**Article 6**

# "Who Seeks Peace, Will Live in Peace": Representation of Arab Women in Hebrew Literature Curricula

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**Abstract**

Literature has the potential to play a crucial role in peace education, particularly during childhood and adolescence when literature is considered a strong political socializing agent. Analyzing Hebrew literature curriculum for secondary schools in the Arab sector of Israel/Palestine, this study examines the portrayal of Arab women in this curriculum as well as the socio-ideological and civic aims of the curriculum, described by the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture as "consideration for social and cultural sensitivities". Given the possibility of curricula to enact expressions of social change, the study analyzes if the representation of Arab women in the curriculum contributes to peace-building dialogue between Arabs and Jews. The analysis is informed by Kristeva's notion of abjection as it is often used to describe the state of marginalized groups, as well as the theories of literary criticism that claim literature instills values, reflects

social changes and evolving perceptions, and shapes the identity of the reader. Finally, the analysis draws from peace studies research that argues literature is a powerful tool for cultivating peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, ethical values, and social responsibility.

**Keywords:** literature curriculum, representation of Arab women, Hebrew language, peace, socialization, abjection

## Literature as an agent for peace

In every discipline, and especially in the humanities, the curriculum is based on two considerations: on one hand, there are pedagogical assessments stemming from the structure of the body of knowledge in the discipline and its pedagogical adaptation, and on the other hand the ideological considerations based, to a large extent, on a philosophy of life, reflecting, through the general aims of teaching the discipline, the myth and ethos of the society, its identity and values at a given time. Curricula should be perceived as concrete expressions of social processes and social change since it create beliefs and skills that society finds worthy of bequeathing to the next generation (Iram, 1991).[1]

Given the possibility of curricula as an expression of social change, the aim of this research is to examine the portrayal of the Arab woman in the corpus of Hebrew literature curriculum for secondary schools in the Arab sector of Israel/Palestine. We analyze the status of women portrayed in this literature, the characteristic traits displayed in narrative and imagery as well as her conduct within the problematical reality of Israel. The research asks an important question: does the representation of women in this curricular literature contribute to peace-building dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews living in Israel?

## Literary criticism, identity, and peace building

The theory of literary criticism that claims that literature instills values and shapes the identity of the reader can be divided into three approaches: the historical-documentary approach, the moral-ideological approach, and the socio-national approach (Feingold, 1977). The historical-documentary approach holds that literature is an important source of information about people, cultures and historical periods; knowing “where we come from” will help the reader answer the question about “where we are going”. To “remember” is not a purely intellectual activity, but it can motivate people to act in the present and in the future. This approach holds that literature fulfils a very important function in instilling in the student a national education: reading literature describing the characteristics and the unique features of national life in the past, the reader-learner learns about herself/himself as a member of a nation, intensifying her/his identification with his people and society (Cohen, 1985). The moral-ideological approach maintains that literature is a means of instilling universal human values; literature enables the reader to assimilate important universal ideals and to deal with the negative influence of extraneous ideals. This approach is supported by Fisher (1972) who argues that literary content can support values:

> Language is a medium; literature is a form. Neither the form nor the medium is important in itself. Both are important only as they support human values, and—the eternal peril of an articulate society—both the medium and the form, both language and literature, are always capable of being *mis*used, of *mis*leading, or *mis*informing, as they are of uttering the truth. (p. 16)

Every discussion about social and moral values is not extraneous to literature (Yehoshua, 1998), and it is not "forced" upon it; on the contrary, it is an immanent part of literary work. Levingston (1976) too favors character education through literature claiming “In front of you, today, he is a pupil, but tomorrow he will be a citizen of the great wide world” (p. 73). The socio-national approach considers literature as a means of instilling in the pupil love and loyalty for her or his people, country, and homeland. One of the indications of this approach is that

it can be felt strongly in periods of national crisis or mental stress; in such times there is a greater desire to see literature as a means to refresh values or to restore them. An outstanding example of this approach can be found in an article written by Iram and Yiaoz (1981) objecting to the prevalent trend to teach literature disassociated from any discussion of values, preferring to stick to the text and its poetic features and perennially trying to forge “tools of literary analysis”. In their view, evading any ideological commitment in the realm of nationality, religion and state exerts a pernicious influence on the image and world of education.

