

الكتابة لسبر أغوار التجربة

إيفلين عقاد

في طفولتي كنت أغني وأبتكر قصصاً أرويها على الأصدقاء
دونما حجل، إلا أنني فقدت هذه العفوية في مراهقتي، قضى عليها
المجتمع والنظام المدرسي الصارم. ولكنني اكتشفت لذة الكتابة في
صفوف الكتابة الإبداعية في مدرستي الثانوية في بيروت، فانطلق
قلمي يروي القصص والأحداث، ملوثة بأحلامي ورغباتي في الإغراء
والتعبير والتوصل الى أفكار طريفة، خلّاقة، بإمكانها أن تغيّر
مفاهيم العالم. فكانت الكتابة غوصاً في عالمي الداخلي، سبراً
لأغوار مشاعري كي أعبر عن وجودي تعبيراً صادقاً، كي أتكلم عن
تجربتي الفريدة كامرأة عربية من أم سويسرية تربت في بيروت
الكوزموبوليتية تربية بروتستانتية صارمة. وواجهت صعوبات جمة
بحثاً عن الكلمة المناسبة في كل من اللغات الثلاث التي بدأت أكتب
فيها: الفرنسية والانكليزية والعربية. ولكنني شعرت بميزة انتمائي
الى حضارات مختلفة، وما يستتبع ذلك من غنى وتسامح وانفتاح.
أكتب لأفهم العذاب والظلم في العالم، لأستوضح العناصر
الأساسية التي تكوّنني، أنا المرأة العربية. أكتب عن هذا كله
لشعوري بمسؤوليتي تجاه نفسي وتجاه العالم. كذلك ساعدتني
الكتابة على ان أرأم جراحي: بواسطة الكتابة تصالحت مع ماضي،
خففت من عذابي وغضبي وإحباطي، ولا سيما اثناء الحرب
اللبنانية. وفي كتابتي ثرت على ختان البنات، على التعصب
الطائفي، على كل مظاهر الظلم في الحياة. وبالكتابة خففت ايضاً
من عذابي حين أصبت بسرطان الثدي.

هكذا تسير كتابتي، باحثة عن التجربة الانسانية، عما لا يراه الآخرون، او يغفلونه. فتحاول ان تعبر عن المحطات الأساسية في حياتي وحياة الآخرين، ان تفتح أمامنا آفاقاً جديدة، ان تبعث الأمل. فلعل الفنون، والكتابة إحداهما، وسيلة من وسائل إعادة خلق الوجه الخفي من العالم، صورة طفولتنا الضائعة.

WRITING TO EXPLORE (W) HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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...biography of an artist is as little an objective science as history is and would never fulfill its purpose if it were... Always the starting point is the individual's ideologizing of himself to be an artist. From then on, he will live out that ideology as far as the realities of life allow him to do so. Insofar as they do not, the artist will fabricate those experiences for himself, search them out and give them form.

Rank *Art and Artist*¹

When did I start to write and why should I search in my memory for that moment ? To trace the beginning of the writing experience in my life can help me understand how and why it evolved the way it did in consciousness and in practice, and what meaning it acquired with time. It is like going into oneself and digging, digging, searching for that bursting point hidden far away into one's mind and soul, the breaking of all knots and barriers, the crumbling of walls, windows opening wide, letting loose one's imagination, finding unending freedom, swimming and swimming in a blue Mediterranean sea, sometimes flat and smooth like shining oil, other times with rolling waves,

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the fury of discovering winds, or running and running towards a horizon filled with expectations and dreams. To use Virginia Woolf's words :

If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills - then my bowl without a doubt stands on this memory. It is of lying half-asleep, half-awake in bed in the nursery in St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach ; and then breaking one, two, one, two behind a yellow blind...²

At the age of four - my mother told me, but I also have memory glimpses of these moments - excited and wanting to communicate and entertain, I would face audiences, invent stories and songs I loved to tell, sing and act for family and friends. Daring and not shy at the time, what could have happened between now and then to make me withdraw into a corner and only tell the blank page what I used to perform with such audacity ? Is this where the writing starting point is located for me ? Psychologists tell us that it is a decisive age where every action and reaction is determined for the rest of one's life. Every experience lived at that age is supposed to have marked one's future choices and reactions. Am I filled with the same feelings of amazement and marvel at the possibility of seducing audiences when I write now as when I performed as a child ? What led my imagination then and what moves it now ? I am inclined to think along with Virginia Woolf, and other artists, specifically Albert Camus, that : "The work is nothing else than the long journeying through the labyrinth of art to find again the two or three simple and great images upon which the heart first opened³."

