

Subverting the Binary Oppositions concerning Female Agency in Alameddine's An Unnecessary Woman

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Received: 11/26/2022

Accepted: 02/18/2023

Published 02/26/2023

Abstract

This study explores woman's agency in Alameddine's fiction, *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013) concerning the normative state of agency in a communal structure that controls women's behaviors and wishes set by suppression. The current study uses the deconstruction theory of French post-structuralists Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous, taken from a feminist perspective, which undermines gender dichotomies and interrupts “the unquestionable truth” in Western philosophy. In short, Rabih Alameddine’s fiction reveals the misconceptions about – and misrepresentations of – Arab women in contemporary Arab American fiction and disrupts the binary opposition which resembles the backbone of patriarchy.

Keywords: agency, binary, deconstruction, feminism, hélène cixous, jacques derrida, oppositions, rabih Alameddine

Cite as: Omar, N., Alhasan, A., Zainal, Z. I., & Bahar, I. B. (2023). Subverting the Binary Oppositions concerning Female Agency in Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman*. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 7 (1). 301-312.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol7no1.22>

Introduction

The conventional representation of Arab cultures represents patriarchal authority that enables a potent binary opposition between downgraded females and males in supremacy. In this context, the common thought of an agency may be recognized as the dimensions of subject to the act, even though the relegated collection to which she belongs is without legitimate authority. The specifically feminist post-structuralist view of agency is that it doesn't necessarily free subjects from self-structure in discourse but still renders them to adjust and struggle against this bullying sermon (Davies, 1991). In most eastern narratives, women are presented as dominated, downgraded, who offer readers with the stereotypical representation of Arab females as hesitant and obscure objects (Sadek, 2018; Ramadan, 2017; and Almatrafi, 2012). Alameddine is a modern Arab-American writer famous for exploring Arab-American women's entities, and for their engagement with transnational themes. He shines a spotlight on distinct involvements of individuals who attempt to adjust and resist the goal in most of his stories, mainly, *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013).

Alameddine's story mainly concentrates on a single protagonist who develops self-awareness and assertiveness within a procedure of evolution formed by struggle, an important mechanism that establishes control and agency. As feminist philosopher Kruks (2019) argues, subjectivity requires personality and self-awareness in vibrant interaction settings and uses within discourses that achieves subject a state. Alameddine assigns the contribution of the protagonist to a female describing her story in a female voice. *An Unnecessary Woman* (2013) portrays a woman's struggle in body and mind in contrast to customs and supremacies of any kind: communal, religious, economic, cultural, or political. Aaliyah, the primary character, whose name in Arabic refers to high one, eminent, sees herself as totally at variance with several views and norms in her culture. She chooses to live by herself in her room in Beirut, constructing her identity in a sufficient reality and with no regret for her solitary existence because of a rational decision she has made. She observes in the narrative: "I am alone. It is a choice I've made" (Alameddine, 2013, p.12). Aaliyah has positioned herself as liberated with an extraordinary mental ability that misuses her loneliness as creative and constructive.

Women's suppression in male-controlled cultures penetrates the cravings and objectives of women (Qiao & Omar, 2012). In Arab cultures, a "yes, I do" is undoubtedly not the approval of a marriage proposal by the female herself; instead, it is mutual "yes, we do" in which the self-confidence of a female eliminated, her actual goals and wishes belonging to herself alone. The collection in a male-controlled society only takes account of male cravings and suppresses the wishes of the marginalized (albeit majority) group, women (Farmer, 2001). Feminists state that the binary opposition of male and female is the mainstay of a male-controlled community (Kristeva, 1986; Hélène, 1986; and Irigaray, 1985). Cixous (1980) argues that females should not stay within the imposed binary resistance but instead that they should move further than that. Simone de Beauvoir, in the *Second sex* (1949), states that chronological, genetic, mental and economic factors underpinning females' state represent them as weaker entities and make their struggle for liberty changing (Shepherd, 2018). In connection with objects dualism, de Beauvoir postulates that once females have realized their fiscal and societal independence there will be no instant sex (Marcus, 2020). The recreation of self-rule, agency and self-determination involves the structure of a self beneath communally established. The self needs an 'I' instead of 'me', the identification of the self as a subject. 'I' represents one who reflects and articulates the 'me'. It

probes into the content of what makes an individual, regardless of what you are. The only object that does matter is how self modifies itself as 'I'. Self-awareness is the facilitator for resistance and the interior power to authorize agentivity. In this case, agency reviews the properties obstructing self-empowerment and actualization.