Literature has the potential to play a crucial role in peace education. Political behavior studies show that patterns of political behavior**,** such as support for a certain political party, tolerance of minorities and support for freedom of speech are formed and internalized by the individual during childhood and adolescence. During these early stages of life, literature is considered a strong political socializing agent (Zamir, 2005). In his book *Education Through Art* (1967) Read, a pioneer in the development of the concept of peace culture, argues that literature is the best tool for cultivating personal relations, values and moral virtue. A function of literature and the arts in society and education, Read explains, is to expand human responsibility as well as ethical values.

The role of women in peace literature holds two facets: women protagonists who promote peace and women as peace authors.

The earliest known play, *Lysistrata,* written in 411 B.C, the third and concluding play of Aristophanes' War and Peace trilogy, is a comic account of one woman's uncommon mission to end The Peloponnesian War. The Heroine Lysistrata, conveying her feminist and pacifist ideas, convinces the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands and lovers as a means of forcing the men to bring an end to the Peloponnesian War and to negotiate peace. At the end of the play, the device of the bold Lysistrata proves entirely effective and peace is concluded.

Alongside with figures proponent of peace, the contribution of women literature in the advancement of peace is indisputable. For example, the literary works by Virginia Woolf drew attention to the fact that women are more susceptible to war, terror and deprivation than men. *Three Guineas*, published in June 1938 by Woolf's own Hogarth Press, is a feminist, pacifist, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist polemic. It shows Virginia Woolf, prior to World War II, at her most politically urgent and reveals how constantly attuned she was to her political, social and cultural surroundings. In this work, Woolf (1938/2006) argues women should maintain an attitude of indifference to war and not try “to incite their brothers to fight, or to dissuade them”. A woman should “bind herself to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise; to make no part of any claque or audience that encourages war; to absent herself from military displays, tournaments, tattoos, prize-givings and all such ceremonies as encourage the desire to impose ‘our’ civilization or ‘our’ dominion upon other people”. These acts would “help to prevent war and to ensure freedom” (p. 129).

Woolf’s previous book*, A Room of One's Own,* is also considered one of the most significant feminist texts of the twentieth century. Published in 1929, Woolf's essay was the first literary history of women writers and its radical nature is evidenced by its anticipation of many of the concerns of Second Wave feminists some forty years later. It was Virginia Woolf (1929) who devoted many of her works to the research of the conditions of women’s writing and expressed the opinion that “Money and peace…are the necessary preconditions for every creative process, regardless the gender; however, the inequality between men and women meant that difficulties were much more formidable for women” (p. 30). She argued in order to prosper women had to “kill the monster”—in other words, break down the gendered stereotypes that limited their agency and constituted women as possessions of men (p. 34).

The literary works of a second language are considered authentic sources for getting acquainted with the "other" culture. There are three main reasons for this: a) Literature provides the reader with the opportunity to learn about the "other",

b) it helps the reader get acquainted with the "other's" narrative, and c) it also enables the reader to experience a modicum of contact with the "other," either through the reading (Gordon, 1983) or through the plot, which may include analogies between protagonists representing the reader and the “other”. The advantages of literary works of a second language become even more significant in the light of tensed relationships between parties which are bound to nourish their negative images and stereotypes about each other through violent reality.

In addition, the portrayal of women in literature serves as a barometer by which we can measure that status and role of Arab women in society. Understanding literature as a socialization agent may invite the readers to view subjectively the woman protagonist by portraying specific values, prejudices and stereotypes. Nevertheless, it also offers readers the chance to exchange culturally restricted points of view together with the women in the narrative.

**Background**

Before analyzing the representation of Arab woman in the corpus of Hebrew literature curriculum for secondary schools in the Palestinian-Arab sector of Israel, it is important to present a background of language education in the area.

