University of Zagreb

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ISMET BUJUPAJ

The poetics and politics of contemporary Arab American writing

DOCTORAL THESIS

Zagreb, 2013.

Sveučilište u Zagrebu
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

ISMET BUJUPAJ

Poetički i politički aspekti suvremenog arapsko-američkog pisma

DOKTORSKI RAD

Zagreb, 2013.

University of Zagreb
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ISMET BUJUPAJ

The poetics and politics of contemporary Arab American writing

DOCTORAL THESIS

Supervisor: Jelena Šesnić, Ph.D.

Zagreb, 2013.

Sveučilište u Zagrebu
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

ISMET BUJUPAJ

Poetički i politički aspekti suvremenog arapsko-američkog pisma

DOKTORSKI RAD

Mentorica: dr. sc. Jelena Šesnić, izv. prof.

Zagreb, 2013.

Jelena Šesnić rođena je 20. veljače 1974. u Splitu, gdje je završila osnovnu i srednju školu. Godine 1997. na Filozofskome fakultetu u Zagrebu diplomirala je grupe engleski jezik i književnost i komparativna književnost. Od 1998. radi kao znanstveni novak na Katedri za američku književnost u Odsjeku za anglistiku Filozofskoga fakulteta. Istovremeno je i suradnica na projektu „Suodnosi anglofonih i hrvatske književnosti" (voditelj: prof. dr. Sonja Bašić), od 1998-2001. Od 2002-2006. suradnica je na projektu „Nacionalni ideologemi u modernoj hrvatskoj i irskoj književnosti" (voditelj: prof. dr. Ljiljana Ina Gjurgjan). Od 2006. sudjeluje na projektu „Konceptualizacija mora i njegova mjesta u kulturnome imaginariju SAD-a" (voditelj: prof. dr. Stipe Grgas) te od 2008. paralelno i na projektu „Kulture hrvatske tranzicije i anglofone globalizacije: književnost i film" (voditelj: prof. dr. Borislav Knežević).

Poslijediplomski studij književnosti upisuje 1997., a magistarski rad pod naslovom „Metafore ideologije i figure teksta: *Moby-Dick* u kontekstu 'starih' i 'novih' američkih studija" brani u rujnu 2001. (mentor: prof. dr. Sonja Bašić). U suradničko zvanje asistenta na Katedri za amerikanistiku izabrana je u siječnju 2002. Doktorsku disertaciju pod naslovom „E Pluribus Unum: Identity Politics and the Construction of Ethnicity in Contemporary US Ethnic Literature" („E pluribus unum: politika identiteta i uobličavanje etničnosti u suvremenoj američkoj prozi"; mentor: prof. dr. sc. Stipe Grgas) obranila je u srpnju 2005. g. U studenome 2006. izabrana je u znanstveno-nastavno zvanje docenta na Katedri za amerikanistiku pri Odsjeku za anglistiku. Od listopada 2011. do listopada 2013. obnaša dužnost pročelnice Odsjeka za anglistiku FF-a u Zagrebu. U zvanje izvanrednoga profesora promovirana je u srpnju 2012.

Od 1998. angažirana je u nastavi na Odsjeku gdje drži proseminare *Uvod u književnost*, a kasnije i seminare iz američke književnosti na višim godinama studija, a od 2007. sudjeluje i u izvođenju nastave na Doktorskome studiju književnosti na Filozofskome fakultetu u Zagrebu. Od 2002-4. koordinirala je organizaciju i izvođenje Poslijediplomskoga studija amerikanistike na Filozofskome fakultetu u Zagrebu pod vodstvom prof. dr. Sonje Bašić. U zimskome semestru 2009. kao dobitnica Erasmus stipendije za akademsku mobilnost održava jednosemestralnu nastavu na Sveučilištu u Grazu. Godine 2010-11. koordinirala je za Filozofski fakultet međunarodnu suradnju u sklopu Inter-American Studies CEEPUS mreže. Završila je radionicu za mentore pri Sveučilištu u Zagrebu (15.-16. lipnja 2011.). Od 9.-11. lipnja 2011. sudjeluje na radionici Young Researchers Forum u organizaciji European Science Foundation na National University of Ireland (kompetitivna stipendija). U ožujku 2011. bila je uključena u recenziju programa Fonda za razvoj Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

Usavršavala se na nekoliko stipendija u inozemstvu, od kojih valja istaknuti boravak na Fulbright stipendiji na Sveučilištu Virginija u SAD-u tijekom akademske godine 2002-3., te nekoliko kraćih istraživačkih stipendija (European Association for American Studies; J.F. Kennedy-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin). Redovito izlaganjima sudjeluje na međunarodnim skupovima (preko 20). Objavljuje na engleskome i hrvatskome jeziku, a prerađeni tekst disertacije objavljen je pod naslovom *From Shadow to Presence: Representations of Ethnicity in Contemporary American Literature* (Rodopi, 2007). Sljedeća knjiga *Mračne žene. Prikazi ženstva u američkoj književnosti 1820.-1860.* tiskana je 2010. (Leykam International). Urednica je zbornika *Siting America/ Sighting Modernity: Essays in Honor of Sonja Bašić* (2010).

Članica je uredništva časopisa *Književna smotra*, Matice hrvatske, Hrvatskoga filološkog društva, profesionalnih udruženja MESEA (The Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas), EAAS (European Association for American Studies), MLA te suosnivačica i tajnica HUAmS-a (Hrvatsko udruženje za američke studije).

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my late mother, R.I.P. Despite her struggle between life and death, she found strength to nourish and encourage me for the task I had undertaken. The list of acknowledgements and gratitude is very long and includes all those who encouraged me spiritually while I wrote. First of all, I would like to thank and express my greatest gratitude to my dissertation supervisor Dr. Jelena Šesnić who patiently guided me; I owe her a great debt for trusting in my capability for such a project. I would like to stress that this thesis would be impossible without her comments, suggestions and her kind attitude she demonstrated towards me during the process of writing. Special thanks go to Dr. Stipe Grgas and Dr. Iva Polak, whose encouraging words gave me hope and self-confidence for further steps which I undertook.

I owe a sincere gratitude to Steven Salaita who first introduced me to Arab American authors; his suggestions in choosing authors played a crucial role in the development of this work. I dearly wish to thank the poet, literary critic, and humanist Lisa Suhair Majaj who, without hesitation, sent critical resources to me, whether hard copies or electronic links. Majaj was unstinting in assisting me during the research process, and her kind words were meaningful for my further writing.

My heartfelt thanks go to Prof. Andrea Zlatar-Violić who "opened" the doors of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, the institution that "sheltered" me warmly when I, like a crying child, desperately needed an academic "home."

On a personal level, I would like to express my eternal gratitude to my friend Zija Shoshi and his brothers, who were emotionally attached to the project I had undertaken, and were ready to support me by all means, whether financial or moral. Last but not least, I owe a distinctive debt to my Albanian-American childhood friend, Ana Vula, who provided books by contemporary Arab American authors and supportive words in regard to this thesis.

Summary

This dissertation brings together for study various Arab American writings by contemporary authors from diverse elements of Arab America. The emphasis is to assert that there is a rich field of Arab American literature now, and an emerging field of Arab American studies following in its wake as a newer addition to the U.S. ethnic studies field, which this study brings to bear on the literary texts, highlighting socio-ethnic and political issues in relation to the primary texts. Our study examines an array of primary authors who have different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, men and women, of varying politics, who write in a variety of genres including memoir, poetry, and fiction, and whose aesthetically crafted literary texts tackle the politics of anti-Arab discourses and negative stereotypes about Arab Americans.

The Introduction of this dissertation offers a brief overview of Arab American literature, from the first wave of Arab American writers in the first two decades of the twentieth century to the contemporary non-fiction and fiction writers. It introduces the diversity of Arabs and Arab Americans, as well as the interconnections between political developments and Arab immigration to the U.S, against a backdrop of longstanding anti-Arab discrimination in Western discourse. The last two decades of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first century mark a rapid development of Arab American studies and literature, including all literary genres, and this introduction shows how Arab Americans themselves have mapped this development, in their own voices not only as writers of literature but also as writers of literary criticism and history, such as Lebanese American Gregory Orfalea, Jordanian American Steven Salaita, and Palestinian Lisa Suhair Majaj. The introduction lays out the synthetic approach in our study, which explores some of the manifold concerns in the work of many Arab American writers, notably, acculturation and its limits and challenges, common ground and differences between those who are of Muslim background and those who are of Christian background among Arab Americans, anti-Arab policies and politics in the United States, mistaken understandings of Islam by majoritarian elite, the experiences of Arab Americans after the terrorist attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001, and the

ongoing stereotyping of Arabs by mainstream Western discourses. The latter topic was first addressed seriously by the Palestinian American Edward Said (1935-2003) in his influential work of literary theory *Orientalism* (1978), which is considered to have established postcolonial studies as a field. Many of Said's other writings analyse the politics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and much of his activism as a public intellectual revolved around this issue. Because the issue of Palestine is an axis around which Arabs from many countries, religious backgrounds, and political affiliations coalesce, this issue also runs as a central pole through the work of Arab Americans, and indeed through this dissertation.

Said is the first author this dissertation examines, in a chapter which focuses not on Said's theory and criticism, but on the narrative he wrote about his own life, *Out of Place* (2000). In a counterpoint to Said's autobiography, the following chapter offers an exploration of the memoir *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography* (1985) by Egyptian American literary theorist Ihab Hassan (1925-), who appears to have little interest in the literatures of ethnic minorities in the U.S., and seems to align rather with mainstream literature and thought. Between Said in Chapter Two and Hassan in Chapter Three of this dissertation, we establish a spectrum, from the exilic to the acculturated Arab American. The next two chapers open up in scope to study issues related to exile and acculturation across a number of Arab American women writers of both prose and poetry. Chapter Three examines the politics and aesthetics of the writings of four Arab American women, Lisa Suhair Majaj (1960-), Naomi Shihab Nye (1952-), Mohja Kahf (1967-), and Laila Halaby. The first section of the chapter explores poetry by Majaj and Nye, who are Palestinian American, as well as by Kahf, who is Syrian American, after opening with a discussion of the place of poetry in Arab American heritage. Nye, the most established of the three poets, has a deeply ethical vision of humanity which spans across multiple peoples and geographies, but cannot help but maintain a tender focus on Palestinian experiences, which are also prominent in Majaj's poetry. Majaj's poems do important work of creating ways to remember Palestine's loss and to be aware of continuing Palestinian losses in massacres and current events. Kahf brings a particular focus to the experience of Arab Americans who are Muslim, and manages to create a spectrum of Muslims of other ethnicities, both in the U.S. and in

other countries. Chapter Three's second section continues with the analysis of Kahf's prose work to focus on her novel, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) then moves on to analyze *Once in a Promised Land* (2006), a novel by Halaby, who is Jordanian American.

Chapter Four maintains a special focus on prose fiction by Arab American women, approaching it through themes such as storytelling, mother-daughter relationships, postcolonial and multicultural consciousness, exile, distinct geographical Arab American ethnic groups, gender and feminist concerns, and politics as an integral part of the Arab American experience, especially in light of the events of September 11, 2001. The chapter examines four works of prose fiction for their insights on these themes, these four primary texts being: Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003), Susan Muaddi Darraj's short story collection *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly* (2007), and Diana Abu-Jaber with her novels *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2004). Halaby does the most to bring out Arab American experiences of post-September 11 discrimination, with characters whose attempt to assimilate and acculturate are cut short by that event, while Halaby also offers criticism of the rigid attitudes also found within Arab American communities, including intergenerational conflict within Arab American families. Darraj too, like Halaby, pays special focus to family dynamics across the lives of characters who are Christian and Muslim Arab American neighbors. Abu Jaber, as much a longstanding pioneer in contemporary Arab American fiction as Nye is in poetry, has been a leader in developing the art of storytelling in her fiction, and not only offers a powerful internal critique of Arab Americans, but also expands her scope to a truly multi-ethnic view of minorities and majority Americans.

What such themes have in common in the pens of the writers in this chapter, and what links the analysis of these authors to the ideas explored in other chapters of this dissertation, are the connecting bridges these stories make with other ethnicities which share parallel bittersweet realities. Put differently, there is a deeply ethical humanist vision that links them. In the dissertation's Conclusion, keeping in mind, as we have throughout this dissertation, Said's ethical articulation of a universalist secular humanism which undergirds his work from postcolonial studies to the cause of Palestine, we return to Orfalea's broad humanist vision and voice, which helps us to sum up this dissertation's

task of delineating some of the main concerns to which contemporary Arab American writers have turned their pens. The diverse contemporary Arab American authors critically studied in this dissertation, publishing in a U.S. environment in which they are cast as "Others," serve to combat anti-Arab stereotypes, and in doing so build bridges across multicultural divides, and evoke an ethical calling to draw together, through the imagination, worlds that are torn apart and still belong to the same planet.

Key words:
September 11, 9/11, Arab American, anti-Arab racism, stereotyping, storytelling, United States of America, Palestine, Islamophobia, post-colonialism, postmodernism.

Sažetak

Tema je disertacije proučavanje različitih tipova i žanrova tekstova kojima su autori svuremeni američki pisci arapskoga porijekla. Osnovno je polazište disertacije da danas postoji bogato stvaralaštvo arapsko-američkih pisaca, koje je dovelo s vremenom i do nastanka i razvoja arapsko-američke kritike kao novijega odvjetka etničkih studija u SAD-u. Ova studija nastoji koristiti elemente te kritike u čitanju književnih tekstova naglašavajući društvene, etničke i političke probleme u odnosu na primarne tekstove. Studija nadalje razmatra čitav niz književnika različitih kulturnih, etničkih i religioznih korijena, muških i ženskih pisaca, različitih političkih orijentacija, koji pišu u nizu žanrova uključujući memoare, pjesništvo, prozu, dok njihovi estetski uobličeni tekstovi dotiču politiku anti-arapskoga diskursa i negativnih stereotipa o arapskim Amerikancima.

U uvodnome dijelu disertacija donosi kratki pregled arapsko-američke književnosti, od prvoga vala arapsko-američkih pisaca u prvim desetljećima 20. stoljeća do suvremenih pisaca nefikcionalne i književne proze. Uvodi se pojam različitosti Arapa i arapskih Amerikanaca, kao i veze i suodnosi između političkih zbivanja i arapskoga useljavanja u SAD na podlozi dugotrajne diskriminacije protiv Arapa u zapadnjačkom diskursu. Posljednja dva desetljeća 20. stoljeća te prvo desetljeće 21. stoljeća označavaju brzi razvoj arapsko-američkih studija i književnosti, uljučujući sve književne žanrove te uvodni dio pokazuje kako su sami arapski Amerikanci obilježavali taj razvoj svojim vlastitim glasom, ne samo kao pisci, nego i kao književni kritičari i povjesničari, poput libanonskog Amerikanca Gregoryja Orfalea, jordanskog Amerikanca Stevena Salaite, te palestinske Amerikanke Lise Suhair Majaj.

Uvodni dio iznosi sintetski pristup naše studije istražujući neke od mnogobrojnih problema koje nalazimo u djelima arapsko-američkih pisaca, kao što su primjerice akulturacija, njezini dosezi i izazovi, zajednički elementi i razlike između američkih Arapa muslimanskog porijekla i onih kršćanskih korijena, anti-arapske politike i mjera u SAD-u, pogrešnog razumijevanja islama sa strane većinske elite, iskustva arapskih Amerikanaca nakon terorističkih napada protiv SAD-a 11. rujna 2001, te neprekidnog stereotipiziranja Arapa u dominantnom zapadnjačkom diskursu. Ovom se potonjom temom prvi ozbiljno pozabavio Edward Said (1935-2003) u svojem utjecajnom

književno-teorijskom djelu *Orientalism* (1978), koji znači utemeljenje polja postkolonijalnih studija. Mnogi kasniji Saidovi tekstovi analiziraju politiku palestinsko-izraelskog sukoba, a znatan dio njegova aktivizma kao javnog intelektualca odvijao se u vezi s tim problemom. Budući da je palestinsko pitanje os oko koje se vrte Arapi iz mnogih zemalja, raznih religioznih uvjerenja i političkih pripadnosti, to se pitanje javlja kao osnovna potka u radovima arapskih Amerikanaca, pa tako i u ovoj disertaciji.

Said je prvi autor kojega se razmatra u disesrtaciji, u poglavlju koje se ne usmjerava na Saidovu teoriju i kritiku, nego na pripovijest koju je napisao o svojem životu, *Out of Place* (2000). U kontrapunktu sa Saidovom autobiografijom sljedeće poglavlje nudi propitivanje memoara *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography* (1985) egipatsko-američkoga književnog teoretičara Ihaba Hassana (1925-), koji je naizgled pokazivao malo zanimanja za književnost etničkih manjina u SAD-u, te se, čini se, radije povezivao sa srednjostrujaškom književnošću i teorijom. Između Saida u Drugome poglavlju i Hassana u Trećemu poglavlju ove disertacije, ustanovili smo jedan spektar, od egzilne do akulturirane arapske Amerike.

Sljedeća dva poglavlja usmjeravaju se na proučavanje pitanja povezanih s egzilom i akulturacijom putem niza arapsko-američkih spisateljica i pjesnikinja. Treće poglavlje propituje politiku i estetiku Lise Suhair Majaj (1960-), Naomi Shihab Nye (1952-) i Mohje Kahf (1967-). Prvo potpoglavlje analizira pjesništvo Majaj i Nye, obje palestinske Amerikanke, a potom i ono Kahf, sirijske Amerikanke, nakon kratkog razmatranja uloge pjesništva u arapsko-američkoj baštini. Nye, najpoznatija od tri pjesnikinje, ističe se duboko etičkom vizijom čovječanstva koja se proteže mnogim narodima i lokacijama, ali se istodobno pažljivo zadržava na palestinskom iskustvu, istaknutom također i u pjesništvu Majaj. Majajine pjesme svoju važnost ističu stvaranjem načina prisjećanja gubitka Palestine i održavanjem svijesti o trajnim palestinskim gubicima u masakrima i zbog tekućih zbivanja. Kahf se usmjerava prema iskustvima arapskih Amerikanaca muslimanskih korijena te uspijeva stvoriti spektar sastavljen od Muslimana i drugih etničkih pripadnosti, u SAD-u i drugim zemljama. Drugo potpoglavlje u Trećem poglavlju nastavlja se s analizom Kahfičine proze, posebice njezina romana *Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006), da bi se potom usmjerila prema romanu *Once in a Promised Land* (2006) autorice Laile Halaby, jordanske Amerikanke.

Četvrto poglavlje i nadalje se bavi književnom prozom arapsko-američkih spisateljica, ovoga joj puta pristupajući putem tema kao što su pripovijedanje, odnos majka-kćerka, postkolonijalna i multikulturna svijest, egzil, geografski odijeljene arapsko-američke etničke skupine, rodna i feministička pitanja, te politika kao sastavni dio arapsko-američkog iskustva, posebno u svjetlu zbivanja 11. rujna 2001. godine. Poglavlje razmatra četiri prozna fikcionalna djela obzirom na gore navedene teme, poimence: roman Laile Halaby *West of the Jordan* (2003), zbirku novela Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly* (2007) i romane Diane Abu-Jaber *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2004).

Halaby se najviše potrudila prikazati arapsko-američka iskustva diskriminacije nakon 11. rujna, pokazujući kako su nastojanja likova za asimilacijom i kulturnom prilagodbom zaustavljena nakon tog događaja, dok istodobno nudi i kritiku tvrdih stavova unutar samih arapsko-američkih zajednica, uključujući i međugeneracijski sukob unutar arapsko-američkih obitelji. Darraj se, poput Halaby, bavi posebno obiteljskom dinamikom putem života likova arapskih Amerikanaca kršćanskog i muslimanskog porijekla, u odnosu susjedstva. Abu Jaber, pionirka suvremene arapsko-američke književne proze, analogno ulozi Nye u arapsko-američkoj poeziji, vodeća je u razvijanju tehnike pripovijedanja u svojoj prozi, te ne samo da nudi snažno kritiku arapskih Amerikanaca iznutra, nego širi svoj raspon da dosegne istinski multietnički stav prema manjinama i većinskim Amerikancima.

Zajedničke teme koje prožimaju djela ovih spisateljica, te veze koje povezuju analize djela ovih spisateljica s idejama u prethodnim poglavljima ove disertacije, stvaraju posredstvom ovih priča mostove prema drugim etničkim zajednicama koje dijele istu stvarnost. Drugim riječima, postoji duboko etička i humanistička vizija koja ih spaja. U Zaključku disertacije, vodeći računa kao i tijekom izlaganja o Saidovoj etičkoj artikulaciji univerzalističke sekularne vizije humanizma koja prožima i podupire njegovo djelo od postkolonijalne teorije do razmatranja palestinskog pitanja, vraćamo se Orfaleovoj širokoj humanističkoj viziji i glasu, koji nam pomažu da sažmemo zadaće ove disertacije u smislu ocrtavanja nekih osnovnih preokupacija kojima se bave suvremeni arapsko-američki pisci. Različiti arapsko-američki autori kritički razmatrani u ovoj disertaciji objavljuju djela u američkome kontekstu u kojem ih smatraju "drugima",

nastoje se boriti protiv anti-arapskih stereotipa te time graditi mostove preko multikulturnih podjela i osnažiti etički poziv na spajanje svjetova snagom mašte, svjetova iste planete, a ipak razdvojenih.

Ključne riječi:
11. rujna 2011, arapsko-američki, anti-arapski rasizam, stereotipiziranje, pripovijedanje, Sjedinjene Američke Države, Palestina, islamofobija, postkolonijalizam, postmodernizam.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This disseration explores Arab American literature to shed light on the most important cultural, religious, sociopolitical and ethnic aspects of Arab American life, as well as anti-Arab racism and stereotyping which have existed in the minds of the U.S.'s white majority ever since the first settlers of that stripe came to the United States. In the very beginning of this introduction, we will offer a brief overview of the Arab American community and Arab American studies and literature at large, beginning from *mahjar* writers (Arab American writers of the first two decades of the twentieth century) to contemporary non-fiction and fiction writers, highlighting key issues which preoccupy these authors in our time. The emphasis in the introduction and throughout the thesis will be given to an emerging field of Arab American studies following in the wake of, and parallel with, Arab American fiction and non-fiction, in the diverse groups that comprise Arab America. This synthetic approach best covers manifold concerns of Arab Americans, notably; (the limits of) acculturation, anti-Arab policy in the United States, mistaken understandings of Islam by majoritarian U.S. elites, and ongoing stereotyping by the American mainstream, first tackled seriously by Edward Said.

The human race and even other living creatures many times do not show friendly attitudes toward newcomers and strangers even if creatures of that particular sort belong to their own species. Arab Americans were not accepted as were other ethnic groups, for example, Italians, Greeks, Hispanics or South Asians, but were cast as "Others". Belonging to a different ethnic group means being inferior to those who have settled in a place before and appear to have different language, skin color, culture, and behavior. The first Arab immigrants were not very warmly welcomed by the descendents of European immigrants who had settled in the U.S. before them and considered themselves as "natives." Despite the fact that the first Arab immigrants were Christians, they were still identified as Muslims due to the fact that their place of origin was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. This taxonomy and invented realities about Arabs have been carried on from generation to generation, so that they have not been classified as other ethnic groups. Steven Salaita argues, "to search out inclusions in this sort of taxonomy reinforces ambiguity because the taxonomy has largely been inhospitable and contrived ever since

its origin in the juridical imagination of pre-Revolution settlers. (…) I would further point out that any argument about where Arab Americans best fit into extant racial paradigms is hopelessly ambivalent because Arabs comprise the entire range of human skin pigmentation and don't necessarily form a race so much as a loose cultural grouping that is likewise impossibly abstract." [1] Western historians invented narratives about Arab "barbarity" and Islamic world wherein Arabs are described as "wicked" pirates. In an article related to the capture of the schooner *Maria* of Boston by Algerians off Cape St. Vincent in July 25, 1785 followed by James Cathcart's eleven-year imprisonment in Algiers as described in his letters, Jacob Rama Berman states: "The 'Mahometans' who boarded the six-man vessel demanded to see its flag and papers. '[O]f the first they had no knowledge' writes James Cathcart in his account of eleven years in Barbary captivity, and 'the papers they could not read and Mediterranean pass we had none'. With this terse assessment of national non-recognition and the international legal jeopardy it occasioned, the American nation's political relationship with the Islamic world opened its first violent chapter. The ongoing history of this relationship is proving to be a complex narrative." [2]

An important issue that preoccupies Arab American studies and literature is the issue of migration and exile. The immigrants brought with them their own cultural inheritance and traditional way of life, which has been represented in Arab American literature. In the earliest wave of Arab immigration to America (the end of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century), predominantly Christian Arabs migrated to the United States, to be followed later by Muslim Arabs. The migration is a growing process. War forced many Arabs into exile from their homeland, such as the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, the Six-Day War in 1967, and the Lebanese Civil War (1975 to 1990). The on-going revolutions, which started in March 2011 in some Middle Eastern countries demanding freedom, removal of tyranny and toppling of "rotten" regimes, may have increased the number of refugees in neighboring countries as well as in Western Europe and the United States.

---

[1] Steven Salaita. *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,* 23.
[2] Jacob Rama Berman. "The Barbarous Voice of Democracy: American Captivity in Barbary and Multicultural Specter" *American Literature 79*, no.1, March 2007, 1.

In order to understand Arab America, we offer a historical overview of what makes Arab America and mention diverse religious and ethnic groups that comprise Arab America. Many people do not have a clear picture about Arabs and Arab Americans. Sometimes they identify all peoples of the Arabic-speaking world as Arabs and Muslims, knowing not that among them there are groups who belong to non-Muslim religion and non-Arabs. Steven Salaita does not view Arab Americans as a singular community, but as a diverse mixture and far more interesting that one can imagine. When mapping Arab America, he defines what religions are included in Arab America and lists national demographics that comprise those communities, stating: "Iranians, Afghan, Turks, and Pakistanis are not Arab. Although these groups are predominantly Muslim, a commonality they share with Arabs, each of them is culturally and linguistically distinct, with its own artistic tradition. Even within the geographical Arab world, there are non-Arab ethnic communities; Barbers, Kurds, Armenians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Circassians.… The biggest national demographic is Lebanese Americans, followed by Syrian, Egyptian, and Palestinian Americans.… Not all Arab Americans are Muslim and Christian, though; the community includes Druze, Bahai, and Jews, although in small numbers. Muslims include both Sunni and Shia, and the Christians are mainly Catholic and Orthodox". [3]

The last two decades of the twentieth century marked a rapid development of Arab American studies and literature, including all literary genres.This was not the case during the previous decades, during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when there was a kind of stagnation in regard to shedding light on Arab American identity and the main cultural and socio-political issues, although the political events, which very often motivate many artists, were numerous and had a great impact on people who favor peace and oppose oppression. Arab American literature surged during the 1980s, with major writers and critics on Arab American issues such as migration, theme of exile, gender issues, assimilation, marginalization, stereotyping, position of women within and outside the family, nostalgia, domestic violence, and the issue of "return," as made clear by Edward Said and other Palestinian-American authors.

[3] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 9.

The delayed appearance of the Arab American novel is due to the rich poetic tradition which dominated early Arab American literature. "The novel," notes Gregory Orfalea, "may have presented a daunting challenge to a poetic tradition and disposition which enshrined the image, the metaphor, the outpouring of complicated meter and song-like monorhyme".[4] In relation to such development of Arab American literature, Lisa Suhair Majaj (a Palestinian-American poet and critic), writes: "In the mid 1980s, anyone trying to research Arab-American literature faced a difficult task. Indeed, the concept of Arab-American literature barely existed.… Arab-American writers have also started to expand into previously underrepresented genres such as drama. Yet another literary milestone has been the establishment of journals dedicated to publishing Arab-American writers.… Where once there were scattered, hard to find texts, now there is a growing body of readily-available literature, the significance and impact of which is steadily increasing. And where once writers worked in relative isolation, now they enjoy a multiple literary connection."[5] In some respects, however, Arab American writing is not a new phenomenon. It began during the first decade of the twentieth century, when a group of Arab American writers joined together to establish a North American literary association called Arab Pen League, centered in New York, while Arab immigrants to Brazil formed a Southern branch of what is called *mahjar* literature. *Mahjar* in Arabic means lands of immigration or diaspora for Arabs around the world. In regard to these Diaspora writers, Majaj writes: "After all, the first few decades of the of the twentieth century saw a flourishing of Arab *mahjar*, or immigrant, writers in New York and Boston, among best-known of whom were Kahlil Gibran, author of 1923 best selling text *The Prophet*, and Ameen Rihani, whose prolific output included the first English-language novel about the Arab immigrant experience, The Book of Khaled (1911). Publishing in both Arabic and English, these writers not only initiated Arab-American literature in the U.S, but also led a renaissance in Arabic letters. In 1920 they formed a literary organization, *al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* (the Pen League), with Gibran as their president."[6]

[4] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel" *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 115.
[5] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 125, 126, 127.
[6] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 127.

The decade of the 1960 saw the rise of revolutionary movements in the Arab world, and also marked some other socio-political developments, such as the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, which resulted in a new wave of Arab immigration to United States' soil. The 1967 War did more than bring new Arabs to the U.S.; it raised consciousness of Arab identity among those Arab Americans already there. Elizabeth Boosahda writes, "after the 1967 Israeli-Arab war, some first- and second-generation American-born members of the Arab-American community became more aware of and sensitive to their Arab heritage."[7]Wars in the Arab world, despite the negative impact on human lives, have played an important role in regard to exploring the Arab American identity and their multi-cultural heritage, an issue which Arab American authors have tackled seriously and translated for American readers. In regard to Arab American identity, Rebecca Layton writes: "The descriptive phrase *Arab American* does not imply a single, unified identity. Arabs are Muslim, Christian, Jewish, or subscribe to no faith at all. Like the Arab-American writers profiled in this volume, these individuals come from vastly different countries and cultures."[8] The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, despite the fact that it increased the figures of Arab immigrants in the United Sates, also pushed forward many Lebanese-American scholars to undertake firm steps towards shedding light on Arab American heritage and to combat the negative stereotypes which had been present in America and in the Western world at large for over a century. Palestinian American Edward Said continuously defended the Palestinian cause and Arab American cultural heritage and identity with his critical theory and non-fiction writing, came to awareness of his Arab heritage after the 1967 War, and Lebanese American Gregory Orfalea saw a need to bring together Arab American literature by editing a pamphlet of poetry in 1982, as Israel was invading Lebanon. "The subsequent expansion in 1988", writes Majaj, "of that pamphlet into full-length anthology *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American literature*, co-edited by Orfalea and Palestinian-American Sharif Elmusa, helped provide a sense of literary community which had not been in existence since the Pen League. Lebanese American author Elmaz Abinader commented soon after *Grape Leaves* was

[7] Elizabeth Boosahda. *Arab American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community*, 204.
[8] Rebecca Layton. *Multicultural Voices: Arab-American and Muslim Writers*, 7.

published, 'If Greg [Orfalea] hadn't done *Grape Leaves* [… we] would still be clacking away in isolation.'" [9]

Arab American literature and Arab American studies at large cannot be regarded as a single subject, for the authors have different geographical backgrounds, religious affiliations and ethnicities. Arab American organizations such as Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG), the Arab- American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and the Arab American Institute take on the challenging task of defining common goals for Arab Americans in order to organize Arab Americans in protecting their "hybrid" identities, combating stereotyping and addressing cultural and socio-political issues in general. In 1992, Arab American intellectuals and writers established an organization called Radius of Arab American Writers, Inc (RAWI), which is devoted to gathering the energies of Arab American writers. RAWI's creation helped to stimulate the collating of Arab American subjects into a field of study, and libraries will soon have sections of Arab American literature, so that a scholar or a student can search for a particular book or novel written by Arab American authors. "The acronym RAWI, coined by Syrian American poet and novelist Mohja Kahf, means "storytelling"'—an apt choice, given the centrality of storytelling to Arab literary tradition and to Arab-American writers, who draw both directly and indirectly on this oral tradition as they articulate Arab American concerns and explore the nuances of their hyphenated identities."[10]

During the 1990s there were some sparks, or precursor moments, in regard to fuller developing of the Arab American novel. Apart from Etel Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose* (which, although it was first published in French, in Paris, 1978, is included in Arab American literature), in 1993 Diana Abu-Jaber published her first novel *Arabian Jazz*, which exclusively deals with Arab American themes and settings. The same year Mona Simpson published her novel *The Lost Father*, which is often excluded from Arab American literature due to its mostly non-Arab theme and setting. While discussing the stereotyping of Arabs and Arab Americans in fiction by mainstream American authors post-World War II, Gregory Orfalea states, "It is to the best of this writer's knowledge,

[9] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 130, 131.
[10] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 132.

the only literary novel published since Amin Rihani's *The Book of Khalid* in 1911 with a non-stereotyped Arab American main character until Mona Simpson's *The Lost Father* and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, both of which appeared in 1993- a thirty-three-year gap from Bourjaily and eighty-two years from Rihani".[11] In regard to the writers such as novelist Mona Simpson and poet Samuel Hazo, whose works mostly do not tackle specifically Arab American content, Lisa Suhair Majaj notes: "Certainly, fine writers exist whose work is not recognizably Arab-American: the novelist Mona Simpson is one obvious example. But whether or not the work of these writers should [sic] categorized as Arab- American is an on-going debate."[12]

Many Arab American writers in the United States hesitate to explore themes and settings which deal with Arab world due to the political circumstances and stereotyping which has existed for a century. Many times the Arab American works which carry such politicized themes remain unpublished due to the existing cultural politics in the United States. On the other side, Arab American authors had to be careful in criticizing Arab culture and often have been accused of restating Arab stereotyping and criticism of Arab culture. "Consider, for instance", writes Lisa Suhair Majaj, "the response to Diana Abu-Jaber's first novel, *Arabian Jazz* (1992). The novel, which poked fun at sexist Arab men and made reference to female infanticide, was criticized by readers for bolstering stereotypes, and misrepresenting sociological realities—serious concerns at a time when Arab-Americans were already dealing with rampant negative portrayals in the media in the aftermath of Gulf War."[13]

Due to the slower development of the fiction genre compared to poetry among Arab American writers, Arab American literature is a latecomer to being situated as an ethnic discourse in the United States in the manner of other immigrant literatures such as: Jewish American, African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and others. During the last two decades Arab American writers have not only cooperated with each other and read each other's works, but they learn from other ethnic literary voices, and in particular from Native-American and African-American literatures. Considering Arab American literature and criticism, as well as the various thematic choices that Arab American

[11] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 182.
[12] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 134.
[13] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 141.

fiction can provide, Lisa Suhair Majaj's call of 1999 had a positive impact in awakening the consciousness of contemporary Arab American authors. Her call was addressed on one hand to literary critics, where she advised them to develop a sensibility that should consider the literary text in a pragmatic way when dealing with Arab and Arab American realities. On the other hand, she urged new fiction writers to translate political issues into cultural terms and show the real face of Arab Americans in the American landscape: "A body of informed and nuanced Arab American literature for both Arab and non-Arab readers, thereby lessening somewhat the pleasure of Arab American writers to serve as 'translators' of their culture. Literary criticism also has a crucial role to play in highlighting not just the cultural and sociological, but the literary dimensions of our writing, reminding us that we are, first and foremost, writers."[14]

Given the abovementioned, can one without hesitation define what makes up contemporary Arab American literature? Contemporary Arab American authors are American citizens and have American passports. They explore everyday life and concerns which preoccupy Arab Americans in the U.S., and try to connect their American experiences with those of their countries of heritage. Following Edward Said as their "Father," Arab American writers attempt to blend American and Arab cultures aiming towards a balance of specificity and universalism. They have hybrid identities and provide to the American readership the translated cultural and socio-political issues which are rooted in their Arab heritage. "In the same way that the *mahjar* writers sought both to bring American ideals to the Arab world and bring Arab spirituality to the West, [literary scholar and translator Salma Khadra] Jayyusi sees her own role as that of 'letting as many Americans know and cherish Arabic civilization and culture".[15]

The events of September 11, 2001 and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, despite catastrophic consequences on humanity, unveiled the visibility and existence of Arab American literature, which has increased enormously and has drawn attention and interest of many politicians, scholars and popular readers in the United States and worldwide. In regard to this "visibility", Steven Salaita writes: "Before 9/11 scholars examined Arab

[14] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "New Directions: Arab-American Writing at century's End," *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, edited by Khaled Matawa and Munir Akash (Bethesda, MD: JUSSOR 10/11, 1999), 76.
[15] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer,137.

American invisibility or marginality—or whatever other term they employed to denote peripherality—but after 9/11 they were faced with a demand to transmit or translate their culture to mainstream Americans. The demand was matched by an insatiable curiosity about Arabs and Arab Americans; everybody from 'everyday' Americans to high-ranking politicians wanted to know about the people who had irrevocably altered American life."[16]

Literary critics in postwar America, such as the New Critics, assumed a strong opposition between aesthetics and politics, claiming that politics devalues art within the context of literary criticism.However, politics is one of the key issues which dominates the works of contemporary Arab American writers. Due to the political implications impacting their existence as an ethnic minority in the U.S., many Arab American authors cannot "escape" politics; these authors critically observe the cultural issues and Arab American realities by translating the negative and positive cultural aspects of Arab American communities in the United States. In relation to politics in literature John Whalen-Bridge states: "Aesthetic language and political language are not mutually exclusive, but for much of American criticism the two kinds of language have come to seem like two magnetic poles with the same charge, each repelling the other.… One response to this complete aestheticization of literature is to be fastidious about the distinct differences between categories such as 'literature' and 'aesthetic'. If we assume that a literary work has both aesthetic and political capacities, we may respect the differences between political and aesthetic motivation and at the same time allow for their intermingling within a work of art. The study of political fiction also requires that we resist the equally erroneous and now prevalent equation of politics in literature."[17]

It seems that Said's contribution to Arab American consciousness, Majaj's call of 1999, and other experiences that Arab American authors have absorbed while reading each other or other ethnic literatures during the 1990s and particularly after the painful events of 9/11, are real markers which show the flourishing of Arab American fiction. Among Arab American authors, there is a considerable number of women writers who have attempted to tackle anti-Arab racism, and to offer more complex alternative images

[16] Steven Salaita. *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes and What it Means for Politics Today*, 74,75.
[17] John Whalen-Bridge. *Political Fiction and American Self*, .4.

of Arab American culture. The 9/11 terrorist acts crushed years of striving by Arab Americans to diminish the anti-Arab stereotyping in the United States. In addition, these acts deepened the feeling of unwelcome presence of the Arab Americans on American soil, and pushed forward many intellectuals and literary authors to engage themselves intellectually and emotionally in order to produce notable fiction, poetry collections and non-fiction works**.** The number of fiction writers and published books has increased enormously in the beginning of the 21st century, and the previously fewer voices of women writers turned louder than ever before. Some distinguished recent titles in the field of Arab American literature include: Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Devine* (2001) and *KOOLAIDS: The Art of War* (1998), Miriam Cooke's *Hayati* (2000), Kathryn K.Abdul-Baki's *Ghost Songs* (2000), Samia Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000), Patricia Sarrafian Ward's *The Bullet Collection* (2003), Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* (2003), Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan* (2003), Liala Lalami's *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), Rawi Hage's *DeNiro's Game* (2006), Mohja Kahf's *The Gril in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006), Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile* (2007), Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008), and one hopes more new titles will follow, either from the mentioned authors or from emerging talents.

