Chapter 4

INTERVIEW WITH AHDAF SOUEIF

Anna Ball

Introduction

IN *CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM*, Said writes that the liberationist 'intellectual mission' has evolved from its nationally resistant roots to be borne today by 'the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages'.[1] As a writer, cultural commentator and political activist, Ahdaf Soueif both embodies this powerful interstitiality and enacts its liberationist potential. Born in Cairo, educated in Egypt and England, and politically active in many countries, Soueif's work spans histories, cultures and contexts, always operating at the vital intersection between the lived and imagined, creative and political. In her fictional writing, she is admired for her nuanced and humane construction of characters and relationships that navigate the complex historical and geographical territories demarcating 'West' and 'Middle East'; in her cultural commentary and her political activism, meanwhile, Soueif is renowned for her vocal and creative advocacy of Egyptian democracy, and Palestinian rights. Small wonder, then, that Soueif's creative, critical and cultural activities have received prolific attention from scholars of 'the postcolonial Middle East'.[2]

Soueif was born in 1950s Cairo, and spent portions of her childhood in both Cairo and London, where her mother, who would later go on to become professor of English Literature at Cairo University (a post she could not take up 'until the British had left')[3] undertook a PhD on the influence of the Oriental tale in English fiction. The effects of these early cultural traversals reverberate throughout Soueif's first collection of short stories, *Aisha*, which are united by the voice of a young Egyptian girl who tells of her travels between Cairo and London.[4] Writing in her essay collection *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*, however, she also traces this hybrid transcultural awareness back to her Cairene upbringing in the 1960s, which she describes as 'a spacious meeting point, a common ground with avenues into the rich hinterlands of many traditions'.[5] In her adulthood, she would come to traverse this terrain more literally: having undertaken BA and MA degrees in English Literature in Cairo, she moved to Lancaster, UK, to undertake a PhD in literary semantics, before moving back to Cairo to enter, relatively briefly, into academia at the university there;[6] later, after marrying the writer Ian Hamilton, with whom she would have two sons, Ismail Richard Hamilton and Omar Robert Hamilton (now an author and cultural activist himself),[7] she would move again to London. A sojourn of two years in Riyadh saw her start her first novel, *In the Eye of the Sun* (1992): a work that, while attentive to female consciousness and desire, is also about the act of teaching and reading across languages.[8] As of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, however, Soueif has come to assume permanent residence in the city of her birth, and to continue her transcultural activities from this base.

Given the recurring themes within her writing, it is hardly surprising that Soueif's work has drawn the attention of scholars of the 'postcolonial Middle East'. Her fiction has received acclaim for intervening within the territories of Orientalist stereotype, and while attentive to difficult historical detail, her works ultimately locate a redemptive potential in humans' capacity to connect above and beyond cultural dissonance. In her Booker Prize-shortlisted novel *The Map of Love*,[9] for instance, the encounter between the English Lady Anna Winterbourne and Egyptian nationalist Sharif al-Baroudi results in a marriage that radically contests the power imbalances and national affiliations that would seem to divide them. Indeed, echoes of a 'common ground' are to be found not just in their meeting of true minds, but in ludic linguistic references to the connections that can be traced between seemingly disparate words, within and across languages. (It is interesting in light of this to note that *The Map of Love* remains the only one of her novels to have been translated into Arabic – by her mother, Fatma Moussa Mahmoud.) Soueif's literary consciousness is never simply utopian, however. Indeed, in her earlier collection of short stories, *Sandpiper* (a selection of which were later collected together alongside stories from *Aisha* in *I Think of You*), she also demonstrates a keen awareness of the fragility of human and cultural bonds, and of the sometimes devastating pressures exerted by distance and displacement on individuals' lives.[10]

