victorian predecessors. Women writers from the Middle East use similar tropes of bending gender, racial and class categories; however, they also add another dimension to this emerging figure. The multi-dimensionality of the traveler-writer also stems from the amalgamation of two cultures, Western and Non-Western traditions, and thus also takes place at the cross-cultural and cross-national level.

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