The entire plot spins around the story of one female, it nevertheless encompasses the lives of all those around her, even the lives of the characters in her translated manuscripts. Alameddine, as a novelist, manages to develop a storyline that embraces a creative dimension and emancipatory agenda amenable to the feminist project of subverting the disabling binary opposition inherent in patriarchy. The female in his narrative described in terms of the gender realities of the feminine not the normative constructed understanding of the female. This contra-normative perspective reveals the fragility of patriarchy. It exposes the tools and limitations imposed by the (patriarchal) leader limit the margins of opportunities for man's freedom and originality. The author mocks the punitive tools of the leader for being disordered and illogical in their dealings with ethical purity and social autonomy. This analysis intends to locate the binary oppositions to subvert the patriarchal norms and expectations propagated by a group of people liked solely because of genital differences and to examine how subjectivity formulated – regardless of gender – when it comes to self-awareness.

Methodology

Deconstruction has become popular in contemporary critical analysis (Stephen, 1991). It is advisedly referred to as a manifestation of post-structuralists because it comes end of a groundbreaking but ultimately too-rigid Structuralism (Cornell et al., 2016). While, structuralists hold the logic of text certainty, deconstructionists help the reader to generate their understanding as validated by applying the constituting beliefs of language and meaning (Hall, 2001). The feminist research by Hélène Cixous (1980) based on Derrida's approach argues that we should possess free production of sense to transfer outside the binaries where terms get their senses from the leading dialogue in which expressions implemented to dominate. This posits that there is no reality. Cixous and Derrida implemented deconstructionism to display the diverse implications in writing and undermine the binary order. Feminist study devolves the ordered binary of femininity domination. The study used Derrida's (1992) framework of analysis by identifying binary opposition in the text, classifying the hierarchical connection between the two components, deconstructing the binary opposition by identifying the nature of its unpredictability, quoting parts of the text that researches the binary resistance and finally producing clarifications of certain aspects of the text. Derridean and Cixousean principles used to investigate instances of resistance show feminine agency in Alameddine's work. I embrace deconstruction approach of Derrida and Cixous' 'free play of meaning' in subverting the hierarchal binary of patriarchy.

Discussion

An Unnecessary Woman (2013) is contemporary Arab American writer Alameddine's fifth novel. Alameddine is the only Mahajar writer to have written two stories in a first-person female voice that expresses the tortures, cravings and aims of Arab women. His fiction relates to a woman's story throughout the civil war in Lebanon in 1975 when women faced severe social constraints on their teaching, movement and conduct besides spiritual and radical restrictions. It was offensive for a separated lady to stay alone, mainly if she had no offspring. As the heroine-protagonist,

Aaliya, bluntly asserts, “Beirut society wasn’t fond of divorced, childless women in those days”. (Alameddine, 2013,p.12).

Beginning in the winter of her 72nd year, Aaliyah narrates her life story in a series of flashbacks—starting with her childhood. These “snapshots” of moments in her earlier life progressively reveal her metamorphosis – her development from object to subject over time. First, Aaliyah makes a place to visit, perceive and reconsider her vast apartment in Beirut, which she vigorously defends psychologically and physically. Second, she misuses approach of replacement as an instrument to substitute whatever is inaccessible to what she did during the Civil War. Finally, year after year, she maintains a self-imposed cycle of work relating to her translations, to preserve a sense of meaning and productivity in her life.

Female’s Exclusion

The position of Aaliyah’s self-realization changes as a womanly substance in a male-controlled culture. Aaliyah’s father, who expired during preschool, addressed her as Aaliyah the high one, but she has never sensed the confidence that such a name implies. Early in the narrative she remarks she has constantly been an adjunct: “I am my family’s appendix, its unnecessary appendage” (Alameddine, 2013,p.16). The only solution is to arrange a second marriage for her mother shortly after her father’s death. This alone tells her the position of even an adult woman with her family. Unfortunately, the stepfather does not compensate for the absenteeism of the father either. He does not give her the devotion any child deserves, not even when he is on his deathbed. When dying, he calls for his sons to offer a pearl of final wisdom but not his daughters. Aaliyah and her younger sister are excluded. The absence of a father places the mother in a position that causes the absence of a mother. Aaliyah describes her mother as a terrible nightmare. Remembering is preferred as part of existence over disremembering; however, in Aaliyah’s tale, retention is not much liked. She explains, somewhat obscurely, memorizing is the menace that banquets on me now. She explains, somewhat obscurely,” the receding perspective of my past smothers my present. Remembering is the malignancy that feasts on my now” (Alameddine, 2013,p.39). This accomplishes that the patriarchal hegemony in her childhood and adolescence still haunts her presence. This chiefly perpetuates her agonies and grief that build up her rebellious thoughts and decisive conceptions of resistance against all forms of subjugation women encounter in patriarchal societies.