During the British Mandate[2] in Palestine, 1920-1948, the language of instruction in Arab high schools in most subjects was English. During this period the Arabs did not study Hebrew at all; starting in 1948, while the War of Independence known by the Arabs as *Al Naqbah* [The Great Disaster] was still in progress, the Provisional State Council of Israel decided to impose Israeli military rule on those parts of the country that, with the subsiding of the battles, were still inhabited by relatively large Arab populations. These areas included the Galilee, the foot of Samaria, the Negev, Ramle, Lod, Jaffa, Acre and Migdal. As a result, beginning in 1948 until the gradual phasing out of its regulations in 1966, the military government was the main official Israeli institution that functioned over the Arab minority of the country, which at that time constituted about 12% of the population.

In spite of its military character (and name), it turned out that its main task was running and supervising the civil administration of the Arab minority in the country. The special supervision of the Arab minority (considered by the government as a hostile minority or even a "fifth column"[3] necessitating "security supervision" since it was liable to help the enemy outside the country) focused on preventing freedom of movement, assembly and other activities as well as supervising education (Baumel, 2002).

At every level, the military government's security concerns took priority over educational concerns in staffing Arab schools. This added additional layers of bureaucracy that further hampered the Arab educational system (Mor-Sommerfeld et al., 2008).

Compounding the negative presentations of Arabs in Hebrew textbooks and literature during the military government, the Jewish school system further contributed to the marginalization of the Palestinian community by giving Jewish students little, if any, exposure to the Arabic language or culture. Despite the fact that Arabic was officially designated as one of the two official languages in Israel, the study of Arabic was not required in Jewish schools as a matriculation subject. The Arabic language, like the people, was present at some superficial level, but absent at the nuts-and-bolts, practical level that would shape Israeli Jewish education into the future (Mor-Sommerfeld et al., 2008). The first supervisors in charge of teaching Hebrew to the Arabs were Jewish (Shohamy & Dounitsa, 1998).

Teaching the Hebrew language to Arab students began immediately after the establishment of the state of Israel; beginning in the fourth grade (having reached the age of 12), Hebrew was compulsory in all Arab elementary and secondary schools; school children had to learn Hebrew 4-5 hours a week; Hebrew was compulsory in teacher-training colleges as well. In this respect, the phenomenon of diglossia[4] for all mother-tongue speakers of Arabic has not been taken into consideration: Although native Arabs speak Arabic, they all have to be bilingual

due to the diglossic nature of Arabic. The sharp variations in the informal language spoken in different Arabic-speaking countries make it necessary to use both forms of the language, formal (Classical Arabic) and informal. For this reason, Hebrew became actually a third language that contributed to intricacies in academic literacy (Zamir & Hauphtman, 2009).

The government directive to introduce Hebrew in the Arab education system was very controversial at the time; it was reached only after many disagreements and lengthy, drawn-out debates among both the Israeli majority and in the Arab sector (Shohamy & Spolsky, 1999, 2002). The opposition to teaching Arabs Hebrew stemmed from political and religious reasons. One cannot ignore the connection between national and linguistic issues that runs along the line of revivalism (Kuzar, 2001; Shohamy & Spolsky, 1999). The term “revival” represents both to the revival of the Hebrew nationhood in Biblical Canaan as well as to the revival of Biblical Hebrew (Kuzar, 2001; Shohamy & Spolsky, 1999). In other words, the renewal of the Hebrew language revivalism is harmonious with national rejuvenation. Those in favor of the idea gave several compelling reasons: Hebrew would be the key to learning about Jews and their culture; it would be an important tool for direct written and oral communication with the Hebrew-speaking community; it would prove to be an important tool for fostering Israeli citizenship (Zamir & Hauphtman, 2009). Examining these three goals shows the goals focus on acquainting the target population with the Jewish people and its culture. In 1959, the elementary school curriculum for teaching Hebrew to the Arab sector was published; by and large, it was based on the above-mentioned goals; however, it was expanded to include not only additional goals such as "bringing the two communities closer," but also to discuss general didactic issues stemming from the aspiration to form a peaceable community (in the elementary school curriculum for teaching Hebrew to the Arab sector curriculum, 1959). In contrast, the secondary schools still lacked a curriculum for studying Hebrew; at the beginning of the 1960s, however, the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture published a curriculum for the study of Hebrew in Arab

secondary schools entitled "*Hebrew Language and Literature Curriculum for Arab Secondary Schools: Grades 9 – 12"*. Those who outlined the curriculum set two major goals for teaching Hebrew language and literature: a) to impart the Arab learner with a basic, precise and comprehensive knowledge of the Hebrew language for practical and cultural purposes, and b) to provide the Arab student with an opening into Israeli culture and values in the past and present, and to facilitate the student's understanding of the Jewish community's social and cultural life.

