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Remapping the World

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When we say “Remapping the world”, what do we mean? Who is remapping the world? And remapping it into what? And to whose interest? To the interest of the superpowers who claim to own God, absolute truths, nuclear weapons, money and media? Or to that of millions of women, men and children who demonstrate in the streets against those powers and their super God, and their super military, religious, economic, and informational weapons?

The history of this world is written, shaped, mapped and remapped by the savage and brutal ruling groups who win the war, who colonize, recolonize and neocolonize under different human shaped euphemisms like democracy, civilization, modernism and humanitarianism.

We live in a jungle where one can invade another country and kill its people without being punished or where one can be considered a war criminal purely by his or her position as the president of the United States of America, or by being one of its intimate allies such as Israel or Britain or other countries.

“1989. A crucial year in world history. Europe saw the fall of a wall. In China a tank stopped for a man. In the United States Bush senior became president. The end of the Cold War heralded a new era.”

When I read these words I realized I do not relate to these very important crucial changes. They may be relevant to an American or a European writer, or a writer from China, but not to me, a writer from Egypt or from Africa, or from what one considers The Middle East. Middle to whom? We were put on the map and given the name of The Middle East by the old British colonizers. Egypt was middle east in relation to London, India was the far east according to the same British rulers. This false colonial language continues until this day, under the Neo Colonizers.

But the old map is evolving according to the changing interests of different dominating groups or countries. In the old map there was a country called Palestine. Now it is called Israel. The Palestinian nation was killed; those who survived the massacres in 1948, ever since became refugees, immigrants, dispersed all over the world. The Palestinian Holocaust and sufferings are ignored by those who write history and map or remap the world. History glorifies the Israeli Holocaust and their sufferings by the Nazi. History is not real history. The history of our world has been ignoring the struggles of the colonized people (not only the Palestinians) since the beginning of the Slave Patriarchal Class System, some thousand years ago.

The year 1989 is considered a crucial moment in world history. Because Europe saw the fall of a wall? Is the history of Europe the history of the world? A wall did indeed fall in Berlin but what about other walls erected to enslave and colonize other nations? What about the wall in our region? What about, for example, the wall separating the Palestinian people from their land and homes? The erection of such walls is not enough a crucial event to be remembered by world history, because some people do not count, because they do not own nuclear weapons or big money. One American or Israeli soldier seems more valuable than thousands of Iraqi, Palestinian, Afghani, or African people.

Israel is the only country in our region that is in possession of nuclear weapons; it can eradicate some nations in our region such as Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and other countries which do not own equal nuclear armies. The President of the USA, Barak Obama, declared in his speeches that the USA and Israel are one country. He ignored the fact that Israel is a colonial project working for the interests of neocolonial powers in the USA and in Europe, and is established on Palestinian land.

In 1989, a tank stopped for a man in China. This is considered a crucial global event. But what about more crucial events in our region where tanks are killing people every day? Is the life of one man in China more crucial than the life of thousands in our countries? The so called Third World? Third relative to whom? Can we call a war criminal First World ?

In the US and European academia many people say we are living in the Post Colonial era. This language does not reflect our reality because we live in the Neo Colonial era – not the Post Colonial. How can colonial and neo colonial languages distort our vision in addition to the distortion of the reality of the world? This is my question. But the question tonight is: “What are the crucial changes in our world that have had an impact on identity, language and literature?” My reply is: This depends on where one is in the world and what one believes in and what is meant by the word Identity. Identity is a dangerous word like religion, because it divides people according to nationality, religion, class, race, color, gender and other false differences imposed on us since we were born.

Divide and Rule is the basic principle of colonialism and exploitation. You cannot dominate people except by dividing them. Identity and Religion are postmodern words repeated all the time in the last 3 decades to divide us, to invade our minds, our lands, our material and moral resources. Our role as writers is to demystify these words in language and in literature.

There is no pure identity. Pure identity means Racism. All of us are mixed blood, mixed identities and the more mixed we are the better, the more human, the more fair and just. We have to celebrate our common human identity and not our inherited so-called identity differences.

In the last twenty or thirty years we suffered the backlash against women and the poor classes, especially those living in our region, the so called Middle East. The increasing political and religious global and local powers increased the oppression of women and the poor.

Increased economic-religious wars and more discrimination between people on the basis of gender, class and religion.

As a writer and as a woman belonging to the poor working class I had to fight globally, locally and inside the family against all these powers and their patriarchal capitalist racist global god or gods.

Many cases were raised against me in the court of Egypt accusing me of apostasy, infidelity, heresy and other. I was threatened by the government and religious fundamentalist powers to lose my Egyptian nationality, to be divorced forcibly from my husband, to lose my job and my name was put on the death list among some other dissident writers.

However I won all cases and I will return from my exile to my home in Cairo this summer 2009.

I think that my writing protected me, and my readers all over the world are my power and reward.

Creative dissident writers do not gain money or win big global or local prizes. My only prize is a letter I receive from a reader saying: Thank you, your book changed my life.