Patriarchy confirms that men and older women comprising mothers have supremacy over younger women and that family is the leading site of hegemonic authority in Arab patriarchal communities (Joseph, 1996). The family occupies a traditional position that ascertains, authorizes and maintains its members’ communal reference and sense of distinctiveness with the authorization of spiritual forms in society. The boundary between one’s self-esteem and otherness is somewhat fluid due to “the” meaning of self that highlights the association of people with one another (Joseph, 1996; p. 18). The exclusion of females from power and relevance at an early age affects the mature Aaliyah’s memory of herself as a child. Her excluded child Self, in turn, excludes the character of the father “ in every evocation of a childhood scene, my stepfather’s face is the least detailed, the most out of focus; when I think of him my memory’s eyes have cataracts “(Alameddine, 2013,p.16). This phrasing makes it plain she is not permitted to reject him, regardless of her feelings about him, she is only sixteen. This absence of subject-hood continues after her marriage. When she and her husband move to their new place, the landlord does not even

admit her presence in their first meeting. Business people who want to hire an employee to run his text store disprove Aaliyah as a candidate for the job. She observes that, at the job interview, “he spoke as if I weren’t there, as if I were invisible, as if his face hidden behind a perforated printout” (Alameddine, 2013, p.23).

Aaliyah states that the business people appeared hidden and spoke invisibly behind a perforated printout. He wants to employ a beautiful, classy woman who will fit in with his male viewpoint of females as sex objects. Aaliyah prefers not to get married again, not to get kids and a lover. The spouse, the kid, or the courtesan is needless for her. She replaces these conservative female wishes with eccentric ones. She holds a K47 Kalashnikov in her room throughout the war alleviating this saying “I slept with AK-47 as a substitute for a spouse”. She keeps a K47 Kalashnikov in her bed during the civil war justifying this saying, “I have to mention here that just because I slept with an AK-47 in place of a husband during the war does not make me insane” (Alameddine, 2013,p.26). If a male in discourse affords care and shelter to a female, it is substituted by practicality for Aaliyah. As discussed earlier, Aaliyah claims the phallus, therefore, she does not marry to obtain male supremacy instead she steals this power. In addition, she substitutes translating textbooks every New Year for getting children annually.

The patriarchal pyramid relates to bonds and binaries within the family constructs. Aaliyah’s rendition projects comprise mainly textbooks by man writers. Symbolically, writing designated as “male” understanding. It is within male capabilities since men considered the rational and competent half of the human race. This indicates that they are self-present and this rejects otherness (woman) and marks her absent (Bray, 2004). In Alameddine’s story, in the imaginary Aaliyah’s discourse, the interpreter is a female, who exposes that knowledge is not the exclusive preserve of men, even though some readings state that writing is preferred over interpretation as the writer is the creator (Abkarian, 2020). This is a deciding factor in identifying translation as creative writing, where each translation somehow upholds his perspective, thoughts and understanding.

The narrative in the story provided to the bookworm via an internal speech that exposes an absence of existence, feelings and views of the “I” and “me” of an explicitly female and character-locked first-person narrator. Aaliyah has shown an interest in reading and writing since her youth. In it [she] play[s], build[s her] forts and castles spend[s] glorious time (Alameddine, 2013,p.10). She dedicated her time to the lust of written words inside forts and castles worried about the troubles of the outside world. She admits that her real satisfaction is within textbooks, but most of her dilemmas come from the outer sphere. She says “I live and have my being” (Alameddine, 2013,p.20). Literary critics interpret her place of asylum as a self-imposed refugee, meaning that Aaliyah has banished herself from the outer sphere (Abkarian, 2020; Donica, 2019; and Deakins, 2019). Whatever the case, Aaliyah places herself where she appears relaxed and sensible. The feelings of coziness and pleasure go outside physical distance; she considers the “world” of her translation projects as accommodations from interlopers including half-brothers and acquaintances, the three “witches” who devote most of their time to chattering. The happiness of success overwhelms her other intellects. She declares, “How safe I will feel once I begin my translation” (Alameddine. 2013; p.24). Alameddine, the writer and creator of Aaliyah, in his meetings, said that he felt insulted when individuals describe Aaliyah’s life as unpleasant and miserable. He considered his creation dedicated to living and that what matters is the actual self. It is that Aaliyah does not welcome superficial or incompetent people into her private world. In