We will attempt to bring to light the fact that Arab Americans cannot be regarded as a discrete community, but as an integral ethnic group that contributes to enriching of American multicultural values.We would like to emphasize that Arab American is the latest strand in American ethnic studies, which has become a new model for readers of U.S. multiculturalism. Put differently, Arab Americans studies is regarded as a powerful contribution to postcolonial theory, which has enabled the expansion of post-colonial literary criticism, and it has been followed by numerous authors in all genres of literature. Contemporary Arab American fiction and non-fiction writers encompass almost all religious, ethnic, and national demographic strains comprising Arab Americans. Therefore, due to the complexities and the themes that Arab American writers deal with, literary criticism faces difficulties when trying to group them together in a unified literary tradition. Nevertheless, the thesis will maintain that there is continuity and consistency within this body of texts. The characters of contemporary Arab American fiction writers (especially women) offer alternative representations of Arab women through storytelling

and memory, in contrast with examples such as Gustave Flaubert's Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, who never spoke of herself, never represented herself, but was represented. Furthermore, the Arab and Arab American characters in contemporary Arab American writings are not marginalized and stereotyped, as Arabs had been by mainstream U.S. authors of the post-World War II era, but rather they are depicted realistically as other human beings and enjoy all liberties that life offers, regardless of their social and religious backgrounds.In addition, contemporary Arab American fiction writers do not represent exotic subhuman figures, but characters who stand as connecting bridges with other ethnicities and share the same bittersweet realities. They span geographically the Orient and the Occident, respectively the Middle East and the U.S., two parts of the world that historically have had strange and estranging imaginative attitudes towards each other.

The intent behind the writing of the thesis is threefold: first, to highlight the development of an entirely new academic discourse pertaining to Arab American studies within American, ethnic and postcolonial approaches; secondly, to make visible the by now remarkable corpus of fiction and non-fiction writing that has not been sufficiently researched even in the U.S. cultural context; thirdly, to make present some "silent" or marginalized voices of the past several decades (among them women writers in particular) that have turned into "speaking voices." The most distinguished authors include nonfiction writers Edward Said and Ihab Hassan, poets Lisa Suhair Majaj and Naomi Shihab Nye, and fiction authors such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Laila Halaby, Mohja Kahf and Susan Muaddi Darraj.

The methodology of the coming chapters is rooted in contextual, materialist and historicist readings, as well as in literary criticism of the particular text. Often the argument will contain a comparative reading of two or more novels of contemporary Arab American writers, discussing some of the main issues that preoccupy Arab Americans and spanning today's Arab America: religion and women; the concept of the family (including parent-child conflicts and inter-generational relationships) in Arab American memoirs, and exilic and nostalgic longing for return to the "Old Countries." The comparative reading and analyses will be based on postmodernist and postcolonial theories and ethnic studies.

The first chapter treats Edward Said (1935- 2003), whose life-long preoccupation was the question of Palestine, which he held on to passionately until his last hour. Said stands as a symbolic figurehead of Arab American literature, and his academic stature meant that he provides literary and cultural capital, which has helped to legitimate Arab American literature. We will offer an analysis of his memoir (*Out of Place,* 1999), where he critically discusses the notion of exile, the paths he undertook towards the creation of his self-esteem, and his flagstone issue of the displaced Palestinians and their longing for return. Despite the "uncured wounds" of exile, Said in his *Out of Place* critically describes the current impasse of Palestinian return and the problems which Palestinians face from Israeli border officials due to the "sin" of being Palestinians when they travel to Israel/Palestine even as tourists, although these "tourists" happen to be American citizens, as was Said himself. We find stories similar to Said's in many Arab American authors. For example, Lisa Suhair Majaj (a Palestinian American) had a similar Palestinian border experience when she traveled to Jerusalem from Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1998. Majaj writes: "There, the security guard, another woman, questioned me aggressively about whom I was planning to see, where I was planning to go, why I had come there in the first place. (…) When I asked her (of course knowing the answer in advance) why I, apart from other travelers, was being subjected to this interrogation, she looked at me as if I were mentally impaired. 'What do you expect?' she asked me. 'You're Palestinian.' I'm American,' I pointed out, holding up my passport. The guard was not impressed. 'Your father was Palestinian' she retorted. 'That's enough.'"[18] We will tackle Said's role as a universal intellectual and his contribution to the field of postcolonial studies. The chapter treats his childhood, his identity, his concepts of colonialism, comparing his intellectual personality and his exilic life with those of the most outstanding high modernists among twentieth-century authors. Although, as Said stated, his memoir was intended to be apolitical and he attempted to avoid politics as much as he could, he could not escape the political events which changed the geographical map of the world after World War Two.

[18] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections", *Meridians:feminism, race, transnationalism*, vol.2 no.I (2001), 122, 123.

The second chapter, titled "Ihab Hassan's Postmodernist Mode in Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography," examines Hassan's stance towards exile, specifically his self-exile, as well as his attitude towards colonialism and different uses of power, and his political standpoints, which can be regarded as opposite to those of Said. As one of the key literary critics of postmodernism, Hassan describes "his Egypt" in terms very different from Said's eternal longing for and devotion to Palestine. Ihab Hassan's *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography* (1986) highlights many of the same issues as Said's memoir, but from a different perspective. We will underline the opposite standpoints which Hassan holds about exile, identity, political and literary attitudes especially in comparison to Edward Said and the Third World authors at large, including feminist and U.S. minority literatures. While Said defended his roots by showing love for his parents, particularly for his mother, worked for the oppressed and denounced injustice worldwide, Hassan "buries" his parents prior to their natural death by rejecting his ethnicity in favor of mainstream American white male individualism. In addition, while Said criticizes imperialism, Hassan in his *Out of Egypt* shows postcolonial attitudes towards his country of birth.

Chapter three, titled "Politics and aesthetics of Arab American feminist writers" deals with several of the main preoccupations and issues which face the Arab American community. Particular attention is given to Arab American women who are torn between nationalism and feminism. Arab American women in general are seen as the "oppressed gender," oppressed by Arab males, in the eyes of white majoritarian populations in the United States and in Western European countries. The chapter is divided into two subchapters; "Issues in the Writings of Three Arab American Women Poets" and "Themes in the Fiction of Three Arab American Women Writers." Despite the fact that this study deals mainly with non-fiction and fiction genres, the first part of the chapter treats Arab American feminst poets, such as Lisa Suhair Majaj, the celebrated Palestinian American poet Naomi Shihab Nye, and Syrian American poet and novelist, Mohja Kahf. The discussion of the works of the above mentioned contemporary Arab American feminist poets is fitting since poetry has a long tradition and is considered as a substantial matter in the Arab world. We underline key issues in Arab American discourse, such as

politics, Islamophobia, ethnic identities, Palestinian longing for return, gender representation, religion, and nationalism/ feminism in Arab American feminist writing.

The second part of the chapter studies Arab American fiction that in part builds on the political lessons imparted from Said and postcolonial approaches but also moves in new directions. The subchapter deals with Arab American feminist prose writers, such as Mohja Kahf with her *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Laila Halby's *Once in a Promised Land*, where the authors seriously tackle, rather than the above mentioned issues, the events of September 11, distinctions within Islam itself, anti-Arab racism, and the struggle for self-creation of Muslim Arab American women. We will continually draw on Edward Said's work, examining how subsequently mentioned authors testify to Said's influence on articulating Arab American key issues, such as postcolonial consciousness, hybridity and American ethnic identities, gender, nostalgic longing, the question of Palestine, Palestinian wish to return, religion, assimilation and other issues which we have already mentioned.

Chapter four discusses less strictly political themes, such as storytelling, mother-daughter relationship, postcolonial and multicultural consciousness, exile, and distinct Arab American subgroups. Still, we cannot avoid politics as an integral part of the Arab American community and Arab American writing. The chapter includes Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan*, Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*. In a comparative methodology of analysis, the chapter draws parallels between characters in the above-named novels and the linking bridges which bring together not only Arab Americans and mainstream Americans, but also create a feasible unity of multicultural ethnicities for a better world. In particular, we discuss Palestinian women who were forced to leave their ancient homeland for exile in the United States, and underline the advantages of free movement and other liberties which Palestinian Diaspora women have in comparison to those who live in desperate conditions in the refugee camps, with return impossible.. The chapter treats the position of women in the family and society and their search for equity and freedom. In addition, this chapter discusses other issues which preoccupy Arab American women's discourse, such as migration, sociopolitics, sexual misuse of Arab American

women by their relatives, as well as sexual adventures enjoyed by some of the characters in contemporary Arab American writing.

The emergence of Arab American studies is an important cultural and literary academic achievement. Arab Americans have been recognized as an ethnic community for over a century, but today, due to literary and critical endeavors by Arab American authors, the subject has come of age as a valuable subject of scholarship both for common readers and academic circles in the United States and globally. The work of Gregory Orfalea could be the best example to summarize the dissertation's goals.

Without lingering too long on hot-button issues, such as 9/11, the focus in this study is instead on broader issues of cultural, religious, migration-related, gender-related, and assimilation-related issues, coming together in the make-up of an exemplarily hybrid, but also American, identity. The great-grandchildren, grandchildren, and children of Arab immigrants to the U.S. have undertaken, since the 1990s, serious tasks in their writings.They have blended their rich Arab cultural heritage with American reality. Most of them do not speak any Arabic at all, and if they do, they speak and understand it passively. Some are the second, third, or fourth generations of the first wave of Arab immigrants and have American passports—all are effectively American citizens. They use memory and the journey to the past of their family members, their own writerly or poetic voices, and their fictional characters, in order to examine the implications of their own ambivalent perceptions of self, and to devise constructive ways of dealing with the present. This study's concluding section synthesizes the material by asserting that Arab American literature and study is an important cultural and literary academic achievement. It is neither easy nor necessary to separate politics from art, and Arab American authors have achieved a compelling synthesis in creating marvelous works of art with an appeal to both whethelay readers and academics.

Chapter 1

Arab American Non-fiction: Edward Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir*

Interest in the work and figure of Edward Said has increased enormously during the first and the beginning of the second decade of the twenty first century. The themes of exile, dispossession and longing for the restored right of return to Palestine preoccupy most of Said's writing. The dramatic events which occurred in the beginning of the new century such as September 11, 2001, the new era of globalization, and taking into account the revolutionary rebellions, known as "Arab Spring" which were manifested in many Arab countries in March of 2011, against antidemocratic and dictatorial regimes may shed new light on Said's importance, both as intellectual and humanist. Edward Said (1935-2003) stands as a towering figure for Arab American literature and as a key theorist of postcolonialism. The way in which he dwelt between worlds—an earlier era might say, "between the West and the East"—might be hinted at by his having an English first name, "Edward," and the Arabic family name, "Said." In his memoirs, Said writes: "for years, and depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past 'Edward' and emphasize 'Said'; at other times I would do reverse, or connect these two to each other so quickly that neither would be clear."[1] As we read in his memoir *(Out of Place)*, he was named Edward after the Prince of Wales, but was not the "Edward" that his parents wanted to be; rather he created his own "Edward"— the artist, literary theorist, humanist, public intellectual and foremost advocate of the Palestinian cause. F. Elizabeth Dehab notes Gyan Prakash's acknowledgement of Said's outstanding contribution in the field of postcolonial studies: "When the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Orientalism* was celebrated at Columbia University in April 2003, uppermost on Said's mind was the war on Iraq, as expressed by Prakash in his remarkable tribute to Said: 'it was no comfort to Said that the events after 9/11 confirmed his reading of what the called 'the knitted together' strength of Orientalism in its ability to maintain close ties to ruling institutions.'"[2]

---

[1] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 3.

[2] F. Elizabeth Dehab, "On Edward Said, Scholar and Public Intellectual", *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.4 (2003), 4.

Edward Said was born in Talbiyah, in a Palestinian Christian neighborhood, West Jerusalem (during the British Mandate over Palestine) in 1935 to Palestinian Christian parents. Both Said's parents were of Protestant faiths but different geographical backgrounds: Wadie Ibrahim (William A. Said) was born in Jerusalem, whereas his mother, Hilda Musa, was "born in Nazareth, then sent to a boarding school and junior college in Beirut, she was Palestinian, even though her mother, Munira, was Lebanese. I never knew her father, but he, I discovered, was a Baptist minister in Nazareth, although he originally came from Safad, via a sojourn in Texas."[3] As we encounter in his memoir (*Out of Place,* 1999), Said had been "out of place" starting from his early childhood. Due to his father's business, the family moved to Cairo, and when he frequently visited Jerusalem, he had a sense of not belonging—like a "lost child." The sense of not belonging haunted Said all his life.

Said began writing *Out of Place*, (1999), as a reaction to his fatal illness—leukemia, and at the time when he was not able to do other works such as teaching and other writing. He "grabbed" the chance, as W.B. Yeats might say, "before his time goes" to unveil the truth about his youth, and share various events, experiences of his life, his parents, friends and other secrets of his "innocent" early days. Said discusses other pressing reasons for undertaking such a task when he read from his memoir in Berkeley, saying, "My early years took place in three parts of the world, three countries in the Middle East that no longer exist in the way that I lived [sic]. So it was an act of trying to recover by memory. I did not have any paper or notes. I never kept notebooks or journals. It was an act of exercise of memory on a daily basis. I had a kind of rendezvous with my manuscript to talk about life in Palestine before 1948, to talk about life in Egypt before the revolution of 1952.… The third place was Lebanon, where we had a summer house.… It was the period before Lebanese Civil War, and that too has completely changed in the beginning of 1975. So it was an act of recovery to talk about these lost worlds."[4] Said asserts that politics was not a subject to be discussed in his family, but he still could not leave aside the important political changes of that time, the events that changed the world—the years of 1947-1948 in Palestine, the end of the British Empire in

[3] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 5.
[4] Edward Said, "*Out of Place: A Memoir",* 28 September, 2011, 14 min. Uploaded by berkeleycitizen.org.

the Middle East, the forceful abdication of King Farouk, the Free Officers Movement under Nasser, who declared Egypt e republic, and the dramatic consequences of the Lebanese Civil War. "The book itself" Said says "is extremely unpolitical. It is about a life lived in a family that itself was very unpolitical, but the background which occasionally comes through the narrative is really all the important events of that period, roughly from the beginning of World War II to the War of 1967. I end the book at the time when I finished my graduate degree and began teaching at Columbia University in 1963."[5] An academic who has previous knowledge on Said can easily observe the influence of his earlier works, which seem to have dictated the rhythm while Said was writing *Out of Place*. While reading from his memoir at Berkeley, Said indirectly mentions imperialism, stating that he was "born and grew up under British Empire and came to America in 1951, at the time when the American empire was rising in the world, taking over from French and British after World War II."[6] We encounter the reference to British imperialism in his book, *Orientalism* "My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II Britain and France dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did."[7]

One can draw similarities between Edward Said and the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, both in relation to their lived childhoods and the influence of imperialism. Yeats, like Said, was born under the British Empire (Dublin, Ireland), but his father moved the family to London, although not for business, but for the sake of his painting career. Like Said, Yeats spent his youth in three different places-- London, Sligo and Dublin--and had a "hybrid" identity. "As a child who divided his time between London and visits to family back home, he grew sharply conscious of the conflicts that alienated colonial Ireland from imperial Britain. (…) In London he was the shy, day-dreaming son of a disconsolate mother and (apparently) unsuccessful father; at school he was placed near

[5] Edward Said, "*Out of Place: A Memoir",* 28 September, 2011. 14 min. Uploaded by berkeleycitizen.org.
[6] Edward Said,."*Out of Place: A Memoir",* 28 September, 2011, 14 min. Uploaded by berkeleycitizen.org
[7] Edward Said*, Orientalism,* 4.

the bottom of his class in most subjects and was derided for being unathletic and Irish."[8] Unlike Said, who was gifted at sports and had a successful father and a very caring mother, Yeats did not speak Irish Gaelic as Said spoke Arabic. In recent years, some scholars of postcolonial studies have detected various nuances of postcolonial tendencies in Yeats' life and his writing. "Predictably enough, the results have varied widely. For example, Seamus Deane has read Yeats as 'an almost example of the colonialist mentality.' In response, Edward Said had suggested we could 'more accurately see in Yeats a particularly example of nativist (e.g. negritude) phenomenon.' Nativism is a form of nationalism that is anti-imperialist yet derived from imperial structures of thought; like imperialism, it insists on an absolute distinction between the colonizer and colonized, but it praises the colonized rather than denigrating them. The term enables Said to acknowledge Yeats's debt to imperialism and still praise his 'considerable achievement in decolonization.'"[9]

Said's 'exilic journeys' began in his early childhood, since his family and himself were always on a move from a country to a country, from a place to another place. "Along with the language, it is geography—especially in the displaced form of departures, arrivals, farewells, exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging, and travel itself— that is at the core of my memories of those early years. Each of the places I lived in—Jerusalem, Cairo, Lebanon, the United States—has a complicated, dense web of valences that was very much a part of growing up, gaining an identity, forming my consciousness of myself and others."[10] The "mixture" exhibited in Said's identity and cultural background is related to the languages as well. He spoke both languages, Arabic and English, but English was the language of his education and his writing. "I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt. What I do know, however, is that the two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other. Each *can* seem like my absolutely first language, but neither is."[11] The book itself is a beautifully written piece of literature, and as Ahdaf Soueif (an Egyptian novelist and cultural commentator and a friend to Said) comments:

---

[8] David Holdeman. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*, 2,4.
[9] Marjorie Howes and John Kelly, *The Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*, 207.
[10] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir, xiv.*
[11] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 4.

"I am not a neutral reader; Edward Said is my friend. But there was something other than friendship in the emotional charge this book had for me, and other too than a reader's sympathy for living characters or a lover of literature's delight in a well-wrought book. There was, on page after page, the pleasure of recognition, the discovery of a shared perspective, and the sorrow of a common loss."[12]

Said went to different schools, including the British Gezira Preparatory School in Cairo and Victoria College, St. Georges School in Talbiyah (Jerusalem). In 1951, after Said was expelled from Victoria College, his father sent him to Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts, U.S. Said's education in the Middle East was in English— the language in which Said had proficiency, but it was the educational system that Said disliked most, particularly the British school system. It seems that in these English schools in Arabic-speaking countries, Said traced the roots of colonialism, and the experiences he underwent in those schools are part of what enabled him to become the leading literary theorist of postcolonial studies. "In 1942, Said had been forbidden to speak Arabic at the British Gezira Preparatory School."[13] Things were worse at Victoria College, where Said threw stones during the break as a sign of protest against the British colonialism. It was there that he started to move forward politics and develop his self-identity, realizing that he was not "Prince Edward," after whom he was named, but an Arab who was facing difficulties due to his hybrid identity, culture and religion. Ahdaf Soueif states: "A different and difficult only son with four sisters, a (some-times crazily) dominant father, and an elegantly manipulative mother; a Christian Palestinian in Arab Muslim Egypt; an Arab child in a colonial British school in Cairo; and then a supposedly American child with an Arab surname and a British schoolboy's clothes in an American school, also in Cairo; an Anglophone in a Francophone community—the list goes on and on."[14] A childhood friend of Said, once a neighbor in Cairo, Nadia Gindi, while recollecting her memories about Said's personality, writes: *Out of Place* "mirrors his personality: tempestuous, forceful, uncompromisingly outspoken to the point of rudeness,

[12] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 92-93.
[13] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 93.
[14] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 92.

relentlessly restless, theatrical and always very funny.… As a child, I sensed that Edward was never really part of us. There was no doubt in my mind that he lived a life separate from us; coddled, spoilt and adored in true Middle Eastern fashion by his parents and relatives.… Consequently, I thought that whenever Edward did not play with us—or wouldn't play with us—it was because we were 'only girls' and he had a higher calling to follow. Whenever he did play with us, in our beloved and almost our private Grotto Gardens, he would have to be in command."[15] The emerging 'artist' (Said) could not bear the cruelty and offences of '"the weak, ill colonial headmaster, J. G. E. Price, and administered 'with neutral efficiency' by his secretary, Mr. Lagnado, a Europeanized Eastern Jew whom Said had previously heard admonishing an Armenian boy who was dipping his bread in his gravy, "*Ne mange pas comme les Arabes*."'[16] The Arab schoolboy with an English name and a protesting character was powerless to oppose the "tyranny" and swore to struggle "silently" and act ironically in regard to the British Mandatory in the Middle East. "By the end of my first month at school, I had risen to a kind of bad eminence as a rabble-rousing troublemaker, talking in class hobnobbing with other ringleaders of rebellion and disrespect, perpetually ready with an ironic or noncommittal answer, an attitude I regarded as a form of resistance to the British.… A ruthless fury took over as I vowed to make "their" lives miserable, without ever getting caught, without allowing myself ever to get close to any of them, taking from them what they had to offer entirely my own way."[17] In any misfortune there is always a fortune. Said was targeted by the authorities of Victoria School for being united in a group of solidarity named as "wogs" showing disrespect toward cruel English teachers and a school system modeled on British educational institutions, which was old-fashioned, but still existed in some British colonies. The expulsion from Victoria School is an important event which will change Said's life, shape his personality and propel the young man into permanent exile in the USA in 1951, where, in the years to come, he would develop a loud speaking voice that would speak truth to power.

---

[15] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000),287.
[16] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 92.
[17] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 186, 187.

Said's narrative of his experiences at English schools in Cairo bears literary comparison to those of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* In a conversation that Dedalus has with the dean of the university, the young artist finds out that the dean, who shows himself superior as an Englishman, is in fact shallow, while it also turns out that English is not even his first language, as when he said "tundish" instead of "funnel." Education in English refers to maintaining the British control over Ireland, as made clear by Stephen's (Joyce's) observation: "That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach his own language or to learn from us. Damn him one way or the other!"[18] Stephen decides to live his life to the fullest and swears to "cross" the boundaries of control by his family, nation and religion. Ahdaf Soueif writes: "Smarting with insult and injury, the fourteen-year-old Said vows "to make 'their' lives miserable, without getting caught, without allowing myself ever to get close to any of them, taking from them what they had to offer entirely my own way" (p. 187 And if this smacks of Stephen Dedalus's famous vow *in Portrait of the Artist* why that confirms the lived reality of Dedalus's and Said's experience and the porousness of the boundaries between literature and life."[19] As we read in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* in a conversation that Stephen Dedalus has with his friend Cranly, he expresses the decision he has made and states: "Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use– silence, exile, and cunning."[20]

Despite the fact that Said, as the only son in the family, was overprotected, spoilt and adored not only by his parents, but also by relatives and friends, sometimes he underwent physical punishment by his father, who wanted to "to build" his own "Edward" by having autonomy over him. His father, a U.S. citizen, had served with the

[18] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* 194.
[19] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 92.
[20] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* 191.

American Army during World War I. He was a successful businessman in Cairo, and a typical embodiment of Protestant ethics at home and at work. Young Said faced "tyranny" both at school and at home, where he underwent severe corporal punishment by his father. As Said states, his father wanted to be "the model father and husband" using his authority and methods which, he thought, would have a positive impact in shaping of his son's character. "Whatever the actual historical facts were, my father came to represent a devastating combination of power and authority, rationalistic discipline, and repressed emotions; and all this, I later realized, has impinged on me my whole life, with some good, but also some inhibiting and even debilitating effects**."**[21]

In relation to Said's exposure to physical punishment, Nadia Gindi recollects: "Yes he was treated differently but not at all in the way I had imagined it to be. Instead of preferential treatment and the indulging of his every whim, he was subjected to a rigorous punishing almost repressive regime—instead of being a mollycoddled only son, he felt himself a victim or even a martyr of his parents' investment in him as only son and the eldest."[22] Parents' physical punishments leave deep traces in the memory of the victimized child. While recollecting his memories about physical punishment, Said writes: "What I cannot completely forgive, though, is that the contest over my body, and his administering of reforms and physical punishment, instilled a deep sense of generalized fear in me, which I have spent most of my life trying to overcome. I still sometimes think of myself as a coward, with some gigantic lurking disaster waiting to overtake me for sins I have committed and will soon be punished for."[23] Regardless of the painful and traumatic memories related to the corporal punishment, the adult somehow always justifies and forgives his/her parents for the acts of being punished or victimized as a child. "As I write this," Said states in his memoir, "now it gives me the chance, very late in life, to record the experiences as a coherent whole that very strangely have left no anger, some sorrow, and a surprisingly strong residual love for my parents."[24]

---

[21] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 12.
[22] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 288.
[23] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 66.
[24] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 65.

Edward's father, whether he knew it or not, was using Anglo-Saxon customs for corporal punishment on male children. In the book *The English: A Portrait of a People*, Jeremy Paxman writes: "His beating began as a child at the hands of the father. Kissing between father and son had been banned at the age of five, on the grounds that it was effeminate. Corporal punishment was to be 'taken as a man,' so when the boy was beaten he was expected to show no emotions. If he survived the ordeal without crying, his father congratulated him."[25] Edward Said experienced the same fate as did many other boys of that time. He did not show any emotions and endured the pains of the striking whip. In reviewing Said's *Out of Place*, Deirdre Levinson comments: "Powerless to challenge tyranny where it pinches most, the boy who endures his father's blows and the lash of his father's riding-crop without demur vows when flogged in his first term at the school, 'to make 'their' lives miserable, without ever getting caught."[26] Said's upbringing reflects that of an exemplary of colonized subject. "Colonized subjects," writes Homi K. Bhabha, "are, after all simultaneously moulded by class and gender considerations. Also, the split between 'black skin' and 'white masks', is differentially experienced in various colonial and postcolonial societies. We cannot forge a template of a split colonised subject and then apply it to all colonised subjects."[27] Said needed to overcome the state of being "oppressed" at school and at home, and the memories of these events will enable him to write for himself and for others. Power and its injustice many times incite the victimized to be committed to developing the intellectual power which will help him or her to gain a considerable place and respect in society and assume some kind of authority over his/her life. While in Mount Hermon, Said faced hypocrisy of a power and its injustice. Said writes: "Its [power's] unfairness, in my opinion, depended principally on its prerogative for changes in its bases of judgment. You could be perfect one day, but morally delinquent the next, even though your behaviour was the same."[28] Said, as a mature intellectual politicized by the power which was executed over Palestine in 1968, disbursed his accumulated writing power and strongly defended his homeland. His

---

[25] Jeremy Paxman. *The English: A Portrait of a People*, 207.
[26] Deirdre Levinson, "The Apprenticeship of Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward Said", *The Threepenny Review,* No. 82 (2000), 8.
[27] Ania Loomba. Colonialism/ Postcolonialism, 150.
[28] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*,230.

position as Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and the security he had as an America citizen, enabled him to "unveil" the source of his sense of the injustice of power—the trauma of Palestine. Within the period of ten years, beginning from 1968, he wrote *Orientalism* (1978), *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *Covering Islam* (1981), where Palestine is mentioned almost on every page. Affirming this, Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia write: "Because he has located himself in what he calls an interstitial space, a space in between a Palestinian colonial past and an American imperial present, he has found himself both empowered and obliged to speak out for Palestine, to be the voice of the marginalised and the dispossessed, and, crucially, to present Palestine to the American people."[29]

In addition, Said's father "punished" his son verbally, presumably to create a sturdy character in his son. "The most terrible thing", as Edward Said recollects, was when he said to him, at the age of twelve: "'You will never inherit anything from me; you are *not* the son of a rich man, 'though literally of course I was. When he died he left his entire estate to my mother. From the moment I became conscious of myself as a child, I found it impossible to think of myself as not having both a discrediting past and an immoral future in store."[30] The words such as "you will never inherit anything from me" reverberated like loud bells in Said's ears, and prompted him to struggle towards his self-creation and personal independence, both as a human being and intellectual. Edward's father was an authority and power for the emerging intellectual, while Said was not ready to oppose that power openly and loudly yet.

Unlike his father, Said's mother was affectionate and caring, particularly to him. While recollecting her own memories of her, Nadia Gindi states: "I remember, especially the high cheekbones, lovely skin and rounded arms. She always wore original and striking pieces of jewellery. As a child, I remember her as being an affectionate woman, lovingly squeezing her children's arms and hugging them. She was ambitious for them and extremely proud of them."[31] As we encounter in his memoir, Edward Said did not have any close friend other than his mother until the age of twenty. "My mother", Said

[29] Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said*, 6.
[30] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 18, 19.
[31] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 288.

writes, "was the closest and most intimate companion for the first twenty-five years of my age.… She represented herself to me as an uncomplicated, gifted, loving and beautiful young woman, and until I was twenty—when she was only forty—I saw her that way; if she abruptly turned into something else, I blamed myself. Later on, our relationship darkened a good deal."[32] Said's mother played an important part in shaping her son's personality. Unlike her husband, she criticized constructively her son's behavior which resonated positively with the growing up teenager. "'Whatever the reason, once we returned to Cairo a process of change in my life began as a result, and indeed I was encouraged by my mother in particular to believe that a happier, less problematic period had ended. I sank more and more into generalized truancy—'You're very clever,' I'd be told over and over, 'but you have no character, you're lazy, you're naughty.'"[33] His mother wanted to let her son know that he had the power of knowledge, and all he needed was the devoted intellectual work. Phrases such as "you have no character" and "you're naughty" propelled him to develop himself into an outstanding intellectual, charming character, and worldly gentleman. After she died, her "ghost" haunted Said by refreshing the memories of the past. It was particularly when Said was struggling with leukemia and that he needed desperately his mother's care and her presence. Her loss is interlinked with the loss of his father, loss of Cairo, loss of Palestine and all other important events of the past which shaped Said's life. By the end of his memoir, the author states: "She was the first person I needed to tell my story, which I did the moment the ambulance delivered me to the Fribourg hospital. That feeling I had of both beginning and ending with my mother, of her sustaining presence and, I imagined infinite capacity for cherishing me, softly, imperceptibly, underwrote my life for years and years.… It took years after the end of my formal education for me to realize how much she had, whether by design or instinct I shall never know, insinuated herself not just into our affairs as four sisters and a brother, but also between us. My sisters and I still live with the consequences of her redoubtable skills."[34]

Edward Said does not write much about his younger sisters: Rosemarie, Jean, Joyce, and Grace. His relationship with his sisters seems to be noncommittal, and he

[32]Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 12, 13.
[33]Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 27.
[34] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 292, 293, 294.

expresses the same attitude toward other neighbor girls while the family lived in Cairo. We have stated above Nadia Gindi's recollection about young Said's stance toward girls, and his refusal to play with them. Presumably, Said showed superiority in relation to females, except for his mother. "A visit to the Circus meant the recreation of himself as ringmaster—complete with whip—and we girls would have to play the part of the obedient horses trotting round the ring, changing step at each crack of the whip. He would invade our favourite rock...artificially made rock formations...which we called 'our castle' and before we knew it he would bound up to the highest point and shout,' I'm the king of the castle and you're the dirty rascals."[35] Such ambivalent at best and dismissive at worst attitude towards women, is later reflected in Said's idea of feminism, as observed by a number of feminist critics. Leading postcolonial feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak, writes: "Early on in our friendship, looking back upon himself critically, he had described himself as 'playboy' before he woke up to the question of Palestine. (Who knows where one's stereotypes for oneself are hatched?) That word came to mind as I heard him speak about India.… I had taken Edward to task for not having sufficient sympathy for feminism, but I don't remember that. I did always remind him of feminism, remind him not to 'take care of it' by making it one item on a list of worthy causes, or being nice to women, but that was between him and me."[36]

While at Mount Hermon, despite the fact that he demonstrated significant academic skills, he was never chosen as a "floor officer," "table head," or member of the student council. Remembering those years at Mount Hermon and the fact the he was left aside, Said states: "But I soon discovered that I would have to be on my guard against authority and that I needed to develop some mechanism or drive not to be discouraged by what I took to be efforts to silence or deflect me from being who I was rather than becoming who they wanted me to be. In the process I began a lifelong struggle and attempt to demystify the capriciousness and hypocrisy of a power whose authority depended absolutely on its ideological self-image as a moral agent, acting in good faith

[35] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 287.
[36] Gayatri Spivak, "Thinking about Edward Said: Pages from a Memoir", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), 521, 522.

and unimpeachable intentions."[37] Said's experiences and his solitary intellectual struggle at Mount Hermon, remind us of the young Stephen Dedalus of James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* In an article on Edward Said's text "Representations of the Intellectual" (1993), Dr Habadir Türk remarks: "As Said put it, 'nineteenth-century representations of the intellectual tended to stress individuality; very often the intellectual is, like Turgenev's Bazarov or James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, a solitary, somehow aloof figure, who does not confirm to society at all and is consequently a rebel completely outside established opinion." [38]

The age of twelve was a crucial period for Said, and it was then that he had begun to seek his own-self esteem and autonomy as a young man, fantasizing himself as a whole, as a book. "This awareness coincided with my wish somehow to be disembodied. One of my recurrent fantasies, the subject of a school essay I wrote when I was twelve, was to be a book, whose fate I took to be happily free of unwelcome changes, distortions of its shape, criticisms of its looks; print for me was made of a rare combination of expression in its style and contents, absolute rigidity, and integrity in its looks. Passed from hand to hand, place to place I could be my own true self (as a book)." [39]

His father offered Edward numerous opportunities that other fathers at this time could not offer to their children. At the age of sixteen, Edward was sent to the other side of the world, respectfully at Northfield Mount Hermon School, Massachusetts. In"the land of the free and the home of the brave," he felt liberated from the cruel British educational system and his father's oppression. It was here that Said realized who he was and set out to become a scholar, a humanist who would oppose any tyranny, any injustice regardless if performed to him or to others. "In withstanding that very posture in the microcosmic Mount Hermon, he discovers in himself a power 'that had nothing to do with the 'Edward' of the past; and with that, as he grows into his non-Edward self, all his latent powers quicken."[40] Despite his self-recognition in Mount Hermon he demonstrated his notable academic skills as well as his talent at music and sports. His excellent results

[37] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 230.
[38]Habadir Türk, "From Intellectuals to Doxosophers: Edward Said and the Future of Intellectual", *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, Vol. 2 No. 21 (2011), 197.
[39] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 76.
[40] Deirdre Levinson, "The Apprenticeship of Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward Said", *The Threepenny Review,* No. 82 (2000), 8.

at Mount Hermon School will enable Said to enter Princeton University, and later on to earn Master of Arts and PhD degree in English literature from Harvard University. The young professor at Columbia University had achieved his self recognition and in the years to come he will be on the side of the oppressed, of the powerless, regardless of their nationality, religion or geography. In relation to this, much later Said writes, "At a time when most of the tyrannies of Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Soviet Union, have collapsed, three places remain— Ireland, South Africa, and Palestine/ Israel— where hostility between communities has prevailed for decades. In each of them, a minority is surrounded by an uncontrolled majority; it has appeared important therefore for embattled minority to maintain a state of siege— that is, for a minority, like the Israelis or the White South Africans to maintain a state of siege against majority, the Muslim and Arab majority in one instance, the black majority in the other."[41] It is acknowledged that the Palestinian cause had driven Said to involve himself in denouncing any violence and genocide that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century. Edward Said raised his voice against the Persian Gulf War in 1991, the War in Balkans, NATO bombing in Kosovo, genocide in Rwanda, and the War in Iraq in 2003. Still, his focus on Palestine provoked criticism. One critic wrote that, "from the dozen interviews that Said gave in the second half of the 1990s, no one would have known that 800,000 people were brutally dispatched to their graves over a short period of three months of 1994 in Rwanda. Why should it matter? Should we have expected Said to comment on everything, and would it not be reasonable to infer that someone with his broad humanistic outlook, political commitments and moral sympathies would have felt the injustices wherever they might have been taking place? It matters because, in an ironic and even disturbing reversal, the suffering of the Palestinians became for Said the paradigmatic case of oppression in our times".[42]

It is generally known that the theme of exile preoccupies Said in most of his works. It seems that exile left irremovable traces in Said's life until his last breath on the 25th of September, 2003. In Mount Hermon he felt "out of place" for the fist time, since it

[41] Edward W .Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*: *the Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994.* 169.
[42] Vinay Lal, "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said", *Emergences,* Volume 13, No 1/2 (2003), 106.

was there that he experienced solitude and homesickness, which again are the keystones of Said's development as a free and autonomous intellectual. While discussing nationalism and exile, in relation to loneliness and the state of being an "outsider," Said writes, "Nationalisms are about groups, but in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation. How, then, does one surmount the loneliness of exile without falling into encompassing and thumping language of national pride, collective sentiments, group passions? What is there worth saving and holding on to between the extremes of exile on the one hand, and the often bloody-minded nationalism on the other?"[43] Regarding "displacements," in an article related to Said's *Out of Place*, John D. Barbour notes, "In addition to Jerusalem and Cairo, Said describes a third displacement from Lebanon, where his family spent every summer for twenty seven years until 1971, when increasing political tension and violence made it dangerous to return. Although neither Said nor his family, were literally exiled from any of these three Middle Eastern places, he describes his relation to Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon in terms of having been displaced against his will from these childhood homes."[44] Despite these valid points about other displacements, ultimately Said embodies himself with the sense of exile shared by Palestinians displaced from Palestine, the place which remains his first "cradle" in the world. Another childhood friend and neighbor in Cairo, Hoda Gindi (Nadia's sister), describes Said with poetical lines about exile from Hugo of St.Victor (a twelfth-century monk from Saxony)—the same lines which Erich Auerbach cited while an exile in Turkey, and used by Said himself in his *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*: "The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land."[45] Said's standpoints of exile have political implications since he has always defended the Palestinian cause as its most outstanding voice, and strongly opposed exodus or displacement of any other ethnic group. "By this I mean that no human being should be threatened by 'transfer' out of his or her home or land; no human

[43] Edward W .Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 177.
[44] John D. Barbour, "Edward Said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology,* Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 294.
[45] Hoda Gindi, "Edward Said and Critical Decolonization", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 25, (2005), 11.

being should be discriminated against because he or she is not of an X or a Y religion; no human being should be stripped of his or her land, national identity, or culture, no matter the cause," he says.[46] In his book *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays,* Said mentions exiles in other ages, for instance, the Romantic Exiles of nineteenth-century Europe, and compares them with exiles of the twentieth century**.** "But the difference between earlier exiles and those of our own time is, it bears stressing, scale: our age— with its modern welfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers— is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced persons, mass immigration."[47] Exile, on the other hand, is a condition which propels intellectuals to develop their own critical way of thinking, for they possess hybrid cultures which enable them to see the world and reality differently from the native dwellers. "The exile" writes Vinay Lal, "not only sees with sharpened eyes, but ultimately gives birth to a new form of consciousness, the consciousness of those who are 'housed' by virtue of being 'unhoused".[48] Elsewhere, Said has written that the "achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever,"[49] but that loss plays a significant role in other achievements—such as shaping the critical mind of the intellectuals, who left to the mankind valuable pieces of art. As examples, Said mentions "exiles" such as Joseph Conrad, T.S. Eliot, and in particular, German-Jewish intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno and Erich Auerbach, who fled Germany during the Third Reich, the former to California and the latter to Turkey. "Perhaps the most rigorous example of such subjectivity," writes Said in *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, "is to be found in the writing of Theodor Adorno, the German-Jewish philosopher and critic. Adorno's masterwork, *Minima Moralia,* is an autobiography written while in exile."[50] In addition, Said makes exiles distinct from "displaced" people such as: refugees, émigrés, and expatriates. Aside from the "romantic" Russian intellectual exiles of the nineteenth century, there were a number of American expatriates who left their country willingly in the beginning of the twentieth century seeking creative freedom. This group of authors

[46] Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, xiii.
[47] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 174.
[48] Vinay Lal, "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said", *Emergences,* Volume 13, No 1/2 (2003), 112.
[49] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 173.
[50] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 184.

includes the novelists of the "Lost Generation" and American High Modernist poets who created distinguished literary works while in exile. "Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word 'refugee' has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas 'exile' carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. Expatriates voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal and social reasons. Hemingway and Fitzgerald were not forced to live in France. Expatriates may share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions."[51]

Said's exile bears some resemblances to that of James Joyce, who left Ireland willingly due to his disenchantment with his homeland. In contrast to Joyce, Said went into exile due to the reasons which we have already stated above. Although an exile in Europe, Joyce still "dwelled" in the streets of Dublin, and at the same time nursed his anger with Ireland. Said, on the other side, was aware of that "precious loss," but he never accepted that "loss" inside him, and nostalgically was linked to Palestine, as if he had lived there forever. "No champion of the Palestinian cause", writes Deirdre Levinson in an article related to Said's *Out of Place*, "has protested that loss, or asserted the belied reality of that loss, or defended his people's residual rights as relentlessly as Said. But he has done so on his own terms."[52] In relation to Joyce's exile, Said wrote: "James Joyce *chose* to be in exile: to give force to his artistic vocation. In an uncannily effective way—as Richard Ellmann has shown in his biography—Joyce picked a quarrel with Ireland and kept it alive so as to sustain the strictest opposition to what was familiar."[53] Unlike Joyce, Said did not "pick" any "anger" with Palestine, but he chose devotion and longing for the right of return, and "melted" or devoted his critical mind to inscribing it in the public consciousness and defending it. Said opposed the brutal acts of his compatriots, and some politicians of the Palestinian cause, but the question of Palestine as his "place" was settled and reiterated as he became one of the most outstanding

[51] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 181.
[52] Deirdre Levinson, "The Apprenticeship of Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward Said", *The Threepenny Review,* No. 82 (2000), 9.
[53] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 182.

speaking voices for the exile's right to return. "Exile", writes John D.Barbour, "is a political condition that Said shows to be especially painful and unjust in the case of the Palestinian people, whom he described as being in the terrible position of being exiles even while living in their own homeland and, ironically, 'turned into exiles by the proverbial people of exile, the Jews.' In addition to this political meaning, Said frequently used exile as a metaphor to describe his vision of the role of the modern intellectual, who needs a critical, detached perspective from which to examine his culture."[54] Palestinian exiles hoped that one day they would return where they belonged —in their homelands, but that hope "died "due to the Six-Day War and the political conditions which followed the events. "He (Said) knew that the tragic situation of the Palestinians would not soon be resolved. After many decades in the United States and a successful career at Columbia, Said was quite content with his life in New York, despite his continued sense of not being at home there. Yet, although he did not really expect to return to Palestine, Egypt or Lebanon, the consciousness of being an exile became central to his identity and his worldview. Even in Egypt and Lebanon he had felt out of place, because his family lived in an enclave created by his father's wealth and, as Protestant Christians, were isolated from the larger population."[55] Seeing no path open for return and fighting with leukemia, Said wanted only contentment and freedom, which he had missed for years. "'Now it does not seem important or even desirable to be 'right' and in place (right at home, for instance). Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and not ever to feel too much at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die."[56] In relation to impossibility of return, Edward Said states: "The pathos of exile is in the loss of contact with the solidity and the satisfaction of earth: homecoming is out of the question."[57] Said experienced the condition of "exile" even while he was in Egypt, although he did not suffer the same misfortune as the displaced Palestinians.