Subtle as her literary treatment of these themes may be, Soueif's career is also defined by a powerfully liberationist impulse. She is a renowned cultural commentator for publications including *The Guardian*, the *London Review of Books*, *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Ahram Weekly*, among others; much of this work, from 1981 to 2004, is collected together in *Mezzaterra*: a volume that offers insight on topics ranging from the imprisonment of Nawal el-Saadawi to the harassment of British Muslims shortly after 11 September 2001. What unites these diverse interventions, however, is what Soueif has described as a sense of responsibility based on her position as cultural representative and representor of 'the Arab world', to contest the 'fashioning of an image [of Arabs and Islam] that is so at variance with the truth' and that, 'in promoting a picture of the Arab world that is essentially passive, primitive and hopeless . . . validates the politicians' dreams of domination'.[11] Soueif's own cultural commentary from this period can therefore perhaps be described as inflected by a postcolonial desire to debunk Orientalist stereotype and to instigate discursive agency. Since 2000, however, it is possible to note a shift towards a more directly articulated activist consciousness. In this year, Soueif was sent for one week to report from Palestine for *The Guardian*. During this visit, she wrote of a 'world turned upside down' and observed, in searing, poignant detail, the keen injustices and tragedies of the Israeli Occupation.[12] Eight years later, Soueif would come to establish 'PalFest', the 'Palestine Festival of Literature', in partnership with her son, Omar Robert Hamilton (as well as the British writers Brigid Keenan and Victoria Brittain), with the aims of 'showcasing and supporting cultural life in Palestine, breaking the cultural siege imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli military occupation, and strengthening cultural links between Palestine and the rest of the world'.[13] Ten years on, the festival has gone from strength to strength, hosting over 200 authors and industry professionals; this year has seen the publication of commentary on the festival by numerous participatory authors, including prominent 'postcolonial' voices such as Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee and Kamila Shamsie in *This Is Not a Border: Reportage and Reflection from the Palestine Festival of Literature*.[14]

The Egyptian Revolution of 2011 marks the most recent expression of Soueif's cultural activist consciousness. With the first burst of the uprising, Soueif travelled to Egypt in order to join the protests in Tahrir Square. She reported on the protests for *The Guardian* and for the next three years and wrote a weekly column for the Egyptian national daily, *Al-Shorouk*.[15] Her memoir of the revolution, first published as *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* (2012) has just been reprinted with additional material.[16] Despite the setbacks that campaigners for political reform have experienced in Egypt, Soueif remains a vocal advocate of democracy and justice, and, as she reveals in the following interview, continues to employ cultural expression as a mode of activism: she is currently working on a new novel tied to this context, and it will indeed be fascinating to see how she chooses to 'speak truth to power' within this next creative work.

The following interview took place on 5 January 2018, by telephone. Our conversation sought to explore the intersection between the core creative, critical and cultural activist components of Soueif's career that have been so instrumental in connecting lived and written worlds. It also sought to shed light on some of the mental and technical processes that underpin the formation of Soueif's writing – of tremendous interest to literary postcolonialists in particular. What emerges from this conversation – in parallel with Soueif's warm, reflective and generous tone – is her passionate belief in writing as a mode of resistance, and in the urgency of the cultural task for the deeply challenging times in which we live.

***Anna Ball*:** Ahdaf, location is important within your writing and so I thought we might begin by describing where both of us are sitting as we're speaking to one another. I'm in Nottingham in the UK; I'm sitting at my desk in my study and it's a very dour day outside, with mauve clouds on the horizon and a light drizzle: a typically English January scene, the kind I'm sure you're familiar with.

***Ahdaf Soueif*:** I'm in Cairo and I'm in my son's study, in our old family flat in Zamalek; that's the island in the river in central Cairo. It's pleasant – not as sunny as I would like but very good for this time of year. I've got all the windows closed because it's time for Friday prayers and I can hear three sermons being shouted out from three different mosques.

***AB*:** You mentioned you're in Cairo at present. Is that a permanent location for you now? You also mentioned to me you've returned to writing fiction. Are those two connected in any way?

***AS*:** In answer to the second part of your question: no, they're not connected. As you know, I lived from 1984 to 2011 in both London and Cairo but with the larger part of the year in London. I always knew that one day I'd swap that balance and would be more in Cairo. That day came in 2011, with the revolution. So, no, it isn't to do with fiction: it's to do with the revolution, and – in the end – Cairo is home.

***AB*:** I wonder whether your decision to move might be understood as a new kind of political commitment in your cultural life, and if this has created a new connection to Cairo as a city for you. I'm also interested in whether your feelings have altered towards it at all since you moved there, or since you published *Cairo: A City Transformed* (2014).

AS: I've always been committed to Cairo; I make that statement in my memoir of the revolution [*A City Transformed*]. But perhaps this is a new expression of that commitment. In the years 2011–2012, it felt as though here, in Cairo, we were creating something very big and very important – something that could change the world. Then, in 2013, with the military take-over, the defeat of the revolution and the coming to power of the counter-revolution, leaving would have been like running away. And there is still something happening at the moment. As we learn to live with defeat it's vital to continue to encourage any bit of radical activity that still has the spirit of revolution and looks towards the new. I need to be available for that and part of it.