her early life, this has a physical manifestation. As soon as she is divorced and her husband leaves the marital home, she removes all traces of his former presence “she cleaned and washed until no hint of him remained (Alameddine, 2013; p.17). She does not permit her mother, half-brothers, or anybody else to enter her house. The only one who can stage in her place is her friend Hannah. Hannah has constantly been her supporter; she is closer to her friend than her mother. Hannah has been the only person who listened to Aaliyah. After Hannah's loss, she does not let anybody comes closer to her place. The butterfly in her biotic lifespan goes via four steps of change. In its third stage, the worm encapsulates itself becoming prepared for the last stage of evolution of developing into whole butterfly. While living alone in her apartment, Aaliyah goes through a process of change and rediscovers herself and her competencies in an agentic contribution.

Resistance New Forms

In the binary antagonism of ensuing authority power breaking and desired rules have much to gain in following the rules. Aaliyah is married to an unsuitable suitor and drove out of school when sixteen years. She is without agency. Fadia, in contrast, denies the regular engagement and does not defer to family powers. She announces will only wed or love and does so. Freedom of choice is an honor that Fadia enjoys because of her father's care. Contained by patriarchy, a female has agency when it is given to her, only when a man authorizes her. Aaliyah has no such male consent or permission to act so she has to follow the rules made for the benefit of others submissively. However, she becomes increasingly assertive after her separation in her twenties. What transforms Aaliyah is the evolution in her circumstances. In particular, she is no longer under the control of a husband or the men in her family (though the latter try in vain to re-assert that control). According to Beauvoir (1949) female subjugation is a matter of situation and she argues that freedom is “situated” in particular places and discourses (Beauvoir, 1949). Aaliyah does precisely these things as soon as the opportunity arises (as cited in Marcus, 2020).

Space Eater Resistance

Her foremost militant act of opposition is when she wields a knife at her eldest half-brother when he attacks her trying to take her home. Aaliyah defends her freedom as if she is in a battle. She describes the scene, she recounts it, in the historic (heroic) present “I'm getting ready for fight or flight” (Alameddine, 2013,p.52). She describes the scene, as she recounts it, in the historic (heroic) present: “my tongue tastes of copper, which means I'm over breathing, getting ready for fight or flight, ready to pick up my sword or jump on my horse” (Alameddine, 2013,p.52). Her consciousness of the significance of keeping her distance to gain and retain her self-sufficiency empowers her to fight the “space-eater”, she describes her eldest half-brother. Yet, it is not only he who reflects that he has the privilege to take her reason, her mother also believes that should change her great reason with her brother's little room since he has a family. The subservience of being a female in the binary conflict is in the absenteeism of her freedom builds presence/absence wherein the male resembles presence and the female left to absence based on having or not having space. Aaliyah struggles to keep her distance to protect her existence and presence. When it is unacceptable for a woman to live alone, Aaliyah breaks all the familial power. She refuses to return to the parental home where she will have to endure the infantilizing subjection of the family – and possibly a second forced marriage. The next phase in her development is strengthening her new

and adequate situation. With her friend's assistance, Aaliyah seeks employment to confirm her fiscal independence.

Males in Aaliyah's life are "space eaters" of some kind or other; they threaten her autonomous existence by attempting to invade her physical and mental distance. Within patriarchy, men do remunerative work outside and they are considered the suppliers, while females are forced into voluntary and generally undervalued internal work that keeps them economically inferior to menfolk (Hines, 2015). Aaliyah tries to disrupt this imposed financial binary opposition starting to search for a job. The text store vendor does not offer her a job initially but eventually, he is compelled to appoint her because the two more normative ladies who used to stay in the text store leave. She reports honestly how this changes a lifetime, I couldn't imagine life if I had not been appointed that time (Alameddine, 2013). Having the opportunity to engage in remunerative work changes her life. She can work for the next fifty years and look after herself without man support. The only male friend she ever has in her life – and even then not permanently, is Ahmad. He sells her a Kalashnikov AK-47 automatic rifle throughout the war without taking money from her. He wants sexual favors. Initially, she does not realize his price but finally, she understands and her reaction is neither pleasure nor horror. Instead, she is surprised "I stared, thought and scratched my head: "You want sex?" (Alameddine, 2013,p.36). Females living within (or constructed by) the normative male/female binary antagonism are sexually symbolized. Ahmad does not, as an acquaintance, provide t AK-47 for free nor does he accept money, but asks for sex in return. This entails that he recreates the binary of entities.