Edward's aunt Nahiba, beginning from 1948 and after, in a sense, introduced her nephew to the notion of exile and its politics, which would preoccupy Said lifelong. She

---

[54] John D. Barbour, "Edward Said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology*, Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 293.
[55] John D. Barbour, "Edward Said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology,* Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 294.
[56] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 294.
[57] Edward W. Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 179.

assisted and took care of displaced Palestinians who were driven forcefully from their country. ”It was through Aunt Nahiba that I first experienced Palestine as history and cause in the anger and consternation I felt over the suffering of the refugees, those Others, whom she brought into my life. It was also she who communicated to me the desolation of being without a country or a place to return to.… On Fridays she would stay at home and receive people who had only heard of her as a source of help and sustenance. It was a powerful shock to me, when I visited her on Friday that I could barely make it in the door.”[58] Events like these and memories of desperate refugees will later on propel Said to raise his voice against the oppressed in favor of justice and human rights.

Although the status of Said’s family in Egypt was not so certain, the discussions within the family were apolitical. The smart teenager could notice that it was politics which displaced those hungry, desperate and helpless Palestinians. “Politics always seemed to involve other people, not us. When I begun to be involved in politics twenty years later, both my parents strongly disapproved. ‘It will ruin you,’ said my mother. ‘You’re a literature professor’ said my father.”’[59] The events of 1948 affected Said’s father and for the first time he, in some sense, forgot his American-ness and expressed his Palestinian roots. “Only once in a typically sweeping way did my father elucidate the general Palestinian condition, when he remarked about Sbeer and his family that ‘they had lost everything;’ a moment later he added, ‘We lost everything too.’ When I expressed my confusion as to what he meant, since his business, the house, our style of life in Cairo, seemed to have remained the same, ‘Palestine’ was all he said”.[60] In answering thus, Said’s father showed indirectly the path which his son was to undertake twenty years later, despite being “unpolitical.” The events of 1967 mark a radical change for Said by embedding him in a general loss, the loss for which he will turn his “pen” into a “sword” and struggle intellectually and endlessly to overcome it and gain the whole again. “And 1967 brought more dislocation, whereas for me it seemed to embody *the* dislocation that subsumed all other losses, the disappeared worlds of my youth and upbringing, the unpolitical years of my education, the assumption of disengaged teaching

[58] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 119.
[59] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 117.
[60] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 115.

and scholarship at Columbia, and so on. I was no longer the same person after 1967; the shock of the war drove me back to where it all started the struggle over Palestine."[61]

Displaced Palestinians on American soil play an important role in the development of Arab American literature. Through expressing their longing for the right of return, they share various experiences and translate their rich and multicolored culture for the American readers. Lisa Suhair Majaj, a Palestinian American poet, scholar and literary critic writes: "Palestinian American literature emerges from the context of personal and political displacement that has characterized Palestinian experience over the last half century.… It is also informed by other layers of displacement and exile, whether cultural, personal, or gendered. Because Palestinian-Americans, like other Palestinians, are forbidden to return (except, at best, as tourists) to their historical homeland, and hence to their own history, their literature in many ways charts an attempt to 'return,' as it were, through writing. The homeland to which they seek return is rooted in history and memory."[62] By expressing in his writings these experiences of Palestinian loss and exile, Said expresses something axial to Arab American discourse.

Rather than spiritual pain, homesickness and solitude, exile offers some bittersweet pleasures and priorities, particularly in the development of one's mind. In his book *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays,* Said discusses the advantages of the exile in comparison to those who have shared only one house, one culture, and have not experienced that hardship of exilic wandering paths. "The exile knows that in secular and contingent world, homes are always provincial. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reasons of necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience.… Seeing 'the entire world as a foreign land' makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that —to borrow a phrase from music— is *contrapuntal*."[63] In recollecting his multiple layers of identity while in Egypt, Said writes

[61] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 293.
[62] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections", *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism,* vol.2, no.1 (2001), 115.
[63] Edward W .Said, *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, 185, 186.

of having had in childhood "the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on."[64] Yet he transcends this youthful fantasy of homogeneity and childish need for one simple identity, through repeated experiences of hybridity and being out of place. In an article treating how Said's exile enabled him to grow into a broadminded thinker, Ilan Pappe notes: "As a Palestinian, exile, in the first instance, is traumatic; as a universalist intellectual, it is asset."[65] Yet, Said did not see his "exile" as a romantic adventure in relation to his intellectual development, but rather as an unwilling act. Speaking of Said's exile, John D. Barbour writes that "the symbolic source of his deepest values was not the particular geographic places he left, but the experience of exile itself, the memory of having been displaced, and a childhood narrative of involuntary travel."[66] Said's endless state of being "out of place" started at Mount Hermon, and his "exile" in the beginning was a mixture of nostalgia, loneliness and longing for his mother, but soon after the young student overran his emotions, and chose paths which would lead him towards becoming an intellectual with a broad vision. "By the early spring of 1952 I had suspended my feelings of paralyzed solitude—missing my mother, my room, the familiar sounds and objects that embodied Cairo's grace—and allowed another less sentimental, less incapacitated self to take over."[67]

Said, as an American citizen, enjoyed freedom of movement, but as a Palestinian he had no homeland. His childhood homes in Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon were swept away, at least for Edward. In regard to the impossibility of return, Vinay Lal notes: "Yet, however much Said might have wanted to reclaim the house where he had been born, he remained uncertain about wanting to be 'completely at home.' 'I suppose it's sour grapes,' Said told an interlocutor in 1996, 'that I now think it's maybe not worth the effort to find out' what it means to be at home"'[68] The state of being "out of place" is vividly elucidated in the event of his father's illness, where the family could not even buy a site for the grave in the Lebanese mountain village of Dhour el Shweir, where Said's

[64] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 5.
[65] Ilan Pappe, "The Exilic Homeland of Edward S. Said", *Interventions,* Vol. 8 (1), (2006), 19.
[66] John D. Barbour, "Edward Said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology*, Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 297.
[67] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 235.
[68] Vinay Lal, "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said", *Emergences,* Volume 13, No 1/2 (2003), 111.

father wished to be buried. "The gravity of his illness acted as an early announcement of my father's and my own mortality and at the same time signaled to me that the Middle Eastern domain he had carved out for us as a home, a shelter, an abode of sorts, with its main points tied to Cairo, Dhour, and Palestine, was similarly threatened with discontinuity and evanescence.… In early 1971 when he was near death he told us that he wished to be buried in Dhour, but that was never possible, since no resident was willing to sell us land for a little plot on which to grant his wish." [69]

As an intellectual, Said achieved recognition and influenced many scholars of humanities and social sciences worldwide. "Partha Chatterjee, whose own imprint on postcolonial studies and the study of history is palpable to scholars in numerous disciplines, wrote some two decades ago that Said jolted him from his slumbers."[70] Regardless of the fact that he was brought up in a Protestant family, Said never showed any prejudice for any religion or ethnic group, while he spoke against the stereotyping of Islam for political motivations. Palestinian Christians and Muslims have lived in Palestine for centuries and shared the same language and culture. He openly protested some discourses presumably influenced by Western Orientalism, which attacked Islam and Mohammed. "Most of the common stereotypes about Mohammed as a whoremonger, as a false prophet, as a hypocritical sensualist, come from the Syrian Christians who, because they knew Arabic and on or another ecclesiastical language, were able to give nasty myths much currency.…In Palestine and generally among contemporary Palestinians, on the other hand, because there was never the presence of one dominant, unchanging Christian community, and because also since 1880 there was a common Arab enemy in the first European Zionist colonists, such myths were never part of one's education as a Christian."[71] Said opposes scholars and political commentators who intermingle a stereotyped Islam with politics in regard to Arab Palestinians' struggle against racial discrimination and Israeli occupation of their ancient land. In reaction to Bernard Lewis, a British-American scholar in Oriental studies, Said writes, "with Bernard Lewis, you say if Arab Palestinians oppose Israeli settlement and occupation of their

[69] Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 261, 269.
[70] Vinay Lal, "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said", *Emergences,* Volume 13, No 1/2 (2003), 105.
[71] Edward W. Said, The Question of Palestine, 147.

lands, then that is merely 'the return of Islam,' or, as a renowned contemporary Orientalist defines it, Islamic opposition to non-Islamic peoples, a principal of Islam enshrined in the seventh century. History, politics, and economics do not matter."[72]

The title of *Out of Place* directly reflects displaced people notwithstanding if they are temporary refugees or permanent exiles, like Said and many others. Exiles are often scorned, derided and stereotyped by natives. Arab American diaspora intellectuals, like Said, for instance, bridle at derogatory narratives about Palestinians. In his book, *The Question of Palestine*, Said condemned any stereotyping, particularly if committed by literary critics and intellectuals such as Edmund Wilson and others. "With regards to the Arabs that Wilson describes here, Jewish exclusiveness does not seem much of an evil. In his brief portrait of them, the Arabs are seen as totally disgusting and unattractive; the reason for their poverty seems less important than its appearance, although the facts about Arabs in Israel would not have been hard for Wilson to get hold of."[73]

Terry Eagleton says in an interview, "My first encounter with Edward Said was when he wrote to congratulate me on my book *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, which must have been in 1976. I read *Beginnings* as soon as it was published, and then in 1978 - the year of *Orientalism*–I was invited by Fred Jameson to speak at Yale; he and I having taught together a couple of years earlier in California. On the way home, I stopped off at Columbia and spoke to a seminar Said was running; I can't remember what about. So this was our first meeting in person. I remember I had my eldest son with me, who was nine years old at the time, and having heard that Said was an Arab, he was very disappointed on meeting him that he wasn't accompanied by a camel and wasn't wearing a head-dress."[74] Terry Eagleton here humorously and honestly admits the presence of stereotypes about Arabs. On the other hand, Eagleton never fully acknowledges the importance of Said's field, postcolonialism, perhaps due to Said's ambivalent stand towards Marxism, and due to his theoretical contexts which interconnect with his devotion for Palestine. At the end of the interview, Eagleton asserts about Said that, "He was out of sympathy with it [Marxism] partly for philosophical reasons (he remained a classical-style humanist and

[72] Edward Said*, Orientalism, 107.*
[73] Edward W.Said, *The Question of Palestine,* 35
[74] Terry Eagleton, "Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory", (An Interview*), Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 25, (2005), 254.

in some ways a child of Enlightenment, as most post-colonialists are not), and partly for political ones (post-colonialism could serve as a welcome distraction from the problems of a stalled class-struggle within the West itself, as well as generating a lot of modish new 'discourses' for a post-political age to indulge itself with). The good news, however, is that his work has been so powerful that it has survived what it started."[75]

Several critics tend to separate Said's critical writing about literature from his political writings about Palestine. In relation to these tendencies, Ilan Pappe writes: "Said 'the exiled intellectual' or, more precisely, 'the exile intellectual' was attractive to Jewish intellectuals far more than Said 'the Palestinian." [76] As a public intellectual, Said writes vigorously and impartially about the brutality which results from Israeli imperialist politics *and* from the violent response of Palestinians. Put differently, he became an enemy of Arab radical circles, and on the other hand, a target for Israeli extremist intellectuals. In a related article, Ahdaf Soueif, while quoting Said's *Peace and Its Discontents* indicates, "I noted that from his 'difficult situation as a Palestinian in the United States and an American in the Arab world he addresses East and West with even fairness and vigor. In the articles written for the western press he speaks of shoddy American deal-making, of Israel's imperialism and racist policies. In the Arab press he writes of the compromises of the Palestinian leadership and the brutality of its security apparatus. To Arabs eager to canonise him as an implacable foe of Israel he writes of the need to establish dialogue with dissident Israelis like Israel Shahak and Danny Rubenstein."[77] Said's *Out of Place* and Said himself became a target of Zionist attacks, in reviews which denied Said's birth in Jerusalem in order to delegitimize his claims to speak for the Palestinian cause. The most severe attack was launched by Justus Reid Weiner, an American-Israeli lawyer. In an article published in *Commentary* (September 1999), he attacked Said by calling him a liar. According to Weiner, Said was neither born in Jerusalem nor did he go to school there. Said's memoir testifies that he was born in Jerusalem and went to school there, but did not live there continuously due to his father's business in Cairo. Said's family visited Jerusalem regularly until the political

[75] Terry Eagleton, "Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory ", (An Interview*), Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 25, (2005), 269.
[76] Ilan Pappe, "The Exilic Homeland of Edward S. Said", *Interventions,* Vol. 8 (1), (2006), 18.
[77] Ahdaf Soueif, "Becoming Edward Said-Out of Place: A Memoir by Edward W. Said" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2000), 95.

circumstances made it impossible. The impossibility of return left a severe wound in Said, which he will attempt to heal by writing his memoir. In response to Weiner's article, Nadia Gindi writes: "According to the article, Edward has lied about his schooling in Jerusalem that he has never lived in Jerusalem, that he has never left Palestine as a refugee. In fact, Mr. Weiner clearly wants to deny the Saids any claim or right to Palestinian birth or identity. He seems to be rewriting Edward's life for him."[78] Weiner's fierce attack was soon refuted by intellectuals of Jewish background, such as George Steiner, Israel Shahak, and Dan Rabinonwitz, who strongly defended Said. Indeed, it was not Said who falsified the truth, but Weiner himself. Weiner misinterpreted and abused an interview with Said's former neighbor in Cairo, and a professor of English at Cairo University. Hoda's sister, Nadia, quotes the letter which her sister sent to *Commentary*: "Neither Edward Said's nor my reputation, needs defending, but, obviously, they need protecting from the misrepresentations and misleading assertions that amount to a travesty of the truth, to be found in the references made to my supposed statements contained in this article. Are these the new hallmarks of academic research? …. An entirely unknown person rang me up and, was not encouraged to have a 'conversation;' he then turned up-uninvited at my flat, where he was kept standing at the door and coldly but politely told that I was busy and could not spend time talking to him. On this occasion I merely verified that this was the building in which the Saids had lived. Upon his being asked why he was interested, the gentleman said that he was a student at Princeton writing a research paper on Edward Said; I then asked him which of Said's books he had read, and must confess to being taken aback when he said that he had read none."[79]

Said remained a committed secularist until he died. As we have stated above, although he had Christian background, he identified intellectually with Muslim culture and with Arabs at large. "He himself felt that even though born into a Christian family, he very much was part of Arab-Islamic civilization. It distressed him that Arabs and

[78] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 293, 294..
[79] Nadia Gindi, "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place", *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 292.

Muslims, and that Islam itself were presented in negative terms in the mass media and he wrote many articles criticizing their portrayal in newspapers, magazines, and film… he would sometimes shake his head saying that things have gotten worse not better over the years."[80] He regarded the human race equally, pointing out the good spirit that one must possess and the quest for justice, fairness and universal human rights.

In *Out of Place*, Said expresses his bitterness and disappointment with the "charismatic figure" of Charles Malik, who once was adored as an intellectual by young Said. Malik was a professor of philosophy at the American University in Beirut, and later became Lebanese ambassador to the United Nations and the United States. Edward Said remembers Malik, the intellectual who "used to sit by the banks of the Nile and read through all of Hardy and Meredith," as embodying the appeal of dogmatism and certainty.[81] Charles Malik stood as an outstanding voice in the Arab world, but from 1967 onward, his position stunned Said by its withdrawal and passivity, instead of defending justice and fairness, which according to Said are the moral stands of the intellectual. Said, unlike Malik, holds a different stand for universal peace and human tolerance. In his *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (1994), in the chapter "Speaking Truth to Power," Said states the role which intellectual is supposed to play on behalf of peace and humanism: "The public realm in which intellectuals make their representations is extremely complex and contains uncomfortable features, but the meaning of an effective intervention in that realm has to rest on the intellectual's unbudgeable conviction in a concept of justice and fairness that allows for differences between nations and individuals, without at the same time assigning them to hidden hierarchies, preferences, evaluations."[82] Said describes poetically that bitter shock which he experienced when he met Malik by the end of December in 1967: "Uncle Charles and Aunt Eva's imposingly large, monolithic house in Rabiyé, a hillside suburb northeast of Beirut.… Fresh snow lay on the road, the sky was dark, the wind sharp, and the whole atmosphere glowering and inhospitable. I was not too sure what my errand was, expect in some vague way to ask Charles help guide Arabs out of their incredible defeat. A stupid

[80] Elizabeth Dehab, "On Edward Said, Scholar and Public Intellectual", *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.4 (2003), 4.
[81] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir, 265.*
[82] Edward W. Said*, Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures, 94.*

idea perhaps, but at the time it seemed plausibly worth pursuing. What I was not prepared for was his uncharacteristically passive answer: that this was not his time, that he did not feel he had a role to play anymore, and that a new situation would have to arrive from him to reenter politics. I was...astonished that what I had assumed was a common need to resist and rebuild was not shared by a man whose views and commitments I still had faith in."[83] In particular, Malik later became a leader of the Lebanese Christian Right. In the battle lines that came to be drawn in the next decade, the Christian Right wing opposed the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Regardless of the fact that some exiles can never return for good to their ancient lands, the idea of return is fixed in their minds, which are full of memories for their symbolic homes. "Departing from home" writes John D. Barbour "was an act that Said needed to do again and again, and his memoir describes in these terms both the subject matter of his life and the process of writing itself."[84] Their suitcases are always ready to be packed for a journey of no return. As we encounter in his memoir, Said wrote in *After the Last Sky* that "when I travel I always take too much with me, and then even a trip downtown requires the packing of a briefcase stocked with items disproportionably larger in size and number than the actual period of the trip. Analyzing this, I concluded that I had a secret of not returning."[85] Yet, indeed, in 1992 Said returned to the Jerusalem for the first time after forty-five years, but as tourist with an American passport, and then, in 1993 made a trip to Cairo. In the years to come, precisely in 1998, he visited Jerusalem and Cairo again, after he finished the manuscript of the memoir. Recollecting his childhood memories about life in Palestine, Said writes: "I discovered anew that what had been a network of towns and villages in which all the members of my extended family had once lived was now a series of Israeli locales— Jerusalem, Haifa, Tiberias, Nazareth, and Acre—where Palestinian minority lives under Israeli sovereignty. In parts of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians had self-rule or autonomy, but the Israeli army retained overall security control.…One of the routine questions I was asked by Israeli officials (since my U.S. passport indicates that I was born in Jerusalem) was exactly

[83] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 268.
[84] John D. Barbour, "Edward said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology,* Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 299.
[85] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 217.

when after my birth I had left Israel. I responded that I left *Palestine* in December 1947, accenting the word 'Palestine."' [86]

Exile, despite the fact that it shapes the intellectual's mind, also plays an important part in bolstering one's humanism and generosity, due to the hardship, solitude and the state of being away from home. While wandering "out of place" Said met different people with different educational backgrounds and of different ethnicities. His multiplicity of personae was accented by his charming and elegant way of dressing. Although difficult at times, Said showed himself a friend indeed, and was "in place" and "time" when need arose, regardless if the need was for defense, help, advice, or even choice of dress. Remembering Said, Gayatri Spivak writes: "I recall two particular instances of his support. In 1982 I managed to get a job offer from a reputable university in the U.S. Southeast. An embittered applicant had said to him: 'She got it because she is a Third World woman.' And Edward: 'Not on that level.' In 1988, when a couple of younger colleagues trashed me as a racist because of a protocol mistake, Edward sent a message on his own, saying, 'Gayatri works for the oppressed, stop this.' I was immensely grateful that he had somehow drawn me into what was surely his life—working for the oppressed."[87] In the aftermath of Said's death, his friend the Egyptian British novelist Ahdaf Soueif wrote in *The Guardian*: "It is a measure of his no-holds-barred friendship that, when I was alone one night some two years ago, with the diagnosis of my husband's lung cancer just off the fax, it was to Edward in New York that I turned. He talked me through that first hour and gave me phone numbers of doctors, medical centres and friends who had been through it. When I made contact I found he had already called them and told them, again, to 'look after' me."[88]

At the end of *Out of Place*, Said sheds light on what made up his identity and "the cluster of flowing currents" which enabled him to become what he was: a global public intellectual, literary critic, a politician, a humanist, an American, and always a devoted exiled Palestinian. "Sleepiness for me is a cherished state to be desired at almost any cost; there is nothing for me as invigorating as immediately shedding the shadowy half-

[86] Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, x.
[87] Gayatri Spivak, "Thinking about Edward Said: Pages from a Memoir", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), 523, 524.
[88] Ahdaf Soueif, "Edward Said: My friend", *The Guardian*, September 26, 2003, 2.

consciousness of a night's loss, than the early morning, reacquainting myself with or resuming what I might have lost completely a few hours earlier. I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance."[89] Said then, toward the end of his life, had come a long way from the youthful desire to be wholeness embodied in a book, to an acceptance of being "a cluster of flowing currents." Edward W. Said lived "out of place," but he found himself a notable place in his writing, humanistic sciences, musical criticism. He remains not only a father figure of Palestinian culture in Diaspora and a forebear of Arab American culture, but also an intellectual and humanist of our time, who raised his voice against injustices and oppression in general.

[89] Edward W. Said*, Out of Place*: *A Memoir*, 295.

Chapter 2

Ihab Hassan's Postmodernist Mode in *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*

Writing autobiography was not considered as a topic of literary study before the 1960s, although many notable fiction works bear traces of the personal life of the author. In an era of postmodernism and postcolonialism, autobiography has drawn the attention of many literary critics as they began to recognize it as a genre. The revolutionary events of 1968 and onward have produced new literary modes such as feminist literature and criticism, and minority or "ethnic" literatures, and have spawned numerous "hybrid" writers who expose the complex cultural and socio-political identities which intersect in them. "Thus, at a time when postmodern thinkers like Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault pronounced the 'death of the Author'-as part of the poststructuralist critique of the transcendental subject of the Enlightenment-not only avant-garde white male novelists, but also those marginalized by gender, race, and/or ethnicity have shown their vital signs through autobiographical writing."[1]The question of legitimating autobiography as a genre has brought many debates and arguments among literary critics. In a related article about autobiography, István Dobos marks out: "There always seems to be a position cropping up in which one or another statement relating to autobiography can be contested or discredited. This situation was characterized with irony by the critic Couser, who contended that 'on the one hand, autobiography is declared to be problematic or even impossible while, on the other hand, it is considered to be the paradigm of all kinds of writing. Some critics view it as a genre that is non-existent or one that has exhausted its potentials, while others assume that it is inevitable and universal."' [2]

Ihab Hassan writes his autobiography from different perspectives in comparison to Edward Said. First of all, the title of Hassan's autobiography *Out of Egypt: Scenes and*

[1] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 8.
[2] István Dobos, "Autobiography", *WEBFU [Wiener elektronische Beiträge des Instituts für Finno-Ugristik],*(2003), 1.

Arguments of an Autobiography (1986) points out the author's self-exile. Hassan, as stated by himself, "left" and "fled" Egypt, whereas Said's *Out of Place* directly refers to an imposed and compulsory exile. Analyzing it more closely, one can notice that being "out of place" has a broader meaning of complete displacement and loss than "out of one's country." Second, *Out of Egypt* does not have a linear flow of narration as Said's *Out of Place*. Hassan's autobiography is narrated in a post-modernist mode: fragments, refractions, breaks, arguments which let the reader think and participate in the autobiography with respect to its plot. In regard to Hassan's postmodernist mode of writing, in a related article, Jerzy Durczak points out: "*Out of Egypt* includes a great number of such fragments: short autobiographical entries along with brief selection from the diary the author kept in Munich where he was working on his book, short essays on various subjects, quotations from books of various writers and from his own works." [3] Unlike Edward Said, Ihab Hassan writes only about his years spent in Egypt from his early life to a "burning August afternoon", 1946, when he "boarded the *Abraham Lincoln* at Port Said and sailed from Egypt, never to return." [4] In relation to the narrative discourse in autobiography in contemporary conditions, autobiographers "create" or "construct" their lived lives. In an article on Hassan's *Out of Egypt,* Waïl S. Hassan notes: "Further, the dialogical, interpersonal dimension to all kinds of narrative erases conventional distinctions between fiction and autobiography, on the one hand, and on the other, between autobiography and other kinds of non-fiction writing, including historiography, philosophy, literary and cultural criticism, and so on." [5]

That Hassan demonstrated his postmodernist predilection while writing *Out of Egypt* is hardly surprising given the fact that he himself figures as an outstanding theorist of postmodernism. "The reader" writes Ihab Hassan in the preface of the book, "may encounter here other distractions: quotations, brief interludes. In this time of immanent media, minds blend into minds, voices into voices. This is the burden of our intertextual, our gnostic, age. But some quotations here come from my own previous work. "[6] As we

[3] Jerzy Durczak, "Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan's confidential criticisms", *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992), 10.
[4] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 1.
[5] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 8.
[6] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, x.

read Hassan's autobiography we notice his sympathy for Anglophone cultures, despite the fact that French and Arabic were his first languages. His reading of Anglophone authors, begun while in Egypt, clearly underlines his enthusiastic stance for Americanism and the Anglophone books which have influenced him as a scholar, and a man. In the foreword to Hassan's *Out of Egypt*, Jerome Klinkowitz states: "It is also 'the fragment of imaginary autobiography' and thus leads directly to the work at hand. From Henry Miller, Hassan has learned that 'writing autobiography, and autobiography is a therapy, which is a form of action on the self.'" [7] Since we deal here with postmodernism and autobiography, Waïl S. Hassan notes that Ihab Hassan "has written about autobiography as a genre (especially in *The Postmodern Turn, Selves at Risk, and Rumors of Change*). By the same token, his autobiography is the product of a 'sabbatical to write a book about the humanities' that turned out to be more a book about himself." [8]

Ihab Hassan begins his autobiography in an unusual fashion. Where many autobiographers might describe a sense of nostalgia upon leaving their native country, Ihab Hassan left liberated from his ancient land when he boarded the *Abraham Lincoln*, and "saw the town, the minarets, the high cupola of the Compagnie de Suez, recede. [He] saw the sands of Sinai shimmer, fade." [9] The notion of "return" is common to many immigrant authors, but not for Hassan. He repeats the phrases "never to return" or "escape" which have been rooted in Hassan's brain since his early childhood. "There is a violence learned early by every child. As I escaped Egypt on the *Abraham Lincoln*, creaking now in the long, grey swells of the Atlantic, I thought of my father, my mother, my uncles, and why I had so fiercely longed to leave them all behind."[10] As we find it in *Out of Egypt*, young Ihab did not suffer violence within the family circle excepting some slaps on his face by his father when he made errors in math. On the other side, Ihab Hassan was a child of an upper class family and had not experienced poverty as did many children of the corrupted and rotten society which was ruled by King Farouk — the last of a line of Albanian kings in Egypt. In regard to these accounts, Waïl S. Hassan states: "*Out of Egypt* must then be read as an effort not so much to render Hassan's 'life as

[7] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, viii.
[8] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 8
[9] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 1.
[10] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 18.

lived,' but as a 'quest' and a 'labor of self-creation' that complements and extends his work as a critic, and at the same time as a discursive reinvention of his identity." [11]

Powerless to "liberate" Egypt from British colonialism, he left that patriotic duty to Gamal Abdel Nasser and his Free Officers, and took a duty to liberate himself and seek his own creation. The ship *Abraham Lincoln* stands as a symbol, since Lincoln is known as the man who freed the slaves. The ship bearing the President's name leads Ihab toward the long desired country —the United States of America where he will enjoy all liberties and freedoms which he lacked and missed in "Ancient Egypt." By the act of his "Great Escape" from Egypt, Hassan leaves behind everything that he experienced during twenty-one years: his Arab roots, culture, religion and his ethnicity in general, and entered the realm of the American dream which he has desired for so long and prepared himself for emotionally, psychologically and intellectually. His "Great Escape", symbolically can be linked with Israelites' Exodus from Egypt, since he "looked for some private space wherein to change, grow; for [he] had not liked what [he] foresaw of [his] life in Eternal Egypt." [12] In regard to this "escape" and stereotyping of his motherland, Waïl S. Hassan points out: "Hassan's opening move, the evocation of colonial stereotype and the biblical myth of the Exodus, clearly appeals to what Gilmore calls 'a culturally prevalent discourse of truth and identity.'"[13] Edward Said's *Out of Place* symbolically weaves in links with Israelites' Exodus and other Bible stories, but Said is secularist when describing the loss of Jerusalem and his standpoint has more political than religious implications. On the other side, Said wants to point out the bitter experiences endured by Palestinian exiles and links the "chains" of Palestinian displacement from their native land with the wandering of Hebrews through centuries. In relation to what we have stated, John D.Barbour notes: "In all of these ways, although exile is anything but a privilege or a pleasure, some positive things can come of it. While Said is resolutely secular in interpreting the potential value of exile, his effort to find meaning in it is analogous to traditional religious responses to displacement from a sacred space. In the biblical imagination, the expulsion from Eden and the loss of Jerusalem are traumatic

[11] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 13.
[12] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 107.
[13] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 14.

ruptures that shape forever Israel's consciousness. (…) Said's attempt to find compensations and significant meaning in an experience of exile recalls the trajectory of Israel's story in the Hebrew Bible."[14] Said's use of the Israelites and the Bible is extraordinary, both in religious and political terms, given the feud between Israel and Palestine, and given his resolute secularism and "wordliness." Still, Said is preponderantly a good writer and a literary critic so he understands the potential of the Bible. Also, as a philologist, he cannot get around it: it was the exegesis of the Bible that marks the beginning of Western philology.

Ihab Hassan, on the contrary, never shows any sympathy for his roots or country of birth, describing conscious rejection of the facts written on the documents which he keeps, showing that he was born on 17 October 1925 in Cairo, Egypt. In *Out of Egypt* we read: "I carry papers that solemnly record this date and place, I have never felt these facts decisive in my life. I do not recall the house I was born in."[15] Unlike many "hybrid' autobiographers, Ihab Hassan does not tell much about the various difficulties which an immigrant faces, rather than the easy way which has enabled him to embrace the American way of life. "Interestingly", writes Waïl S. Hassan, **"**some critics have complained that, unlike so many other immigrants' autobiographies that tell of painful transition, difficult adjustment, and the challenge of racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice, Hassan says very little about his transition into America. (…) Instead, autobiography severs his cultural and historical roots in exchange for a transcendental conception of selfhood consistent with idealized patterns of immigrant autobiography in America." [16] In an article on marginal literature, while asserting "his stance" for the "abstractions of colonialism" and his spent childhood in Egypt, Ihab Hassan writes: "For I do not recall my days in Egypt in terms of humiliation; I recall them, rather, as promises and aspirations that colonialism could neither trammel nor define. And in truth, I could not wait to leave my native land." [17]

---

[14] John D. Barbour, "Edward Said and the Space of Exile", *Literature and Theology*, Vol.21, No.3 (2007), 295.
[15] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 2.
[16] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 15, 16.
[17] Ihab Hassan, "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance", *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 20.

While reading the book, we can easily trace Hassan's struggle for self-creation and individualism rather than shedding light on Arab American culture, religious diversity, racial prejudices, and other major issues which preoccupy Arab America today. While Ihab Hassan exposes how he "westernized" his "spirit" in "Eternal Egypt," yearning for the Promised Land and the American Dream, his once co-resident in Cairo, the Palestinian, Edward Said, denounces any western dogmatic "imagination", stereotyping, attacks on Islam and pursued other issues related to Palestinians, Egyptians, Lebanese and Arabs in general. "There is no clearer illustration of this than the highly mixed reception of Edward Said's *Out of Place: A Memoir*, on the one hand a lyrical and endearing account of the early life of a prominent Palestinian- American, but on the other hand and endearing narrative of the tragedy of Palestinian dispossession which the dominant Zionist discourse in the West erases."[18]

Out of Egypt was written in Munich, Germany and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. What characterizes the autobiography are the sections which were written in Munich, where Hassan expresses his postmodernist mode. Ihab Hassan is one of the leading literary critics of postmodernism in the Western world. "Among the literary critics who adopted this precarious notion, Ihab Hassan was the first to engage in a sustained effort to articulate the criteria of its usage [postmodernism]. For Hassan, postmodernism, more than a literary movement, is 'a social phenomenon, perhaps even a mutation in Western humanism.' (…) With Hassan, in short, postmodernism begins to have a more discernible identity, and it is through him that some Europeans (Lyotard for instance) may have discovered the term."[19]

He brought with him in Munich his old notebooks as well as other books by various authors. "The Munich diary entries," writes Jerzy Durczak , "constitute a base from which the author's memory travels to the past. At the same time, the Munich sections include all kinds of meta-textual remarks (also present in Hassan's previous works) and comments on the autobiography in progress. There, the author expresses his

[18] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 10.
[19] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 280.

doubts concerning the genre itself and the veracity of the story he is working on."[20] According to Hassan, no human brain can remember all the details of his/her childhood and his memories of the "life as lived" can be "re-remembered like the scattered bones of Osiris."[21] Another feature of postmodernist mode of writing in *Out of Egypt* is Hassan's "dubious private recall", his constant questions and open-ended story which invites the reader to participate in its completion. "My last brief chapter," states Hassan, "in any case, attempts to gather beginnings and ends into its middle with fewer hindrances to the eye. But it cannot, of course, complete the story." [22]

Out of Egypt consists of four chapters which span his childhood in Egypt and his Americanization, but at the same time, Hassan introduces interludes on ideology, knowledge and travel. As a notable critic of postmodernism, Hassan is aware of the postmodern effect which arises by intermingling of various narratives planes. In regard to these planes or "parallel columns," Linda Hutcheon writes: "One of the most influential of postmodern theorists, Ihab Hassan, is fond of creating parallel columns that place characteristics of the one next to their opposite characteristics in the other, usually making clear his preference for the postmodern. But this 'either/ or' thinking suggests a resolution of what I see as the unresolvable contradictions within postmodernism. For example I would see it less as a case of postmodern play versus modernist purpose, as Hassan claims than as a case of play with purpose." [23] Hassan incorporates two or more streams of thought at the same time, while pointing out: "As I write, I read my old notebooks— rare, spare jottings and experiences but never of memories— which I have kept since my emigration. Thus two streams of time flow through my mind: one of recollection that find their source in an Egyptian childhood, the other an abstract, laconic gloss on my life in America. The two streams now surge through our months in Munich, months of work, music, sensuous pleasures of *lived* time moving in still another stream. All three in confluence, enter this book, a fourth stream, or perhaps a shoaly river, itself made of many currents." [24] In interludes, Hassan "jumps" from one topic or event to

[20] Jerzy Durczak, "Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan's confidential criticisms", *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992), 11,12.
[21] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, ix.
[22] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, x.
[23] Linda Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory,*49.
[24] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 37, 38.

another. When discussing the month of Ramadan, he "slips" toward hedonism and Puritanism, and arts. While recollecting those memories, he writes: "Yet even then— or do I think only now? —a vein of hedonism laced my faith. This showed in Ramadan, season of extremes. Temperatures could flash, especially in summer heat, and angry words would pass among friends.… I think of myself as puritan, monotheist (if at all theist), somewhat stoical; but I honor luxury, Lucullan arts".[25] At the same time, he thinks of lust and women. When he writes about his first love affair as a young man, one cannot help but think of those turbulent years of the second half of the twentieth century in the Middle East, which changed the world's history, geography and politics. Hassan indirectly mentions the political circumstances and the first steps toward the foundation of the Israeli state. Thinking of those years, he composes poetic lines together with picturesque description of a special night in the Middle Eastern landscape: "The first romance of my youth took place by the sea, in a summer camp pitched among the dunes of Ras-el-barr, where Nile meets the Mediterranean, far from any city of tree. She was a sun-goldened, green-eyed Jewess, whose name I never knew. She belonged to another camp, young men and women preparing to settle in Israel after the war. At night, under an immense, star scattered sky, their songs rose above the rumpling surf, to my ears." [26] In *Out of Egypt*, Hassan expresses his passion for women, but when it came to women's literature emerging in the 1960s, he showed no sympathy, considering it absurd as literature. Hassan holds the same stance towards other minority and ethnic literatures, which sprang up during the period of the revolutionary movements of 1968 and onward. In terms of feminist literature and feminist literary criticism, on the other hand, Edward Said demonstrated his support, sympathy and his readiness to assist feminist writers whenever the need arose.