AB: It's interesting to hear you use the term 'defeat': that seems a very definitive way of characterising what might also be understood as part of an ongoing process of political development. It's interesting to hear, too, that you believe there are aspects of revolutionary activity still taking place. I want to ask you about the role of culture, and of the writer, and also of the 'public intellectual' which to an extent you have come to embody. How do you feel that revolutionary drive is still being enacted within the worlds of culture, thought and creative activity, and what is your role within it?

AS: Living with defeat is something we have to deal with and try to respond to in various ways: by documenting and bearing witness to what is happening, and also, encouraging and being part of continuing efforts to change things, to resist. Of course the arenas that actually have to change are the political and economic. The contribution of people in the cultural sphere is to try to keep ideas and memories alive, and to insist that something different is possible. Nothing needs to be blatant or direct; it just needs to remain outside and in counter-point to the official discourse. An exhibition of paintings, for instance, can be important; new music or performances are important. One of the very important art forms that really flourished and developed in front of our eyes during the revolution was graffiti art. So just recirculating examples of this in order for them to remain in the public memory is important and gets a huge response. Of course, writing matters. But maybe some genres matter more immediately than others? Poetry – particularly in the vernacular – is what most speaks to people and what is most immediately accessible. One of the things I did during the revolutionary period was I started writing in Arabic. Reportage, commentary, polemic: I had a weekly column in a national newspaper. It got a really wide following and as the population of young people in prison grew, my column became important to them. It was very much part of my contribution to what was going on. It was stopped about two years ago so that forum isn't available to me anymore – but that would have been a good thing to carry on doing.

AB: I would also like to know how your location in Egypt might have altered your attitude to the role of the author, and the opportunities available to you in terms of alterations in readership, publication avenues and censorship pressures. Does it feel that your location has changed what it means for you to be, or operate as, an author?

AS: Of course, the difference is writing in Arabic, and writing in a newspaper. While for my English writing I had a Western readership in the West, I also had a big readership among English-reading Arabs. But writing a column rather than a book reaches a different audience. That was important in view of what was happening.

I'd never thought of myself as a journalist. Then in September 2000, *Map of Love* was shortlisted for the Booker. That gave me a bigger platform than I'd had before, so when the second intifada broke out a couple of months later, *The Guardian* asked me if I would go and write about it, and I did. That week I was in Palestine, and every night writing down what I had seen and heard, I felt that I was putting the skills that I had to an immediate and incontrovertibly good use. Everything was aligned: my ethics, my political position and my skills as a writer. And I guess I kind of hijacked myself into that type of writing – where you use your skills as a novelist in order to communicate something that is actual in the world; to make it felt by the reader. And then in 2005, serious protests started up in Egypt and I started writing about those, also for *The Guardian* and a couple of Western papers. Then the natural progression was that in 2007, I and my son and some friends created the Palestine Festival of Literature, in the belief that writing and culture matter, and that they can reach people's hearts and perceptions in a way that other things can't – and can actually effect change on the ground. We ran PalFest for ten years (last year was the tenth anniversary) and out of that came the book *This Is Not a Border*, and really with all that, I didn't find it possible to have the space and distance that you need in order to write fiction.

AB: I'm going to return to asking you about PalFest a little later on – but I'd like to explore this shift that is taking place in your work back towards fiction a little further. It is inspiring to hear you talk about the ways in which your writing 'came alive' when located against the backdrop of fraught political contexts. These are also facets of your work that many postcolonial scholars have found energising about your work. Please can you therefore tell us more about this shift from politically located, journalistic work to fiction that is taking place for you now? Why do you think this shift is taking place?