Aaliyah tries to overthrow this sexual act and subject-object binary through reading. She confides in her narrative. Aaliyah was an intimate lover intimate with a few (Alameddine, 2013). Notably, she does not mention her marriage amidst this bookish listing of her experience. Aaliyah reflects her transitory relationship with Ahmad as being the swamp of a lifetime through pleasing her wishes and wits. When she defines the physical aspect of this affair, it is in terms of a splitting (and thus separation) of the self (mind and body). Aalyah states she could find herself with Ahmad as if a part of her hovered high in the air (Alameddine, 2013). Aaliyah is giving sex in exchange for the AK-47 and not because she craves sex itself (it is merely an "encounter"); then, Aaliyah, the eponymous "high one" is not involved in it because she disregards female's sexual objectification that does not value the wishes of parties equally (she watches herself with "disinterest"). She is surprised: I stared, thought, scratched my head. Finally, as if inspiration had descended from above, I asked the most inconceivable of questions: "You want sex?" (Alameddine, 2013,p.36).

Self-Empowerment

Aaliyah uses a knife to forcibly keep her half-brother out of the apartment and the AK-47 to defend herself from Israeli and Palestinian militaries who intrude on her house throughout the war in Lebanon. For a single woman in a very conservative culture restricted by societal norms, political constraints and religious obligations provide almost insurmountable challenges to her freedom. One answer is that Aaliyah is not a spiritual lady; she leaves all practices of subjugation. For example, she denies the injunction to cover her head as a Muslim and, if she does, she states that is not for a sacred determination. When she cuts her hair, she teases and undermines spiritual rites that necessitate a female to cover her hair. She wonders, "every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head

uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved.” Without my hair, I am no longer uncovered (Alameddine, 2013,p.184). Aaliyah finds out that existing within masculinity's symbolic order obliges her to adjust to the power, she detaches herself from these responsibilities by staying alone. She observes the normative society around her.

Cixous (1986) argues in masculine order every binary makes antagonism; man/woman is the central conflict that rejects “otherness”, yet other general negatives stem out, such as mind and body connected to males and females, respectively. The binary conflict in this respect found between well-informed males and ill-informed females. Aaliyah undermines this binary to nourish her mind. She says writings become my milk and honey (Alameddine, 2013,p.180). Her satisfaction in reading overshadows related choices that conservative females thought to wish for. She values achievement and attempts to understand strange things around her. This additional determination boosts her confidence, even though, her rendered novels are reserved in the maid's chamber and seen by no one. Aaliyah has no mirror in her house only one in the toilet she does not keep clean frequently because she does not mirror herself. Aaliyah does not take care of herself and appearance. She left education in her six-teens. Her self-recognition makes her independent; it lets her develop her life's philosophy and dreams. She says, “I am my system, and my system is me “(Alameddine, 2013,p.51). She invented this project to move on in her life. Translation has ensured Aaliyah's survival until her septuagenarian years.

The Superior's Fallacy

The binary conflict of entities, grounded on genital difference, makes males dominant for possessing the penis and represents females as inferior for not having a penis (Ruti, 2018). The penis describes subject's/object's social position and importance in the male-controlled community. The penis is therefore the “signifier of signifiers” and might represent supremacy, wish, sexuality and awareness (Abkarian, 2020). The penis is the gap in the insensitive. It indicates “absence” in those who do not have it, such as females and sexually defied males. For a female to achieve communal esteem, she must submit to male authority to acquire a supporting male, who either has a phallus or can procure one for her. This means she must rely on a societally acceptable phallus bearer including a spouse, brother and father. She defines him as an impotent insect (Alameddine, 2013, p. 24). Her spouse lacks a penis, so he cannot consider himself superior to Aaliyah. Alameddine interrupts the hierarchy inherent in a gender-based binary opposition. Alameddine depicts a character which is not “truly” male but not female either – his masculinity is in between. The fictional Aaliyah's ex-husband has shown the fallacious and hypocritical nature of a symbolic order that obliges him to keep this fact and split from Aaliyah so that he can support his situation in a manly order. Alameddine exposes the reality of the untrue, which divests persons such as Sobhi Saleh, Aaliyah's ex-husband, of the chance to exist accurately to themselves.