In addition to different planes of narration and its discontinuity, Hassan introduces various other postcolonial concepts such as philosophical thoughts and self-reflections. "These approaches", writes Milivoj Solar "mostly lead towards a 'kind of play with reader', who is deliberately deceived by the direct introduction of the author or even the

[25] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 72, 73.
[26] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 81.

reader in the book."[27] The best example for this "kind of play with the reader" is the author's imagined interview with the "Autobiographer," where Hassan, while answering the question of the Autobiographer's questions, stresses the importance of education and reading for self-esteem. When asked why he failed in the subject of mechanics in the fifth year of university course, I.H. (Ihab Hassan) does not answer, letting the "Autobiographer" assert that "[Hassan] lost no time, only face". I.H. reacts: "I lost self-esteem. I was in self mourning. I lay in bed, as if encased in lead, aching within. Only study relieved that internal wound."[28] Another example of postmodern fashion which Hassan incorporates in his autobiography is his philosophical concepts. While watching the movie *King Kong* he thinks "On Beauty and the Beast," intermingling his thoughts about human arts, human desires, Plato and the universe. In an article related to Hassan's interlude "On Beauty and the Beast", Jerzy Durczak notes: "A description of the scene provokes a digression, which in turn leads to another scene. In *Out of Egypt* scenes and different type of discourse mingle, the narrative planes overlap and create a new meaning." [29]

Hassan, like Said, sought self-creation through reading and education which will enable him to gain self-respect, recognition and respectful position in the American society, for even while studying he elaborates the plan for his "Great Escape." In relation to his self-esteem, Hassan writes: "At eighteen, I begun to reproach myself for all the time I lost in erotic fantasies, time canceled in the onanistic fastness of movie houses, where I sat sometimes from noon to midnight. ' You will never become a scientist or engineer that way' I admonished myself at least once a day."[30] From his place in his adopted country, Hassan is able to become a leading postmodern theorist. Considering himself "Americanized," he also adopts the mainstream (white male) position in writing. Despite the fact that Hassan opposes the British colonialism of his childhood Egypt, some critics and scholars such as Waïl S. Hassan and Daniel Coleman assert that Ihab Hassan holds a postcolonial stance, due to the fact that he rejects his Egyptian roots in favour of American individualism. Unlike Said, whose first languages are English and Arabic,

[27] Milivoj Solar, *Suvremena svjetska književnost*, 38.
[28] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 91.
[29] Jerzy Durczak, "Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan's confidential criticisms", *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992), 12.
[30] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 87.

Hassan grow up with French and Arabic, but likes English more than his first languages. It is the English language which in the years to come will be his "mother tongue," the language in which he will read, write and speak, albeit with "a slight foreign sound." Regarding his great desire for the English language, he writes: "Who reckons the deep declensions of Desire, Inflections of the Logos, or denials of a Mother's Tongue? Does 'matricide' free men from alien speech?" [31]

Hassan, like Said, grew up in an upper-class family. While Said writes with nostalgia and longing for his dead parents, Hassan "buries" them, so to speak, on the day of his "escape." Although we meet his parents in his autobiography, he does not tell much about them to his wife and son. When asked by his wife about his mother, Hassan writes: "I do not answer, knowing that the reality of my parents, long dead— dead to me perhaps before they entered their grave— must evade me just as I have tried to escape Egypt." [32] Hassan's father was a civil servant, ranging from the position of legal counsel to the governor of various Egyptian provinces. Like Said, Hassan underwent an upbringing at the hands of his father which enacted paternal authority and power over his growing son. Unlike Said, who was victimized at school by the cruel English teachers, Hassan underwent less severe corporal punishment-some slaps at home and light rebukes at school. While describing his father's good sides, such as parental care and instruction in different games and things, Hassan remarks on his father's authority and power. In relation to the "violence learned early by every child," Hassan writes: "But my father had another side, a black, glowering temper that could ruin his lessons, especially math. He would suddenly rage at an error, slap my face, and snap his pencil on the page while correcting an equation."[33] Hassan's mother taught her son many things like "how to dress", "eat", and "wash", but at times she was less tolerant and embracing than his father. "My mother," writes Ihab Hassan "taught me French—English I taught myself, and liked it of all my 'subjects' best. (…) She was pretty, vain of her youth as a mother, tight this side of parsimony, less curious than my father and less eager to please. She prized ambition more than learning, honored tenacity in world."[34]

---

[31] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 3.
[32] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 31.
[33] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 19.
[34] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 19.

"Travel," Francis Bacon said once, "in the younger sort, is a part of education, in the elder, a part of experience."[35] Just as Said and his family moved from country to country, Hassan moved from province to province within Egypt due to his father's governmental assignments. Notwithstanding the fact that Hassan was born and raised in Egypt, he felt a stranger everywhere the family moved. Traveling plays a great deal in the development of the intellectual since the events and experiences the child undergoes, later on the "stored" memories will be "scattered" on white pages. The childhood traveling or "moving" experiences, combined with the knowledge gained by reading, is part of what prepares Hassan to adopt mainstream male-authored American literature, particularly as a critic of postmodernism, by rejecting his ethnic roots and practising Orientalist discourse. Unlike Hassan, Said will always nourish his Palestinian background by writing from the country he found in exile. As we read in Hassan's autobiography, he is not emotionally linked to his birth country, saying, "Roots, everyone speaks of roots. I have cared for none. Perhaps, in my case, they were too old and tangled; or perhaps they withered early from some blight, which I have long ceased to mourn."[36]

This autobiography also clearly underlines Hassan's failure in Arabic while at school in Egypt, despite the fact that he was an excellent pupil in other subjects, particularly in English where he demonstrated outstanding skills. "I did well in all subjects— except Arabic," writes Hassan. "Once, my total points in the marking period earned me second even though I had failed Arabic. The headmaster came as usual to congratulate the tree top pupils in class.… Pausing as if in great perplexity, he lowered his brown, watery eyes and softly asked: 'Why, my son? Are you *rumi* (Greek or Roman any foreigner really)?'"[37] Hassan never failed Arabic again, but neither loved the Arabic language nor Egypt, the country "on which the sun rose in the clear, dry dawn of history" and he will never see it "rise again."[38]

Ihab Hassan was a shy boy and felt a sort of humility despite the fact that he was his parents' only child and was not "victimized" often by his father. Hassan, as a child acted unlike most of the children his age. Like Said, who as a boy dreams of being his

[35] Francis Bacon, *The Essays or Counsels, Civil of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans and the New Atlantis*, 47.
[36] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 6.
[37] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 61, 62.
[38] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 112.

"own true self (as a book)", Hassan needs "perpetual re-creation" which would direct him towards the desired destination. In relation to his self-esteem and his own freedom, he says in *Out of Egypt*: "Self-creation: a sovereign fiction that yet enabled me to resist, even to remake, 'things as they are.' It helped me slip from my birthrights: language and the clutching blood."[39] Hassan's regret for being born in Egypt, where people are "born terribly unequal" and have different cultures and ideologies, later will play a dominant role in shaping the personality. Although "home", seen in general terms has the meaning of personal space and freedom, while in it Hassan still felt in "exile". Hassan did not experience solitude in the way Said did, but in his own terms, for his parents often traveled to Europe and he spent his summer holidays with his grandmother and "dipped" his loneness in the family orchard, among "rows of orange alternated with peach trees"(*Out of Egypt,* 54). Sometimes, at lunchtime he would rather find refuge in various books of different disciplines. Later on Hassan joined the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Cairo studying engineering was not his aim, and that he did not want to become an engineer remaining in Egypt, since its "culture may thwart later in life;" he wanted, rather, to get a scholarship from the government and "escape" (*Out of Egypt,* 8).

While not leaving aside his professional studies, Hassan is also keen to read in relation to his future studies-literature, which will become his main preoccupation after the "Great Escape." He reads fiction, poetry and adventure novels in particular, exclusively those written by Anglophone authors. In his essay "On Travel," within his autobiography, he stresses the importance of travel in reaching one's self-recognition. Since he read English and American authors, presumably he has in mind Francis Bacon's essay "Of Travel," among other works. Hassan writes: "I know counselors against travel. Thoreau boasted that he 'traveled much in Concord;' and Emerson said, 'We owe to our first journeys the discovery that place is nothing…My giant goes with me everywhere I go. … 'Still, the Koran says: 'And God hath spread the earth as a carpet for you, that ye may walk therein through spacious paths.' Walking these paths, we learn the ways of men, and meet in ourselves the stranger we most dread to meet. We experience the world interactively, feeding the shock of differences even as we absorb them in us." [40]

[39] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 6.
[40] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 97.

We encounter almost the same comments in Said's *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays*, where he states that those who cross borders have different thoughts for the world than those who have lived all their lives in the same place.

When Hassan's family moves to Cairo, he detects "invisible worms" of British colonialism, and nuances the colonial "field of force." In regard to the "invisible" traces of colonialism, Hassan quotes Flaubert, but without noting Flaubert's Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, whom Edward Said identifies with the colonized and the "silent voice." Hassan quotes Flaubert: "Often you see a tall, straight obelisk, with a long white stain down its entire length, like a drapery—wider at the top and tapering towards the base. That is from vultures, who have been coming there to shit for centuries. It is a very handsome effect and has a curios symbolism." [41] As Hassan notes, these "vultures" have been coming to Egypt from early ages. There were Greeks, Romans, Turks, Napoleon, and the British, who stayed in Egypt until 1954. Hassan for the first time saw the signs of European colonialism when the family moved to Port Said, where his father was appointed governor. "Above all," writes Hassan, "I became aware of the marks European colonialism imprinted everywhere in Port Said: on the gleaming white marble headquarters of Compagnie Universelle du Canal de Suez (really, a universal, a cosmic corporation?) with its great blue and gold dome, and its signal flags flying from high, brass-trimmed masts". [42] Besides British colonialism, Hassan mentions another type of colonization, emphasizing the monarchy as the main source of corruption in Egypt even though within the frame of that society his father holds an important position. We read in *Out of Egypt*: "Yet the royal family itself traced its origins to a colonizer of a different stripe. Mohamed Ali, a ruthless Albanian adventurer, became pasha of Egypt in 1805 after wresting it from the High Port; later, he wrested also Syria, Cyprus and the Sudan from Ottoman Empire." [43]

Both Said and Hassan "stereotype" the Englishmen due to the red color, but it seems that Said has more reason in doing so. Said's Mr. Bullen is "red-faced and "sandy-haired", whereas Hassan describes "Tommy", the soldier, as red-nosed, demonstrating while simultaneously undercutting the power of the colonizer. In regard to his experience

[41] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 28.
[42] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 44.
[43] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*, 42.

of British presence and colonialism in royal Egypt, Hassan writes in the autobiography: "The British rumored themselves 'civilized colonials,' and so they were, compared to the Spanish, French or Portuguese. Subtle, distant, and discreet, the British divided to conquer, and acted ruthlessly in whatever touched their needs.… I had never directly experienced the 'oppression' of the British.… Once, too, during the war, when Rommel stood near El Alamein, I saw a red nosed "Tommy," taunted beyond endurance by two Egyptian students, knock one of them down."[44] In analyzing the above passage, one detects that Hassan does not show any direct dislike for the British presence in Egypt, for he never was oppressed, nor does he experience the force of power from the British. Hassan's devotion to the English language suggests some of Hassan's sympathy for its native speakers, whose language, in the years to come, will turn into a powerful tool to attack his ethnic roots. "But as a child", states the author, "I had no aversion to the English language itself, nor to its native speakers who sometimes visited our house. Power, real power, I then sensed, rested elsewhere: in my father's burly presence, in experiences which body recalls before the mind." [45] We encounter another passage in the book, where the author seems to rationalize British imperialism in Egypt. Hassan wonders: "had Britain brought illiteracy and disease to Egypt in the first place? Did it impose poverty on the fellah for millennia? Who makes imperialism possible? And how healthy, free, or affluent are Egyptians thirty years after their liberation?"[46]

In his autobiography, Hassan charts several manifestations of power like patriarchal, class-based and political, and all power seems to be connected in Hassan's symbolic scheme. The "violence learned early" by him as a childwill push him, later as a member of academe in the U.S., to decry injustice and social inequities, but always based on the American idealism. Hassan was born in Cairo, but lived in a country house, where he experienced the sufferings of the *fellah* (Egypt's peasants) in a bureaucratic, feudal, colonial and extremely corrupted Egypt. Bureaucratic institutions under King Farouk's reign demonstrated brutal power towards the victimized. Hassan writes: "A *fellah* in his early teens, feet dangling from a donkey, approaches on the way home. Seeing me, he dismounts his respect, then notices the donkey's absurd erection, a blue-black thing

[44] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 24.
[45] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 21.
[46] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 25.

curving nearly to the ground. He shouts, lashes the beast with his switch, then rides again into the gloaming, his voice now a derisive wail.…he swelters under a sun gone mad with its own heat, wielding a mallet I could never lift. The cords in his neck swell and his arms knot as he arches his body to bring the iron down on the rock.… His feet, like pulp, bleed among broken stones. Guards with red fezzes and loaded guns stand at attention as his father nears. The Convict barely glances at him; his amber eyes rest on me instead, beyond seeing. My father says to the sergeant-at-arms: 'take that man to the prison hospital. Don't cane his soles till his feet heal.'"[47]

In *Out of Egypt*, Hassan has sorted out his scattered memories from childhood and produced a true biography. A remarkable example in relation to the use of power by the father is the scene where Hassan symbolically links his father's sword to power, while the viper the sword attacks is the victim. Remembering an evening with his father, Hassan writes: "Suddenly a mottled yellow viper slithered across our path, then inexplicably stopped, rearing its triangular head.… I shrank behind one of my father's knees while he, hesitating for a moment, stood still. Then, softly, he slid the rapier free, and in one continuous movement impaled the viper through its head, stepping on the flailing tail to hold the beast at both ends to the ground. Writhing insanely for an instant, the thing terrified me as if it were still free. When suddenly the sword came finally out, red drops glistening on its steel, I felt a strange thrill." [48]

Hassan, as he himself states, was born under the sign of Libra and he will always defend justice, but the "scales of justice go up and down, and justice is like a swing" (*Out of Egypt*, 22). Defending justice is a difficult task and many times justice is blind, particularly in relation to power. Hassan himself never experienced the force of institutional power in an oppressive manner, nor did he experience any other governmental or colonial injustice. In regard to the impact of colonialism in himself as an individual, Hassan writes: "As for myself, out of pride or pain, pain at seeing the legacy of colonialism maim so many, I resolved early never to give it a place in myself." [49] However, he does see and nuances the use of power and injustice exposed on humans by humans, the power of human towards animals, and even the force of power in predatory

[47] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 16, 17.
[48] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 22.
[49] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 26.

animals that they demonstrate towards each other, as the event of scorpions' "transfixed combat" (*Out of Egypt*, 23). We recollect Said's words "to speak truth to power" when discussing the role of the intellectual. Hassan also stresses that the real scholars and humanists are those who are supposed to shed light to truth, knowledge and humanism in general. Quoting William Butler Yeats, Hassan notes: "Yeats rebuked the scholars: 'Bald heads forgetful of their sins.' But humanist can be scholars and more than scholars, and must recall what turbulence makes the spirit whole. Can humanist learn to dream again, and dreaming wake up to mediate activity between Culture and Desire, Language and Power, History and Hope?" [50]

Culture also includes religious culture, and religion many times has political implications, becoming the subject of power. Ihab Hassan has Muslim religious background. While Said, although a Christian Protestant, strongly defends Islam against stereotyping, Hassan on the other hand rejects Islam in the same way that he rejects his Egyptian roots. Hassan thinks of himself "as a theist" and does not show any particular devotion to any religion. In addition, his parents considered themselves Muslims, although some members on both parental sides were not religious or highly observant Muslims, for they drank and gambled. In relation to his family ties with Islam, Hassan points out: "For my family, for an entire Egyptian milieu, Islam simply defined as cultural inheritance, backward sometimes, sometimes uncouth, yet always a source of pride, pride that concealed its prejudice." [51] Waïl S. Hassan claims that Ihab Hassan's choice to be identified as an American by espousing American liberties in his autobiography, has cut his ethnic and cultural roots, and points out: "Instead, autobiography severs his cultural and historical roots in exchange for a transcendental conception of selfhood consistent with idealized patterns of immigrant autobiography in America".[52] Ihab Hassan justifies his choice in adopting America as his country, claiming that every human being has the right to live anywhere in the world, since our planet is like a "carpet" and everyone can choose which path and direction to take. Ihab Hassan writes: "This talk of westering begins to grate. Isn't it just another private myth, a

[50] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 15.
[51] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 69.
[52] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 16.

memorialist's conceit? Why cling to a quirky compass? I need to explain. I have been always drawn to horizons more than to origins, drawn to visions from the verge; I seek not crowds but sparsity; I feel no tyranny or bereavement in distance; and the idea of burial in a faraway land appeals. On dream roads, I have tended to travel West, North and West. Like William Blake, I imagined America 'another portion of the infinite.'" [53] Socio-cultural, religious and class diversity was very visible in Hassan's narrative of his childhood in Egypt. Apart from religious discrimination by one religious group towards the other groups holding different beliefs, there was discrimination within the same religion, such as that by Sephardic Jews against other Jews, and by Muslims against their fellow Muslims. "In Cairo", writes Hassan, "I saw upper-class Moslems discriminate other Moslems more subtly, tenaciously, than against Copt or Jew. Fairness of skin, in shades perceptible only to an Egyptian snob, connoted descent from Mameluke, Turkish or Albanian ancestors, some of whom had held feudal estates since the time of Saladdin. As for religious observance, not to mention zealotry, that could be left to servants and *fellahin*." [54]

Besides these descriptions and the ones mentioned so far in the text, Hassan continuously underlines the social and cultural circumstances in Egypt which pressed him "to escape," even though some of these descriptions work, in Said's words, as "'Western' imperialist plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world."[55] Hassan does not leave aside any single important political, or social event of his time in Egypt and as he continues to construct his autobiography, "block by fictive block, like a pyramid raised by treacherous slaves." [56] Not surprisingly, Hassan exposes only dark sides of Egypt, presumably to emphasize his contended life in America, or to satisfy his own literary theories. Hassan claims: "Because I had felt a breath of fear? Had I, then, 'remade' myself to include prejudices I lacked in Egypt - or were they just dormant then? And did America deform as well as form my life? Think, I admonished myself, think: had you remained in Egypt,

[53] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 209.
[54] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 69, 70.
[55] *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader*, edited by Padmin Mongia, 28.
[56] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 68.

you might have become an idle land-owner or glazy-eyed bureaucrat." [57] While describing Cairo, Hassan emphasizes the growth of the city, but on the other hand, he is skeptical whether the society will ever change. "Cairo has drastically changed in half a century, more than Paris, London, or New York. When I attended the Saidiah Secondary School, the city counted less than two million inhabitants; now it populates with six or seven times that number. Or is it really more, with numberless peasants dying in the dusty streets which serve them as home? Telephones worked perfectly then, though Egyptians tended instinctively to shout over trunk calls to overwhelm longer distances.… Traffic jams were unfamiliar to us—jams abounded only on breakfast tables. Streetcars were fun to ride, clanging and carrying as they hurled by on rails; and most passengers rode hanging from a leather strap or perched zanily on side boards…. True, I perceived the changes from afar, in the tales of travelers, in news reports. But mutability endures as the law of laws even if time slows and speeds to the mind's metronome. Did Egypt then alter its ways as much in my father's or grandfather's time?" [58] In addition, Hassan remembers times when he was called *khawaga* (Mr. Foreigner) by beggars on the Cairo streets, feeling a foreigner and tourist in his native land. "I became a tourist," Hassan notes: "wide-eyed and fastidious, in my own native place I walked through bazaars, brimming with strident vendors and garish wares, fearful of some contamination I could not quite name. I evaded the bold, *kohled* eyes of street women, the fluttering touch of peddling children, the mournful frolics of cripples." [59]

In Hassan's *Out of Egypt*, the author discusses politics on numerous pages, where we perceive the Egyptian scorn for Europeans, due to their "fairer skin," but because of colonization and colonial complex, which existed in the brains of many Egyptians. *Out of Egypt* was written when Hassan was fifty-five years of age, and was ranked among the leading American literary theorists and scholars. As a scholar educated in the U.S., unlike most of Egyptians, he shows no antipathy, but rather sympathy for, European and Western tradition in general. While writing about the idea of postmodernism, and Hassan's contribution to American criticism, Hans Bertens states: "The 'Prelude' to *The*

[57] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 217.
[58] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 12, 13.
[59] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 71.

Dismemberment makes clear that what is new is not so much the postmodern literature of silence, but its discovery by American criticism: 'it is time, perhaps, to make a new construction of literary history'.… With The *Dismemberment of Orpheus* Hassan establishes a postmodernism that includes, first of all, the 'discovery,' by a new generation of American critics, of an almost exclusively European tradition of silence."[60] It is already well known that Hassan embraces parts of American and Western philosophy and politics, but despite his political stance, Hassan is a scholar and universal humanist. In *Out of Egypt*, Hassan defines his humanist mission: "I am first a man. Asked to define my philosophy or politics, I always state my name. But I am also a teacher, and my responsibility adheres to a vision of the human adventure, not to a canon, method, or text. Great teachers have something to teach. That is given like grace, or else earned by a great effort of the spirit. No life wholly satisfied in literature can bring it to the highest vision. No life wholly fulfilled in criticism can bring to literature the deepest insight."[61] While discussing colonialism of his youth in Egypt, Hassan writes: "Colonial Complex both constitutes and institutes its necessary bad faith: necessary for resistance, self-respect, sheer survival, yet shady, shifty nonetheless. This sentiment can sweep entire nations—witness the resurgence of Islam from Morocco to Philippines." [62]

Based on one's previous knowledge of colonialism, one notes the rise of nationalism in nation-states which were once colonized. Nationalism is often linked with expressions of religion which reject the former colonizer. In an article related to nationalism, Hassan writes: "Nationalism of another and protean kind began to wax elsewhere: in former colonies, in developing nations, in suppressed ethnic or religious communities of various sorts. Their fires spread like conflagrations in an angry wind. The anger and anguish fanning these fires are real. They derive from social injustice, recollected outrage, persistent deprivation, technological change, shifting values, collapsing empires, desperate human migrations."[63] Yet, from nationalism emerge new religious groups, particularly in formerly colonized states carrying political implications, since nationalism gives rise to hatred towards other ethnic and religious groups. In *Out of*

[60] Hans Bertens, The idea of the Postmodernism: A History, 38.
[61] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 15.
[62] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 26.
[63] Ihab Hassan, "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance", *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 14

Egypt, we read: "Neo-Islam speaks thus to the West: 'Neither your imperialism past nor your technological future is relevant to us anymore, and your present dominance is already on the wane.'"[64]

In addition, Hassan describes the massive student unrests against the secret Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1946, in which Britain demanded to keep its military bases and maintain control over the Egyptian Army. Students and workers requested immediate withdrawal of the British forces, facing direct and brutal clashes with British police and Egyptian army in which several students lost their lives. In relation to these events, Hassan creates a distance between his former, engaged self and his new experienced self, for the events push him to realize that he lacked knowledge about the world and politics in general. At the same time, he realizes the need towards his self-creation by holding the same pro-imperialist political stance as he did before. Hassan writes: "Indeed, the notorious student riots of Egypt may have been sparked less by political events than the need of fervent youths to meet one another in common hope. …Blazing with knowledge we did not really possess, we dedicated ourselves to vast schemes: a new Moslem Empire, extending from the English to the China Sea; or rebirth of the ancient gods, Amon, Isis, Osiris and Set, to supplant the barbarism of Islam and usher in new mysteries; or a concept of Universal Justice, reinstating the *fellahs* and reapportioning the land without spilling blood; or again, some miraculous, technological plan to turn all the deserts of North Africa into a green paradise—and always, of course, the expulsion of the British from Egypt."[65] Hassan often mentions British colonialism in stark terms, but one might doubt if he really means that, since we are convinced of his devotion to Anglo-American culture, literature, and in particular the English language which is spoken and written in the country where Hassan finds a home. We have mentioned above that some critics regard *Out of Egypt* as an instance of postcolonial discourse that is less than critical about colonialism. Hassan was raised in an upper-class land owning family and holds feudal stance for "fellahs," (farmers and peasant laborers) who were not educated and led humble lives, and who may be seen as Gayatri Spivak's "subaltern". Spivak acknowledges her distance from the subaltern, male and female. In an interview with

[64] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 26.
[65] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 89.

Rashmi Bhatnagar, Lola Chatterjee and Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan, Spivak states: "And I am afraid of speaking too quickly in academic situations about the women—the tribal subaltern, the urban sub-proletariat, the unorganized peasants—to whom I have learnt to make myself acceptable other than as a concerned benevolent person who is free to come and go."[66] Such comments raise many arguments among postcolonial feminist scholars. "For instance, Benita Perry, in her 1987 essay 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', charges Spivak with being unable to hear the voice of the subaltern and suggests that Spivak's work stems from a 'theory assigning an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse in constituting and disarticulating the native.'"[67] Hassan's similarly distant position towards *fellahs* and his complex post-colonial stance is evident when Hassan writes, in *Out oof Egypt,* "Do my words re- colonize the *fellah*, who will never read them, as do all these learned books I read?" [68] In an article concerned with Hassan's *Out of Egypt* and his post-colonial mode, Daniel Coleman points out: "The question is a discomforting one, for it is quite possible that they do. It is quite possible that Hassan's blunt articulation of his desire to be severed from his Egyptian past does re-colonize the *fellah*, does reinscribe the Orientalist discourse that simultaneously desires and dismisses the non-West." [69]

Hassan fixes his political points of view on the countries which "liberated" Egypt. He has chosen Munich, Germany as the place from where he writes his autobiography; Germany never colonized Arab lands. During World War II, many Arabs, Hassan included, showed sympathy for Germany after a successful attack against the British Forces led by German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in 1942. Hassan, like many Egyptian youngsters, read stories and narratives about Germany and its economic progress. In the beginning of World War II, Germany showed itself a superpower, and on the other side, Egyptians did not experience German colonization. Therefore, they thought that German presence might be a new hope and a counterforce to the British colonialism that brought poverty and socio-political injustice. While recollecting those days Hassan writes: "For like many Egyptian students, more frantic than informed in

[66] The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues, edited by Sarah Harasym, 70.
[67] *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader*, edited by Padmin Mongia, 8.
[68] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 48.
[69] Daniel Coleman "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family".Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne, North America*, 18, (1993), 4.

their idealism, I saw Rommel in 1942 as a liberator. Surely, we thought, the enemy of our enemy must be a friend."[70] But after the defeat of the Axis Forces, students in Cairo, and Hassan in particular, view the Americans as liberators and as "new models for their aspirations." [71]

In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. became a superpower both economically and militarily. Narratives about the American way of life and American notions of freedom became visible in Egypt through the presence of the American soldiers, particularly for those, Hassan included, who did not identify with Nasser's Free Officers Movement. Hassan and those who were oriented towards Western ideology were, too, aware of Nasser's communist dogma and his links with the Soviet Union. The distribution of American products in Cairo shops, such as chewing-gum, Cola-Cola and other American items might have tempted many Egyptians who meant like Hassan, to embrace the western style and "escape" towards Western shores, rather than experience Nasser's regime. In regard to American myths and narratives, Hassan writes: "They [the Americans] arrived, as well, after a million Hollywood myths had long invaded our heads."[72] Another dialect of English was heard on Cairo streets from the American soldiers, who introduced Coca-Cola, Ray Ban aviator glasses and. the *Reader's Digest*, eagerly read by the locals. "Most Egyptians," writes Hassan, "considered the war merely as a struggle between factions of European colonialism; D-Day meant less to them than El Alamein. British soldiers, and even rambunctious 'Aussies,' went now unnoticed on the streets. But American GIs, who appeared increasingly on Cairo streets, met with curiosity, good will. *El Yankees*, after all, had never occupied Egyptian soil, and they brought a history known better for its idealism than imperialism." [73] The termination of the war seals Hassan's decision to "escape" from Egypt. It is neither Ray Ban sunglasses not GIs' chewing gum that inspire Hassan's desire for self-exile; rather, it was a plan which he elaborated with care. In regard to his sympathy for U.S and the role they play in global politics, Hassan writes from his old notebook: "Europe possesses the past; America makes one; but the past America makes becomes elsewhere in the world an

[70] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 27.
[71] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 27.
[72] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 91.
[73] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 91.

optative future. That is, America, alembic of time, distills the future in the present, and so permits other nations to choose their destiny. This does not always win gratitude." [74] The words "Europe possesses the past; America makes one" resonate with Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, but the political stances which Said and Hassan hold in relation to America's global role reflect a distinct contrast. Said writes: "From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II Britain and France dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did."[75]

The theme of exile and the wish "to return" preoccupy many authors who found refuge abroad, whether they write fiction or non-fiction such as memoir or autobiography. Ihab Hassan has not found himself a "stranger" nor has he been stereotyped, perhaps due to the fact that he "left—no, fled" and found America as his eternal home. Like Said, Hassan mentions the various motives for exile. Hassan describes himself as a "psychological exile" which is far different from other exiles. In regard to other types of exile, Hassan writes: "Who are these beings, full of dark conceits, rushing to meet the future while part of them still stumbles about, like a blind speleologist, in caverns of the past? What urgency speaks through their self-banishment? [76] While many exiles dream about returning to their native lands, Hassan refuses to go back to Egypt even in a dream and as a tourist. He simply cannot return for an "iron door clangs shut" to the land of "forgotten past". Hassan's son Geoffrey Karim Hassan visited his grandparents while Hassan did not, for he knows Egypt and "[he] thinks to himself: 'Nothing there has really changed.'"[77] Once passing through Athens, he had "an intuition of Egypt". Hassan writes: "a stifling moment of heat, dust, noise, young men in short sleeves drifting through shabby streets, old ornate building, their cornices, caryatides, peeling on hovels below—most of all, the sense of durance, merciless contraction in the gut. It was, finally, an intuition of prisons; hospitals, asylums, monasteries, dungeons, any occluded relation or carved-in self."[78]

---

[74] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 45, 46.
[75] Edward Said*, Orientalism*, 4
[76] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 106.
[77] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 105.
[78] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 108.

In an article published in 2003 Hassan comments on his autobiography, focusing on his "self-exiled' life in America, and the aftermath of the catastrophic acts of September 11, 2001. "I sought freedom in America, too," points out Hassan, "but I had no blessings to offer, did not know whom to offer thanksgiving. For me, freedom was closer to transgression, having learned from spiritual outlaws – Rimbaud, Dostoyevsky, Melville, Nietzsche – that original creation comes close to crime. Some call it metaphysical revolt. That was the patois of existentialism. But I have come to learn that without self-mastery, without self-dispossession, all freedom comes to naught."[79] In addition, he compares his life in America and life in Egypt, underlining the sense of freedom in America that he lacked in Egypt. Hassan summarizes all the cultural, socio-political, religious issues as well as his adopting character and his individuation. He grew up as the only male child in the family and presumably that fact pushed him towards his male individualism and self-creation. He lived a life isolated and detached from other children and social groups, and made his strive to create his own self named "Ihab Hassan," reject his ethnic roots, his parents, and the society where he was raised. We have written above that Hassan "always states [his] name" when asked various matters, whether they be political, philosophical or literary. Considering these facts, it is not surprising why Hassan has chosen America as his "eternal country," since America is the country where the concept of individualism comes to its full fruition. "The young Hassan" notes Jerzy Durczak "does not feel emotionally attached to his country's history, tradition or religion. He writes: ' The Sphinx, *Abu'l Hol* (Father of Terror)…inspired no fear in me, nor stirred ancestral memories'".[80] Hassan writes: "'we speak fluently now of "identity," its murderous afflictions and global miseries. But what identity did that Egyptian beggar who called me *khawaga* ("Mr. Foreigner") expect me to have? The French and the British, after all, had invaded Egypt only after Hyksos, Lybians, Medes, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mameluks, Turks, and Albanians had cleared the way for them.

[79] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 213.
[80] Jerzy Durczak, "Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan's confidential criticisms", *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992), 7.

In America, natives noted my accent, of course. But they rarely asked where "I came from."'[81]

While discussing Hassan's identity, one can trace his dual personality. Remembering a scene of scorpions, Hassan notes: "I saw two big scorpions meet in the gravel path. Squatting at a distance, stick in hand, I watched their combat transfixed. They locked into an amber mass of claws, mandibles, and curving sting, now still and lucent in the sunlight. They struggled there to some strange, immemorial end; and when one finally staggered away, leaving the other palpitating on its back, I could not bring myself to kill either with my stick. (…) Many years later, I recalled the incident and thought: 'You're a Libra born close to the cusp of Scorpio. There's also in you a touch of sting."' [82] Hassan is content with his "remade" self and his adopted American way of life; he notes: "'how compare imaginary demesnes? And how compare mundane realms: say the grinding poverty and grubby wealth I knew in Egypt with the pervasive 'idolatry' and 'affluenza'of America? The sclerotic bureaucracies of the former with the insatiable hype of the latter? Make no mistake: America is my home if anywhere I have a home. More, it is paradoxically both choice and destiny."' [83] He asserts that his character and identity were suited only to America, and doubts that he "would have had any in Australia". [84] He confirms his standpoints concerning his religion, pointing out that he has never experienced any religious prejudice since he has stepped on the U.S. soil. Among other books and notebooks which Hassan brought with him was a copy of the Koran. Hassan states: "I would then stare at my copy of the Koran, lying flat, unopened, on the bleached-wood sill of the window above my desk, lying there wholly self-contained. Why had I, an unbeliever, packed and carried it across an ocean? Was the book, beyond my disavowals, some link to a language or legacy I could never wholly disown? Years later, I gave away that copy of the Koran, bound in green leather, to an

[81] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 216.
[82] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 23, 24.
[83] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 213, 214.
[84] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 218.

Israeli friend, Nathan Shapiro, who coveted its sinuous lines and looping designs on the page." [85]

Hassan showed himself a humanist and an American patriot in the wake of September 11, 2011, sharing pain and compassion for the fallen innocent with most Americans. As a Cairo-born American, he did not experience any airport controls due to his "light-skinned" face, and was selected for polite searches three times. After the tragic events, Hassan received letters from friends who "commiserated" with him due to the fact that he was born a Muslim, but on the other side, he got hate mail, presumably from Arabs who knew Hassan's writing and his pro- American stance. With regard to those letters, Hassan notes: "A few expressed fear that Moslems will now suffer persecution in America, with only a passing thought to the thousands who perished in the World Trade Center. These friends were not Moslems themselves— I can think of only one friend who practices Islam, in Sweden—but well-meaning liberals.… A few letters, though warm toward me personally, vented their anti-Americanism outright."[86] After the catastrophic events of September 11, Hassan still found himself exposed to various verbal attacks and slanders, as he recollects: "There was an incident, in New Zealand of all places, involving a loony old Brit, over dinner in a gracious country lodge. Sitting across from me at the common table— mahogany, crystal, silver— he began to declaim on 'Muuslims,' as he called them. I ignored him; my wife belted into him; the other guests, Americans and Australians, changed the subject. I could not feel anger; the man, smiling and splotchy-faced, was a kook, nursing some old humiliation. He was, in fact, comical. I was almost amused, until I recalled that cranks like him, if empowered, inflict harm."[87]

Reading Hassan's autobiography, one can see that he rejects anything in relation to his Egyptian identity, and by doing so rejects Egyptian-American culture and Arab American literature in general, which is not the case with other Arab American fiction and nonfiction authors, notwithstanding their religious and ethnic backgrounds. Hassan has chosen to be identified as American and has adopted American doctrines and the

[85] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 219.
[86] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 219.
[87] Ihab Hassan, "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir", *Religion &Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 220.

notion of individualism. In regard to Hassan's identity and his postmodern American fashion, Waïl S. Hassan points out: "This is to some extent surprising, given that postmodernism, Hassan's primary interest, is most often inspired by French theory—deconstructive, speculative, anti-foundational. I would argue, therefore, that Hassan's 'Americanist' brand of postmodernism can be read autobiographically as an expression of his willful 'reinvention' of his American identity." [88] Throughout his autobiography, Hassan does not mention the clash of cultures or religious prejudices (except for the scene in New Zealand), racial discrimination, or the difficulties which immigrants often face upon their arrival in the Promised Land —the U.S. Anyone with previous knowledge of Arab American matters, is well aware that the above mentioned issues do exist, although America is known as a tolerant country in relation to racial, religious and cultural issues. Since Ihab Hassan rejects his ethnic "roots," it is not a big surprise that he does not recognize the literature of other U.S. minorities or ethnic literatures. "African-Americans, Native Americans, feminist literature, and the writings of other marginalized groups, are merely 'tribal' and 'ludicrous.' He, therefore, rejects for himself the title of Arab-American. "Arab-American is to me redundancy, pleonasm. Is not America a land of immigrants rather than exiles?"' [89] Hassan "Americanized" himself successfully, being a professor and a postmodern literary critic. Due to his "Americanization", in *Out of Egypt* and other works Hassan performs the classic American white male individualist position. He shows no sympathy for and views with a skeptical eye the new developments in literature. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the works of many feminist literary theorists and authors, among them the new wave of Arab American writers, do not have any particular meaning for Hassan.