AS: In 2007 I started a new novel. We had initiated PalFest, and so it was OK to try to devote some time to fiction. But then events took over, the most important of which was that my mother died at the end of that year. I think that for me to write fiction I have to be unafraid to go into any corner of my heart, unafraid to be wide open, and I couldn't be that after my mother died. For quite a while. So that novel was put to one side, which is a bit of a shame. The thing is that I've only written two novels – but with both of them, the only way I could begin was by isolating myself from the world for a couple of months, so that whatever landscape was being formed inside me had a chance to emerge; for the world of the novel to be created. After a couple of months, the world would be there and I could access it – as long as I didn't stay away from it for longer than two or three days at a time. With 2011, of course, that isolation just wasn't possible, and continues to be extremely difficult. Another change that has happened – with writing articles and public speaking and so on – it always feels as though this next piece you're writing will be the one that makes a difference. And so you put fiction to one side because not only does it need this semi-isolation, but also, it takes a long time. But then, with the revolution, I found that we'd be in the protest and there'd be tear gas, and somebody would say to me, 'and when's the next novel?' And I'd say 'come on now, is this a moment for novels?' and they'd say, 'yes, when's the next novel?' We were in a sit-in once and a young woman showed me a copy of the Arabic edition of *Map of Love*, which was so annotated, and with bits of paper stuck to it – and she said that during a sit-in, people were reading this together and making their own comments on it. That was incredibly moving and humbling. My sons keep telling me that my actual job is to write fiction. And then of course, with our defeat here, and all the terrible things happening in Palestine, well a direct engagement over seventeen years had not really changed anything, has it? So maybe I've come to the end of direct engagement – for the moment. And maybe the really brave and different thing to do will be to try to engage with what's happening at the level of fiction. But, you know, I was talking of a world being created inside you – but that assumes that this 'inside you' remains more or less the same; that your emotional terrain is consistent to a large extent. And of course what's happening now and has been happening for a while is not that at all. In fact your emotional landscape is so volatile that you hardly have access today to the person you were yesterday.

I guess what I want is to produce something that will reflect this state of volatility. But there also needs to be something of the classic novel in what I do: characters the reader cares about. Somehow that needs to be done in a way through which the reader feels the changed landscape that we are living through.

AB**:** It's interesting to hear that you consider there to be different literary and cultural forms suited to different purposes, and that the novel therefore has a distinctive role to play within this landscape. I am very struck by the story of the young woman activist with her annotated copy of *Map of Love*; the novel clearly assumed a sense of urgency during the revolution, perhaps because of the question it poses about the potential for cultural identities to be negotiated and remade. It is therefore pertinent to reflect on the way that texts assume different lives and truths depending on where and when it is read.

It is also significant to note, though, that you're now seeking to grapple with the new political environment in which you live through fiction. Whereas *The Map of Love* takes place across historical and geographical contexts, you seem to be turning towards a landscape much closer and more personal to you. I wonder if this will influence the way in which you're able to construct that imagined landscape in your work. Because this is such an important topic to your literary scholars in particular, I want to ask how you go about building these political and cultural contexts within your work?

AS**:** With *Map of Love*, I worked out I wanted to situate the book somewhere between 1882 and 1919. Also at that time I was interested in exploring cross-cultural relations, particularly love and friendship. And in language: when did it help people know one another better, and when was it used as a means of deceiving or dividing? I was also interested in the nineteenth century Western women who travelled in Egypt and the Middle East. Some of them were simply the product of imperialism, and some of them, like Lucy Duff Gordon, for example, achieved an open heart and open mind, and saw things for what they were. I started writing Anna's and Sharif's story – and then I found that I didn't want to pretend we were in 1901; I wanted to be in the 'now' – looking back. So the contemporary story of Omar and Isabel was created. And then the two stories needed a device to link them – so Amal, the narrator, emerged. With the old story, I discovered how much detail, texture I didn't know – like did people turn on electricity or gas? So I had to do research and I ended up with a month by month chart of the years I was dealing with. It listed what was going on in Egypt and England and Palestine – political and cultural, civic events; the opening of a bridge, or the publication of a book everyone was talking about. So in the end, I had a scaffolding of real history – and real characters within that history – and then against that background, my invented characters found their places and their lives.

***AB*:** It's clear from what you say that an incredible amount of research goes into your writing, and this is one of the many reasons that it's so rich and fruitful for scholars to engage with *Map of Love* in particular – because it has a strong 'worldly' connection, as Said would have it. It's also clear that colonialism is a force that shapes the world of that text. To what extent has a consciousness of colonialism influenced your work and your consciousness?