Aaliyah states that the marriage is one more deception patriarchy conclusively uses for females. The contrast that Aaliyah creates designed to light up the misleading performances of patriarchy; to highpoint the social rules that bound females' creativity in the circle of a marriage, while Aaliyah observes that facts and education are significant. She says, “when every Arab girl stood in line waiting for God to hand out the desperate-to-get-married gene, I must have been somewhere else, probably lost in a book” (Alameddine,2013,p.94). She values the understanding that can help a female make a good selection that creates accurate connections, she states that a marriage is a unification between two persons of diverse sexes for a lifelong joint tenure of each

other's sexual parts. However, Aaliyah mocks this mutual possession saying, "Kant had not met my husband" (Alameddine, 2013, p.26) about her husband's dysfunctionality.

Marriage within the mannish order is grounded on intrinsically uneven connections. Aaliyah accomplishes that in such a marriage, an unfaithfulness is an option. She provides Fadia's infidelity to her spouse as an instance. Though she has protested against the traditional rules of a marriage, as Aaliyah clarifies, Fadia's rebellion is inside the limit of selecting whom to wed but, none of the females assumed not to marry (Alameddine, 2013). This means that an unequal relationship is inevitable and it is impossible to create a stable family. She regrets that her marriage seized her out of school early. The example she has shown of a bad marriage is her marriage and those of her neighbors, Marie-Therese and Fadia. Fadia's marriage loaded with screams, quarrels and betrayal makes her lie to herself.

Collective Action Agency

Females as relegated objects are viewed as passive heirs of whatever crumbs of self-determination their menfolk allow; however, some suggestions of agency appear in the narrative not dependent on this top-down approach. She is self-empowered. According to Samman and Santos (2009), self-empowerment is an agency's instrumental feature that can lead to developmental outcomes. Agency can provoke transformation via the act of a person or a group of individuals. Aaliyah's knowledge of having an agentive contribution in her life eventually results in group agencies for the females around her. However, constantly conscious of the need for social and spiritual modesty, Aaliyah strengthens her independence in discerning and performing freely away from any intrusion. She isolates herself from her outer surroundings when she needs to foreground her position as a female. She denies the institution of marriage within male-controlled rules, as it bears a resemblance to a hindrance to females' agency. The fictional Aaliyah embodies femininity different from the prevalent masculinist stereotype of normative womanhood.

A disastrous leak of water inside the maid's chamber where she puts her rendered books increases her agency; she exposes to her neighbors she is an interpreter and gains a sense of empowerment from their reaction to this revelation. Her female neighbors' infatuation with her work and their verdict to support her to dry the narratives is a joint action. Once again using the immediate present tense, she tells the reader, [We] work all morning. I run the iron in one corner of my reading room. Fadia and Marie-Thérèse blow-dry. The three of us form a triangle, or three points on a circle, within which Joumana moves" (Alameddine, 2013, p.202). In this image, Aaliyah and her neighbors establish a caring sisterhood in which females in catastrophe stand hand in hand and work as a single entity to strengthen unity in an agentive mode.

Conclusion

Alameddine's work, reported in the first person by a female voice, gives a voice to the voiceless through a deep interior monologue that delves into the protagonist-narrator's deepest self. The discovery by other female characters in the narrative that Aaliyah is a translator locates her as a supporter of woman's agency. Her confrontation until the last minute beside her family to achieve her freedom attests to her agency and affords her a compelling symbol for other females to emulate. The sixteen-year-old girl, married against her willpower at the behest of her family – resists the female subordination she was born in, creates an adequate space in this imperfect world and can

offer her life as an example of woman agency, accomplishment and independence. Best of all, her struggle achieves women's unity in conflict with the domination of a masculinist system.

Authentic femininity shows as a viable alternative to normative masculine ideology, this feminine ontology entailing reversals of conventional gender roles such as when the woman holds the AK-47 to protect herself throughout the war and when she successfully fights to become an empowered provider and not a dependent nurturer of others. By such means, she provides a revolutionary but mutable example of what is possible for other women. The unity amongst the trivial woman charms have shown that they are agents – subjects instead of passive objects. Although much made by gendered and power-laden binary oppositions that exist in the fictional world of this story, deconstruction of this protagonist-narrator does more than act as a disruptive tool. Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman* creates a new framework to initiate change in the (albeit constructed and inherently unstable) social and political domains in the real world.

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