In 1972 the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture in conjunction with the unit for curriculum development at the University of Haifa[5] appointed a joint committee whose function was to prepare Hebrew curricula for Arab students; however, it was not until March 24, 1975 that a curriculum for secondary schools was finally approved by the minister of education and culture. In September 1976 the new format of the curriculum for secondary schools was published in the special Circular A of the Director General of the Ministry of Education and Culture; the curriculum included topics for the course of study and the Matriculation exams. Examining the goals of the Hebrew literature curriculum for students studying in Arab schools (in the introduction of the 1976 curriculum) shows that it was aimed at:

- Leading the learners to communicate at a normal level with the Jewish populace
- Facilitating the learners' integration in the life of the country
- Preparing the Arab high school graduates to continue their studies at institutions of higher learning in Israel
- Acquainting the learner with the essential points of the Jewish people's literary and cultural heritage throughout its history and to appreciate Hebrew culture

- Fostering esthetic awareness through learning the function of linguistic forms in poetry and prose, in the expression of varied contents and through learning the extent of harmony between form and content (pp. 4-5).

Excluding the last goal, which relates to literature as a goal unto itself, all the others regard literature as a means to attain civic and cultural goals.

There are three additional introductory notes in the 1976 curriculum that are important for our purpose: a) the selected works are directed at the range of topics engaging the learners' age group, b) the selection is directed at heterogeneous composition of the target population, and c) the selection also elicits "a debate of authentic issues taking into account social and cultural sensitivities and excluding texts expressing attitudes and utterances liable to provoke extreme reactions either way" (cited in Zamir & Hauphtman, 2009, p. 221).

These additional notes show that the manifest declarations of the curriculum relate to the literacy needs of the learners. Nevertheless the last note specifically aims at avoiding conflicts that might arouse "extreme reactions". Regarding this last requirement, one should ask if this requirement is feasible or if it is structurally contradictory; how can one truly learn about the authentic woman and her aspirations without having to confront fundamental controversies and rooted beliefs?

This question brings about another tension concerning the attitude towards Hebrew studies; various surveys show the existence of some negative standpoints towards the instruction of the Hebrew language among students of the Arab sector (Shohamy & Dounitsa, 1998). Those unenthusiastic standpoints can be mainly explained by Arab students' wish to preserve their lingual identity and their lack of identification with the compulsory tongue. Yet, their achievements in Hebrew studies, relative to Arabic, have been satisfactory.

These findings can be enlightened by the fact that the motivation to learn the Hebrew language is in fact purely instrumental. Instrumental incentive for learning languages stem from external reasons as well as social needs (Kraemer, 1990; Lustigman, 2008). Contrary to Integral motivation to acquire a new language due to internal motives as heritage and attachment, instrumental motivation appreciates the benefits that can be gained from mastering the very language. Hence, the very fact that knowing Hebrew may play a crucial role in the social mobility within the Israeli society contributes vastly to the acceptance of the Hebrew language as a permissible discipline.

This research focuses on this literature curriculum, which has been in effect for about thirty years in the Arab schools of Israel (a new curriculum, whose general outline was published in 2004, is to gradually replace the present one still in use). The research selection includes the literary texts published in the director general's special Circular A (Sep.1977). The texts required by the curriculum were collected in two anthologies, *Ofek Latalmid* [Horizon to the Student] as well as in the three teacher's guides to the anthologies edited in 2003 by the educator and a pedagogical administrator Subahi Addawi, and published by Alnahadia Publishers.