When did I really start to write - i.e., when did I sit down methodically, regularly and consciously with pages to fill out and the desire to mark my time and environment, the knowledge that I had important

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and pressing issues to communicate ? When did I “aim at eternity” with my writing, to use Annie Dillard’s words⁴ ? Adolescent, I lost the spontaneity, freshness, vivaciousness, and enthusiasm I had in my childhood. School - specially and unfortunately the French system, and perhaps even more so in the ex-colonies - often kills a child’s creativity, and society takes care to bury it. Nevertheless, I remember my high-school creative writing classes - a French Protestant high-school in Beirut. They were my favorite courses. The subject to be treated having been announced, a feeling of tremendous excitement, nervousness, joy and anxiety would seize me. I would let my pen travel on paper with the freedom my thoughts led me to, but also with a certain discipline and the need to convey messages my readings had impressed me with and asked me to memorize and to convey. The images, events, stories, proverbs, and philosophies I would relate then took me to far away regions I colored with my dreams and desires to seduce, communicate, and reach original creative thoughts capable of changing the world’s perceptions and notions of reality.

In these moments of intense writing and concentrating, I re-discovered the magic moments of my childhood when I would invent stories and songs ! I submerged myself into a world of fantasy where I let my imagination wander loose and free, in search of the conducting thread, the elements I suspected might lead me to life’s essentials. I also loved playing with words and ideas. I would carry a small pocketbook in which I would write phrases and thoughts discovered through my readings, or made up through research or discussions with my sister (who read more than I did and kept a secret journal), sentences and ideas I had found beautiful and interesting. I would introduce them in my essays to make them appear more scholarly and impress my teachers.

Writing was then as present for me as it is today. It was an experience of total immersion into my inner world. I would go into my feelings and moods to try and express the authentic understanding of

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my existence. I use these Sartrean words because, already, I was moved and influenced by existentialist philosophy, though not yet by feminism which I only read later. At that time, existentialism to me meant authenticity, being as truthful to oneself as one could be, each human being's experience being unique and important. It meant that : "Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence ; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out toward other liberties⁵."

Writing meant telling the world about the uniqueness of my experience, of being born woman, Arab, from a Swiss mother and an Egypto-Lebanese father, with a strict Protestant religious upbringing, in Beirut, at that time the most cosmopolitan city in the Middle East. The identity expressed here did not come out with as much clarity then, due in part to the education I was receiving in the Beirut French school where we were told that our ancestors were "les Gaulois" (the inhabitants of ancient France) - As incredible as this may seem, or repetitious for some people it is an experience I actually lived. It is only when I crossed the ocean, went to study in the United States, started reading the literature, politics, and history of that part of the world, when I read about oppression, racism, and colonialism, and more painfully, when the war broke out in Lebanon, that I began to perceive it acutely and with intensity.

"Plain writing is by no means easy writing. The *mot juste* is an intellectual achievement⁶." Choosing the most appropriate word for me has not been an easy task since I write in different languages (French, English, and Arabic) and in different genres according to whether I write a thesis, an article, an academic analysis, a novel, a short story, a letter, a poem, or a song. I have often wondered, and been asked, if one could seriously use different forms and different languages, if it would not be better to seriously work on one, trying to perfect it. Is there not a fundamental difference between reflective-writing, analytic writing of a thesis and creative-imaginary-writing of a novel for ex-

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ample ? Does practicing one hinder the other ? Does using several languages lead to confusion, a tower of Babel ?

Like the origin of my writing, these questions take me back to the significance of my past, my roots. Unlike many North African writers, such as Driss Chraïbi, Albert Memmi, Abdel-Kebir Khatibi, and Marguerite Taos-Amrouche, who have described how divided they feel about being a mixture of cultures, how torn and unhappy it causes them to be - they use expressions such as “bâtard historique” (historical bastard), “aliénation culturelle” (cultural alienation), “être entre deux chaises” (to be between two chairs, not really sitting) uneasiness⁷ - I prefer Andrée Chédid’s vision of the positive aspects of hybridization, of affirming cosmopolitanism, and the enrichment, tolerance, and openness it brings.