In regard to Ihab Hassan's attitude toward these developments in the field of the humanities, Waïl S. Hassan writes: "It is not surprising, therefore, that Hassan feels no affinity with, and indeed becomes highly critical of, recent developments in the humanities that have foregrounded questions of colonialism, race, and ethnicity in critical

[88] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 13.
[89] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 16.

and theoretical debates. Postcolonial studies is for Hassan the product of an alien 'ideological world' whose inhabitants, he writes with subtle nuance, 'speak to [him] in a mildly *foreign* accent"'. [90] Yet, Hassan himself comes from a privileged family, has been educated in colonial schools and through his "self-creation" has managed to enter the Western academe. "Postcoloniality", writes Kwame Anthony Appiah "is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a *comprador* intelligentsia; a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers, who meditate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery." [91]

Regarding Western-trained writers and intellectuals, Edward Said writes: "In the one part of the Orient that I can speak about with some direct knowledge, the accommodation between the intellectual class and the new imperialism might very well be accounted one of the special triumphs of Orientalism. The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States.… Consider first of all that universities in the Arab world are generally run according to some pattern inherited from, or once directly imposed by, a former colonial power."[92] Hassan began to accommodate himself to American individualist ideology, and won a respectful position in the American intellectual circles. In regard to Hassan's self-Orientalizing (postcolonial) narratives which we encounter in *Out of Egypt*, Daniel Coleman writes: "Furthermore, their working with—or against—the autobiographical genre, itself a specifically Western form of self-construction, indicates how strongly they are influenced by Western ideology. But while this influence is indelible, it is not totalizing, for, as the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* have shown, when postcolonial writers do take up Western literary forms such as autobiography, the inflection of their marginal, ex-centric status suffuses their texts with nuanced levels of subversion and resistance." [93] In an article related to *Out of Egypt*, Ihab Hassan "offers fragments" of his autobiography in order to discuss his stance for colonialism (which he "resolved early", never "justifying himself as a "victim"), and the polemics which arose due to his postcolonial discourse.

---

[90] Waïl S. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations", *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 22, (2002), 16.
[91] Padmin Mongia. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, a Reader*, 62.
[92] Edward Said. *Orientalism*, 322.
[93] Daniel Coleman "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family".Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne, North America*, 18, (1993), 2.

Ihab Hassan states further: "But I offer these fragments of autobiography as an effort to reach out, beyond the distortions of postcolonial discourse, for some shared truth in our diverse experiences, for some clear-eyed critical stance. As good writers everywhere know, a shadow always falls between ideology and reality, and bitterness turns the Muse into stone."[94] In regard to colonialism, imagination, and postcolonial writing, Hassan mentions Declan Kiberd's "brilliant argument" in his *Inventing Ireland*. Declan Kiberd writes: "In my judgment, postcolonial writing does not begin only when occupier withdraws: rather it is initiated at that very moment when a native writer formulates a text committed to cultural resistance. By this reckoning, Seathrún Céitinn and W.B. Yeats are postcolonial artists, as surely as Brendan Beham." [95] Surprisingly enough, due to the fact that Declan Kiberd acknowledges Edward Said's contribution in the field of postcolonial studies, Waïl S. Hassan asserts that Said and other postcolonial theorists, among them feminist postmodern theorists "speak" to Ihab Hassan with "*foreign* accents," because he regards himself as occupying the same position as a mainstream (white) male American author and does not show any special consideration for the Third World writers or U.S. minority literatures at large. In *Inventing Ireland,* Kiberd acknowledges: "Edward Said... has been unstinting in his encouragement: his own work is a touchstone in these endeavours."[96]

As we might recall, Edward Said wrote on behalf of and stood for not only his own Palestinians, but the oppressed and victimized worldwide, while Hassan has written based on mainstream American white male fashion, showing little respect for minority literatures, and in particular for feminist writing and criticism. "I propose here", writes Daniel Coleman in regard of Hassan's White male strain, "to trace the relations between one particular mode of masculinity, a tendency to construct identity by severing the individual from his originary relationships, and one particular mode of neo-colonial imperialism, Orientalist discourse, in order to reveal how they inform and trouble one another." [97] Hassan's masculinity and individualism stem from the position of First

[94] Ihab Hassan, "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance", *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 14.
[95] Declan Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*, 6.
[96] Declan Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*, 8.
[97] Daniel Coleman "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family".Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne, North America*, 18, (1993), 2.

World writing, without minding the authentic, native, and Third World voices, or incorporating a feminist consciousness in his autobiography. In this regard, Daniel Coleman points out: "Feminist poetics of autobiography assert that the drive to define the self by severance from the other is a particularly masculine one. Mary G. Mason claims that "the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other'", while Susan Stanford Friedman shows that the female subject represents herself not just in relation to one other, but to a community of others."[98] As a reaction to Hassan's masculinity in *Out of Egypt*, Daniel Coleman notes the remarks of Gayatri Spivak that "masculinity" and "femininity" should be narrated equally. Coleman writes: "On the one hand, we must be wary, as Gayatri Spivak has warned, of reconfirming a Western template for universal human experience by working only with 'variations on, critiques of, and substitutions for, the narratives of Oedipus and Adam'. We must keep in mind that the binary thinking inherent in essentialist discussions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' participates in the 'dualistic system of thought.'''[99]

Hassan describes his leaving as a "small death," but in his case the "Great Escape" quickened a "new birth". "All leaving is loss", writes Hassan, "every departure a small death—yes, journeys know their end. Yet self –exile may also conceal a deeper exigency."[100] The ending of *Out of Egypt* makes clear Hassan's stance towards his "Eternal Egypt,", self-exile, rejection of his roots, and his reluctance to be counted part of Arab American culture. We read: "For a long time after leaving Egypt, I had a bad, recurrent dream. I dreamt that I was compelled to go back, complete some trivial task—close a door left ajar, feed a canary, whisper a message. There was terror in the banal dream, terror and necessity, and also the sense, within the dream itself, that I had dreamt it before, and within that a feeling that each time I dreamt the dream, something would work out: I would no longer need to go back."[101] Hassan has not only wandered "out of Egypt," but has ended his journey and his search for freedom in Milwaukee preferring "moody afternoons" of the Promised Land to the sun set in his "Eternal Egypt."

---

[98] Daniel Coleman "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family".Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne, North America*, 18, (1993), 5.
[99] Daniel Coleman "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family".Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne, North America*, 18, (1993), 1.
[100] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 106.
[101] Ihab Hassan, *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography,* 108,109.

Chapter 3

Politics and aesthetics of Arab American feminist writers

3.1 Issues in the Writings of Three Arab American Poets

In this section of chapter three we will focus on the poets like Shihab Nye, Laila Halaby and Mohja Kahf, for they critically depict the above mentioned issues and everyday concerns as well as "hot spots" which preoccupy Arab Americans. Notwithstanding the fact that our thesis deals mainly with fiction and non-fiction writing, it is inevitable to include Kahf's, Majaj's and Nye's poetry and other critical works which transparently depict the radical politics in the U.S, and unmask misconceptions about Islam, Arab American women and stereotyping of Arab Americans at large. In addition, poetry has longer literary tradition than prose in regard to Arab American writing. "Arab American writers", as Gregory Orfalea puts it, "are heir not only to Whitman and Eliot, but also to one of the world's largest poetic traditions. Poetry is the stuff of life in the Arab world; it is unfurled at dinner tables, and at nearly all public gatherings, from funerals, to political rallies, to baptism. Poetry seems to vibrate in the desert air, a great collector of communal emotion, personal sorrow and joy."[1] Poetry occupies a particular place in Arab culture and as a genre it is very much in the bloodline of an Arabic literary tradition, while it is presumed that its domination effectively delayed the appearance of Arab American fiction.

On the other hand, poetry as a cultural memory has been passed on across generations and served as a powerful tool for preserving the vast Arab cultural heritage on the soil of the United States spiritually linking the Arab immigrants to their "Old Countries". "Assumption about the role of poetry in Arabic culture", writes Lisa Suhair Majaj, "provide a useful example of the tensions at work here. Depictions of Arab culture typically emphasize its poetic tradition, portraying such legacies as natural, even genetic. For instance, Orfalea and Elmusa argue that Arab Americans have intrinsic relation to poetry, stemming in part from a transhistorical memory passed down through blood and

[1] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel" *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 115.

history to Arabs and Arab Americans alike."[2] Furthermore, poetry enables contemporary Arab American women poets to articulate their political visions, and thus raise their strong feminist voices in response to political implications in the Middle East. Nonetheless, poetry is a genre which enables several of the contemporary Arab American women treated in this chapter to articulate their visions, and to raise strong feminist voices in response to political, social, and cultural developments in the Middle East and the U.S. Contemporary Arab American poetry has room to be more political than prose fiction, and it is less subject to publishers' strictures and the pressures of the book industry, in part because it, like poetry in general in the U.S., is more often published in small presses, rather than in large, commercial publishing houses.

Politics is an inevitable issue in contemporary Arab American writing, and informs the writings of the four authors discussed in this chapter. The political experiences of immigrant to the U.S. and U.S. minorities in the twentieth century is interlinked, for Arab Americans, with new political implications as a result of 9/11 events, the Iraqi war, and Palestinian struggle for liberation. These emergent political circumstances have worsened the position of Arab American community in the United States. "These socio-political implications," writes Steven Salaita, "are only now starting to develop into analyzable phenomena. Most important, though, Arab Americans did not have a mature scholarly apparatus before 9/11. It has proved challenging to develop one in response to an event that so drastically affected the makeup of the Arab American community."[3] Even prior to 9/11 events, Arab American literature had never been fully perceived in mainstream U.S. culture, nor positioned as the literatures of other ethnic groups are in U.S. academe, due to the lack of critical attention and to political issues which include anti-Arab racism, xenophobia, and racial taxonomy. Finally, there is the issue of Islamophobia, and it is one which targets all Arab American authors, because they are often assumed to be Muslims. Regarding this assumption, I quote Steven Salaita, a literary critic, one of the foremost scholars of Arab American studies, and a devoted advocate of Palestinian cause: "Obviously, the fact that I am proudly Arab American and

[2] Amritjit Singh, Joseph T. Skerrett, Jr. and Robert E. Hogan. Memory & Politics: *New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, 268.
[3] Steven Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 148.

also happen to be Christian limits my desire to insinuate or assert that Arab America is mono-religious. On the other hand, I would point out that much of the culture of Arab America, despite religious diversity of its participants, is drawn from Islamic influence; Arab America thus is what Edward Said called an Islamicate community. … The trick in my mind is to find a way methodologically to highlight the importance of Islam without concurrently ignoring the realities of many Arab Americans who are not Muslim. Construing Arab America as Islamicate offers a helpful start. Another helpful place to turn is the fiction written by Arab Americans, which discusses Islam frequently but doesn't allow the faith to overwhelm its particular ethnic sensibilities." [4] "They [Arab American authors] also have maintained strong ties to radical politics; ethnic critics, in fact, have been pivotal in unmasking the workings of American imperialism and in turn formulating alternative politics in response to that imperialism, both domestic and international (for instance, Edward Said, Vine Deloria, Jr., Robert Warrior, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Barbara Christian, Craig Womack, Lisa Suhair Majaj)."[5]

With these ideas established here, we may turn to the first of this chapter's four writers who are part of a new wave of Arab American authors to compose notable fiction, poetry collections, literary criticism, memoir, and non-fiction by employing postmodern and post-colonial mode of writing. Lisa Suhair Majaj, in many ways, may be regarded as a true heir to Edward Said's work. Like Said, she grew up with two languages: Arabic and English due to her hybrid identity as daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother. Like Said, her religious background is Christian: her father was Anglican and her grandmother was Greek Orthodox, while her American mother was Lutheran. Majaj has engaged with critical writing, creative nonfiction and poetry. She stands as an outstanding critic of Arab American literature and has contributed a great deal to shed light to Arab American cultural and socio-political issues, and Palestine has been a main axis in her work, as in the work of Said. Her books of literary criticism include: *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (2000, coeditor with Amal Amireh), *Intersections: Gender, Nation and Community in*

[4] Salaita, *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,* 7.
[5] Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 147.

Arab Women's Novels (2002, coeditor with Paula Sunderman and Therese Saliba), and *Etel Adnan: Critical Essays on the Arab American Writer and Artist* (2002, coeditor with Amal Amireh).

Notwithstanding the fact that Etel Adnan often is not considered an Arab American author (as an Arab woman writing in multiple languages from multiple locations), Majaj's contribution has an outstanding importance in the development of contemporary Arab American literary criticism. In addition to her numerous articles in the field of humanities, Lisa Suhair Majaj has published two poetry collections: *These Words* (2004) and *Geographies* of *Light* (2009). Majaj has always identified herself as a Palestinian American and, in her sophisticated articles and poetry, describes her ethnic roots. In an autobiographical article titled "E-mail to the Muse," she writes: "Over time, however, I slowly made my way back to writing—or perhaps it was you [the Muse] who made your way back to me. I wrote small poems about my mother's death, the process of articulation providing, at last, a small surcease for the pain lodged behind my breastbone. (…) When my father, too, died of cancer after a futile attempt at treatment, I found myself face to face with the Palestinian history his life has embodied. For the first time I began to see my own writing as meaningful in a broader context: to articulate some small portions of Palestinian experience of which my father's life had been a part was, perhaps, one way of standing up in the face of injustice."[6] Apart from being a literary critic and poet, Majaj has engaged in feminist issues and humanistic concerns in general. She admits the debts she and other Arab American authors owe to Said and she is well aware of the political circumstances and her path which has to follow. She writes: "There's no denying that it's dark time. And now Edward Said has died—peerless intellectual, writer, teacher, musician, standard-bearer of justice for Palestinians and upholder of the principle of justice for everyone. Without his voice, his words, his passion, his commitment, his leadership, we are all bereft."[7]

Majaj, though not yet to such an extent as Said, has tackled seriously the main issues that make up Arab American literature and studies. Like Said, she deals with the question of Palestine, nationalism, hybrid identities of Arab American authors and

[6] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, 30.
[7] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, 32.

Palestinian right to return. Yet politics is the issue which frames Majaj's work in depicting Arab American realities, whether she chooses literary criticism, poetry or non-fiction writing. While writing about political events and migration of Arabs to the United States after Arab-Israeli political tensions, Majaj notes that "the period after 1960 saw an increased Arab migration to the Arab- American world: well-educated and politically astute, these new immigrants brought settled Arab-American communities into fresh contact with contemporary Arab political, social, and cultural realities. Finally, domestic and international political events—including the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, the oil embargo of the 1970s, the Lebanese civil war, the 1980 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the two Palestinian Intifadahs, Gulf War I and II, the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and the current occupation of Iraq—have forced Arab-Americans to grapple with their identity and with the imperative to write or be written."[8]

Majaj experienced herself the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and the Lebanese Civil War while she was a student at the American University in Beirut. It seems that brutality and massacres which were committed then will 'haunt' her writing and her mind lifelong. Remembering her college years and the 'wounds' of war, Majaj describes those events in a bitter poetical tone: "In college I continued my exploration of writing, grappling in particular with the connection between writing and war. Surely you [the Muse] can recall our clandestine meetings during my years at the American University of Beirut, where I used to sit on the rocks overlooking the sea and scribble in a tattered orange notebook, trying to make sense of the civil war that had enveloped the country.… All around me was war: just beyond the campus boundaries, just beyond the limits of comprehension. But, I couldn't write about it directly." [9] Surely, in the years to come, Lisa Suhair Majaj will depict all those events and direct images she experienced and compose beautiful artistic lines whether in prose or poetry. Such shocking images and experiences, as Shelley would say, have "vibrated in [her] memory"[10] and her consciousness for a long time. "One experience" writes Majaj, "that impressed itself on me with particular clarity occurred just before I left Lebanon in 1982. (…) I was rushing

[8] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 129, 130.
[9] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, 28.
[10] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Music, When Soft Voices Die", published in *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* in 1824 in London by John and Henry L. Hunt, 214.

past the university hospital, trying frantically to arrange the details of my own evacuation, when through the glass windows of the emergency room I saw a man standing, swaying slightly, clutching a child to his body. The child had a wound in his forehead. Blood had dripped on the floor at the man's feet, splattering the tiles, but neither man nor boy seemed to notice: their faces were vacant masks of exhaustion. Time froze for a moment as I stood before this stilled snapshot of the war."[11] The 'wound of the child,' the death of innocence and the 'wounds of the war," have haunted Majaj for years. Many years later, she depicts a similar scene in her poem "Cyclones and Seeds", where she, in a tender and delicate voice, memorializes the death of a fourteen–year-old child named Samer Suleiman Abu Mayaleh:

I want the headlines to scream
of Samer Suleiman Abu Mayaleh
fourteen years old stripped
pushed faced down in the street.

soldiers fired one bullet at close range
up his rectum
it burned through his body
penetrating liver, heart
blood soaking the dust
from veins three quarters drained,

they said a heart attack killed the boy".[12]

While this boy is Palestinian, and the boy remembered in Majaj's essay was presumably Lebanese, the common thread between them is a demand to recognize the shocking suffering of children in war—both of them Arab children. It is as if the second image is a response to Majaj's inability to respond, in the moment, to the first image.

Despite the horrors that preoccupy them, Arab American authors find room for depicting the variety of Arab American life. When doing so, several of the authors

[11] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, 28.
[12] Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Geographies* of *Light*, 107.

studied in this chapter often demonstrate friendly attitudes towards each other's writing. They appreciate each other's work in order to unveil good and bad sides of the culture, and to redress wrongs when their ethnicity is stereotyped, ignored and isolated. They write about each other's work not in terms of friendship and their common cause, but in terms of human loss committed by the cruelty of wars. While reviewing Sharif S. Elmusa's *Flawed Landscape: Poems 1987-2008* and Lisa Suhair Majaj's *Geographies of Light*, Mohja Kahf notes, "Majaj memorializes another bulldozer-crushed life in 'Rachel Corrie,' notes the dead 'infant's mouth/ slightly open, as if dreaming of a breast' at the Beit Hanoun Massacre ('Shards'), sees in Jenin 'the boys cradling a small charred foot' while officialdom insists, eponymously, ominously, 'This is not a massacre.'"[13]

Politics and wars have played a negative part in relation to Arab American stereotyping and marginalization which have existed in the United States and Europe for over a hundred years. Therefore, Arab American authors needed to "write or be written" to combat discourse that devalued Arab American culture, identity and public profile. Majaj has played a great part in developing Arab American literary criticism. Together with Steven Salaita, Gregory Orfalea, Khaled Mattawa, Evelyn Shakir, and Randa Jarrar, she has contributed to shedding light in regard to Arab American realties and Palestinian cause, which has raised political anger for over a half-century. "Although the establishment of Arab-American organizations" writes Majaj, "helped provide an institutional framework for Arab-Americans, these organizations mostly focused on political activism and the battle to eliminate negative stereotypes; little attention was paid to literature and the arts." [14] These organizations and Arab American authors many times are helpless against the anti-Arab stereotyping and politics of some American publishing companies, which are 'sensitive' if any writing deals with Palestinian issues in particular. "New York publishers" remarks Gregory Orfalea, "must quit playing to the mob (or, indeed, creating it) and act responsibility. They must begin to allow novelists to treat the two-ton gorilla in the room (i.e., Palestine) with verisimilitude and empathy. It's extremely troubling, for example, that Diana Abu Jaber, who has published two breakthrough novels with Arab American protagonists in the past decade, has repeatedly

[13] Mohja Kahf, "A Controlled Burn of Memory", Book Reviews: *Flawed Landscape: Poems 1987-2008* by Sharif S. Elmusa and *Geographies of Light* by Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Banipal* 38 (2010), para.6.
[14] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 130.

been rebuffed in trying to publish a fiction manuscript dealing with Palestine."[15] Many Arab American voices remain unheard based on their political and ethnic content, which contributes to marginalization of Arab American literature in general. In regard to the rejection of such works by a particular number of publishing companies and American literary criticism, Lisa Suhair Majaj writes: "But others insist that Arab-American writing should be recognized and discussed on basis of its literary merits, not whether it adheres to any particular ethnic content. Kahf, for instance, argues, 'When an Arab- American writes a good book, they show up on the radar as Novelist of Poet, or whatever. Not as Arab- American poet or novelist."' [16] Such politicalized exclusion of Arab American writing seriously devalues aesthetics.

In order to avoid one-sided politicization, contemporary Arab American women writers deal equally with both worlds, Arab and American. Trying to escape such political animosity that exists on American soil, Arab American authors have followed Said as the best example and have committed themselves to building bridges by bringing Arab and American cultures together, and by being willing to critique both. In relation to the attempts of modeling a hybrid literature, Majaj notes: "At the same time, contemporary literature clearly shows a new level of self-critique and internal diversity, albeit one still under development.… However, many point toward a new willingness on the part of Arab- American authors to raise sensitive issues in their work—sexuality, domestic violence, and other formerly taboo subjects."[17] While discussing pioneer Arab American literary critic Evelyn Shakir and the above mentioned "sensitive issues" which preoccupy contemporary Arab American authors, Majaj writes: "Shakir comments that over the past two decades she has noticed 'an increased willingness to move beyond nostalgia and celebration and to represent a more complex and nuanced rendering of Arab- American community,' through portrayals of a wider cast of characters and treatment not just of the conflict of Arab-Americans and mainstream society but also tensions within the family and community."[18]

---

[15] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 189.
[16] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 134.
[17] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 140.
[18] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 140.

Despite the fact that Arab American authors today try to depict the above mentioned realities, they cannot 'escape' their ethnic identities which are interlinked with political tensions. "Such representation tensions," remarks Majaj, "are perhaps unavoidable for the current generation of writers, whose artistic careers are caught up with their identities as Arab-Americans in ways that were not true for older generation of writers. For many, perhaps most, Arab-American writers today, who they are in terms of ethnicity and gender and race and class grounds their writing in concrete ways."[19] In a discussion about the role of identity in Arab American writing, Majaj stresses Mohja Kahf's comments about the difficulties of avoiding her identity. "Indeed, many feel that to separate their writing selves from Arab-American identities would be impossible. Mohja Kahf, for instance, comments that she doesn't know 'how, in writing anything more major than poems of a few lines, I could separate between the writer and the Syrian, Arab, Muslim woman that I am'. Kahf's response is characteristic of a generation of writers who no longer feel the need—or the ability— to obfuscate their identity.

As Kahf comments, in her characteristically iconoclastic fashion, 'I did try to exit Muslim American discourse for a few years, but it turned around and kicked me in the pants. So I re-entered that discourse, picked it up again in my writing, and am kicking IT again in the pants.'"[20] Notwithstanding the political 'climate' which exists after 9/11 in the United States and Western Europe in relation to Arab Americans and Arabs in general, contemporary authors do not hide their Arab heritage; instead, they create linking bridges not only with the American mainstream culture, but also with other ethnic cultures which contribute to enriching of the Arab American literature and push it forward toward broader artistic values. In relation to Arab American identity and connections with other ethnic cultures, Majaj writes: "At the present time, such interconnections are proliferating. As Arab-American writers consolidate, define, and give voice to Arab -American identity, they also expand the boundaries and possibilities of this identity. [Arab American poet David] Williams, for instance, writes with deep awareness of the cultural, political, and human connections between Arabs, Arab–Americans, Native Americans, Guatemalans and others. Naomi Shihab Nye explores the

[19] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 142.
[20] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 142.

multiple connections between peoples and cultures, whether Palestinians or Mexicans or Indians or Hispanic-Americans."[21]

Lisa Suhair Majaj, like Kahf, Nye, Darraj, Shakir, Halaby, Abu Jaber, and many other Arab American women authors, has dual identity, and has links to both Arab and American cultures. While discussing the bicultural subject which Said mentioned in his *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays,* Majaj writes, "as Arab-American cultural spaces expand, Arab-American writers increasingly position themselves not simply in relation to dual, implicitly opposing spheres of Arab and American culture. Rather, they consciously occupy a hybrid third space, one situated on American ground but which is a product both of the diaspora and of ethnogenesis. In this space the most significant factor is not necessarily ethnic content, but rather perspective and stance: the ability not just to move between worlds but also to create new ways of looking at the world."[22]

Like Said and other Palestinian authors, she cannot escape the bitter experiences of her father and the Palestinian being "out of place" for more than a half century. Palestinian experience raises many issues, such as the Palestinian Right of Return. The issue of return is associated with other issues such as feminism, nationalism, gender oppression and the struggle for Palestinian women's human rights, whether in the United States, or in the Middle East. "Within these interesting contexts, 'return,'" writes Majaj, "emerges not only as a pragmatic response to historical injustice, but as an issue that has multiple layers of resonance for feminism, activists, writers, and all those concerned with issues of home and exile, justice and injustice, women's rights and human rights."[23] As a Palestinian-American, Majaj is personally and politically connected to the collective loss: loss of Palestine and the attendant grief, violence and injustice whether personal or collective. In an interview with Deborah Al-Najjar, Majaj states: "Loss is embedded into my familial narrative – that of my grandmother's family who fled Jaffa in 1948 to become impoverished refugees in Jordan, or of my aunt killed by a bomb, or my father who lost his homeland and died in exile, or my relatives who continue to live in

[21] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 146.
[22] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 136.
[23] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 113-114.

Jerusalem and the West Bank under escalating hardship. My familial narrative on my father's side is a story about loss – and that loss is the loss of Palestine."[24]

When Majaj writes about the Palestinian longing to return to their original homeland, and severe living conditions of those displaced Palestinian in refugee camps in the Middle East, she observes them from her feminist and humanistic perspective. As an American, a Palestinian, a mother, a humanist and an activist, Majaj reacts against the deaths, violence and deconstruction as consequences of the war. In her poem "Shards", she depicts the shocking images of the dead and in a "soft" voice demands the protection of women's human rights and the end of violence, which might unveil the unspoken realities:

"Some of the dead kept their heads. One young mother lies
waxen, holding two children in rigid embrace, slumbering portrait
belied by the blood smearing their cheeks—infant's mouth
slightly open, as if dreaming of a breast, the warmth flow of milk;
tousle-haired girl-child turning the death's dream.

Part of this has been screamed a million times.
Part of it will never be heard.
Part of it reflects like quiet light off the streams of untreated sewage
and pools of shimmering blood in Gaza lanes.
Part of it hides behind the headlines.
Where this shard of the story will never be told."[25]

In fact, Majaj's poetry *is* the telling of these scattered shards of the Palestinian story. "Now numbering over four million," writes Majaj, "Palestinian refugees live in often desperate conditions in camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and the West Bank and Gaza, and individually in other countries. Although fifty-three years have intervened since their original dispossession, neither their desire to return nor the legal and moral potency of their right to return have diminished. This is true not only in the Diaspora, but also in the

[24] Deborah Al -Najjar, "Interview with Lisa Suhair Majaj", *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 9:3 (2007), 407.
[25] Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Geographies* of *Light*, 104.

West Bank and Gaza, where massive bypass roads, land confiscations, and Israeli settlements accentuate the stark realities of ongoing displacement."[26] Due to the already known political circumstances, Palestinian exiles, refugees and other displaced Palestinians are not allowed to return to their homeland. Palestinian diasporic experience "is also informed by other layers of displacement and exile, whether cultural, personal, or gendered. Because Palestinian-Americans, like other Palestinians, are forbidden to return (except, at best, as tourists) to their historical homeland, and hence to their own history, their literature in many ways charts an attempt to 'return,' as it were, through writing. The homeland to which they seek return is one rooted in history and in memory. At the same time it is, of necessity, a homeland of the imagination, grounded not just in the past, but also in the future. This is particularly true for Palestinian-American women, who, like all women, must negotiate the constraints of gender along with other historical, cultural, and personal exigencies. For those negotiating multiple identities and experiences (as perhaps all exiles must), the return to Palestine becomes on some level a metaphor for the return to the self- a return that for writers most often occurs through language."[27]

The exiled Palestinian women have faced racial, and gender discrimination and have been objects of marginalization, whether in the United States or within Arab world itself. Palestinian-American women and other Arab American women have seriously engaged in writing not only to shed light to their identities and eliminate the negative stereotyping, but also give shape to "silent voices" and unmask the realities about Arab American women in general. "Exiled from the Palestinian homeland by history, geography, politics and personal circumstances, often marginalized within U.S. culture and both Arab and American spheres of male power and discourse, they chart the difficult terrain of Palestinian experience, exploring the possibilities of return. But 'return,' in their work, signals a return not just to Palestine or to Palestinian history, but also to new visions of home and selfhood—grounded in history, memory, resistance, and the transformative power of the imagination."[28] The last decade of the twentieth century

[26] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 114.
[27] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 115.
[28] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian-American Women's Literature", *Thaqafat*, No.7/8 (2004), 251.

and the first decade of the millennium have witnessed a considerable number of Arab American authors and literary critics who have been engaged in feminism. It seems that Palestinian-American experience is the best example to be followed by other Arab American authors, for their political injustices are closely linked to feminist awareness. In regard to Palestinian-American women writers, and their personal lives and existing politics which push them forward to write, Lisa Suhair Majaj states: "As Palestinian-American women writers make evident, to write as a Palestinian woman is to write not only from an understanding of the personal as political (that tried-and-true dictum of feminism) but also from an understanding of the political as personal. It is to write out of recognition of the ways in which the multiple layers of history and politics, exile and displacement situate and shape individual lives. And it is to write from an awareness of the ways in which personal and gendered issues are integrally related to, rather than separate from, the struggles for freedom, justice, and peace."[29]

Feminism as a movement emerged during the 1960s together with other civil rights efforts against racial, national, ethnic and religious discrimination. Together with ethnic studies and minority literatures, it began to develop in the 1970s, where ethnic groups and women raised their voices for more freedom and tolerance, and political, economic, and gender equality in the United States and Western Europe. "Feminist literary criticism properly begins in the aftermath of the 'second wave' feminism, the term usually given to the emergence of women's movements in the United States and Europe during the Civil Rights campaigns of the 1960s. Clearly, though, a feminist literary criticism did not emerge fully formed from this moment. Rather, its eventual self-conscious expression was the culmination of centuries of women's writing, of women writing about women writing, and of women – and men –writing about women's minds, bodies, art and ideas."[30]

The rise of feminism in the United States highlighted the existing differences between women of the Western world and those in the Middle East. "The rise of U.S. feminism," writes Susan Muaddi Darraj, "in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with the rise of Islam as the 'new enemy' of the Western world. Images of the Ayatollah Khomeini in

[29] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol.2, no.1 (2001), 115.
[30] *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, 2.

Iran, the *Mujahedin* in Afghanistan, Qaddafi in Libya, and Yasser Arafat and the PLO concretized Islam's new role as the author of fear and the enemy of Western democracy, human rights, and especially civil law."[31] After 9/11, U.S. media played a great part in stereotyping the Arab and American women at large, showing images of veiled Arab women, considering them as the oppressed and objects of pleasure as had, in an earlier age, Gustave Flaubert with his Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, or Lord Byron with Leila from his poem, "The Giaour." In battling these negative stereoptypes and fighting for their own liberties and gender oppresion, Arab American women writers and critics have committed themselves seriously to the feminist program, and despite the difficulties they faced both in the U.S and the Arab world, they have achieved an outsanding place within women's literature. It can be argued that Arab American women writers in Diaspora have had more freedom in writing than their sisters in the Middle Eastern countries, although they face the pressures also faced by Western women writers multiplied by the conditions of anti-Arab stereotyping. "Though I understand," writes Anastasia Valassopoulos, "and to an extent agree that Arab women writers have had to fight hard to gain recognition as artists, this in and of itself is not so varied from their Western counterparts. What a feminist framework within which we can read these works can achieve is to bestow value on hitherto undervalued subject matter, including motherhood, domesticity and other forms of public and political engagement."[32]

Without reaching as far back as Mary Wollstonecraft and other women authors of first wave feminism in the West, twentieth-century feminism owes a great debt to Virginia Woolf. "Woolf matters to feminist literary criticism not simply as a writer and critic, but also as a subject of critical enquiry. The rescuing of Woolf from the apolitical prisons of Bloomsbury and madness was one of the formative projects of second-wave feminist literary criticism …, giving rise to a constructive relationship between the writer, her criticism and her critics."[33] Virginia Woolf and later feminists show example of multifaceted struggle which parallels that of their sisters in the Arab world and the Arab American community, whether in the United States or Western Europe. Palestinian

[31] Susan Muaddi Darraj, "Understanding of the Other Sister: The Case of Arab Feminism", *Monthly Review,* Vol.53, Issue 6 (2002) 16

[32] Anastasia Valassopoulos,.*Contemporary Arab Women Writers: Cultural Expression in Conten,* 10.
[33] *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, 9.

women, for instance, have lived as refugees in difficult conditions with the memories of what they lost in their ancient homeland. And the pragmatic condition of such refugees (stateless, homeless, and suffering under a level of oppression perhaps difficult to imagine from a comfortable American academic perspective) accentuates the need for a return that is not just metaphorical, but actual."[34] Despite the wish to return shared by both genders, Palestinian and Arab women face gender oppression due to patterns of male dominance in Arab world, and at the same time those gender inequities are stereotyped within a larger context of anti-Arab discourse in the West. Lisa Suhair Majaj notes that there is "a stereotype that encourages the assumption that Arab women must reject their own culture to improve their lot, instead taking succor in a flight to western feminism. Palestinian women have been particularly caught within this dichotomy of nationalism and feminism. But as any assessment of contemporary Palestinian women's issues makes clear, issues of nationalism and feminism cannot be so easily opposed to each other."[35] While discussing Virginia Woolf's assertion that gender overrides nationalism , Majaj notes, dissentingly: "Virginia Woolf's famous claim notwithstanding (that as a woman she had no country), Palestinian women can no more be expected to 'choose' between their national and gender identities than U.S. women can be expected to 'choose' between being American and being feminist."[36]

Due to the existing Arab discourses where nationalist concerns often have been defined in male-centered terms and the female gender is considered as a "silent gender," Palestinian women, and Arab women at large, find themselves between nationalism and feminism. Even when their feminism and nationalism are derived from politics in their communities, the critique they might face in their own culture, precisely due to this combination, makes them hesitant to give voice to gender issues which preoccupy their everyday life. "At the same time" as Majaj puts it, "they may find their efforts to levy internal critique of gender practices within their own communities hampered, both by the pressure to prioritize the all-too-urgent issues of nationalism, and by the fear of 'airing

[34] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 119.
[35] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 116.
[36] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 116.

dirty laundry' in an environment where Palestinians are already negatively viewed. Finally, Palestinian-American writers have often found their literary work subject to implicit or explicit censorship by publishers unwilling to take on 'risky' topics and writers, whether or not their texts address 'political' issues. In negotiating all of these pressures, Palestinian-American women writers find themselves situated within contexts of both literal and metaphorical exile."[37]

Notwithstanding the fact that Arab and Arab American women writers have found themselves in a 'blind alley', i.e., among Arab nationalism, Islamist discourse, existing politics in the U.S, and feminism, they have tackled these issues by criticizing negative male attitude towards Arab women and dismantling Western "imagined" stereotypes about Arab-American women, while at the same time they have given voice to many political and social injustices which have plagued Arab American communities in the United States. In an article related to nationalism and feminism which preoccupy Arab American feminists after September 11, 2001, Mervat F. Hatem writes: "I do not see any reason why Arab and Arab American feminists should not embrace the role of being national speakers and/or representatives of the community without betraying their gender interests. In this new role, one can expect them to combine an understanding of the international and national challenges facing their communities with an appreciation of their distinct gender implications."[38] Based on the storytelling, fragmented and gendered memories, narratives and their own experiences, Arab American women writers, particularly Palestinian American authors, have employed postmodern and postcolonial approaches, and "[their] act of writing charts a multilayered search, a longing for return to Palestine, to the legacy of the past, but also to that space between 'Palestinian' and 'American' where 'home' is as much created as found."[39] Arab American women authors and the characters they depicts are neither Ihab Hassan's *fellahs* (peasants) nor Gayatri Spivak's subaltern who remain silenced, but rather loud and daring feminist voices who claim their identity, and gender, whether they are veiled or expose their "exotic" Arab

[37] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian+ American Women's Literature", *Thaqafat*, No.7/8 (2004), 254.
[38] "Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives", edited by Maha Yahya, *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 5, (2005), 40.
[39] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "On Writing and Return", *Meridians: feminism, race transnationalism,*vol..2, no.1 (2001), 124.

curls. In her poem, "Cadence," Lisa Suhair Majaj underlines the tasks which Arab American women writers have undertaken in defending their culture, identity and unmasks the "imagined" and romanticized Arab female:

"She longs to walk into the forest empty handed,
climb up a mountain and down again
bearing no more than what any person
needs to live. She dreams of shouting from
a high place, her voice cascading down

wild rivers. Already she can hear the questions:
'Do you Arab women do things like that?'
And the protests: 'We have so many problems!
—our identity to defend, our cultures under siege.
We can't waste time admiring trees!'"[40]

Here, Majaj both tackles stereotypes about Arab American women, and tackles the single-minded focus *among* Arab Americans about what issues are proper topics for an Arab American woman poet, while asserting a broader role for such a poet *beyond* the tackling of such stereotypes.

In her prose poem "Origins", Majaj discusses the birth of her daughter from a mother's perspective. In the first minutes after the child's birth, the mother in the poem is preoccupied with the notion of return to Palestine, the general and personal loss, her origin, her identity and her gender. At the same time, Majaj points out the other places that mark her origin such as the United States, and Cyprus where Majaj currently lives. Majaj writes: "She came headfirst into a space of music, Fairuz singing *Jerusalem in My Heart*, safely delivered, as they say, as if she were a parcel that might have gotten lost en route, but instead had reached the final destination.… I am asked, do I hope she will one day return to Palestine, to the United States, to Cyprus, to any of her points of origin?"[41]

[40] Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Geographies* of *Light*, 65.
[41] Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Geographies* of *Light*, 14.

Despite the fact the Majaj is embedded within the Palestinian cause, she builds bridges between Arab and American landscapes. In her poem, "Season of Fire, Season of Light," she does not "waste time admiring trees," but she interconnects the golden leaves of New Hampshire trees with "blossoms trembled clouds in gold clouds on the trees" in Beirut. "Majaj's imagery," writes Mohja Kahf, "is thick with vegetation, not just the figs we expect in Arab American poetry and the olive trees that are such symbols for Palestinian poetry, but asphodels and knotted fruit and American farmscapes and the gold-leaf of New England autumns— the latter linked startlingly to the fires of Beirut under siege".[42] The unforgotten and bitter experience from Beirut haunts her still:

"Outside Lebanon, New Hampshire
A hundred trees are chanting of fall.
When the wind stirs, gold coins flash
under every tongue. Their fares have been paid,
but the dead still can't cross
to the other side. Bright ghosts, they linger
on the chill New England air.
*
We're still traveling the road from Beirut.
Still remembering how blossoms trembled
in gold clouds on the trees
the morning of evacuation".[43]

Rather than using shocking images, Majaj uses the symbol of light in order to shed light on the darker side of mankind, and attempts to build a better future notwithstanding nationality, ethnicity, religion, race and gender. In a review about Majaj's *Geographies of Light*, Marcy Jane Knopf-Newman notes, "Majaj's poetry comprises one of those particles of light that kindles the flames of darkness. For while one travels from dark to light through her poems, one is always reminded of why that journey is necessary, of why one must remain steadfast. The powerful imagery of light and the portraits of humanity resonate with the work of other Palestinian American poets

[42] Mohja Kahf, "A Controlled Burn of Memory", Book Reviews: *Flawed Landscape: Poems 1987-2008* by Sharif S. Elmusa and *Geographies of Light* by Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Banipal* 38 (2010), para.3.
[43] Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Geographies* of *Light*, 47.

like Suheir Hammad, Nathalie Handal, and Naomi Shihab Nye. In these same footsteps, Majaj's poems are instructive in the way she brings to light the aspects of Arab American identity that are often shrouded." [44]

Naomi Shihab Nye stands as another example of Arab American writers in the wake of the space created by Edward Said. Like Majaj, Nye is daughter of a Palestinian father (in Nye's case, a Muslim) and an American Lutheran Christian mother from the Midwestern region of the U.S. Nye's work has been an outstanding contribution to enriching of the Arab American literature with her collection of poems such as *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East* (2002), *You and Yours* (2005), *Tender Spot: Selected Poems* (2008) *Different ways to pray* (1980) *A Maze Me: Poems for Girls, Red Suitcase* (1994), *Words under the Words (1994), Fuel* (1998), a book of essays *Never in a Hurry* (1996), her novel *Habibi* (1999) and many other poems and essays. As with most contemporary Palestinian American authors, religion has not played nearly as important a role in Nye's writing as has her Palestinian heritage. Notwithstanding the fact that she acknowledges never having experienced the 'flames' of war nor the refugee life of thousands and thousands of displaced Palestinians, the themes related Palestinian cause occupies a particular place in her work. In an interview with Kate Long, she accepts her Palestinian roots, the general loss and other hardships which mark the hopeless refugees. She states: "My father's entire life was shadowed by grief over loss of his home in Palestine in 1948. Millions of refugees worldwide have known a similar grief. I never have. But I have tried to mention theirs again and again in some of my writings."[45] Nye, as a celebrated Arab American poet, does not write poetry only for Arab American communities in Diaspora, but also for mainstream American readers as well as for multicultural readers across the boundaries.