**Analyzing the representation of Arab women**

The method we applied in our study of the representation of Arab women in Hebrew literature curricula is content analysis, the systematic study of various forms of written works and usually aims mainly at description as the preliminary basis for supplementary explanation (Leavy, 2000). A series of procedures is used in content analysis to arrive at diagnoses and generalizations from within the text (Weber, 1985). Our study can be considered a feminist content analysis as we are exploring “both progress and problems in the area of women-relevant scholarship” (Hesse-Biber & Leavey, 2007; see also Leavey, 2000). In their book *Feminist research practice*, Hesse-Biber & Leavey (2007) note “feminist researchers have used content analysis across media forms to explore a range of issues that are central to our understanding of gender and difference, as well

as research aimed at social action” (p. 234). Angelique and Culley (2000) present three characteristics of feminist content analysis: “1) consciousness of gender issues, 2) gender stratified power imbalances or 3) multilevel contextual analysis” (p. 797). Guided by these scholars, we have conducted a feminist content analysis because the cultural products of any given society at any given time echo the gendered themes of that society and that era.

Compared to other tools of measurement, content analysis has three major advantages: it is not invasive; contrary to other techniques such as interviews, responding to questionnaires, and projection tests, it is free of errors in data analysis stemming from the respondents' awareness of the examiner's presence and expectations. Content analysis allows one to add criteria through the process of analysis. While in techniques such as interviews and questionnaires the data is obtained in a structured manner so that every category being investigated is known beforehand, in content analysis the analyst may not be able to predict all the categories before conducting a preliminary check of the text.

Context analysis is context sensitive; the interpretation of the data in the process of content analysis is supposed to follow the processes occurring in reality, including political and ideological processes. It is also a technique that is able to deal with a large amount of data such as data culled from textbooks (Krippendorff, 1980).

According to Stephens (1992), stories that have a neutral didactic content that more easily influence the reader ideologically; Latent ideology in the story leaves the author above suspicion of political or ideological bias, so that it is easy for the readers, whatever their political views, to open their minds to the author's writing. Latent ideology is more easily absorbed by the reader since it does not meet with his immediate resistance. Therefore, inexplicitly stated ideology is often considered, and wrongly so, legitimate. Even stories that are apparently free of any ideological content will impart some kind of ideology; for example, a tale presenting a protagonist's way of life, which is supported by the author may

assimilate ideological statement about what is and what should be. The values, constructing the ideology, touch upon the past, the present and the future: the traditional values, the prevailing ethics of the present, and the wish to create the values of the future (teaching values to children who will be tomorrow's adult citizens) in order to improve society (Stephens, 1992).

The anthologies comprise 105 literary works, 17 of which deal with the portrayal of Jewish women and only three works deal with Arab women. Another 23 literary works that portray unspecified feminine figures were not included in the research sample. The story “Hassan, Hamed and Haled” (Smilansky, *Offek 2*, pp. 90-103) conveys two main characteristics of the Bedouin woman: One, the traditional hierarchy which suppresses the woman's existence in comparison to the man's: "Behind the men, the women were sited, veiled from the guests, holding the infants between their arms" (p. 93). Second, the phenomena of polygamy: the three mentioned protagonists of the story have one father and three different mothers.

The story “Mohammad” (Smilansky, *Offek 3*, pp. 109-119) Portrays Mohammad's wife as marginal character who is forced to leave her home due to poverty. In the third story, Swimming Race (Tammuz, *Offek 3*, pp. 109-119), most of the women personify insignificant characters aside from the elderly woman who constitutes peaceful coexistence with her Jewish neighbors: "Who seeks peace, will live in peace" (p. 96). In contrast to the terminology of peace among the women of the story, the men in their lives cannot stop competing till the bitter end.

**Abjection of the marginalized**

The analysis of the selections included in the *Ofek* anthologies, including the accompanying teacher's guide, shows that the portrait of the Arab woman that emerges is mostly archaic because it is based mainly on the traditional and conservative profile of the Arab woman. The first story, “Hassan, Hamed and Haled”, is prominent for it complies to the sexual code of the Bedouin society,

namely that perceptions of honor and shame dictate behavior (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2005). The Bedouin sexual code affects every aspect of a girl's upbringing, from childhood to marriage. As a vehicle of procreation, the Bedouin woman is both marginalized and venerated. Her primary role of reproduction emphasizes her connection to uncontrolled nature, which restricts her ability to be perceived as morally equal to men (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2005). This format, according to the writers of the curriculum and the editors, seems to conform to the requirement found in the introduction to the goals of the anthologies: i.e. to elicit "a discussion of authentic issues, taking into account the social and cultural sensitivities and excluding texts expressing attitudes and utterances liable to provoke extreme reactions" (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2005).