Khatibi describes bilingualism as : “Impregnable love. At each moment, the foreign language can - unlimited power - retire within itself, beyond any translation. I am, he would say, between two languages: the more I reach the middle, the farther I move away from it⁸.” To such irreconcilable torment, I prefer Chédid’s “wish to graft all her various roots and sensitivities. Hybrid, why not ? She liked these crossings, meetings, these composite looks which don’t block the future nor brush aside other worlds.”⁹ These values are what Lebanon used to represent and what Kalya (the central character of this novel) had come to seek : “Tenderness for this exiguous land that one could cross in one day ; this land so tenacious and fragile. For the memory of impetus, hospitability, harmony of voices.” This is a picture of Lebanon that Chédid paints in an essay before the war : “Land where opposed voices, confronting each other, do their best to remain harmonious. Centuries have marked it with unalterable signs, yet nothing fixed, set, flatly eternal weighs you down here. Very ancient land of wonders, never ceasing to give birth to itself¹⁰.” Chédid’s understanding and description of Lebanon, the importance she attributes to pluralism, and the meaning she gives to roots are very much at the

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core of how I feel towards my past, towards writing, and towards having to do so in different languages and genres. I once told Andrée Chédid it upset me to sometimes use “anglicisms” (words which sound French but are English) when writing in French. She amazingly remarked : “Mais c’est très bien. Tu aères la langue !” (“But it’s good. You bring fresh air to the language !”)

Writing has been for me, mostly, to express with as much authenticity, sensibility, lyricism, beauty and accuracy, the important moments and experiences of my life. Interpreting the world means both learning from the past and expressing new ideas, creating new worlds. All the forms of expression I use help me explore (w) human experience. I use the prefix (w) because the woman in man, and in man’s world, has too often been left out of the analysis, descriptions and expressions of the human experience. This letter (w) and what it symbolizes is probably at the core of much of my writing. Interpreting the world has meant understanding its pain, suffering, and oppression, digging into my soul, experiences and observations for the crucial, essential elements of my condition as an Arab woman, feeling an urgency in transmitting the picture I witnessed and see with as much precision as I can, in all of its complexity. I am overwhelmed with the desire to communicate. Communicating to me comes from commitment as I feel responsibility to myself and to the world. I often feel like Cherrie Moraga : “that my back will break from the pressure I feel to speak for others.”¹¹ I try to bring light into my past, into my part of the world with all its tragedy and its beauty, hoping to help reach a more universal vision.

Writing also helped me heal the wounds. It reconciled me with my past. When expressing what upset me, I exorcised the anger, the pain, the suffering, and could move on. I started composing songs in 1975 when the war broke out in Lebanon. My grief was so overwhelming I could not sleep nor lead a normal existence thinking about what my loved ones and the country I cherished were going through. Songs -

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music and words - came out of my body like a long plaintive shriek. They helped relieve the pain, anger, frustrations and communicate my feelings to others. When I witnessed how some of the audiences, especially in Lebanon, cried when I sang, I was overcome with the realization I could really move them. And the question came : what if it moved them so much they decided to change the wrongs in Lebanese society ? What if it made them see the need for love, tenderness, the transformation in relationships based on violence and destruction ? In these instants, I relived the magic moments of my childhood when, facing audiences with invented songs and stories, I sensed the impact I could have on the listeners and the secret belief I might move mountains and make people happy or sad.

Another event triggered in me great emotions which marked the development of my writing, a point of fixation or crystallization which would determine the focus and aims of my writing. When I read about excision and infibulation, the cruel practice of sexual mutilations million of women suffer from all over the world - most specifically in some countries in Africa and in the Gulf - I was very shaken. At the time I was preparing a doctoral thesis at the University of Indiana. It was the first time I had heard about it. I was already aware of many practices of oppression afflicting women, since it was some of them which had motivated me to leave my country of birth, but excision was the height of anything I could have imagined. I was sick for several weeks, my thesis took a different turn, and the title of my first novel, *L'Excisée*, was already determined.

I decided to include in my thesis, which was about the role of women in the literature of the Mashrek and the Maghreb, a first chapter exposing and developing the sexual and social problems women faced in that part of the world from a sociological and anthropological point of view. This chapter gave me lots of problems with some of the members of my committee (one Arab male in particular) on the grounds it had nothing to do with literature. This criticism hid the fear

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of a subject too emotionally charged and too polemical. But I was determined to keep it, and encouraged by my thesis director, I finished and defended it. Since then, the subject has been written about and discussed at great length inside and outside academia, in the West as well as in the East.