Like Majaj, Nye does not "waste time admiring trees," but uses the fig tree to connect her Arab and American heritages and to bring these two cultures together. In her poem "My father and the Fig Free," Nye connects her father's past and the Palestinian fig

[44]"Lisa Suhair Majaj. Geographies of Light". Review by Marcy Jane Knopf-Newman, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol.34.No. 2 (2012), 130.
[45] Kate Long, "Roots: On Language and Heritage: A Conversation with Naomi Shihab Nye", *World Literature Today,* Vol. 83 Issue 6 (2009), 32

tree with those fig trees in Dallas, Texas. The symbol of fig tree resonates with her hybrid identity:

"For other fruits my father was indifferent.
He'd point at the cherry trees and say,
'See those? I wish they were figs.'
In the evenings he sat by my bed
weaving folktales like vivid little scarves.
They always involved a fig tree.
Even when it didn't fit, he'd stick it in.
Once Joha was walking down the road and he saw a fig tree.
Or, he tied his camel to a fig tree and went to sleep.
Or, later when they caught and arrested him,
his pockets were full of figs.
…….
The last time he moved, I got a phone call.
My father, in Arabic, chanting a song I'd never heard.
'What's that?' I said.
'Wait till you see!'
He took me out back to the new yard.
There, in the middle of Dallas, Texas,
a tree with the largest, fattest, sweetest figs in the world.
'It's a fig tree song!' he said,
plucking his fruits like ripe tokens,
emblems, assurance
of a world that was always his own." [46]

From tree to tree, roots extend, and bring familiar fruits to different and separated locales, describing a power in nature that could never be dismissed, as it is by the impatient listeners described in Majaj's poem, as "wasting time admiring trees."

[46] Naomi Shihab Nye. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of Middle East*, 6-7.

Nye addresses everyday concerns which preoccupy ordinary Palestinian and Palestinian American lives. Like Majaj, Nye uses tender voice by sharing humanity and dignity with other multicultural readers. Unlike Majaj and Nye, Mohja Kahf, who will be discussed later in this chapter, uses a loud, daring and provocative voice in reaction to existing American politics toward Arab Americans, and toward Muslim Americans. But neither Majaj, nor Nye or Kahf, escape their identities which directly clash with the American politics of the present day. Nye, through her poetry, persistently has attempted to avoid such contradictions between her father's and her mother's cultures, respectively Arab and American, and works instead to bring them together by sharing humanity, hope, and peace worldwide. In a related article about Nye's identity and the message which her poetry leaves, Lisa Suhair Majaj observes: "From her earliest publications Nye has suggested that Arab-American identity is not something to be preserved or denied or escaped or romanticized: it is just another way of being human. In language that is accessible to a mainstream U.S readership, Nye creates space in which Arab and Arab–American experiences can be articulated, not through nostalgic reclamation, but by honoring the diversity of experiences and the necessity to change."[47]

Nye's poetry attracts not only young people, but also a range of readers including all ages and various ethnic groups within the United States and across the borders. Through her poetry, she tries to create a space for a change in terms of humanity and progress. In an interview with Joy Castro, a scholar who writes about religion, ethnic identity, violence, and adoption, and was herself adopted by a Cuban-American family of Jehovah's Witnesses, Nye states: "My goals have always been to make wonderful voices available to more readers, to promote poems of humanity and intelligence that extend and connect us all as human beings, to enlarge readers' horizon—including my own, as I work on the books— and to help connect people. My friend Wendy Barker, a fine poet, once called me a human switchboard. I think that was the greatest compliment I ever received."[48] In relation to Nye's Palestinian voice and multicultural poetic approaches and her impact on various readers, Majaj writes: "For Naomi Shihab Nye, the process of

[47] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Arab-American Literature-Origins and Developments", *American Studies Journal*, No. 52 (2008),par.13.
[48] Joy Castro, "Nomad, Switchboard, Poet: Naomy Shihab Nye's Multicultural Literature for Young Readers: An Interview with Naomy Shihab Nye", *MELUS*, Vol.27. No.2 (2002), 233.

challenging boundaries is central: her poetry explores the markers of cross-cultural complexity, moving between her Palestinian and American heritages, the culture of the Southwest where she resides and the different countries.

While honoring the specificity of cultural rooted lives, Nye also emphasizes the liberating possibilities of border crossings; her poems trace the gift of knowing 'that there are travelers, that people go places/larger than themselves' (Yellow Glove, 42).'"[49] These lines can be interconnected with Said's writing in *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays* (2002), where Said emphasizes the advantages of those who travel and their multiple visions about the world in comparison to those who have lived all their lives in one place and possess only one home and one culture. Said was a secularist and he addressed himself to humanistic values, rather than religion. Nye, like Said, is not centrally concerned with religion, but through her poetry, she has worked towards self creation and human dignity. "As the title of her first volume, *Different Ways to Pray*, suggests, notes Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Nye grounds selfhood upon the recognition and articulation of differences. Of note is her depiction of a sense of individual wholesome articulated through internal as well as external complexity. Thus, in the poem, "The Whole Self," Nye writes "the long history of self/on its journeys to becoming the whole self"".[50] The line, "to becoming the whole self," reminds us of the young Said when he wanted to "be [his] own true self (as a book)" (*Out of Place*, 76). It seems Nye has not forgotten the debt she owes to Edward Said in relation to her artistic and individual development. While honoring Said's work and his devotion for Palestine, Nye states: "Recent years saw the deaths of Edward Said and Mahmoud Darwish, two eloquent speakers on the realities of Palestine—in their absence one can only keep turning to their voices, quoting them, urging others to read their work. . . ."[51]

Despite the fact that Nye has a dual identity--Palestinian and American--she tries to connect these identities into a whole, leaving no space for separation, fragmentation and exclusiveness, but rather creating a "woman [who] opens the window" regardless of

---

[49] *Memory & Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, ed. By Amritjit Sigh, Joseph T. Skerret, Jr, and Robert E. Hogan., 282.
[50] *Memory & Cultural Politics: New Approaches to American Ethnic Literatures*, ed. By Amritjit Sigh, Joseph T. Skerret, Jr, and Robert E. Hogan., 282.
[51] Kate Long, "Roots: On Language and Heritage: A Conversation with Naomi Shihab Nye", *World Literature Today,* Vol. 83 Issue 6 (2009), 32.

the place or country where she dwells, and regardless of ethnicity, sometimes using the everyday imagery of housewifely tasks. She writes:

"You can't be, says a Palestinian Christian
on the first feast day after Ramadan.
So, half-and-half and half-and-half.
He sells glass. He knows about broken bits,
chips. If you love Jesus you can't love
anyone else. Says he.
(…)
A woman opens a window—here and here and here—
placing a vase of blue flowers
on an orange cloth. I follow her.
She is making a soup from what she had left
in the bowl, the shriveled garlic and bent bean.
She is leaving nothing out."[52]

In this poem, Nye embues the simple household tasks of an unnamed woman with a quiet will to wholeness and inclusion that overturns the exclusive terms of identity voiced by the man in the earlier stanza. Whereas the man says "If you love Jesus you can't love/ anyone else," the woman merely "opens a window," and that, subtly reinforced by Nye's brief line, "Says he," is enough to override the religious exclusivity the man has asserted.

Political events such as violence against civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, and the U.S. invasion in Iraq, have driven Nye to raise her tender and passionate voice as a call for ending the oppression on her Palestinian sisters and brothers. Catherine Wagner while reviewing Nye's *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East* and *Mohja Kahf's E-mails from Scheherazad,* writes: "Both books are political acts that set out to represent, celebrate, and build political capital for a particular group. For Nye, that culture is mostly Palestinian, while Kahf focuses on Middle Eastern women living in America. Nye's poems amass everyday emotional details of Palestinian lives so that her

[52] Naomi Shihab Nye. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of Middle East*, 97.

readers can identify with them, see their humanity and, Nye hopes, recognize their plight. She sees poetry as a powerful tool for peace. (…) Kahf's poems celebrate humanity too, but they aren't often in pursuit of dignity. They're deadpan or passionate by turns; they present a cast of characters from goddesses to babysitters to painted odalisques, and they are varied formally."[53]

Nye cannot escape from her father's memories as a refugee, and his longing for a Palestinian fig, which resonates on the wish to return. She lived as a teenager in Jerusalem and has traveled extensively, meeting not only Palestinians who have told similar stories like her father's, but also people of other ethnic groups who shared experiences which had an outstanding impact on Nye both in relation to Palestine and to the world at large. As a feminist, she observes the distinction between a white American woman who is fighting for gender equity and, as Amal Abdelrezak puts it, "a Palestinian woman who is trying to find a safe corner to live in where she can protect her children from gunfire."[54] While traveling to Jerusalem, Nye had experiences of injustice similar to those of Edward Said and Lisa Suhair Majaj, due to her Palestinian heritage. In a related article, Majaj remarks: "And it is the exile that Nye comes to understand as part of her own identity: whether at the Israeli airport, where she is 'put in the slow line, the line for trouble that we earned without even trying,' or writing a poem whose lines include a call for peace between Arabs and Jews that is rejected for publication by the Israeli censor, or walking in the West Bank with her father when a tank pulls up and train [sic] its guns at them, at which Nye finds herself shouting furiously at the soldiers —understanding, she says, 'several years before the official beginning of the Intifada….why little boys throw stones' Never 217; 57)."'[55]

Nye writes often about women and she is well aware of the gender oppression anywhere in the world. She describes her emotional attachment to her grandmother in Palestine, and is well aware of the existing gender differences in the Middle East, Arab and Muslim world in general. "When her grandmother asks, of her husband, 'Does he

---

[53] Catherine Wagner, "19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East / E-mails from Scheherazad" *MELUS*, Vol. 3. (2006), 235-235.

[54] Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives", edited by Maha Yahya, *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 5, (2005), 153.

[55] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian+ American Women's Literature", *Thaqafat*, No.7/8 (2004), 256.

beat you?…No? Ah, good. Then he is a good man,' Nye comments, 'It is simple to define things here' (Never 51). Although Nye makes clear her outrage over the abuse of women in all cultures, she does not subscribe to a rigid notion of feminism; nor does she indulge in simplistic dismissal of traditional ways." [56] In the poem called "Going to the Spring," Nye gives voice to the simple life, everyday activities, and cultural issues that have existed among Palestinian women for centuries. These women are not forgotten by history, as there will always be someone who will "cup [his/her] hands" "for the long sweet draft". She writes:

"In the evenings the women
walk to the spring,
my cousins balance huge buckets
on their heads.
They know all the stories of water
that comes through pipes:
their brothers are digging trenches,
laying down tile.
On a roof a silver tank
will cook the water in the sun.
They know there are countries
where men and women kiss in the streets,
where a man's hand on a woman's knee
does not mean an earthquake.
(…)
Pages are turning, centuries of breeze.
These feet write history on the dirt road
and no one reads it, unless you are here
to read it, unless you are thirsty
and cup your hands where the women
tell you to hold them,

[56] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian+ American Women's Literature", *Thaqafat*, No.7/8 (2004), 257.

throwing your head back
for the long sweet draft." [57]

Nye here imbues the everyday activities of these women with value, without essentializing them.

The invasion of Iraq, the violence performed on Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the overall political circumstances have changed Nye's tender voice into a gendered and assertive one. Her "smallness" and "everyday life" which abound in her poetry are powerful notions with which to oppose violence and the military sublime. While discussing Nye's poetry after 9/11, Samina Najmi introduces the notion of "military sublime" which glorifies the US military intervention against Saddam Hussein's strategic positions in Iraq. The US bombing of Baghdad, on the one hand, can be regarded in terms of threatening images of military grandeur, while on the other hand and in other discourses, these images are used to stand for the enthusiasm and hope to liberate the people and bring peace to the region. While introducing the sublime in Shelley's poetry in connection the limitless of the outside world, Angela Leighton remarks: "As the boundaries of the external world are pushed out towards infinity, and as writer come to advocate the freedom of obscurity of the act of seeing, the whole model of sight becomes self-defeating. (…) As visibility opens, both outwards and inwards, towards vision, in the development of the sublime, it opens towards its own opposite." [58] Indeed, in Nye poetry, the opposite of "the military sublime" is the aesthetic depiction of smallness, the everyday things, and the simple which stand as a counterpoint to "threatening grandeur" and its vast delightful fear. In other words, Nye's "aesthetics of smallness" indicates the feminist voice against the brutality of male power, underlying the idea that common things have the power to bring together different ethnic groups. This mode of writing is demonstrated in her poetry collection *You & Yours* (2005), where Nye expresses a belief that poetry and art in general are more powerful in bringing peace and connecting people than the use of violence and military operations conducted by the U.S., often bearing fantastic and bombastic names. "Thus Nye's aesthetic of smallness", writes Samina Najmi, "operates politically to bring together different groups of people.

[57] Naomi Shihab Nye. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of Middle East*, 9,10.
[58] Angela Leighton.*Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems,* 18.

Although she describes poetry as a genderless form (…) her use of an aesthetic of smallness to underscore human connectivity makes her poetics distinctly feminist, confronting and challenging the traditionally masculine turfs of politics and war in a strategy that takes aim at the seductiveness of the sublime in representations of war."[59] Of note where the smallness, the innocence counter the sublime is Nye's elegiac poem called "For Mohammad Zeid of Gaza, Age, 15". The poem depicts the death of a Palestinian boy named Mohammad by a stray bullet in Gaza. This poem has parallels with Majaj's poem "Cyclones and Seeds," where in Majaj mourns a fourteen-year-old child named Samer Suleiman Abu Mayaleh. "Nye shrinks the vast and vague generalities of the military sublime, yet she also exposes the enormity of what is falsely rendered diminutive in the discourse of war."[60] Nye, in a mourning voice, reacts against the death of "smallness", the death of truth and purity:

"There is no stray bullet, sirs.
No bullet like a worried cat
crouching under a bush,
no half-hairless puppy bullet
dodging midnight streets.
The bullet could not be a pecan
plunking the tin roof,
not hardly, no fluff of pollen
on October's breath,
no humble pebble at our feet
so don't gentle it please.
….
But this bullet had no innocence, did not
wish anyone well, you can't tell us otherwise
by naming it mildly, this bullet was never the friend

[59] Samina Najmi, "Naomi Shihab Nye's Aesthetic of Smallness and the Military Sublime", *MELUS*, Vol. 35 Issue 2 (2010), 152.
[60] Samina Najmi, "Naomi Shihab Nye's Aesthetic of Smallness and the Military Sublime", *MELUS*, Vol. 35 Issue 2 (2010), 165.

of life, should not be granted immunity
by soft saying—friendly fire, straying death-eye,
why have we given the wrong weight to what we do?
….
Mohammed, Mohammed, deserves the truth.
This bullet had no secret happy hopes,
it was not singing to itself with eyes closed
under the bridge."[61]

Lines such as "friendly fire, straying death-eye," "it was not singing to itself with eyes closed" and "eyes closed under the bridge" are real markers of Nye's humanism and her task which she has undertaken in creating a better world and building linking bridges where people will not die under them, but rather, hand in hand walk along them towards a better understanding, a peaceful world without ethnical diversities and hatred.

While Lisa Suhair Majaj and Naomi Shihab Nye deal with universal issues and everyday concerns which face the Arab American communities, especially with the Palestinian cause, Mohja Kahf and Leila Halaby, despite the already known Arab American issues, also seriously tackle Islamophobia, negative stereotypes of Arab Americans and in particular stereotypes in relation to Arab American women. Prejudices about Islam have existed in the Western world since the Crusades, beginning in the eleventh century, and were carried on to the American continent by the first settlers. Due to religious and political animosity, the West invented narratives about the Arab male as uncivilized and as a model of barbarity and "wicked" pirates, whereas Arab and Islamic women were described as imagined objects of pleasure. On the other side, Western ideologies took advantage in stereotyping of Muslim and Muslim Americans based on the existing "gender oppression" which is presumed to be more present in Muslim world than in other religions. In the modern U.S. context which is heir to those older Western stereotypes, Arab Americans and the overlapping but not identical category of Muslim Americans, have been considered a real threat to the American democracy and civilization. Therefore, Arab American authors and Muslim American authors have had a

[61] Naomi Shihab *Nye.Tender Spot: Selected Poems*, 138.

difficult task in representing the more nuanced faces of Arab Americans, especially of Arab Muslim American women. Some have tried to dismantle negative issues associated with them, such as Western perceptions of the *hijab* (veil) and gender discrimination, while unveiling other liberties embraced by Muslim American women. In relation to Islam as a culture and literature, Sama Abdurraqib writes: "When Islam is considered solely a cultural affiliation, narratives of immigration become bifurcated along gender lines. Immigrant narratives that focus on religion have the potential to follow the same patterns as normative immigration novels. However, when Muslim women are placed at the center of these oppositions, the patterns are revised. The oppositions become stauncher—and the divisions between 'us and them' are relied upon more heavily. Islam becomes the religion of the 'other' and the culture from which women need to be liberated." [62]

Mohja Kahf stands as an eminent poet, novelist, scholar and feminist who strives to "liberate" Muslim American women and justify her Muslim heritage. Kahf is a Syrian American author and belongs to the new wave of Arab American feminist writers. She writes poetry, essays, while in 2006 she gained wide recognition with her novel *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*. In her collection of poetry *E-mails from Scheherazad* (2003), she portrays Muslim Arab American women and their actual concerns including the issue of sex, claiming that Arab American women are part of America and have their own dignity, passion and dreams as other women in the United States. Besides writing poetry and prose, Kahf has made a significant contribution to the development of Arab American literary tradition by emphasizing the concept of "storytelling" which is used by majority of Arab American writers nowadays. Storytelling and Arab oral tradition have a particular importance in the development of contemporary Arab American literature. The immigrant stories contain multifaceted aspects of life and hardships which were experienced by Arab exiles and in particular Arab women who have been silenced and oppressed gender in the Arab world and stereotyped in the Western civilization. We will turn to storytelling in chapter four, emphasizing it as a central concept of Arab American writing.

---

[62] Samaa Abdurraqip," Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature", *MELUS*, Vol. 31, No.4, Arab American Literature (2006), 56.

One may wonder how a Muslim woman who (sometimes) wears a scarf writes poems about sex. "Kahf vigorously combats such assumptions", writes Catherine Wagner, "she's a feminist, she writes sexy and aggressive poems, *and* she's a Koran scholar who wears a headscarf. If you thought you knew what a feminist was or what a Muslim was, Kahf insists that you think again."[63] Unlike her parents, about whose past affiliation with the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood she has written, Kahf's position in the Muslim spectrum tends toward the progressive side, supporting woman-led mixed-gender prayer, for example. Currently, as feminist activist in the Syrian Revolution opposing the Syrian dictatorship, often defending Alawites in the Syrian Revolution against sectarianism within the revolution's discourses, she demands freedom for all Syrians and equality for all religious groups in Syria. However, in the context of post 9/11 Islamophobia, she strove not to stereotype conservative Muslims and even political Islamists, in ways which could construe her as an apologist for conservative Islam. For example, she states in an interview published in 2007: "In my upbringing, the foremost factor in bringing me to my voice was religion, and the religion of Islam as manifested in my family which had a modern, political Islamist orientation. Whether I agree or disagree with that worldview today, I am dismayed that it is being painted as extremist and terroristic, not only in Western media but by secular Arabs, Arab feminists, and others in the Arab world who consider themselves 'progressive.' These progressives are often extremists themselves, favoring undemocratic secular rule over democracy that gives room to Islamists, whom they see as the apocalypse. I come from an extended family that has Muslim Brotherhood roots going back three generations, and I am proud of their activism."[64] After September 11, Islamophobic discourse acquired a new intensity, where Arab men in general were represented by numerous media as suicide bombers, hijackers, and source of terror, identifying all Arabs with those who brought about thousands of innocent deaths. On the other side, the veiled images of Arab women could be found in cover books, in posters in daily press and magazines. "The label of racism" as Steven Salaita puts it in attempt to show the connection between Islamophobia and anti-Arab

[63] Catherine Wagner, "19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East", by Naomi Shihab Nye and "E-mails from Scheherazad", by Mohja Kahf, MELUS 31, no 4 (2006), 237.
[64] Hilary E. Davis, Jasmin Zine and Lisa K. Taylor, "An interview with Mohja Kahf", *Routledge* 18, no. 4, (2007), 383.

racism, "can thus be applied to anti-Arab vitriol independent of the severe dehumanization that occurs by construing a religious group's prophet as a pedophile. If, after all, Mohammed is portrayed as subhuman, what does it imply about those who follow his religion?"[65]

Thus, in speaking out against negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims, Kahf raises her loud and daring voice, whether in poetry or fiction, while presenting her ostensibly victimized veiled sisters as possessing agency. Kahf's poems, like Nye's, depict everyday lives in Arab American communities and unfriendly attitudes faced by these ethnic groups from the majority of Americans. Unlike Nye, she uses sometimes aggressive political language. "Kahf's poetry riskily uses violence as a figure for a powerful force in American society that we ignore at our peril—energetic and daring Middle Eastern women. Kahf's stance is complicated. Her poems evidence a strong affection for the American everyday, with a simultaneous strong disdain for American cultural and political ignorance and ethnocentrism." [66] In her poem "Copulation in English," despite her seductive stance in favor of the soft Arabic feminine voices against those whose first language is English, we encounter her attempts to eliminate stereotypes about Muslim American woman as the object of pleasure, by demanding recognition of Arab women as transformative presence within American society:

We are going to make English love us
and kiss us and explore us with its tongues
Then we will play hard-to-get
and English will have to phone
and leave message after message of desire on our machines
English will have to learn what to say to please us
….
English will come to us hoarse with passion
we will have taught English to have

[65] Salaita, .Steven, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 157.
[66] Catherine Wagner, "19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East", by Naomi Shihab Nye and "E-mails from Scheherazad", by Mohja Kahf, MELUS 31, no 4 (2006), 236.

and English will never be the same and will never regret us.[67]

In metaphors of playful erotic exchange, Arab Americans are depicted here as enriching the English language, against a view that demands linguistic assimilation of the immigrant.

Kahf's poem "*Hijab* Scene #7" is the best example where she depicts the issues of the Muslim American women and Arab Americans at large, after the destructive events of September 11, 2001. The poem reads:

No, I'm not bald under the scarf
No, I'm not from that country
where women can't drive cars
No, I would not like to defect
I'm already American
But thank you for offering
What else do you need to know
relevant to my buying insurance,
opening a bank account,
reserving a seat on a flight?
Yes, I speak English
Yes, I carry explosives

They're called words[68]

In this poem, Kahf combines the veil, Arab American identity, progressive and educated Muslim American women, their liberties, the role of the poet to change the world as well as the negative image in regard to Arabs in general, even while deploying the very notion of suicide bombing on an airplane which is at the heart of the stereotype itself.

[67] Mohja Kahf. *E-mails from Scheherazad*, 71,72.
[68] Mohja Kahf. *E-mails from Scheherazad*, 39.

3. 2 Themes in the Fiction of Two Arab American Women Writers

Kahf continues with her veiled women in her fiction as well, trying to "liberate" the reader from the interpretations of them derived from the existing politics and media. Her novel *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* (2006) stands as an iconic novel in regard to the above mentioned issues. Today, veiling has become a problematic and political issue, not only in the United States and Western world, but also in other countries worldwide. Due to the existing political climate in the United States, France, Germany, and indeed in various Middle Eastern countries, veiling is regarded as political issue and as a sign of separation of Islam from modern Western civilization.Islamic veiling is regarded in mainstream Western discourses as marker of gender oppression used in the prevalent stereotyping of Muslim women; at the same time, the veil raises polemics within feminist movement, including not only Western feminist activists, but also among Muslim women who hold secular beliefs. "In the West today," as Jennifer Heath puts it, "the veil is rarely treated as a traditional or sacred custom but is perceived almost entirely politically. The practice of veiling has long been the subject of conflict, though now in the early twenty-first century arguments grow louder and more combative than ever.

As we learn from Zahedi and from Mohja Kahf, in 'From Her Royal Body the Robe Was Removed,' the custom of veiling has historically been a source of political manipulation, from the British treatment of it in Egypt in the nineteenth century to Atatürk's and Reza Pahlavi's forced unveilings in Turkey and Persia in the early twentieth century. It was a colonial and imperial football."[69] For many Western citizens, veiled women are considered as uneducated and self-abnegating, knowing not that the covered head might be the head of a scientist, a scholar or a poet, as Kahf is. "Once, a journalist," as Kahf points out "who was supposed to be reviewing my poetry reading reviewed my mode of dress instead. All she could find to say was 'Here's this woman in hijab who reads poetry! Look, she's in hijab and reads poetry!' She led with it and mentioned my physical appearance about five times in her article. I found it very condescending, as if women who wear hijab were porcelain dolls who couldn't possibly be expected to know how to wield words: My, my, isn't it amazing that this one does.

[69] Jennifer Heath. *The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore and Politics*, 6.

Millions of women around the globe wear hijab and go about their daily lives, as they do in saris and dashikis and other non-Western dress, so it's silly and ethnocentric to trip over it like that."[70]

Kahf's novel, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*, offers a valuable representation of veiled Muslim American women, as well as of some of the politics which animate Muslim American immigrants, anti-Arab racism, misinterpretation of Islam, diversities and racism which exist within Islam itself as well as within other ethnic religious groups such as Christian Arabs, Mormons and Orthodox Jews. In *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* Kahf employs postmodernist style and emphasizes her feminist points of view, trying to liberate Muslim American women from conservative Islamic norms. The novel depicts the upbringing of the main character, Khadra Shamy, who migrated to the United States with her parents. The young and daring immigrant girl is emotionally linked to her Muslim culture, and to the city of her birth,-Damascus. Khadra Shamy is proud of her identity, but in comparison to conservative Islamist points of view, she distances herself from such conservatism and eventually from her parents, who embody it. Khadra is not suspended between nationalism and feminism as it is the case with women in Arab and Muslim Arab communities but rather criticizes negative norms within Islam and embraces positive sides of Islamic culture, by emphasizing progressive and moderate steps which should be undertaken by Arab American communities and white Americans in order to create a better understanding and bring the cultures together. "The Kahfs, it seems, transported the 'home space' with them when they settled in the USA. Like many similar emigrants, they sought to re-create nostalgically and reflectively, in Proustian manner, the cultural and emotional particularities of locations and connections left behind. Mohja, their daughter, grew up in a community that observed Islamic rituals rigorously and tolerated little dissidence, if any."[71]

The reader who has previous knowledge about Kahf, may regard *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* as autobiographical, for although it is fiction, it is her first novel—the first novel being autobiographical for many authors. The plot revolves around Khadra, her Syrian immigrant parents in Indiana in the 1970s, her childhood friends and the racial

[70] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, 14.
[71] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 29.

and political prejudices and the clash of civilization which traps the covered "young artist." In the very beginning of the novel, we encounter racial and religious hatred which is demonstrated towards Khadra's brother Eyad by a white American kid named Brian, and to the Shamy family by their white American neighbours. "'Brian Lott, whyn't you go pick on someone who is your size?"' Eyad yelled at the boy on the dirt bike. 'Fuck you, raghead!' Brian shouted back. We gonna get all you fuckers!' He wheelied on 'fuckers.'"[72] Brian learned the "art" of hatred from his parents and a reaction to their son's quarrel with Eyad, such as when Mr. Vaughn shouted at Shamy's door. '"—ACCUSING MY CHILDREN—OFF MY PORCH— BACK WHERE YOU PEOPLE CAME FROM!'"[73]

While Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* is considered as the first Arab American novel in depicting the positive and negative Arab American issues, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* stands as the first novel to criticize both American politics and conservative Islam. Racism in *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* is not evident only between white Americans and Muslim Americans, but also within Islam itself. Khadra's parents are regarded as conservatives and show racism toward American black Muslims. They react when their son, Eyad, wants to marry a Sudanese Muslim American, and they also oppose the marriage of their younger son, Jihad with Sariah Whitcomb, who is white and belongs to the Mormon religion. In relation to the diversities within Islam, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* reads: '"So…I was wondering what you would think about the idea of proposing to Dr. Abdul-Kadir's daughter Maha,' he began timidly one evening in the kitchen. His father stopped deboning the chicken, mid-breast, and blurted, 'But for heaven's sake, she's black as coal!'" [74] In relation to self-criticism and criticisms in Kahf's novel and Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, Layla Al Maleh notes: : "Kahf was not the first novelist to surprise the Arab-American community with her daring and to practise [sic] self-criticism on behalf of the collective. Diana Abu Jaber, a Palestinian American, more than a decade before her, managed to do exactly that, and in the face of much opprobrium. Her *Arabian Jazz*, published in 1993 (Winner of the Oregon Book Award and finalist for the National

[72] Mohja Kahf. *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 5.
[73] Mohja Kahf. *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 7
[74] Mohja Kahf. *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 138, 139.

PEN/Hemingway Award) and regarded by many as the first Arab-American novel, offered what some viewed as a negative and unflattering portrayal of Arab-Americans."[75]

Despite criticizing negative aspects of the Arab American community, Arab American women writers both hesitate and show courage in choosing "hot themes" such as American foreign policy and wars that result from such politics. Kahf's *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* depicts many political events which shook the world in the second half of the twentieth century. "These women writers" says Amal Abdelrezak, "feel that they are not forced to choose between passively keeping silent and minimizing the consequences of Arab and Islamic fundamentalism or siding with the harrying forces of the United States with its wanton bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan and its continuing assaults on Iraq. Using the healing power of words to tell their stories, Arab-American writers seek to open door to an understanding of their differences and resist their own image that has been distorted and demonized by the harmful power of prejudice. These women writers, as appears in Mohja Kahf's and Suheir Hammad's poetry and Diana Abu-Jaber's novel, *Crescent*, explain notions such as the veil, the Arab female body, difference, and doubleness."[76]

Some political developments contributed towards religious hatred and xenophobia in the U.S. After the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Iran worsened. The Muslim presence in the U.S. was opposed by many white Americans and Muslim Americans became a target of backlash prejudice. In the novel, Kahf portrays the anti-Muslim vandalism that occurred in Dawah Center, an Islamic educational institute where Khadra's father works, as part of the unfriendly attitudes of the white residents of Indiana toward Muslim Americans, particularly after Iranian revolutionaries captured fifty-two hostages in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979. In relation to the political points of view and religion, and considering the vandalism demonstrated towards the Shamy family, Steven Salaita writes: "This harassment of the Shamy family and its peers relies on the assumption that all Muslims share a singular belief and political outlook, an

[75] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 32.
[76] "Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives", edited by Maha Yahya, *The MIT Eletronic Jurnal of Middle East Studies* Vol 5, (2005), 146-147.

assumption that Kahf's independent-minded Muslim characters clearly disprove."[77] Through her characters, Kahf represents the theme of war and the violence exhibited on civilians not only in the Middle East, but also in the the Balkans at the end of the twentieth century. "Kahf" as Purnima Bose puts it, "also successfully decenters dominant American narratives about geopolitics by describing Arab perceptions and reactions to an all-too muscular and imperial foreign policy. The characters express horror at the Sabra and Shatila massacres, cheer the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, avidly follow the first Intifada, experience outrage at Syrian Baathist attempts to strip women of hijab, and mourn the aerial bombings of Iraq with their attendant massive civilian casualties."[78]

While remembering the main political events in the Middle East and the Lebanese Civil War, Kahf writes in *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*: "Khadra and her friends applauded the assassination of Sadat and wished Saddam had met the same fate before he'd crush the Shia Islamic resurgence in Iraq. They cheered the growing anti-Israeli resistance of the Shia Amal militia in the south of Lebanon. Insaf [a Muslim character in the novel who becomes a lesbian] now liked to wear men's shalvar-qamises in stern plain grays and browns. She 'liberated' them from her father's closet."[79] The characters thus bring to light Muslim American reactions heretofore unheard in American literature, as does a conversation that the adult Khadra has with an Orthodox Jew, named Blu, over the Palestinian-Israeli issue, both characters fight verbally in relation to their respective points of view. Blu says to Khadra, '"What? You *don't recognize Israeli's right to exist*?' Blu stood up. This was beyond bounds. 'What? You mean you actually *expected* me to?' Khadra said indignant. 'Israel was illegally made—by terrorists emptying out villages and forcing mass exodus of Palestinians.' 'I can't listen to this,' Blu said, her voice tremulous. 'You don't understand: My grandmother died in Holocaust. My mother grew up saving pennies in her little Land box. You're insulting their lives. Their deaths.' Khadra was taken back. 'I don't mean to be,' she said, softer. 'I'm sorry about your grandmother. The Holocaust was a horrible thing. And I need to learn about it, like your grandmother's story— I've never known anyone personally who— I'm so sorry.' She

[77] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 34.
[78] Purnima Bose,"The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf," by Mohja Kahf, *Indiana Magazine* of *History*;(2009), Vol. 105, Issue 1, 90.
[79] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 152, 153.

took breath. 'But— I don't see how that justifies Israel. How does it follow…'(…) When Khadra got home, she was mad at herself for not having said, 'Well *you're* insulting the death of my Téta's husband in '48, and uncle Omar's parents and all the other Palestinians who got killed by the *terrorism* that Israel was founded on, so *there*.'"[80]

Kahf's themes of war and violence cross boundaries, interconnecting religion and politics. She stresses the violence which occurred in the Balkans in the 1990s, mentioning atrocities towards civilians and raping of women by Serbian soldiers and paramilitary groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but on the other side, she points out the hatred for other religious groups which exists within conservative and fundamentalist Muslims. Here, for example, is the passage where Khadra's mother, Ebtehaj discuses the war in Bosnia: '"Those Muslims in Bosnia,' her mother went on in a strong voice that caused Khadra to blink out of her woolgathering, 'hundreds of years they've lived with the kuffar [non-Muslims] of their land, taking them for friends and even marrying them, and still the kuffar, in the end, turn on them and murder them. The women are being raped by their own neighbors!' There was no denying that horrible fact, but Khadra didn't like where her mother was going with it. It was pointless to have friendships that crossed the lines of religion? 'It goes to show that, in the end, Muslims must become strong again in the world, and get nuclear arms, and depend on themselves. Only they can save themselves from destruction,' Ebtehaj said." [81] We hear the mother through the skeptical ears of the daughter in this scene which depicts both the realities of racist violence, and the mother's wrong, and equally racist, conclusion drawn from it.

Kahf, in *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*, depicts the bombing of Baghdad. By this time, Khadra is a "grown-up" artist studying photography in Philadelphia, distanced from her family not only geographically but also spiritually. On the background of the bombing of Baghdad, Kahf depicts the hatred of some white Americans towards Arabs, and on the other side the horror that was experienced by Arab American characters reacting to the death of innocent civilians. *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* reads: "Khadra and Chrïf were out with his friends, a cousin who was a cab-driving civil engineer, and an Algerian couple, when the first greeny night-vision shots of the carpet bombing of the

[80] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 320, 321.
[81] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 382.

city of Baghdad were aired. They watched these images as they shone down eerily upon them from the TV set above the bar, seeing fiery glow dropping from dark sky into dark city. Some guys at a booth shouted 'Whoo! Nuke' em!'and they looked at each other. The Algerian woman pushed her plate away. Her husband opened his billfold, shaking his head. Khadra had her hand on her mouth in horror." [82]

Khadra Shamy experiences many events and injustices beginning from her childhood. As the plot progresses, we notice Khadra's attempts to push for a progressive change of the identity of the Muslim women and herself towards modern Muslim American women. Khadra meets different nationalities who embrace Islam in different ways and have different cultural traditions, such as African Americans, Arabs, South Asians, and Cambodians, Albanians and Bosnians. She also draws the existing diversities within Islam, such as the evident tensions and prejudices between Shias and Sunnis. On the other hand, Kahf portrays other ethnic groups who are born Muslim or converted to Islam, but are not familiar with the rituals and the practice of Islam. This is best illustrated in the conversation she has with her father on the trip for Hajj, the Islamic ritual pilgrimage to Mecca. In Amsterdam they board the Jeddah connection for Saudi Arabia, where they met many people who were going to Hajj, among them an Albanian couple, whom Khadra initially assumes is American and non-Muslim because they do not know how to wear *ihram*, the ritual garb for pilgrimage. Kahf thus exposes to the reader Khadra's own prejudices about Muslims.