***AS*:** Well, I have dealt with this more extensively in the introduction to *Mezzaterra*. I suppose the first political thing I became aware of as a child was the Suez Crisis of 1956. We were in London at the time – my mother was doing a PhD and my father a postdoctoral, and the war broke out. I knew it was a war waged by England, the country I was in, against Egypt, my home, but I was also taken to protests by my parents' English friends against that war. My parents' friends were all Left, many of them Communists. I guess it was a very early lesson; that the State is one thing, and the people are another. A valuable lesson. Back in Egypt growing up, the discourse was strongly anti-imperialist: this was the moment when colonialism was being ejected from Africa and the Eastern South. And at the same time, colonialism was not a burden we in Egypt had to bear: it was bad and it was gone and we were free. We could be angry about it historically and on behalf of other people, but mainly we could help. I grew up believing in Egypt's liberationist role in the region, in justice for Palestine, and in Positive Non-Alignment. It was back in England, and with the blossoming of anti-Islamic sentiments after the Khomeini revolution, that I started to see that the divide was not over; that even if colonialism in its traditional forms was receding, it very much had the energy and the desire to reinvent itself. This, I guess, was me waking up to the fact that a great schism was still very much there – and then realising that not everyone wanted peace and friendship, and not everyone wanted to strive for a better world. And as time went by, I guess one realises that the big players in the world – power, money, arms – see their interests in continued conflict and division – until we reach neoconservatism at the start of this century, where people actually work towards Armageddon. So it's a global thing that isn't simply to do with the Middle East or colonialism; it is really to do with larger forces in conflict across the world, in different manifestations.

***AB*:** It is pertinent to hear you talk in these expansive terms because it strikes me that the broad and connected ethical underpinnings to your work reflect key characteristic of much postcolonial discourse; the commitment to ethical humanism also of course underpins the work of thinkers including Said. Departing for a moment, I wonder if I might ask whether this influence is direct? To what extent have you been influenced by the work of postcolonial authors or scholars in your own writing?

***AS*:** I must say that I only read Said after I got to know him as a friend. I loved his work and I loved how *Orientalism* pulled together and made a case for what I had already had glimpses of. My mother's work was on the influence of the Oriental tale on British Romantics. She had worked on William Jones and Beckford, and had a great interest in

Byron. And looking at a couple of her essays ('Hajji Baba in Isfahan' was one), I found some of the same ideas as Said. So what he had done was to take this thing that we knew but hadn't articulated and put it cogently and forcefully in a book that changed the world. I mostly read fiction so I really can't claim to know a great deal about the discourse. What influenced us all was the lived reality and our experience of living that reality in different places.

***AB*:** The question of real-world influence leads me neatly to your work on PalFest. You are of course the Founding Chair, alongside your son Omar Robert Hamilton. You've written extensively about this work, particularly in the introduction to *This Is Not a Border*, but I wanted to ask you specifically about what you consider to be the major successes of this work, and what you now view as its major challenges – perhaps particularly in light of the landscape of renewed conflict and antagonism that we now find ourselves in, following Trump's declaration of his intention to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem, and ensuing conflict.

***AS*:** Well, it's been very heartening to see the response of our Palestinian friends to the festival – and to witness people coming in and engaging and working with them and learning from them. When I first went to Palestine in 2000, and then in 2003, I saw how the Palestinians' very strong sense of their own culture has enabled them to survive as a people with a recognisable identity. Culture is tremendously important in this situation – and so is a connection to the world. They need to continue to belong to large conversations happening in the world. PalFest helped to make that possible. The people who've travelled with PalFest have said it was a life-changing event. We've repeatedly seen people on, say, day three of PalFest saying it was like science fiction; that everything they'd learned about the situation from the media was upside down. So I guess there are some 150 cultural practitioners out there who have been enabled to have an experience and to absorb really important information that they would not have otherwise; that has an impact on their life and their work. And they are opinion-formers. So what we can hope for is that PalFest is part of altering the discourse around Palestine in the UK and in the West. And the changed discourse contributes to the wider solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians that is taking shape in, for example, the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] campaigns, and that is the best, maybe the only, hope we have – we supporters outside Palestine – of changing anything on the ground. It is a tiny, tiny contribution but it's what's available to us.

***AB*:** This is again a manifestation of you considering the wider lived role of the author, and of the potential for writing and culture to incite dialogue.

***AS*:** 'Dialogue' and 'bridge-building' and so on are really bad words now. In Palestine, 'dialogue' has been a smokescreen. They put an imam and a rabbi on stage talking to one another; meanwhile the State is demolishing Palestinian houses and turning people out of their homes. So the word we're looking for is 'justice' and a decent and human life for everybody.

***AB*:** How, then, do you move towards that goal of justice through culture?

AS: The only thing you can do is to carry on upholding ideas of justice. We're living in a period that is becoming flagrant in its denial of these concepts themselves: history, truth, justice. As in people speaking of 'alternative facts', for example. So this is where you dig your heels in and insist that there are such things as truth and justice and history and context. You say this is what happened and this is what needs to happen. You need to keep saying that in as many different and effective ways as possible, because you have no instruments or tools except your words. It's the only thing you can do – to refuse to take part in any falsification of history, in any dilution of what you know is right. If it's a losing battle, it's a losing battle – but you die fighting it.