It was 1975, declared International Women's Year by the United Nations, which mobilized feminists around the globe on this issue, and stirred much controversy, debate, and resentment on the part of some African women who saw European and American interference as reductionist and ethnocentric, representing them in racist, misogynist, backward, inhuman terms, thus reinforcing the stereotypes.

I remember being myself torn apart in this conflict at one meeting of the African Literature Association in Madison, Wisconsin, during those years. I had presented a paper where I used the term mutilation and was immediately attacked by one of my African male colleagues for not using the word tradition. The plenary session was split in a heavy debate bringing in the whole audience which got divided along race rather than gender lines. I was very depressed to see the African women siding up with the African men. But in the evening, I discovered the reasons behind this apparent division. I had sung one of my compositions on genital mutilation and the pain it causes in women. Some of the African women present there had tears in their eyes and came to thank me after the performance. They told me the reason they had sided with their men in the morning was because they had to be loyal to them. In front of the West, loyalty was more important than truth, but I was right in denouncing the practice.

With time, I have become more aware of the issue of loyalty versus truth, and how it causes women to be split when they should be uniting on these crucial issues (see my discussion of these conflicts in "Sexuality and Sexual Politics : Conflicts and Contradiction for Contemporary Women")¹². I have also become aware of the importance of music, poetry, testimony, etc. versus strict analysis. As Françoise Li-

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onnet puts it, talking about Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero* and my novel *L'Excisée* : "It is a more effective and convincing denunciation than many pragmatic or political treatises because it allows the reader to enter into the subjective processes of the woman, to adopt her stance."¹³

According to Lionnet, differences in ideologies among feminists produce disagreements that threaten dialogue. It is therefore very important to examine the sources of these disagreements, to engage in comparative feminist criticism without necessarily finding solutions but in order to open up dialogues. Ethnocentric value judgements have no place within a diverse, multicultural feminist quest. She uses the debates surrounding the practice of excision to reexamine the debates on universalism and particularism. Two claims emerge from the debates : those who campaign for the abolition of all such practices on the basis of universal ethics and those who favor respect for the cultural autonomy of African societies and criticize all forms of intervention as "acculturation" to Western standards.

Lionnet attempts to "create a relational space where intersubjectivity and reciprocity become possible," but how can there be "convincing denunciation" without "value judgements" and "without necessarily finding solutions" ? Is there not a contradiction here ? Can one unveil an upsetting aspect of oppression without trying to find a solution ? How can one manage to only discuss it and not become committed to changing it ? She says that "when Saadawi denounces those practices, she puts herself in jeopardy. By appealing to universal human rights, she attempts to build bridges across cultures, showing the validity of a 'Western' mode of analysis that allows her to name her subjective experience of pain and to situate it within an intersubjective context."¹⁴ How can denouncing genital mutilation be a "Western" mode of analysis ? Are Westerners the only ones to have denounced the violation of (w) human rights ? Do they have the monopoly over human rights ? Lionnet must have been aware of the

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problem since she put “Western” into quotations, and since, in the final analysis, she claims to have been “interpellated” and led to respond in a way that “universalizes the integrity of the body.” To such acceptance, is there not only one step into looking for solutions ?

Coming from a mixed background gives me a perspective I might not have otherwise, it is the kind of *métissage* Lionnet describes as “a dialogical hybrid that fuses together heterogeneous elements.”¹⁵ It gave me courage to leave when I felt life was closing in on me, and strength to return when I thought I might be effective in bringing about some necessary changes.

The ideas expressed in my thesis were to compare the role of Arab women in the writings of women and men, in French and in Arabic, and to see if it reflected the “realities” exposed in the first chapter. Some of my conclusions determined how insufficiently those problems were expressed in the literature, due in part to the fact that many of the authors who had escaped those conditions were the ones able to write, but were not concerned with the suffering of others. Along with Marilyn Waring, I wished to tell them that : “The litany of disappointments and distress is not only the justification for our being indignant about woman’s condition, it is also real cause for concern about our world.”¹⁶

It was therefore on a fixation with pain that I wrote my first novel. *L’Excisée* shows a woman, E., Elle (She in French), Eve (woman everywhere, myself to a certain extent), woman excised symbolically by fanatic religion in war-torn Lebanon, socially by the tyranny of man, and a witness to the physical mutilation of other women. Where can this woman go ? Is love between a Moslem and a Christian possible ? The story of E. is both a protest and a sad, hopeful prayer. Dominated by a stern Protestant father in destroyed Lebanon, the idealistic young woman yearns for peace, harmony, and love. But she is gullible and naïve, as well as innocent ; she falls under the domination of her seducer/lover who transports her into his desert world. She is witness to

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the traditional excisions of the young girls in the women's quarters. Through all the horror, the story is "sung" in the poetic voice of a young woman who refuses to hate or to act with violence.