Considering all the above mentioned issues, Khadra decides to make a trip to Syria and discover by herself the country of her birth, where she gets in direct touch with her faith and identity. In our first chapter, we have drawn parallels between Joyce's Stephen Dedalus and Edward Said as a "young man," and following Khadra's coming of age, and her struggle towards creation of her identity, we can draw the same similarities with Dedalus, the young Said, and this novel's "artist as a Muslim woman." While comparing Khadra with Stephen Dedalus, Layla Al Maleh writes: "Indeed, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* projects a portrait of the artist as a Muslim woman, or 'angry young Muslim' woman, as she chronicles the struggle she has to wage in order to reconcile her faith with a country that is often hostile towards it. Kahf lashes out at Islamic orthodoxy

[82] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 338.

as well as American parochialism, all in a style that can be described as edgy, aggressive, at times confrontational, often cynical and sarcastic, and always audacious." [83]

Presumably, the most decisive event in relation to Khadra's recognition of her identity and self-creation is death of her friend's sister named Zuhura, a Kenyan-American Muslim activist. Zuhura was raped and then murdered by, it is strongly hinted, reactionary white extremists known as KKK (Ku Klux Klan). Her murder emphasizes the racial and religious hatred by white supremacists towards non-white and non-Christian immigrants, and has a direct impact on Khadra's readiness to recognize the racial hatred and political injustice in relation to the "other" communities, since the police did not pay much attention to Zuhura's death and the murderers were never caught. Zuhura becomes a symbolic figure for Khadra, due to Zuhura's courage in expressing her political points of view and liberties of Muslim-American women. Kahf notes conservative attitudes of Khadra's parents and other Muslims in regard to personal liberties triggered by Zuhura's murder. Kahf writes: '"She should not have been traipsing about the highway at mid-night alone,' Wajdy and Ebtehaj agreed in late-night kitchen-table voices. And the whispers and undertones around the water cooler at Dawah Center agreed: She had been asking for trouble. Sad as it made them to say it. And her family should've given her more guidance. You protected your daughters."[84] In relation to Khadra's identification with Zuhura's death Salaita notes: "Her death, in other words, has entered into the everyday reality of everybody's lives. Only when Khadra finally confronts and accepts the horror of Zuhura's death and the meaning of Zuhura's life is she able to move forward with a sense of wholeness comprising her numerous identities."[85]

Khadra as an adult acts as a moderate Muslim and does not have any dislike for other religions. This can be best illustrated in the passage when she talks with her friend Tayiba over Islam. '"You once said on the phone that Muslims are just messed up as non-Muslims,' her friend says. 'Been meaning to ask what you meant by that.' 'I didn't say that. What I said was that Muslims aren't necessarily better spiritually than people in other faith. They might be as close or even closer to God and not be Muslims. He hears

[83] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 32.
[84] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 95, 96.
[85] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 41.

their prayers too.'"[86] As a moderate Muslim woman, Khadra adapts the American multicultural society, actively engaging in women's rights, but always emphasizing her identity. As a feminist, Kahf has Khadra deal with very sensitive issues within Muslim American communities, rejecting conservative norms in favour of Muslim women's liberties including the way they dress, abortion, and divorce, as well as difficulties of Muslim Arab Americans to acculturate "Americanness." Khadra marries Juma al-Tashkenti, a Muslim from Kuwait, but soon their marriage declines. Juma forbids her to ride a bicycle, but that is only one indication of what he represents to Khadra: a constraint on her self-development, aided by a modern yet restrictive Muslim interpretation of Islam and of gender roles.Feeling herself cornered between choosing to develop her inner self and continuing a life of increasing conformity to dominant Muslim concepts of Islam and Arab concepts of femininity, Khadra aborts a pregnancy from him and, soon after, divorces him. Later, toward the end of the novel, she begins a relationship with her childhood friend, Hakim, of African American ethnicity, which suggests a potential to bridge racial gaps and bring together not only diversities within Khadra's Muslim American community, but also to overcome hatred among ethnicities, races, religions in multicultural America.

While returning back from Syria to the United States, Khadra has a moment which crystallizes her sense of identity through the idea of wearing a scarf, not the black conservative headscarf she once wore, but a tangerine scarf from her grandmother-figure in Syria whose vibrant color represents adaptibility. On the flight from Damascus to Chicago, she puts the scarf on her head yet does not drape it tightly. As one critic notes, "Kahf subverts this stereotypical projection of Muslim women. Her book is on Muslim and Muslim woman identity. The picture [on the book cover] is of a woman (still sad-faced and not smiling) clad in tangerine long scarf. Muslim women are usually denied from wearing clothes with bright colours, in certain conservative Muslim societies. However, the Quran only stresses on dressing modestly and makes no mention of what colour is right or wrong."[87]

---

[86] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 401.

[87] Ruzy Suliza Hashim, "Notions of Home for Diasporic Muslim Women Writers" *European Journal of Social Sciences,*Volume 9, Number 4 (2009)**,** 549.

The novel itself is beautifully written where Kahf despite portraying a nuanced image of Muslim Americans and Muslims in general, employs her poetical craft, whether depicting the bombing of Baghdad or a natural Midwestern U.S. landscape such as the one in this scene of sunset: "The last sunlight filtered through the raspberry bushes as the children crawled through flickering light and shadow within." [88] The novel is framed on the event of Khadra's return as an adult to (the fictional town of) Simmonsville, Indiana, and shuttles back and forth from that timeframe to flashbacks recalling Khadra's childhood, as the adult Khadra reevaluates bittersweet memories, her friends, and the events she has experienced. Indeed, the "shadow" of the Muslim American woman is lit by transparent and visible lights which Kahf uses in depicting variations within Islam, on one hand, and American everyday life, on the other. "She illuminates," writes Steven Sailaita, "Arab and Muslim Americans in their totality, including the negative, which ultimately makes them more human and thus more likeable. Perhaps this thoroughness is the most notable aspect of *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*: the fact that Kahf shows people to be repository of so many problems and yet never allows readers to lose faith in humankind."[89] Khadra's transformation into a young woman and a moderate Muslim American is illustrated at the end of the novel, by which time she has grown as an artist (a photographer), having far fewer religious and political prejudices than before, and seeing herself equal with the white Americans and human race in general. She is no longer "distanced" from the folks of Indiana where she grew up, but a part of that community, as well as a part of American Islam and Arab America. "Midwesterners— Hoosiers— set in their ways, hardworking, steady, valuing God and family. Suspicious of change. In a funny way, Khadra realizes suddenly, as she surveys the crowd: they're us, and we're them. Hah! My folks are the perfect Hoosiers!"[90]

The Girl in Tangerine Scarf represents a moderate Muslim American woman, who supports equality and women's liberties, and opposes conservative norms of Islam. She rides a bike in public which is unusual of a Muslim woman from as conservative a background as Khadra's. She wears both a headscarf and jeans— two garments whose simultaneity the text uses to identify her as moderate Muslim Arab American women.

---

[88] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 64.
[89] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 41.
[90] Kahf, *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf,* 438.

While Kahf "liberates" her "girl in the tangerine scarf" from conservative Islamic rules and places her into a multiethnic America, Laila Halaby's protagonists, Jassim and Salwa Haddad, in her novel, *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) are caught between their desire of chasing the American Dream and victimization by the American patriotism after the events of September 11, 2001. While her novel *West of the Jordan* (2003), flashes out the history of Palestine as well as diverse cultural, socio-political and economical issues in the United States and in the occupied Palestine through storytelling and memory, *Once in a Promised Land* portrays the events that face Arab Americans or precisely Palestinian Americans after September 11, such as anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia, and the political persecution of the Middle Eastern ethnicities. Like Lisa Suhair Majaj, Naomi Shihab Nye and several other Palestinian American women authors, Halaby claims affiliation to both Arab and American cultures as a daughter of Palestinian Jordanian father and a white American mother. The novel was written during a period when the political relationship between the United States and the Middle East became a part of everyday life of far greater numbers of Americans, and shaped the writings of many contemporary Arab American authors.

Laila Halaby with her novels *West of the Jordan* and *Once in a Promised Land* has managed to stress the key issues that preoccupy many Arab Americans today. In relation to the Palestinian cause which is present in Halaby's work, Layla Al Maleh, while quoting Laila Halaby, notes: "Palestine has always been central to her [writing]. Love of land, loss, exile, forcible removal, the physical beauty of land being bittersweet because it is so often seen through memory rather than today's life."[91] Indeed, the loss of land, rather than "bittersweet" memories, dictates bitter experiences which the main characters of *Once in a Promised Land* undergo due to politics of the day. "That is to say,", as Steven Salaita puts it, "the novel [*Once in a Promised Land]* reflects on the most important topics of our day. The topics revolve in some way around the events of September 11, 2001, and their numerous effects on American society and foreign policy. (…) Like the title *West of the Jordan*, the title *Once in a Promised Land* is a double entendre. The word *once* can denote a singular moment or a past era, or it can denote a

[91] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 204.

sequence, as 'Once I arrived in the United States.'"[92] The September 11, 2001 attacks on the Pentagon and Manhattan's "Twin Towers" deepened the existing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States; many Muslim Americans and Arab American became suspicious subjects of investigations for various U.S government agencies including FBI and airport security. The United States government under George W. Bush's administration declared war on terrorism, and some of the actions undertaken by U.S. security agencies seemed to view all Arab Americans, including charity organizations and intellectuals as a possible source for further terrorist activities.

Due to the events of September 11, the American government has changed not only its domestic policy toward Arab Americans and Muslim Americans at large in ways that affect the civil liberties of all Americans of all backgrounds, but also its foreign policy in relation to the Middle East. "All of these issues" writes Steven Salaita, "contribute in some way to the proliferation of anti-Arab racism because they construe the Arab World as crucial to the wellbeing of the United States and usually conclude that the Arab World is a detriment to American progress. By involving itself militarily and economically in the Arab World the American government has ensured that productive intercultural dialogue and meaningful political interchange among Americans and Arabs will rarely take place."[93]

Jassim and Salwa, a Palestinian couple from Jordan, are the main protagonists of *Once in a Promised Land,* and are presented right away as direct victims of the consequences of September 11. Halaby depicts the human hatred towards other ethnic groups which have existed ever since the creation of mankind and such stories happen to everyone, notwithstanding the time and the place. She writes: "*They say there was or there wasn't in olden times* a story as old as life, as young as this moment, a story that is yours and is mine.… Our main characters are Salwa and Jassim. We really come to know them only after the World Trade Center buildings have been flattened by planes flown by Arabs, by Muslims. Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and

[92] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 87.
[93] Salaita, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes from and What It Means for Politics Today*, 35.

everything." [94] In the hardcover version of the novel, Halaby had written a longer prologue than in the paperback version, but it was cut, due to the politics of publication. In a telephone conversation with Halaby, the playwright Jayne Benjulian notes: "I had read the paperback, and I was surprised to learn that she had written a longer prologue, from which, according to Halaby, the publisher cut several pages in the paperback edition, believing that it might 'put you off . . . it just might. The object was to sell the book.' The next day, I ran to the University of San Francisco Library and borrowed a copy. That original version includes a more concrete and more unambiguous presentation of prejudice against Arabs, in particular, an imaginary scene in which an Arab moves through an airport security line. 'I remember writing it and thinking yes, that's it: now I've said something I needed to say.' What remains in the prologue and epilogue is the dreamlike frame of a Palestinian folktale." [95]

Political situation after September 11, 2001 dictated a new wave of American xenophobia in the United States which was pointed toward Arab Americans, who were isolated, stereotyped and undesired on American soil to a larger extent than before, despite the fact that all of the September 11 hijackers were citizens of other countries, and not Arab Americans. New legislation was passed in the wave of the attacks, which curtailed civil liberties for all American citizens. "The Patriot Act," notes Salaita of one of these new laws, "is only the first legislative initiative of what many legal scholars fear will be a series of federal resolutions that might severely limit civil liberties. In January 2003, Bill Moyers posted on the NOW website the text for the Domestic Security Enhancement Act (DSEA) (also known as Patriot Act II), which would further enable federal agents and intelligence officials to intrude in people's private lives and detain them for indefinite periods of time without legal counsel based solely on suspicion."[96]

In Halaby's novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, both Jassim and Salwa identify themselves as whites, but in the eyes of white Americans, they are perceived as Arabs and Muslims. Halaby seems to be illustrating how the September 11, 2001, events also demanded not only that America take reckoning of her Arab Americans, but also that

[94] Laila Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*.,xii, xii.
[95] Jayne Benjulian, "Conversation with Laila Halaby February, 2008", *A Room Of Her Foundation* (2008), par.4.
[96] Salaita, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes from and What It Means for Politics Today*, 79.

Arab Americans take reckoning of the price of supposed assimilation. When discussing forced or supposed assimilation, Arab American communities were not regarded as other ethnic groups that embraced total assimilation. Speaking of liberal U.S. discourses in the wake of 9/11, Salaita says, "They attempted to urge Arab Americans, before 9/11 generally anti-assimilationist and radical, into total assimilation. In this case, it was not a forced assimilation that other ethnic groups, primarily natives, have experienced. It took the form of the repeated statements: 'They're American, too'; 'They're American, just like you'; 'They also love this country.' (…) This has never been the case with Arab Americans because the American government has long been involved in the Arab World in a way that most Arab Americans find invasive and unjust."[97]

Lisa Suhair Majaj offers insights about the "whiteness" and undefined position of Arab Americans in the multiethnic American society that may help us to understand Halaby's protagonists, writing that, "Like other immigrant groups at various historical junctures, Arab Americans occupy a contested and unclear space within American racial and cultural discourse. Although classified as 'white' by current government definition, they are conspicuously absent from discussion of white ethnicity, and are popularly perceived as non-white."[98] As professionals, Halaby's Haddads have gained the status of the upper middle class, and have assumed the privileges of being counted white, but they are still not aware of their change of status in post-9/11 America. This "blindness" is more visible in Jassim than in Salwa, since he, as Salaita puts it, "will never fully escape the limitations of his ethnicity in the United States."[99] Notwithstanding the fact that Jassim is a successful hydrologist, in charge of the city's water supply, and Salwa works as a banker and a part time real estate agent, the political climate created in their hometown of Tucson, Arizona leads toward the inversion of their American dream. Due to the pressure to demonstrate American "patriotism," the main protagonists of the novel are caught between the will to stay in the United States and the need to return to Jordan. To some extent, their return is easy in comparison to the other displaced Palestinians

[97] Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), 151, 152.
[98] *Post-Colonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity and Literature.* Ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, 320.
[99] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 90.

from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, who remain longing and hoping to return to the country with which they are emotionally identified —Palestine.

Anti-Arab racism and bitter experiences that Jassim and Salwa undergo are portrayed in the very beginning of the novel, but it seems that Jassim ignores or does not want to accept the hostility which is demonstrated by white American supremacy. Jassim becomes a suspicious subject while shopping in a department store when a young shop assistant called Amber alarms security. In comparison to her husband, Salwa is more conscious about the hostility towards Arab Americans and their unwilling presence. She continuously tries to convince her husband about the bitter realities which are awaiting the couple, but Jassim is taken in by the promise of America, even blinded by it, and does not want to admit to these. Salwa wants Amber to call her manager, Mandy, and wants Mandy to apologize for her employee's racial stereotyping. Halaby writes: '"Okay, Amber. Please call your manager. What you two just did is illegal.' Salwa stared at them, gigantic in her anger. Amber's face changed in blotches. Something seemed to be building up in her, and she blurted, 'My uncle died in the Twin Towers.' Salwa knew something like this was coming, had been waiting for the moment when it became spoken. 'I am sorry to hear that. Are you planning to have every Arab arrested now?"'[100]

Due to American xenophobia in the aftermath of September 11, Salwa and Jassim are found in the state of ambiguity and various psychological, economical and social dimensions. It seems that Salwa is more aware of her mixed identity and the state of being "out of place" than her husband, who continuously associates with white Americans, ignoring all portentous events which he will face due to his Arab-Muslim background. Halaby writes: "American flags waving, pale hands willing them to go home or agree. Jassim didn't seem to be bothered, but Salwa could not tolerate it, those red, white, and blue fingers flapping at her, flicking her away."[101] Notwithstanding the fact that they live and work like most white Americans and feel Americanized, their countenances clearly show their Arab ethnical background, an indication which subjects them to direct verbal, physical and political assault. The American flags which Salwa sees planted in their neighborhood seem to her as a sign of superiority of the white

[100] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*.,30.
[101] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*.,185.

majority in relation to Arab Americans, who become synonymous with "evil" and "bad." While Salwa is driving home and stops at the red light, although the windows of the car are closed, she can still hear the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim message. "She pressed the forward scan button on the radio, searching for the station with soft rock and no commercials. A man's voice blared out: 'Is anyone fed up yet? Is anyone sick of nothing being done about all those Arab terrorists? In the name of Jesus Christ! They live with us. Among us! Mahzlims who are just waiting to attack us. They just want . . .'" [102]

Instances of racial discrimination against Arab Americans are very frequent in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*. The passage where a bank client assaults Salwa due to her English does not indicate Salwa's proficient or poor English, but racial hatred and unwillingness to tolerate the presence of those who have the same color and ethnicity as the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks.: '"What is the name on the account, ma'am?' Salwa asked with a professional smile, all emotions hidden. The unnamed woman still looked at her with a stony face and thinking eyes. 'I think I'd like to work with someone else."'[103] Like Khadra from *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*, Salwa undergoes racial discrimination, but unlike her, she is not ready to 'recognize' her Muslim identity yet, and still has unrealistic view about American myths. Like her husband, she intermingles with white Americans like her young white American lover named Jake, trying to "preserve" her Americanness. Her ability to attract and desire men is interrelated to her attempts to adopting the American values.

In the scene where she has coffee with Jake, where Salwa deploys her sexual appeal, Halaby writes: "He placed the purple cup on the bench between them. Just as his hand let go it bumped the cup, which started to tip. Both he and Salwa reached to steady it, the result being that his hand grabbed hers. 'Close call,' he said. She felt it, the spark that comes from unprotected flesh touching unprotected flesh. All those innocuous conversations had softened them both, had worn away the protective coating human beings come wrapped in, and Salwa's heart sped. Still trained in formality, she grabbed her hand back. (…) Their gazes filled the employee room and she forced herself to turn away, willed him to leave, forced her professional self to come gasping back to the

[102] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 56.
[103] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 114.

surface as he got up and walked out to the front. How could this unacceptable thing be happening? Underneath were other thoughts, ones she barely acknowledged, ones that pointed to the way he looked at her, the way the world vanished when they spent time together." [104] Salwa had hidden her Palestinian and Muslim identity prior to 9/11, despite her „exotic" looks, through her trained professional charm, and through adoption of the American codes of dressing and behaviour. "In her profession as a real estate agent," writes Geogiana Banita, "Salwa seems complicit in the image of the United States as an agent of territorial infringement and occupation. As Salaita contentiously argues, rather than regard anti-Arab racism as a function of the geopolitical interaction between the Arab and the American worlds, 'we are better served looking at that racism as being on a continuum with America's roots in settler colonialism. Correlative settler colonialism in the West Bank, after all, accounts for much of the tension among the United States and Arab nations—and, by extension, Arab Americans"'. [105]

In addition to socio-political issues, everyday life of Arab Americans, and racial prejudices, Halaby, through her main characters, draws the issue of Arab American identity. Jassim's bewilderment in relation to his identity is interlinked with the event when he, while driving, accidentally kills a boy on skateboard. Although he is declared innocent the fear still haunts him. In order to protect his social status and his Americanness, Jassim is poised to enter a relationship with Penny, a white lower class American waitress, despite the fact that he holds upper middle class attitudes and shows dislike for people who have lower class social status, whether in the United States or Jordan. On a shopping trip with Penny to a cheap discount store named Wal-Mart, "Penny gave him directions and Jassim drove, relaxed and delighted by this new development. Having Penny in the car made him feel safe, attached. When they entered the store, walking closer together than strangers, Jassim realized that in this place he would never have gone to on his own, an establishment with rolled-back prices and rolled-up hope, were all the people from all those neighborhoods. Only here he didn't need to peek in windows, to slow down and try to guess what was going on." [106] While at

[104] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 160.
[105] Geogiana Banita, "Race, Risk, and Fiction in the War on Terror: Laila Halaby, Gayle Brandeis, and Michael Cunningham", *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 21.4 (2010), 247.
[106] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*.,276.

the supermarket, they come upon a couple from Jordan, but Jassim does not talk to them, since he feels he has embodied the assimilated experience, showing indifference and superiority towards the people who have the same ethnic background.

On the other side, Penny shows her anti-Arab racism. While watching television with her friend Trini, Penny exposes her anger about the destruction of the Twin Towers and other terrorist attacks. She does not associate Jassim with the rest of Arab world, but she still shows dislike and hatred for Middle Eastern population, saying '"The one has nothing to do with the other. And he's from Jordan, not Afghanistan. Jassim is a good guy—he's not like them, shouldn't be judged like them. But those people over there, they oppress women and kill each other. They're the ones who should be bombed.' 'Hey, Penny, watch yourself with this guy. You don't know what he's into. Men over there can marry four women at once, make them wear those sheets over their whole bodies."' [107]

Despite the fact that Jassim and Salwa differ much from each other, they share the same wish to associate with lower class white Americans. Salwa and Jassim intermingle with white Americans when they realize that despite the fact of their American citizenship, they are still subjects to racist assaults due to their hyphenated "whiteness." The white Americans act as a proof against racism even as their status secures the Haddad's superior social position.

Halaby accords more importance to Salwa after September 11 than she does to Jassim. Through her, Halaby draws out gender issues and the imagined attitudes of the western men towards oriental women. After Salwa's relationship with Jassim grows 'cold' due to her secret pregnancy and loss of the baby, Salwa begins a relationship with Jake, a young white American co-worker, who also deals and uses drugs. At the same time, Salwa thinks of her former lover in Jordan named Hassan, Jassim's opposite, whom she knew before marrying. Meanwhile, Jake speaks proudly to his colleagues about the sexual relationship, but not mentioning Salwa. This act may resonate with a colonial (post-colonial) discourse where Jake indicates "the speaking voice," whereas Salwa remains "silent" and victimized. When Salwa decides to leave him and go back to Jordan, possibly to marry Hassan, Jake under the effect of drug intoxication, attacks her both physically and verbally, not holding back his racist discourse: '"So you're running back

[107] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*.,281.

to the pigsty?' (…) 'Bitch! Goddamn fucking Arab bitch! You ruined everything!' Her body rocked back and forth on a dizzy boat in a storm, her limbs too heavy and sick to move. She felt herself being lifted.'"[108] '"Pigsty"', remarks Salaita, "refers to Jordan, a space that Salwa, like Jassim, can never fully escape".[109] This physical assault on Salwa may be compared to Zuhura's rape and murder due to racism in *The Girl with the Tangerine Scarf*, but Halaby lets Salwa live, presumably to tell the story in the years to come. It seems that Halaby provokes her female characters with unpleasant and violent events in order for them to fully recognize and accept their ethnicity. After being beaten and racially insulted by Jake, Salwa is able to accept her identity and identify with the colored people like Guatemalans and others. Similarly, her characters from *West of the Jordan* identify themselves as Arab Americans, specifically Palestinian Americans, only after being insulted or violated to a certain degree.

Jack Franks, a retired army officer, is another character who is fueled by anger and dislike towards the Arab world due to his personal reasons and in fulfillment of his patriotic duties. Through him, Halaby depicts anti-Arab racism, the power of force, and the oppression of white women by Arab men and politics following September 11. Jack is Salwa's client, but he also met Jassim at the swimming pool. Jack stereotypes Arab men as drug dealers, cheaters and possible sources of danger. He complains how his daughter had run away with a guy from Jordan and he had not heard from her ever since. Jack tells his story to Salwa: '"My daughter, Cinda, met a fellow from Jordan back when we were living in Ohio. They got into drugs. Cinda was no angel, so it's hard to tell who started it. She ran off with him. I went all over the place trying to find them, even flew to Jordan and went to his godforsaken village. Never found them, but I did travel around your country looking, and it was very beautiful. The people were kind to me, as much as I wanted to hate every last one. I brought my kids up to be honest people. I don't know what happened to Cinda, where I failed her. The worst is not to know what really happened."' [110]

Jassim, on the other side, soon faces the consequences of September 11, and can no longer enjoy his white-collar job. The decline of his American dream is marked when

[108] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 320, 322.
[109] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 91.
[110] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 34.

he becomes a subject of FBI investigations. Because Jassim is highly educated, but Arab American, the FBI thinks that he might use his brain and skills to support terrorism. The loss of job is associated with other problems which Jassim faces: Salwa's miscarriage, isolation, sending money to Jordan after the fall of Twin Towers, and the hit-and-run accident in which Jassim run over the boy in the road leaving him dead. In regards to Jassim's loss of his social status, Geogiana Banita writes: "The isolation and condemnation of this couple as foreign and immoral in fact form the gist and main engine of the narrative, which describes a whole string of catastrophes culminating with Jassim's termination from his job despite his excellent record with the firm. Of course, Jassim's termination is purportedly based on something other than his racial profile; after all, as Salaita has stated, 'imperative patriotism relies on a perceived pragmatism in order to command moral legitimacy"'. [111] Even Jassim's boss, Marcus, justifies his decision for suspending him by citing his neglect in performing professional duties, which might be detrimental to business.Yet it is clear that Marcus knows he has lost confidence in Jassim due to political circumstances. In a conversation with a co-worker named Al, Marcus states: '"Al, the FBI is trying to get information on every Arab in the country right now. Our government is at a loss, so they're grasping at straws. Jassim is a straw."'[112]

Halaby employs fluid poetic prose in *Once in a Promised Land* and the human sufferings flow like water. She uses the symbol of water since it is the essential source of life, but on the other hand, its flow is uncontrolled and takes various directions. The flow of water can resonate with the "waves" of life which shape human fortune and many times lead towards undesired destinations. The lack of water symbolizes the lack of love, emptiness, lack of human warmth and loss-- all issues which Halaby depicts beautifully in her novel. Jassim remembers his uncle Abu Jalal's words about water and its importance, "Water is what will decide things, not just for us but for every citizen of the world as well. If we humans were smart, if we were truly as evolved as they say we are, we would all work together to figure out how to turn saltwater into drinkable water, how to use water wisely, preserve the water that falls each year.…Mark my words: shortage of water is what will doom the occupants of this earth, and they are fools not to know

[111] Geogiana Banita, "Race, Risk, and Fiction in the War on Terror: Laila Halaby, Gayle Brandeis, and Michael Cunningham", *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 21.4 (2010), 247.
[112] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 269.

that."[113] Halaby introduces Arabic words, *kan/ya ma kan/fee qadeem az-zamaan* ("there was or there wasn't in olden times"), from Arabic fairy tales, in the "Before" section of her novel, and ends it with the "After" section where she employs a fairy tale about a girl who was stabbed unwillingly by her lover named Hassan, and suddenly a nightingale rescued the girl and healed her wounds. "The story" as Salaita puts it, "collapses binaries with its various 'yes and no' prepositions and particularly in its abrupt ending". [114]

Once in a Promised Land thus describes the rise to the surface of an ethnic background that had been nearly forgotten or surpassed by the Arab American protagonists. Political pressures and American xenophobia bring it to the surface, resulting in bitter experiences, spiritual pain, intolerance and human sacrifices made for survival. The novel delineates the human will for understanding and pleas for a better future for all inhabitants of the globe, notwithstanding geographic boundaries, religion, ethnicity and the existing politics.

[113] Halaby, *Once in a Promised Land*., 40, 41.
[114] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 92.

Chapter 4

Aspects of Arab American Women's Writing: Storytelling, Mother-daughter Relationships, Postcolonial and Multicultural Consciousness

Storytelling and memory play a crucial part in contemporary Arab American women's writing. As we have stated in the introduction, the term "storyteller" was chosen by Mohja Kahf as a name for the Arab American writers' association, RAWI (Radius of Arab American Writers), and the concept is widely used by numerous writers in depicting bittersweet Arab American realities. Members of Arab American communities have suffered bitter experiences both in their "old countries" and as immigrants in the United States. Their various stories which were stored as memories have helped to preserve their identity and culture, and to keep strong ties to and devotion for the countries from which they originate. "An Arab American," writes Gregory Orfalea, "did not have to go too far for inspiration on that account. He only had to sit and listen to an uncle cough out how he had survived the starvation in Lebanon by hauling a chandelier over the snowy mountain; she only had to listen to her mother's long tale of woe at the hands of the Israeli or Iraqi or Libyan guard; they only needed to open their jug-like ears to a whole tradition of converting everyday life into verbal drama to know that story was very much a part of an Arab's way of finding and making meaning in the world."[1] Displaced Palestinians and those in the Occupied Territories also share their sad and true stories which tell the experienced hardship and injustice due to the use of force. Palestinian American writers have shed light on all misfortunes, inequities and discrimination their characters have faced for more than a half century.

Novelists such as Diana Abu Jaber, Laila Halaby and Susan Muadi Darraj, who will be discussed in this chapter, have shed light on numerous issues and Arab American experiences which are narrated by their women storytellers. "For Arab American writers as for others," as Lisa Suhair Majaj puts it, "storytelling functions as one tool in the face of oppression: a way to speak truth to the power." [2] Majaj's quotation reminds us of Said's famous chapter, "Speaking Truth to Power," which he developed in his

[1] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel," *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 116
[2] *America and the Orient* .Edited by Heike Schaefer, 133.

Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures (1994). In addition, Majaj's quotation also justifies that Arab Americans who have written in the wake of Said's work have unveiled the truth against injustice as well as the negative and positive sides of Arab American communities.

Said's *Orientalism* has influenced many scholars of Arab American studies, literary critics, historians and contemporary Arab American fiction writers who depict the same elements of the Arab American reality. Said's work has strongly influenced Naomi Shihab Nye in her later poetic writings, where she underlines the aggressive attitudes of the West towards the Arab world. Said is known as the exilic intellectual and the issue of migration is mentioned in Diana Abu Jaber's novels *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*, Laila Halaby's *novel West of the Jordan* and Susan Muaddi Darraj's short story collection *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*. Immigration of Arab Americans to the U.S. often results from occupation, tyranny and oppression as well as from the dissident political points of view that immigrants hold in the country of origin. Said's concept of universal exile has opened space for authors such as Abu Jaber to portray politically motivated immigration, the American invasion of Iraq, the American foreign policy in El Salvador, and the desire for return to the homeland— all the key issues which are dominant in Said's writings.

Storytelling is the central style of narration in Abu Jaber's *Crescent* and Halaby's *West of the Jordan*, where both authors link the past with the present. One can trace similarities between the stories about Palestinian history told by Mawal, a character in Halaby's novel, with Said's voice about the Palestinian oral history. In a meeting with Palestinian and Israeli historians in Paris in 1998, Said demonstrated that "oral history and Palestinian archives of memory, almost at the last moment before living witnesses of the catastrophe passed away, emerged and far more importantly were relocated as a vital source, no less viable than military archives."[3]

Halaby's *West of the Jordan* is narrated by four teenaged maternal cousins: Soraya, Khadija, Hala and Mawal. The young cousins have different characters and tell different stories which touch on the most crucial issues of the Arab American community. Their stories deal with intergenerational conflicts, socio-political aspects,

[3] Ilan Pappe, "The Exilic Homeland of Edward S. Said," *Routledge.* Vol 8, (1), 14.

sexuality beyond limits, anti-Arab racism, difficulties faced by the parents and relatives of young generations in relation to acculturation, postcolonial consciousness as well as cultural issues and everyday life of Palestinian Americans and Palestinians in general. In *West of the Jordan,* Halaby employs postmodern and postcolonial modes of writing, since each of the characters tell fragmented stories, some of which depict everyday life and the occupation of the West Bank. Halaby, through these fragmented stories, tends to emphasize the hybrid identity of Arab Americans, particularly Arab American women, and their unstable position in relation to the other ethnic groups which comprise multicultural America. Women's storytelling and memory reveal various "silenced" stories which underscore gender issues and the secrets women unveil, whether sweet or bitter. Based on the fact that our four narrators are teenaged females, Halaby emphasizes the central role of the mother in the Arab family, and strong ties between mother and daughter as well as the relation among maternal cousins as shown in *West of the Jordan*.

"As several Middle Eastern scholars have noted," writes Dalya Abudi, "in the Arab world, arguably to a greater extent than in the West, the child's mind and personality are shaped by the mother because during the first seven to nine years of its life, the child is entrusted entirely to the mother (or a female mother-substitute such as an older daughter or a grandmother)."[4] Not only in the Arab world, but in many cultures, mothers are trusted in relation to their daughters' secrets, while being "instructors" shaping their daughters future. In relation to the family and mother's role in the children's coming of age, Dalya Abudi continues: "...the family is the most important vehicle of socialization of the young as functioning members of society, teaching children customs and traditions that preserve the cultural heritage and ensure the stability of the existing order. Core values such as sexual mores and the hierarchy of age and gender are upheld and transmitted through the family. Similarly, interpersonal skills, behavioral modes, gender role expectations, and basic attitudes are acquired largely within the family and carried into the wider society." [5]

Halaby, through the character of Khadija, highlights the importance of the mother and the role she has in regard to her daughter's development. In the story entitled

[4] Dalya Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*, 5.
[5] Dalya Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*, 28.

"Mothers," which is told by Khadija, the novel reads: "I finally have a secret, but it's an ugly secret and I'm not sure what to do with it. Ma always used to tell my two half sisters about boys, especially American boys, and how they will take that secret thing between your legs for nothing.… 'Your husband has to be the one to take it from you.' Ma told me once. 'Otherwise you are a disgrace to us and we are stuck with you forever.' Then she said in English, 'You shameful.'"[6] It seems that Khadija is the most unstable and "victimized" character of *West of the Jordan*. She is a "lost" character, lacking dignity and self-confidence. Khadija in many ways is the opposite of Khadra from *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*. Presumably, due to her teenage years, she does not have the strength to fight against the tyranny she experienced at home, while she is unable to deal with her Palestinian heritage in school. To a certain extent, the brutality of force turned on her at home and the anti-Arab racism she experiences at school remind us of young Said from *Out of Place*, but unlike Said who opposed colonialism and defended his Palestinian background, she cannot recognize her dual identity among her school friends.

Khadija's cousin, Soraya, in her story entitled "Fire," asserts: "At least my parents aren't as bad as Khadija's father, who thinks that his daughter's reputation is the most important thing in the world. Her father hits her and her brothers for anything. One time Khadija took two dollars from her older brother Muhammad, to buy a barrette. Her mother wouldn't pay for it because they have no extra money ever and she doesn't think she should spoil her, so she took from Muhammad who got really mad when he realized she was the one who took it. The day when he came from school, he told his father that he saw Khadija at school kissing a boy behind the gym during lunch hour. Khadija's father didn't ask her if that was true, just came after her with a belt, yelling *slut* and *whore* at her." [7] While her father tortures Khadija physically and insults her verbally, her mother does not insult her daughter to that extent, apart from some "slaps on her face." Khadija says: "My mother seems to be busy to have lost any dreams, and she never talks to me about things like that, only about house things and taking- care- of your-brothers things, and sometimes don't- do- that-or- you'll-never-marry things." [8] Along with telling their own stories, the four cousins are told various stories by their parents and relatives—

[6] Laila Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 178, 179.
[7] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 30, 31.
[8] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 37.

stories of general loss and eternal longing to return. It seems that the loss of Palestine and enforced displacement from Nawara has left emotional toll on Khadija's father due to the hardships experienced, and his unhappiness leads towards heavy drinking and chaos within the family. In her story "Sand and Fire," Khadija reflects: '"My ache comes from losing my home,' my father tells us a lot. Part of me understands that, because I see him unhappy and feeling different than everyone here, but part of me doesn't understand." [9] Presumably, the disorder in the family results in the cold relationship between Khadija and her mother. Khadija understands her mother and justifies her distanced attitude towards her, saying: "My mother's mother, who lives in Nawara, is dying. Ma wants to go home and stay with her, but Baba says there is no money. This makes Ma quiet, sometimes for a day or two. 'I am trapped,' she yells at him. Finally, I feel sorry for her too."[10]

In contrast to Khadija, Soraya, despite the fact that she leads a free life filled with sexual adventures in Los Angeles, trying to take advantage of the American dream and Western idealism that confronts Middle Eastern cultural tradition, does not experience corporal punishment or verbal abuse by her parents. Her family preserves Muslim traditions, whereas she attempts to enjoy the sexual liberties and embrace the American dream to the fullest. She takes advantages of her father's wealth and liberal attitudes of the West Coast in fulfilling her desires due to the "fire" which "burns" inside her. She likes to attract men and dresses herself stylishly, and tends to keep it secret from her family. She says: "I have a skinny girl's waist with woman hips and large breasts. I know my body is sexy; I can tell by the way men look at me, by the way men have always looked at me. I try to hide it from my family, and most days I go to school early so I can change out of my loose pants and elbow- length shirts into tighter clothes that make my body show more.… I'm not easy like some girls, but if I like someone, then I'll make him happy. Not to mention that I am exotic."[11]

Halaby shows Soraya's use of the imagined exotic Arab woman which exists in the mind of Caucasians. Soraya's mother knows her daughter quite well, but she does not use harsh language with her. Her mother and her sisters hold conservative Islamic points

[9] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 39.
[10] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 39.
[11] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 30.

of view in relation to sex outside marriage. "My mother" Soraya asserts, "tells me how wrong this is, like it is evil or something and my sisters say the same thing. I think they think it's wrong because they don't know what is to be satisfied, and it scares them. It seems all the women in our family are like this. Even though married ladies talk about sex, it is always within the context of a marriage and you have to have been a virgin."[12] Soraya's mother preserves Palestinian national pride and advises her daughter not to stereotype the already stereotyped Arab American and Arabs in general. As a hybrid and unstable character, Soraya tells many lies about her own people, but she remains an Arab in the eyes of her white friends. At the same time she stereotypes and is being stereotyped; for example, when the following way is said of her: "In her country they don't have furniture or dishwasher, only oil."[13]

Her mother reacts angrily when she hears stories in which her daughter repeats, for instance, stories about the sexual relationship young Palestinians have with animals or how old *Shaykhs* [elder males] marry young girls. We read: "My mother exploded the first time she heard about a story I told. 'You have to show best of us, not ugly lies.' But I let my ambassador sister and cousins to do that while I talk ghetto slang."[14] It seems that Soraya's mother knows her daughter well and despite criticizing her, she still shows tolerance towards her. Soraya tells a story which happened at the wedding of her cousin Lina. Soraya's mother did not object when she wanted to bring to the wedding her friend Ginna Shims, of a mixed Russian, Black and Chinese ancestry. Ginna is known in the neighborhood as a woman who dates a lot of men. Khadija's father sees his daughter dancing with Ginna in the group and forcibly removes the latter from the dance by insulting her. When Ginna is about to leave, Soraya's mother rebukes her daughter: '"Scandalous daughter,' my mother [Soraya's] said to me in Arabic as Ginna picked up her purse and jacket. 'You even manage to offend your own friends.' She got up and moved to another table. " However, a moment later, she seems to have forgiven her daughter. The text reads: "'Can you believe how young Esmeralda looks?' my mother

[12] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 30.
[13] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 24.
[14] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 24

asked me later when she came and sat next to me again, forgetting that she was mad at me." [15]

Hala, another cousin, is not only the most developed character of the novel, but also the one whose story in regard to her relationship to her late mother can be regarded as fraught with the strongest emotions in comparison to others. "Hala" as Salaita states, "exists in both Middle East and America, so she acts as a symbolic bridge between the two spaces culturally, politically, and physically. She has a Jordanian father and grew up in Jordan, but as a teenager she immigrated to the United States—Arizona, specifically—to study at the urging of her Palestinian mother."[16] We begin to read her stories and get to know her personality at the very beginning of the novel, as she flies back to Jordan to her dying paternal grandmother. She describes her mother and her desire to get her daughter an education, and her death which happens when Hala is away from home, has effected Hala emotionally. The figure of Hala's mother underlines the role of the Palestinian woman in upbringing children, notwithstanding the hardships she faces as a central figure of the family. Hala asserts, "My mother died two years ago. She sent me away because she knew she was dying, though I learned this later. I am the youngest in a family that already had one boy, Jalal, and two girls, Latifa and Tihani. My mother was diagnosed with cancer just after my sister Tihani was born.… Then she got pregnant with me. Between being physically drained from the miscarriages and her cancer and already being a mother of three children, she was a tired woman when I was born." [17] Hala's mother showed a special affection towards Hala as her youngest child, but Jalal as the only son was the child most adored by her.

