

**Prof. Samira Aghacy**, *Lebanese American University, Lebanon*

**Masculine Identity in the Fiction of Hoda Barakat and Rachid Al-Daif**

saghacy@lau.edu.lb

At a time in Lebanese history when many men are becoming increasingly concerned over the feminization of Lebanese culture, and when women are beginning to trespass into traditionally male domains, many Lebanese male as well as female writers began to question the meaning of manliness, and the strong boundaries that characterize male identity. Sensing the need to reaffirm their manliness, many male characters in contemporary Lebanese fiction insist on seeing male experience in essentialist rather than cultural, social and historical terms. The modernization of Lebanese society and the apocalyptic changes that took place during the war period resulted in a strong disparity between a supposedly modernized and tolerant public male attitude to gender relations and private hegemonic practices, causing self-division and fragmentation. Furthermore, the war which is generally considered a manly endeavour brought about an emasculating and castrating effect on men and intensified their fear of being made passive and vulnerable. In this paper, I am going to deal with masculinity in the works of two Lebanese authors Rachid Al-Daif (a male) and Hoda Barakat (a female) and consider similarities and differences in their presentation of male characters. These texts uncover a whole series of anxieties about male power and loss of power in relation to women revealing the interconnectedness of power and sexuality. Since these characters tend to see masculinity as an attempt to fend off the ghost of feminization, they transform all emotional into erotic intimacy to avoid being under a woman's thumb.

*Prof. Samira Aghacy is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Lebanese American University in Beirut. She has published a number of articles on contemporary Lebanese and Arab fiction. Her latest book, on masculine identity in Arabic literature, published by Syracuse University Press was published in 2009.*