"Woman against the wall. Woman who tricks in order to live. Woman who compromises herself to live. Woman who pierces the wall with a pin to see the other side of her prison, the side of liberty, the side of space."¹⁷ This first novel is the story of my adolescence trapped by a family whose religious system suffocates me, in a country where religion has no tolerance for the other. It is also a love story which ends in tragedy, for how can a Christian and a Moslem love under a sky of hatred, in a country divided by dogmas and religions ? "They risk death, assassination, there in the open road under that sun which crushes and kills."¹⁸ And even if they could manage to escape and run away together to another country, how could she bend to his customs, which crush women even more than those of her childhood ? Where can this woman go except to suicide, to death ?

L'Excisée is also a search in style, writing where the biblical and the Koranic mix, leaving space for song and poetry, voice in search of itself, in the stifling of a millennial condition, voice which becomes shriek when the circle closes in too brutally, voice which dares confidence in front of a young woman who did not have "her body sliced like her sister's.... a beautiful young woman of tomorrow, the young woman who will nourish all hopes".¹⁹

And this is how writing in exile can open new horizons, new paths not yet trodden. It helps bear exile. And by a return process, exile, the shock created by the confrontation of different cultures, the suffering of separation, the desire for return feed the breath of writing. The vision of new forms, new ideas, new rhythms takes place thanks to these rubbings, tearings, sufferings calling for fusion, harmony, understanding, love of life and of others beyond the frontiers.

Another event which turned my life upside down was my experience with cancer last summer and spring (1994) . I never thought I

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would have to go through this hell in my life, the “poison, cut and burn” treatment which breast cancer patients know only too well. I decided to hold a journal on my journey through cancer. I needed to do it for myself, to exorcise the pain, and to do it for other women, those going through the same calvary, or those who will in the future, and all those who need to be made aware of the dangers we are living in this century : the post-modern era. I feel I have been made to pay the price for modern civilization. Someone has to pay the price for all the pollutants thrown into the atmosphere, all the pesticides sprayed on the fruits and vegetables, all the hormones fed to the animals, all the contaminants dumped into the rivers and seas, all the chemicals destroying the atmosphere, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sun our skin receives. And I was one of the seven women who gets breast cancer in her life time (these are the latest statistics for the States and Canada, I don't have those for Lebanon, but from my little experience of talking to people around here, I believe it must also be quite high), yes the figures are frightening and cancer is on the increase in all countries, and specially breast cancer, and I did ask : “Why me ?” Yes, I did ask this question. I was not like one of my friends who reversed it and said : “Why not me ?” Later, I learned to ask myself : “What can I learn through this ordeal ?” But when it hit me (I was diagnosed with lobular carcinoma on March the 2nd, 1994), I was too shell shocked. I was not prepared to live through that hell. I never thought it would happen to me. I had not been informed, or I had ignored the articles on the topic. I felt that if I could help someone through the lines I was writing, my suffering would not have been in vain. I also composed new songs in the middle of chemotherapy : “Take me to the river going to the sea. Take me towards healing.”

As Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi well expresses in an article entitled, “Ectomies : A treasury of Juju Fiction by Africa's Daughters” : “Cultural determinism becomes the focal point of the politics of ectomy : to cut or not to cut ? The mind boggles at Western culture's

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playing on women's bodies : hysterectomies, oophorectomies or ovariectomies, salpingectomies, episiotomies, mastectomies... I envision ectomy as a trope to express the excision, the cutting off, the exclusion attached to woman's destiny."²⁰ Twenty years had passed by since I wrote *L'Excisée*. Little did I know at the time that I would be experiencing mutilation in my own flesh as I did last year. I felt the link tying me to all the women around the world being reinforced in this tribulation and sorrow.