AB: It's very powerful to hear how you visualise the cultural task as one of seeking justice and truth. This takes me right back to the very start of the interview, where you spoke about the different potentials held by different cultural forms – in particular, the novel as a vehicle for a particular way of engaging with the world. Here, I'm reminded of the author Azar Nafisi's statement that 'what we search for in fiction is not so much reality as the epiphany of truth'. Fiction may, then, have an exceptional value within the landscape that you describe. Bearing this agenda in mind – I would like to conclude by asking you to look ahead and to describe your hopes for the future of Egypt, and more broadly, for the region we might term 'the postcolonial Middle East'.

AS: The problem is that anything I say now will sound like a pipe dream – but what can one hope for except a system that actually works for the good of the people and that sees this country and region as part of the world, and a world that is really struggling to find new ways of running itself? We have obligations to the planet itself – to the environment. We need to remember that. I would want to see the people who make the decisions, demonstrating efficiency and shaking off the interests which are really bad for them and for the country. A country should be run in a way that tries to fulfil the needs of all its citizens, while taking account of the region, the planet, the future generations. But I should also say that I don't see anything coming right for Egypt independently of what's going on in the region and the rest of the world. I think the wars and the brutalities and the refugees of the last few years show us that new systems and new relationships and new ideas are essential if life on earth is to stand a chance.

Notes

1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 403.
2. Soueif's work has received prolific postcolonial attention too extensive to list exhaustively here; a good indication of the postcolonial reach of her work, however, is the range of critical engagements that have been produced by contributors to this volume, which include Waïl Hassan, 'Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*', *PMLA*, 121:2 (2006), pp. 753–68; Lindsey Moore, *Arab, Muslim, Woman: Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature and Film* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 146–58; Stephen Morton, 'Colonial Violence, Law and Justice in Egypt', Chapter 8 of the present volume; Caroline Rooney, 'Ahdaf Soueif in Conversation with Caroline Rooney, Cairo University, 12 April 2010', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47:4 (2011), pp. 477–82; Caroline Rooney, 'Utopian Cosmopolitanism and the Unconscious Pariah: Harare, Ramallah, Cairo', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 46:1 (2011), pp. 139–55; and Anastasia Valassopoulos, *Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Context* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 111–32.

3. Ahdaf Soueif, *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 6.
4. See Ahdaf Soueif, *Aisha* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983).
5. Soueif, *Mezzaterra*, p. 6.
6. Rooney, 'Ahdaf Soueif in Conversation', p. 478.
7. See for instance, Omar Robert Hamilton, *The City Always Wins* (London: Faber and Faber, 2017).
8. See Ahdaf Soueif, *In the Eye of the Sun* (New York: Random House, 1992).
9. See Ahdaf Soueif, *The Map of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999).
10. See Ahdaf Soueif, *Sandpiper* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) and *I Think of You* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).
11. Soueif, *Mezzaterra*, p. 18.
12. Ahdaf Soueif, 'Under the Gun: A Palestinian Journey', *The Guardian*, 18 December 2000, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/dec/18/politicsphilosophyandsociety.books (last accessed 29 January 2018), n.p.
13. Palestine Festival of Literature, 'Mission Statement', *Palestine Festival of Literature*, http://palfest.org/about/mission-statement (last accessed 29 January 2018), n.p.
14. See Ahdaf Soueif and Omar Robert Hamilton (eds), *This Is Not a Border: Reportage and Reflection from the Palestine Festival of Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017). Soueif's enduring solidarity with the Palestinian cause can also be seen in her acclaimed translation from Arabic to English of Mourid Barghouti's memoir of his return to Palestine, *I Saw Ramallah*. See Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans. Ahdaf Soueif (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
15. See for instance Ahdaf Soueif, 'Tahrir Square Protests: For Everyone Here, There's No Turning Back', *The Guardian*, 1 February 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/01/ahdaf-soueif-egypt-protests (last accessed 29 January 2018); and for an archived version of one of Soueif's articles for *Al-Shorouk* in English translation, see Ahdaf Soueif, 'To Work', *Al-Shorouk*, 16 November 2011, http://www.ahdafsoueif.com/Articles/To_Work.pdf (last accessed 29 January 2018).
16. See Ahdaf Soueif, *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), reprinted with additional material as Ahdaf Soueif, *Cairo: A City Transformed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).