The second story "Mohammad" portrays Mohammad's wife as a marginal character who is forced to leave her home due to poverty. Again, her status is low, nevertheless she acts assertively. However, the third story, "Swimming Race"**,** can actually be considered as the most significant narrative of the anthologies for it actually contributes to the realization of the curriculum's main social goal, namely, to build a bridge between the Arab and the Jewish populations in Israel. The convoluted plot takes place during the complicated days of the pre-state and the 1948-1949 war, conveying the sensitive encounters and relationships between Jews and Arabs. The story consists of three parts. In the first part, the narrator, as a young boy, and his mother, medical doctor, have been invited to spend their vacation at a summer dwelling place (a house in the orange grove) of an old and noble Arab woman who had been cured by the mother. The relationships between the two women are warm, generous and respectful. The relations between the narrator and the old lady's granddaughter, Nahida, are pure and innocent and the only tension between them is of sexual nature, typical to juveniles. Nevertheless, a national tension starts to emerge between the narrator and Nahida's uncle Abdul Karim who attends the college of the Mufti of Jerusalem, a sworn enemy of the Zionist movement: "Nahida's uncle—his name was Abdul-Karim—asked me if I was in the Haganah. When I

told him that was a secret, he laughed and said it was an open secret which the whole country knew about". The hidden conflict between them unveils itself in the swimming race and Abdul Karim triumphs.

In the second part, the narrator as a young man full of nostalgia, spends his vacation in the Arab village of Ein-Karem and rents a room there. He is totally assimilated in the environment, enjoying the Arabs' company, their food and their music. He reminisces the past with strong yearning: "I realized what I had come for".

In the third part, the narrator, now a soldier has been lined up to storm Tel-Arish, an Arab stronghold in the Jaffa dunes, east of the city. When the narrator and his fellow soldiers finally approach the courtyard of the house in the orange grove, the narrator recognizes Abdul-Karim and calls his name. "When I explained who I was, he gave a weary smile of recollection…You're the victors," he said. "We do as we're told." As long as I haven't beaten you in the pool," I told him, "there's no telling who the victor is". While Abdul-Karim has been ordered to be taken into the orange grove, with the other prisoners, the narrator entered the pool and swam across it, as if he truly races Abdul-Karim. Suddenly he hears a shot from the orange grove: "My heart missed a pulse. I knew Abdul-Karim had been killed". Abdul-Karim died supposedly by a discharge bullet. Following the atrocity, the narrator rushed towards Abdul-Karim's body and turned it over. "His was not the face of a man who had lost. There, in the courtyard, it was I, all of us, who were the losers". Contrary to the peaceful relationships and the discourse of peace between the female heroines of the story, the male protagonists cannot break the cycle of war.

One cannot ignore both the diminution of the total number of literary works portraying Arab women as well as their archaic nature. Derrida (1997) states that "there is nothing outside the text" [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*] (p. 158) namely that it is necessary to take into consideration the function and operation of absence. The total absence of the contemporary, capable, and

even revolutionary woman becomes a form of presence that imparts awareness to the origin and effects of the actual exclusion.

Derived from the theory of absence is the term “abjection”. “Abjection” is often used to describe the state of marginalized groups. According to Kristeva (1991) since the abject is situated outside the symbolic order, being forced to face it is an inherently traumatic experience. This act of excluding the “abject” is done in the light of the parts of ourselves that we exclude. Compatibly, excluding the contemporary Jewish woman may stem from the necessity to abject the threatening other, in order to construct an identity that complies to familiar social order.