And this is how my writing goes, in search of the (w) human experience, in search of what others did not see, or left out, trying to express the meaningful moments of my life, and of others, to give them new grounds and to move forward. I am reminded here of Dillard's words : "Art is an instrument... and with religion the only instrument for probing certain materials and questions... When in the art object the artist has mastered his own confusion, he has gained new ground..."²¹. Like in my childhood, when confident and daring, I faced audiences with invented songs and stories, like in my difficult adolescence, when I searched for authenticity, for the real me, and for what caused the pain I felt inside and all around, I continue to search for that linking thread, for what might give meaning to a world I see shrouded in despair, lack of imagination, and bent to destruction, I search for the *mot juste* mixture of many different voices, in various languages, yet harmonious, melodious, forming a chorus, playing a symphony, I search for correspondences and connections so present in nature, the life which gives hope. And perhaps, in the end, when all is said and done, when life's experiences have given us the rounder, sharper vision, one is able to see writing, singing, art, culture as a fuller, more complete hopeful picture, ways to recreate the hidden face of the world, the lost image of one's childhood.

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3. CAMUS, Albert, *L'Envers et l'endroit*, Paris, Gallimard, 1952, p. 82.
4. DILLARD, Annie, *Living by Fiction*, New York, Harper Colophon, p. 65.
5. Translations from French into English are usually my own. de Beauvoir, Simone, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Paris, Idées, 1969, p. XXVIII.
6. DILLARD, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
7. See analysis of this theme in Isaac Yétiv, *Le Thème de l'aliénation dans le roman maghrébin d'expression française*, Sherbrooke, CELEF, 1972.
8. KHATIBI, « Repères », pp. 48-49. Quoted in *Celfan VIII* : p. 3.
9. CHEDID, Andrée, *La Maison sans racines*, Paris, Flammarion, 1985, pp. 79, 81.
10. CHEDID, *Liban*, Paris, Seuil, 1974, p. 6.
11. MORAGA, Cherrie, *Loving in the War Years*, Boston, South End Press, 1983, p. V.
12. ACCAD, Evelyne, « Sexuality and Sexual Politics : Conflicts and Contradiction for Contemporary Women », *Sexuality and War*, New York, NYUP, 1990, pp. 11-26.
13. LIONNET, Françoise, « Feminism, Universalism and the Practice of Excision », *Passages*, Issue One, 1991, Northwestern University, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
15. Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices : Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989, first chapter.
16. WARING, Marilyn, *Women, Politics and Power*, London, Wellington, 1985, p. 59.
17. ACCAD, Evelyne, *L'Excisée*, Washington, Three Continents Press, p. 14.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
20. OGUNYEMI, Chikvenyc Okonjo, « Ectomies : A treasury of Juju Fiction by Africa's Daughters », pp.4-5 (Forthcoming article)
21. DILLARD, *op. cit.*, p.168.

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L'ÉCRITURE AU PLUS PROFOND DE L'ÉPREUVE HUMAINE

Evelyne ACCAD

Dans mon enfance je chantais et j'inventais des histoires que je racontais, sans honte, à mes amis. Spontanéité naïve que j'ai perdue à l'adolescence, tuée par la rigidité des règlements scolaires et sociaux.

Et pourtant, c'est à l'école secondaire que j'ai découvert l'art d'écrire et ses joies. Mon crayon s'aventurait à travers les histoires et les événements que je nuançais et colorais de mes rêves et de mon désir de séduction. Écrire était déjà un voyage intérieur, découvrant mes émotions intimes, exprimant mon existence ; l'existence d'une femme arabe née de mère suisse et soumise dans le Beyrouth cosmopolite d'alors à une éducation protestante stricte et sévère.

A travers le dédale des langues, arabe, française, anglaise, j'étais à la recherche du mot. Perplexité, mais sentiments de richesse, d'ouverture et de tolérance.

Evelyne Accad

J'écris pour comprendre la souffrance, l'injustice. J'écris pour rendre claires les composantes de la femme arabe que je suis.

J'écris pour sentir ma responsabilité envers moi-même et envers le monde.

J'écris pour atténuer ma douleur, ma colère, mon angoisse.

J'écris pour surmonter la haine et l'intolérance confessionnelle.

J'écris pour supporter mon cancer du sein.

J'écris pour recréer le visage mystérieux de moi-même, l'histoire de mon enfance perdue.

J'écris du plus profond de mon être avec les vides sans fin laissés par l'épreuve humaine.

Evelyne ACCAD

* American of Lebanese origin.

* Ph.D. in Comparative Literature

Professor, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, USA.

* Novelist, literary critic and musician.

* Amongst her publications :

- *L'Excisée*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1982 ; *The Excised*, Colorado, Three Continents Press, 1989, 1995.

- *Des femmes, des hommes et la guerre : fiction et réalité au Proche-Orient*, Paris, Côté-Femmes, 1993, Prize France-Liban, 1994.

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