A scrutiny of the proposed new curriculum (2004) contains some changes. The novel *Dancing Arabs* by Kashua Sayed (2002), which is included in the recommended reading list for Hebrew instruction describes merging identities of Arabs who live under dominant Jewish Zionist culture. The novel begins with a story about the narrator's grandmother. At the start of the novel, his grandmother tells him about objects she kept in the cupboard where she hid old photos, newspapers clips, and documents. His grandmother is the only person idealized in the novel. She is an orphan, who got married and had four children and whose husband died in the war of 1948-1949 while fighting the Zionists. She then worked as a fruit picker to raise her children. Idealizing his grandmother reflects the narrator’s view of the female role in the family: She is the oldest, most respected, and most powerful person in the family (Magdid, 2005).

The novel ends with the narrator going back to the village with his wife and child to visit his family. At night, he hears his grandmother vomiting in the shower. He asks her:

> What's the matter, Grandma? I ask...‘Go back to sleep, habibi, It's like this every day’. I hug her and kiss her head, trying not to cry. She hides her eyes now behind her white scarf and says it isn't

> death that makes her cry. Not at all. She's tired already, and she doesn't want to be a burden to Mother and Father anymore. She says the only reason she's crying is that she used to think she'd be buried in her own land. ‘Do you remember where the key to the cupboard is?’ And we both cry together. (pp. 226-227)

The grandmother wishes to pass the author the heritage of his Arab family, believing that co-existence is preferable to assimilation.

Yet, the most prominent literary work is Sami Michael's novel *Trumpet in the Valley.* The plot is set in the months preceding the 1982 Israeli-Arab conflict in Lebanon. The heroine of the story, thirty-year-old Huda lives with her Christian-Arab family in the city of Haifa. However, her world is turned upside down when an eccentric Jewish immigrant from Russia, Alex moves into her apartment building. A diminutive, hairy, and none-too-attractive musician who enjoys practicing his trumpet late into the evening, Alex is instantly infatuated with Huda and begins courting his new neighbor. Despite their families' strong objections, Huda and Alex gradually fall in love with one another as they come to terms with their disparate backgrounds, until the tragic end. Huda personifies the modern Arab women who struggles between merging identities within a perplexed society living at the shadow of continues conflict. Huda who seeks for love chooses peace. The author locates the courageous female protagonist in Haifa, a city that exemplifies co-existence.

These kinds of literary works which are characterized by dilemmas concerning the evolving identity of contemporary Arab women, may function as genuine agents for a renewed society.

**Notes**

[1] See Zamir & Hauphtman (2009, pp. 224-225) for an extended discussion on ideology an curricula. In it, we argue that national curricula are political creations mediated by the ideologies, beliefs, value systems and political agendas of the curriculum makers who decide what ‘knowledge’ and ‘skills’ are to be compulsory in schools-and for whom (see also Hill, 2009). The political principles behind a curriculum for 'national' education, whether it is overtly egalitarian or anti-egalitarian, support the wider objectives of governmental policy and these are of course not only social but also economic. The National Curriculum has aims beyond the controlled reproduction and re-validation of particular cultural forms and elites. It is also 'a bureaucratic device for exercising ideological control of ruling ethnic or class groups over what goes on in schools (Althusser, 1971; Hill, 2009). Bourdieu's cogitation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) analyses the relationship between education and cultural formation. Though the concept “cultural capital” is central to Bourdieu's original analysis of how the mechanisms of cultural reproduction function within schools regarding social classes, one can realize its adaptability also to ethnic textures of a given society. For Bourdieu, the education system is not, in practice, meritocratic. Its major function is to maintain and legitimate a social division.

[2] The British Mandate of Palestine was a legal instrument for the administration of Palestine formally approved by the League of Nations in June 1922, based on a draft by the principal allied and associated powers after the First World War. The mandate formalized British rule in Palestine.

[3] The fifth column is a term used to describe a group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders.

[4] In linguistics, diglossia describes a phenomenon where a given language community uses two languages or dialects as in the case of literary Arabic versus spoken varieties of Arabic.

[5] The University of Haifa is considered to be a pluralistic institution of higher education. The university is situated in the city Haifa which has a mixed population of Jews and Arabs giving an example for peaceful co-existence, tolerance, and mutual respect.

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