In relation to sons and daughters and their importance in the Arab family, Dalya Abudi maintains: "It is generally recognized that Arab culture places a much higher value on sons than on daughters and that the overwhelming desire of all parents is to have at least one son. The preference for boys derives from various motives: to perpetuate the family, carry on its name, and take the father's place after his death; to assist the family financially by getting a job or by helping the father on the farm or in the shop; to take

[15] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 35.
[16] Steven Salaita..*Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 84.
[17] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 7.

care of the parents in old age.[18] As we have stated above, in case of the absence of the mother, the older daughter or the grandmother takes up the upbringing of the child, as is the case with Hala. She states: "She [Hala's mother] adored me most—after Jalal—but she left much of the work to my older sister, Latifa, who was always a little slow. Latifa would take me on all chores and tasks with great seriousness, admirable in an employee, admirable in an older sister. If my mother had told her to throw me off the roof, she would have done so."[19]

As we read Hala's story, we observe that Latifa, in the role of the older sister who is also something of a surrogate mother, exerts power over her little sister, which might have affected Hala's development as a personality. "Psychoanalytic theory" as Dalya Abudi puts it, "recognizes that interaction with the mother, who is the child's primary caretaker during infancy and early childhood, has determining effects on the development of the child's personality. Patterns of mothering and child-rearing not only influence later adult behavior but are also decisive in producing the kind of 'self' or 'personality' that may be regarded as typical of a given society."[20] In this regard, Hala's mother, despite her illness, would react if she saw any demonstration of cruelty or "use of authority" on Hala by her oldest daughter, Latifa.

Hala's story reads: "Latifa would take care of me, then would do something so awful that my mother would take over. She would indulge and cuddle me, and tell me stories and teach embroidery and other things I can't imagine her ever having done with Latifa, who resented me more and more."[21] The relationship between Hala and her mother is a good example of mutual love between parent and child. Seeing her mother in a desperate state of health, struggling at the same time with all her physical and spiritual force to raise her child, Hala shows deep compassion and sorrow for her mother. In relation to this affection, Hala asserts: "And then I would see my mother start to fade: fell asleep in the middle of her embroidery, curse when she dropped something, with words I have never heard anyone else use. (My mother had a distinct way of cursing herself when

[18] *Dalya Abudi. Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier,* 64.
[19] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 7.
[20] *Dalya Abudi. Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*, 4.
[21] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 8.

she was sick: God damn your stupid, useless, jackass mother.')" [22] Hala's mother leaves the impression of a moderate Arab Palestinian woman. She detects her daughter's passion for reading and education and urges her towards her further education and self-creation, by sending Hala to her uncle Hamdi in America for the purpose of education. Hala, like Ihab Hassan in *Out of Egypt*, spends a lot of time reading alone, but unlike in Hassan's text, the novel does not show her as a grown up, even though presumably she would be the "young artist" of *West of the Jordan*. Hala says: "Regardless, I was terrified at the thoughts of being way from home and family, even though the idea of going to America—the America my mother only tasted—*was* exciting. I was so tired of being made fun of for reading, for being headstrong, for speaking my mind." [23]

Mawal, the fourth character and maternal cousin to Hala, Soraya and Khadija, is steeped in her ethnic roots and storytelling. She continues to live in the family's original hometown of Nawara, the West Bank, and is related to the title of the novel more than her other three cousins, who live in the United States. We have stated above that the four cousins have different personalities and tell different stories, but sometimes they share almost the same traits. It is clear that Mawal is a type opposite to Soraya and Khadija, but she has some similarities with Hala in relation to Palestine, its history and the actual experiences of occupation by Israel. As a traditional Palestinian girl, Mawal has good relationship with her mother, since she is innocent and not "spoiled" like her cousins who live in the United States.

While discussing Jane Flax's views in regard to the mother's affection for sons and daughters, Dalya Abudi notes: "because the mother identifies so strongly with a girl child, she also wants the child to be just like her."[24] Mawal looks almost like her mother, although a teenage girl. We see this similarity in Soraya's story entitled "Fire," but also in Mawal's own story "The Beautiful Gift," where she recollects her uncle Hamdi and his American wife's visit to Nawara. Mawal narrates: "This day was so nice, filled with food and stories and shyness and English. Fay [Hamdi's wife] sat next to me when she could, and Hamdi kept telling my mother that I looked like her."[25] Mawal's mother is proud of

[22] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 8.
[23] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 9.
[24] Dalya Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*, 9.
[25] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 140.

her young chubby daughter and shows maternal love and affection. Prior to her brother's visit while she and her mother-in-law are preparing food for the coming guests, she talks sweetly and passionately to her daughter. Mawal says: '"Yum! All this for my uncle?' I asked. My mother looked happy. 'No, all of this for you and your sunshine smile.' She kissed me on the forehead. Go wash your hands and come help us.'"[26] Mawal's mother shows affection and compassion not only for her daughter but also for other children. She exposes her humanism and mother's care and criticizes her daughter for hurting other people, even when the act of harm is done unintentionally. She blames her daughter for hurting her friend Hanan when she rode Mawal's bicycle that was brought from America by uncle Hamdi. On the other side, Mawal shows her goodhearted nature and shares compassion for her injured friend. She blames herself for "victimizing" Hana and wishes that the accident would happen to her instead of her friend: '"Thank God you are alive!' she gasped. Hanan! What happened to her?' We were going downhill….' 'What were you doing in the street? I told you not to go in the street!' She began yelling about how stupid and foolish and selfish I was for taking someone into the street, as if it wasn't enough to risk my own life but to take someone else.… My mother picked up the bike and walked with it in front of me, sometimes turning around to yell how stupid I was or to give me a loud stare. I wished it had been me who had fallen so hard, because for sure Hanan was going to die and it would be my fault for being so stupid to brake when I did."[27]

In Arab and Muslim cultures, mothers are in the position of advising their daughters to preserve their virginity which, in some village subcultures, requires public proof. "In no area of life is the differential treatment of girls more apparent than in sexual matters. The sexual mores of traditional Arab culture are characterized by severe prohibitions for both men and women. Nevertheless, it is the women who bear the brunt of sexual repression. Female sexuality is surrounded by strict rules designed to safeguard premarital chastity in women and their marital fidelity."[28] In the aftermath of the accident, Hanan's mother is anxious and worried that her daughter might have lost her hymen which, the text makes clear, she equates with her virginity. "[Mawal's] mother

[26] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 140.
[27] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 146.
[28] Dalya Abudi. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*, 67.

explained that there are some places that have lots of blood in them, so they make an injury worse than it is. 'Between your legs is one of those places,' she told me. 'It's not a good place to have an accident.' Hanan didn't have any injuries besides that, only scrapes and scratches. One funny thing was that her [Hanan's] mother saved her bloody underpants and wrapped in a newspaper from the day we had the accident 'so when she gets married, she'll have proof that she's a girl,' which I didn't understand."[29] So, this episode figures almost, in the family's view, as the girl's unwitting end of her maidenhood. Halaby portrays the significant role of Palestinian mothers in regard to protecting their daughters' reputation for marriage in a traditional Palestinian Muslim village where virginity is a key subject.

The issue of assimilation is interconnected to the relationship between mothers and daughters. Halaby, in *West of the Jordan*, pays particular attention to the issue of assimilation by Arab Americans, especially Arab American women, and draws a clear distinction between the challenges of acculturation for Arabs on American soil and the Arabs who tend to preserve their identities in their "old countries." Living in her place of origin, Mawal has no need to embrace the American dream and assimilation, and she is determined to preserve her Palestinian pride under Occupation, whereas her cousins in the United States are placed in a state of more ambiguity. Religion and gender are factors in the process of assimilation and reflect an interesting theoretical case to be explored. Christian Arab Americans do not face as many serious problems to assimilate into "Americanness," while the Muslim Arab American immigrants face specific problems in relation to acculturation.

The four characters of *West of the Jordan* have Muslim religious background and live within traditional Muslim families. Regardless of the fact that the three characters of Halaby's *West of the Jordan*, in particular Soraya and Khadija, consider themselves American, they are still perceived as Arabs and Muslims by their school friends and white American community at large. "Nothing has been more critical," writes Steven Salaita, "to the racialization of Arab Americans in the United States than Islam, and nothing, correspondingly, has more ability to preclude Arab Americans from total assimilation. Islam, like Judaism, retains discreteness in both a theological and ethnic

[29] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 148.

context, and as long as Arab America includes Muslims—which presumably will be perceived as a minority group, either of our own choosing or, more likely, because in the United States Christianity often is a prerequisite of assimilation." [30]

Regardless of the fact that Soraya embraces American values and identifies as American, she experiences unpleasant events both at school and during her night adventures while indulging her pleasures. On one occasion, while she visits a bar with her cousin Walid, where he is beaten by white Americans, Soraya realizes not only the implications of her Arab identity but also the "red faced" ascendancy and the use of male power towards non-whites and the accompanying disrespect for the "Third World" women. The story entitled "Visas" reminds us of Said's "red-faced" Mr. Bullen, and Ihab Hassan's red-nosed soldier named "Tommy" that symbolize white Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Soraya's story reads: "Which is how it was that five Fridays after Samson's closed temporarily, Walid and I found ourselves at the Jack Knife. It was the first time Walid had been there. White name, white customers, white neighborhood. Twenty minutes inside and Walid got a tap on his gold shoulder. 'Speak English!' a red face shouted in whiskey breath.… 'We speak what we please,' he told him quietly, but honest. 'Fucking Mexicans,' said a back as soft as the eyes.… 'We're not Mexicans!' I shouted. 'We're Americans.' This charged the men enough to take the ten steps it took to reach us and to swing fists into Walid's face and body." [31]

Along with religion and family and gender issues, intermarriages and politics are also a factor in the process of assimilation. Some Arab American ethnic groups are eased in embracing the American values due to their religious background and nationality. In an article published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, in relation to the Arab American immigration, assimilation, education, intermarriages and other difficulties the community faces Andrzej Kulczycki and Arun Peter Lobo state: "Whereas Arab Americans might be expected to conform to the assimilation paradigm and intermarry in the same way as White European ethnics, this assumption need not hold given majority group prejudices against both Arabs and Muslims.… The magnitude of the Muslim presence, however, is unknown because neither census data nor immigration statistics collect information on

[30] Steven Salaita, *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,* 8.
[31] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 58, 59.

religion. Although we cannot assess the influence of religion on intermarriage, the analysis that follows does examine the effect of ethnicity, which may be closely related to religious affiliation. We hypothesize that rates of out-marriage will be higher among persons with Lebanese or Syrian ethnicity. These groups have a longer established presence in the United States and a larger proportion of Christian among their members."[32] While Christian Lebanese and Syrian ethnicities do not face assimilation difficulties, Palestinian ethnicity, regardless of the religious backgrounds remains a marginalized community due to the politics of the day, especially due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In regard to assimilation and Arab American identity, Steven Salaita remarks: "The reclamation or recovery of an Arab American identity is in many ways analogous to the social trajectories of other ethnic groups, and can therefore be considered typical of modern American acculturation and deculturation. And yet international relations have played a prominent role in the construction and consolidation of Arab America as a social and political unit. Nothing has been of more concern to Arab Americans since 1967 than the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, although Iraq has also been pivotal since 1990. American support for Israel has long enraged Arab Americans (and others), thereby providing Arab Americans with a tangible rallying cry and political purpose.… Therefore, while Palestine may have expedited the coalescence of an Arab American identity, it in no way exclusively dictates or maintains it. Like any other ethnic group, Arab Americans function as a communal entity based on innumerable factors, both cultural and political."[33] The best example where Halaby illustrates the anti-Palestinian animus including U.S. government agencies is the scene when Walid is beaten "for being Mexican" and questioned by the police. We read: '"So they beat you for being Mexican?' the policewoman asked. 'We're not Mexican.' 'You got beaten for being Mexican and you're not Mexican? What are you?' 'Palestinian' 'Well you got off pretty lucky then.' The policewoman was quiet for a minute. 'The jacket sure makes you look Mexican'."[34]

[32] Andrzej Kulczycki and Arun Peter Lobo, "Patterns, Determinations of Intermarriages among Arab Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no.1 (Feb., 2002), 204.
[33] Steven Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11," *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), p.150, 151.
[34] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 59, 60.

Assimilation for the Arab subject also depends on the family and the relationship between genders within the family. It is obvious that women from traditional Muslim families are perceived as the oppressed gender where certain liberties are restricted for females in comparison with males. Perceptions about Islam and the politics of the day are the real markers that prevent Arab Americans, respectively Arab American women to fit in American society. At the same time the generation gap within the family is an important factor in regard to assimilation, as made clear by Halaby in her *West of the Jordan*. In an article related to religion, family and gender, Jen'nan Ghazal states: "Families are a central institution in Arab culture, yet few studies examine systematically their influence on Arab American assimilation.… Although gender differentiation is the norm in many parts of the Middle East, family and gender dynamics vary considerably among people of Arab descent in the United States…. Some Arab Americans feel that female domesticity is fundamental for preserving their ethnicity and reproducing Arab culture in the new world …. Others maintain pride in their Arab heritage but discard patriarchal customs perceived as inhibiting their integration in the U.S society."[35]

The conflict between generations, gender oppression, marginalization and traditional culture in Muslim families are transparently depicted in Khadija's story entitled "School." At school, Khadija is supposed to know more than white Americans, whereas at home she is victimized by her drunken father and traditional mother, who rejects American values in favor of traditional Palestinian culture. The story reads: '"Ma and I have the same argument, only she gets really mad: 'You are Palestinian,' she says in Arabic. 'You are Palestinian," I tell her in English.' I am American.' 'You are Palestinian and you should be proud of that.' 'Ma, I can't speak Arabic right, I've never even been there, and I don't like all of those dancing parties. I like stories and movies. I can be American and still be your daughter.' 'No! No daughter of mine is American.'" [36]

In relation to assimilation, Halaby not only portrays the inter-generational conflicts within the same ethnicity, but also critizes the clash between cultures, traditional Middle Eastern and Western American. The author critiques anti-American and anti-Christian prejudices which are rooted in the minds of some conservative Arab American

[35] Jen'nan Ghazal and Arun Peter Lobo, "Family, Religion, and Work among Arab American Women," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no.4 (Nov.2004), 1043.
[36] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 74.

Muslims who reject assimilation and Western values. In the opening story of *West of the Jordan*, Hala tells the story of a Syrian woman whom she meets on the plane while flying to Jordan to see her dying grandmother. Hala's fellow passenger has lived in Los Angeles for thirty years, yet she doesn't speak a word of English and clings to a rigid notion of her Arabic identity. She wears a flowered scarf, whereas Hala is dressed in a more typically Western way, representing a moderate Arab American woman, and serving as a linking bridge between the two cultures. When Hala points out the ignorance that the Syrian woman has for the English language and American values, the conversation with the Syrian woman goes thus: "Why should I bother?' she shouts, so close to me that I taste her egg breath. 'You might enjoy it more,' I suggest, trying not to inhale. 'Nothing to enjoy.' 'Then why do you stay?' 'My children and grandchildren are there.' (…) The Syrian woman faces forward and says in a loud voice to no one in particular, 'I have to go to the bathroom.' 'Well, you should go then. They're very close.' I point to the lavatories, just two rows away. 'I couldn't set foot in such a place!' Why not?' 'They're filled with the smell of dirty pigs.' 'I beg you pardon?' 'You would use the same toilet, breathe the same air, as a stranger man? I'd prefer exploding.'"[37] This scene shows that some Arab ethnic groups, especially those who belong to Muslim religion, do not want to accept acculturation and flatly refuse to adapt to living in America. Rejection of coexistence in America, together with anti-Arab American politics of the day, are both indicators which alienate the Arab American communities from multicultural America, particularly after September 11, 2001.

Laila Halaby's novel *West of the Jordan,* in many ways is related to Said's theories, and in particular in relation to postcolonial discourse. Even the title of the novel *West of the Jordan*, as Salaita puts it, "denotes both geography and political orientation. On the one hand, it directs readers' attention to the West Bank and to the geo-political West, the United States in particular. On the other, it identifies a locus of concerns that combine an emphasis on the United States and the Middle East." [39] Halaby, through her characters of Mawal and Hala, depicts postcolonial reality and postcolonial consciousness in the West Bank. While Mawal stands as a symbolic figure of Palestinian

[37] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 5, 6.
[39] Salaita..*Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 79,80.

endurance, Hala stands as a linking bridge between the United States and the Middle East. Mawal experiences directly postcolonial presence and the difficulties that she faces in her daily life in the occupied West Bank. In contrast to her three cousins who left their "Old Country," Mawal has continued to live in the village of Nawara, West Bank, where she can hear and tell stories about her ancient homeland. In relation to America and postcolonial consciousness, Mawal has her own points of view and says: "You think our village was in love with America with all the people who left, like America is the best relative in the world that everyone has to visit. America is like a greedy neighbor who takes the best of you and leaves you feeling empty."[40] Mawal is the character that represents the past and the future of Palestine, and she stitches *rozas* to remember Palestinian history. "Stitch in red for life. Stitch in green to remember. Stitch, stitch to never forget."[41] These lines underline that memory and storytelling are key issues of the novel. Memory and storytelling remind the characters of their Palestinian roots, which at times are ignored by certain characters of the novel.

On the other hand, Mawal's cousin, Hala, while visiting Jordan realizes that apart from missing *home* as a place, she misses *home* as a country. Hala lacks freedom of movement in the occupied homeland and recalls the memories from her childhood and the event when she and her cousin Sharif Abdel-Hammed crossed the sea by boat to return "home" to Palestine, but were turned back by Jordanian officials. This memory brings into the narrative reference to the bitter events when Israelis occupied Palestinian territories, making it impossible to return to the homeland. Hala has a dual identity and due to her absence from the Middle East and her years in the U.S., she fits neither in her "Old Country" nor in the U. S. Halaby tries to "build" bridges and link East with West through characters who have dual identities while plagued with the impossibility of return home. "Her multi-faceted narrative does much more: instead of just focusing on cultural encounters in the adopted land, in this case the US, her novel is invested in capturing the complexity of life for Palestinian women. True to the textile metaphors that she frequently employs, her book weaves together varied snapshots of Palestinian domestic life under occupation and creates fissures in the stereotypical homogenized representation

[40] Halaby. *West of the Jordan*, 96.
[41] Laila Halaby, *West of the Jordan,* 103.

of Oriental/Arab women as submissive and overtly sexualized beings."[42] The recollection of the memories of the past and storytelling are important issues and enable Hala to understand her heritage, which will inspire her for a new life in the United States.

As we have stated in Chapter 3, Arab American women writers not only learn from each other, but often also inspire one another in their further writings.:. Like Halaby's West *of the Jordan*, Susan Muaddi Darraj's story collection, *The Inheritance of Exile Stories from South Philly* (2007), is told by four Palestinian women who narrate their youthful and adult immigrant lives. Unlike West *of the Jordan*, where the characters are based in different geographical places, such as California, Arizona, Jordan and the West Bank, the characters of *The Inheritance of Exile* narrate from the same city neighborhood . While the characters of West *of the Jordan* are Muslim maternal cousins, the four storytellers of *The Inheritance of Exile* all attend St. Nicholas School in South Philadelphia. Nadia, Hanan, and Aliyah are Palestinians of Christian background, whereas their friend Reema is a Palestinian of Muslim background. In Aliyah's story "Reading Coffee Cups," her mother narrates: "Our block sits behind the St. Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Church and grade school, which all our kids attend, even Huda's kids [Reema], though they are Muslims."[43] Religion has never divided Palestinians in relation to the Palestinian cause of their longstanding struggle for liberation and self-determination. We have mentioned above that Palestinian American scholars such as Edward Said, Lisa Suhair Majaj and Steven Salaita, while they have Christian religious backgrounds, nevertheless strongly defend their Palestinian brothers and sisters regardless of religious background. While discussing the possible Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, Edward Said reiterates his secular beliefs, saying: even if the compromise on behalf of a ministate, a passport, a flag, a nationality is made, there is no doubt that the larger ideal, that men and women should be neither defined nor confined by race, religion, will continue to have its influence." [44] In discussing Islam and Christianity in Arab America, Salaita also emphasizes secular common ground: "In reality, though, the majority of Arab Americans—and the overwhelming majority of Arab Americans involved in scholarly pursuits—assume something of an ecumenical

[42] Parama Sarkar, "[untitled]," *MELUS* 31, no. 4, (2006), 263.
[43] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 58.
[44] Edward W.Said, *The Question of Palestine,*175.

approach to the community, and I have always been pleased with how fluidly and effectively Arab Americans of multiple faiths communicate as *Arabs*."[45]

The daughter of Palestinian immigrant parents, Darraj in her collection, *The Inheritance of Exile*, tackles many issues pertinent to Arab American communities such as exile, assimilation, relationship between mothers and daughters, intermarriages, Arab American identity and conflicts between generations. Though not to such an extent as Lisa Suhair Majaj and Laila Halaby, Darraj also mentions the experiences of the Palestinian immigrants in refugee camps. Yet the main themes which mark the narratives of Darraj's novel are questions of belonging and identity. Darraj tries to link the "inherited" cultural issues and experiences of the "Old Country" with the new values of multicultural America. In a related article to Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile*, Joab Jackson notes: "*Exile* crackles with the tension of characters trying to reconcile Arab and American cultures. The characters struggle to draw the best traits from each and try to make sense of the more quizzical ones. Bon Jovi dance moves, cheese-steak sandwiches, and Rob Lowe posters intertwine with Egyptian soap operas, *malfoof*, and fortunes told through just-emptied coffee cups."[46]

Darraj, like Halaby, depicts the relationship between mothers and daughters, especially in light of the gap between traditional Arab culture and adopted life in America. While reading the novel we also notice the gendered issues which are traditional in Arab families, where fathers are more attached to their sons, while mothers have the role to bring up their daughters in terms of Arab culture. Aliyah's mother narrates: "But on Saturday afternoon, when our husbands took the boys and went to the Lebanese bookstore and coffee shop on 9th Street—this block of time, these precious few hours belonged to us. We had the girls of course, but they never attached themselves to us for long. Nadia, Reema, Hanan, and my Aliyah went into a bedroom and shut the door, and soon, we could hear from downstairs the sound of Michael Jackson's or Cyndi Lauper's music.… I have pierced Aliyah's ears myself when she was a baby, using a needle heated over the stove and uncooked potato as its landing spot, but I warned her

[45] Steven Salaita, *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,*7,8.
[46] Joab Jackson, "Remade in America: Parkville Writer's Short Story Collection Explores Adult Lives of Immigrants' Children," *City Paper,* posted on 8/22/2007, para 7.

now that if she ever puts a second earring hole in her ears, I would cut them off and leave her deaf. Of course, she just rolled her eyes as usual. Huda tells me that Reema reacts the same way when she tells her not to rip her jeans at the thigh—is it wrong for us to want our girls to look respectable, and not like they live on the streets?" [47] We encounter the same family tensions as in Halaby's *West of the Jordan*, and in some ways Reema is similar to Halaby's character Soraya, who likes to expose her body and look American. "Muaddi Darraj pays particular attention," as Joab Jackson notes "to the tensions between the parents, who still have fresh memories of the old country, and their offspring, who are growing up in America. Her own parents were both born in Palestine; they moved to America in 1967."[48] Darraj, through the storytelling of her characters, manages to interconnect traditional Palestinian culture with the American realities and to show nuanced images of Arab American women and the issues which preoccupy them.

Nadia's story, entitled "Back to the Surface," is the best example in regard to the relationship between mother and daughter. Despite frequent maternal rebukes, Nadia has a good relationship with her mother. "Now my mother," Nadia narrates: "smoothed my hair in long comforting strokes that ended in the middle of my back, before starting again at top of my head, like a skier at the summit of a slope."[49] While remembering her dead father, Nadia underlines Arab American identity and hyphenated "whiteness." She recalls: "Many nights that year, I'd lie attentively in bed, conjuring up his image in my mind. Not as he looked in the coffin—pale and pasty, the mortician's makeup job masking his smooth olive skin—but as he looked when he played baseball with me or as he sang songs during road trips to entertain Mama and me." [50] On the other hand, this story explores the Arab American identity and intermarriages between Christian-Arab immigrants and other white Christian ethnicities. Although "it is evident that Arab women show greater propensity than Arab men to marry within their own group,"[51] Nadia's youngest aunt, after whom she is named, chooses to marry a "non-Arab or *"al-*

[47] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 58.
[48] Joab Jackson, "Remade in America: Parkville Writer's Short Story Collection Explores Adult Lives of Immigrants' Children," *City Paper,* posted on 8/22/2007, para 10.
[49] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 3, 4.
[50] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 4.
[51] Andrzej Kulczycki and Arun Peter Lobo, "Patterns, Determinations of Intermarriages among Arab Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, no.1 (Feb., 2002), 205.

Amerikani," despite her mother's objections. The story reads: "But his real name was Kevin and he was an Irish-American, tall and blond and handsome.… She married Kevin despite the frown that Siti [her mother] wore throughout the entire church ceremony. I was actually thrilled for Nadia [narrator's aunt], but dared not to act too exuberant in front of Siti. Things calmed down when Patrick was born two years later and he glittered our lives with his laughter." [52]

Hanan, another storyteller and a character in *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, in many ways is similar to Khadija of *West of the Jordan*. She, like Khadija is in constant conflict with her mother, and distances herself from her heritage by embracing American values. Like Khadija, who flaunts her "Americaness" in front of her mother, Hanan unnerves her mother by driving crazily and speaking English in reaction to her mother's Arabic. In Hanan's story "Preparing a Face," we read: '"Hanan, go out of this lane,' her mother commanded. 'Too fast. We want to be there alive.' For some reason, that calm, haughty exterior jangled her nerves, even though Hanan was used to it. She swerved sharply, spitefully, into the middle lane, hoping to unnerve her mother. 'Crazy girl,' her mother said calmly, clicking her tongue against her teeth reproachfully. 'I'll show you crazy, Mama,' Hanan laughed, swerving back into the left lane, then back again to the middle. Why are you so crazy?' her mother asked in Arabic. 'Because I'm *your* daughter!' Hanan replied, in English, on purpose." [53] In another story, entitled "Sufficing," Hanan does not want her mother to come to her school's parents' day, since she as a young schoolgirl is embarrassed by her mother's Arabic accent, and worried that her classmates would tease her. Like Khadija, who is named after the Prophet Muhammad's wife, Hanan does not like her Arabic name. '"Why can't I be Laura? Or Miranda?' she asked over dinner one night. "All the kids laugh at my name and the teachers never say it right."[54]

Darraj, like Halaby, creates situations where her characters realize their dual identities, and through them, she attempts to create linking bridges between the two cultures—Arab and American. Like Halaby's character Khadija who "learns how much

[52] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 4.
[53] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 82.
[54] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*,102.

her Palestinian cultural background has shaped her worldly outlook"[55] when she is invited by her friend Patsy for dinner, Darraj's Reema realizes her Arabness while being asked by her boyfriend Alex about Muslim and Arab polygamy. In Reema's story entitled "Chasing Valentino," while discussing Rudolph Valentino's movie *The Sheik*, Alex shows his dislike for Arab culture and stereotypes Arab men. This scene is decisive for Reema, provoking her to accept her Arab roots and explore them further, and to distance herself from Alex. The story reads: "So she didn't say much about her feelings to him—in a way, she was grateful that he showed interest in her culture. There were times she lacked interest in her Arab-ness, when she wanted to disappear and just wake up blonde and green-eyed with a live-in stockbroker boyfriend who watched football on Sundays while she read Time magazine on the couch beside him."[56] In addition, like many other Arab American women authors, Darraj cannot sidestep politics that prompted compulsory migration which shaped narrated lives of her characters in *The Inheritance of Exile*. In another story entitled "The Scent of Oranges," through Reema's mother, Darraj mentions briefly the British mandate over Palestine and bitter events experienced by the displaced Palestinians in refugee camps, even as they hoped to get visas for the United States. The story reads: "Most of the Palestinians in Haifa were thrown out in 1948, but Baba managed to return after the war. Even so, by the time I was born, nothing was certain. Our life was temporary, like we always knew they [the soldiers] would come for us one day." [57]

Probably the greatest merits in regard to the development of storytelling and Arab American fiction at large belong to Diana Abu Jaber. For more than two decades, she has contributed a great deal to unmasking of Arab American experience and shedding light on the existing conflicts and confluences, between the two cultures, Arab and American. Put differently, Abu Jaber stands as a pioneer of modern Arab American women's fiction. Her first novel *Arabian Jazz (*1993), appeared as a brilliant example which has influenced many Arab American fiction writers. As a daughter of a Palestinian father from Jordan and Euro -American mother, Abu Jaber has inherited both cultures which

[55] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 83
[56] Susan Muaddi Darraj. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*,175.

[57]Susan Muaddi Darraj. The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly,193.

enables her to portray with insight her Arab American characters and themes that are interwoven with them. In addition, her *Arabian Jazz* is the first novel with Arab American themes and experiences where Abu Jaber criticizes the negative sides of Arab and American cultures. "The publication of *Arabian Jazz*" writes Steven Salaita, "signaled much broader way of approaching the constructing fictional accounts of Arab American society and as a result set much higher stakes for those Arab Americans who would write after it was published." [58] Following *Arabian Jazz* there appeared new titles by Arab American authors, including her own *Crescent* (2003), which threw light on Arab American experiences. Other works by Diana Abu Jaber include her memoir *The Language of Baklava* (2005), her novels *Origin* (2007) and *Birds of Paradise* (2011); neither of the latter deal with Arab American themes nor have any significant Arab American characters.

Besides the fact that Abu Jaber is a pioneer in portraying Arab Americans as main protagonists, she also stands among the first Arab American fiction writer who breaks the pattern of portraying male storytellers. "Much modern Arab American writing, in all genres, includes portrayal of storytellers, usually male, and often an uncle (such as Jidah in Alameddine's *Hakawati*). Abu Jaber frequently eliminates this tradition, particularly in *The Language of Baklava*."[59] Storytelling and memory characterize *Arabian Jazz* by interconnecting the bitter past of a Palestinian-Jordanian family with their everyday life in the United States. *Arabian Jazz* portrays everyday experiences and contradictions between the first- generation Arab immigrant Matussem Ramoud and his sister Fatima Mawadi with the first-generation young Arab American women, Jemorah and Melvina, who are Matussem's children with Nora, his Caucasian American wife, who died of typhus on her trip to Jordan. Her parents blamed Matussem for her death while, on the other side, Nora was not very well accepted by Matussem's family. Nora's death affects the lives of her daughters and her husband, and the memory of her plays a crucial part in the development of the plot and characters of the novel. "It is in large part because of her memory that Ramouds slowly grow closely. These characters stumble through the

[58] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 97.
[59] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 104.

narrative, at times in burlesque fashion, toward a better understanding of themselves and their world."[60]

It seems that the characters of *Arabian Jazz* are not able to create "new worlds" to compensate for the loss, but are rather being haunted by memories which tie them to the past, unable to find a possible solution and move forward. Fatima is the most poignant character due to the loss, violence and poverty that she experienced in her homeland and because she tries to compensate for that loss by telling stories. Diana Abu Jaber stresses the issues of both gender and the violence done to Palestinians by the establishment of Israel in 1948. She, as Salaita writes, "highlights the issues of gender and violence in her fist novel, *Arabian Jazz.* The violence exhibited in *Arabian Jazz* is multidimensional, touching on such things as the burial of infants, the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and the physical abuse of Arab Americans."[61] Fatima's memories surface when she is provoked by her nephew Nassir, a postdoctoral scholar at Harvard, over the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Fuelled by anger and haunted by traumatic events, she reacts to his use of the word "game" in her piercing loud voice: "I forbid you use such a word in the house of my brother. Is no kind of game, you stupid, stupid boy. For all you lose and learned nothing.… What of my losses? What of my parents' shame, driven off the good land and sacred home the fathers' father built? When we were homeless and dying without food, what of the four starving babies I had to bury still alive, living—I, I, I?' (…) 'Can I buy a bar of American soap and wash these away, as you have washed up yourself?'"[62]

The bitter memories of the experienced events haunt Fatima endlessly, and storytelling is the only means that "cures" her spiritual pain. "Storytelling," writes Salwa Essayah Chérif, "is also offered significant room in Abu Jaber's novel where it even takes the form of a dramatic articulation of long repressed haunting dreams."[63] The events related to the occupation of Palestine push Fatima's memory back to the year 1956, when she was imprisoned by the Israeli soldiers for crossing a dividing line: "But at some point in 1956—perhaps she [Fatima] was crossing the street to the market-place, perhaps

[60] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 97, 98.
[61] Salaita, *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,* 107.
[62] Diana Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 334.
[63] Salwa Essayah Chérif, "Arab American Literature: Gendered Memory in Abinader and Abu Jaber," *MELUS* 28, no 4 (2003), 209.

merely standing at the edge of the road—the border switched again and she was seized without warning for crossing that line. The merchants and villagers had fled before the foreign truck.… The men wore army jackets; they did not speak Arabic. They put her into a truck so crowded that she couldn't turn around. Her bag of eggs was smashed and liquid pressed through the paper. The men threw hoods over the prisoners. When the hoods were removed, Fatima saw a room the color of which she would never forget, though there was no word for it in Arabic or English."[64]

Due to the death of her sister-in-law, Nora, Fatima takes up the upbringing of her nieces, Jemorah and Melvina. Abu Jaber, like other Arab American writers, depicts in her fiction cultural contradictions between past and present and ways of life, and between "Old Country" clashes with American values. On one hand, Jemorah (Jem) and Melvina face cultural conflicts with their aunt Fatima, who wants them to marry in a patriarchal way and, on the other hand, face racial prejudice by white Portia Porshman who is Jem's supervisor in the hospital where she works.

Fatima's trauma of the past and her maladjustment in the U.S. may be regarded as factors which cause her oppressive relationship towards her brother's daughters. Fatima rejects her nieces' American side and does not treat them as their mother would. The grown-up and motherless sisters are suspended in a state of ambiguity. The girls are fed up with patriarchal and anti-feminist discourse and stories which Fatima tells. "It is enormously to Diana Abu Jaber's credit," as Judith Grossman puts it, "that she can render the two voices of Fatima: on the one hand, her pushy social-climbing tirades and her bullying of her American-born nieces Jemorah and Melvina; on the other hand, her memories of the family's bitter dispossession from Nazareth in 1947, and the years of hunger in the border encampments. Fatima's mother, who already had seven daughters and her treasured son Matussem, gave birth in exile to four more girls. And each of these she compelled Fatima to help her bury alive."[65] Along with her anti-feminist points of view, Fatima shows her racial prejudices towards white ethnic groups and is pleased that her nieces have inherited Arab looks. Fatima tells her nieces: '"It's terrible to be a woman in this world. This is the first thing to know when the doctor looks at baby's thing and

[64] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 120.
[65] Judith Grossman, "From One Desert to Another," *The Women's Review of Books*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1993), 23.

says it's a girl'. But I am telling you, there are ways of getting around it. It helps to get a good bust, but don't worry. At least you didn't get that Irish Catholic skin of your mothers, may she rest in peace. Everyone knows that the Irish are pretty-pretty when they're young, but let them hit thirty and that skin? Gone! Horrible!"' [66]

Regardless of Fatima's speeches and boosts of traditional Palestinian culture, the girls, and in particular Jemorah, attempt to embrace their American half, but it seems that even Jemorah is unable to consolidate her belonging due to the absence of her dead mother, whose ghost haunts her continuously. The novel reads: "You have to *make* children see, Fatima thought, even if it meant scooping out their eyes and pointing them with your own hands. Jemorah and her innocent face were locked like a clam against her aunt's good efforts. She simply would not use hair spray or padded bras, no matter how Fatima wept and railed. She listened nicely, then turned and did the opposite."[67] Since Jemorah and Melvina have hybrid identities, they search towards their own consolidation in the homeland of their mother, whose ghost and memory haunt them in their everyday life. Melvina is eight years younger than Jemorah, and she is shown as a stable character in comparison to her sister. She takes the role of the older sister by protecting Jem, who has lost her way between Arab and American worlds. In the very beginning of the novel, Melvina shows her compassion and love for her sister: '"Just stick with me," Melvie said. "And remember the Bedouin saying: 'In the book of life, every page has two sides.'"[68] The "two sides" may refer to in-betweenness, two cultures, two opposing worlds and hybrid identities that belong neither to the adopted land nor to the "old country" where their ethnic roots are. Jem and Melvina are situated between their mother's homeland and Fatima's continual pressure on them to return and marry in the "Old Country." In an article related to *Arabian Jazz*, Mazen Naous writes: "The Bedouin saying allows Jemorah to better understand the demands of the Arab side of the family and to access her American side to counter those demands. Melvina's recourse to a Bedouin saying might seem paradoxical (she uses it to at once participate in and subvert Arab traditions);

[66] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 116.
[67] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 117.
[68] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 6.

however, the nomadic nature of the Bedouin allows for a traveling understanding or cross-translation of Arab and American in the Arab American condition."[69]

While Jemorah continually attempts to establish her selfhood and her American half, Melvina seems to have established her Arab American identity by dressing and behaving like other nurses in the hospital where she works. The novel reads: "Now Melvie was charged with such responsibility and it had seen so much that she would become like the other nurses, with a laugh if granite, a chest braced like an iron crossbar.… Every morning since Melvie was old enough to dress herself, she had dragged a great weapon of brush through her curling blue-black hair, forcing her hair down with Vaseline and bobby pins till it shone like lacquer. Her pale olive face was always scrubbed, and her eyes were wet stones."[70] Unlike Melvina, Jemorah is unable to stabilize her identity and belonging. While discussing Nora's figure, Steven Salaita states: "As a remembered figure, she acts as both a stabilizing force and a source of conflict. Nora's parents blamed Matussen for her death, barely disguising their belief that his being Arab had much to do with it, and Matussen's relatives never fully accepted Nora into a familial unit."[71] Her mother's death has left an uncured trauma and memories which intervene in Jem, creating difficulties in regard to the development of her identity. When Jem and her cousin Nassir go to Jordan, to see if their marriage would work, Nora's ghost follows Jem everywhere. The novel reads: "Her [Jemorah's] mother was also somehow there, her memory residing in the steeping streets. She was a jinni, whose real activity Jem could scarcely remember, less a memory than a presence who] might fly out from any crook or corner, perhaps from the tubs of corn and butter vendors carried on muleback."[72]

Along with the fact that she is bullied by her aunt Fatima, Jem experiences racial offenses by Portia Porshman, a white American who is her supervisor in the hospital. Porshman goes to the same church as Nora did, and does not spare her anti-Arab racism and stereotyping learned from grand American narratives. Portia says,: "Your mother used to be such a good, good girl. She was so beautifully white, pale as a flower. And

[69] Mazen Naous, "*Arabian Jazz* and the Need for Improvising Arab Identity in the US," *MELUS* 34, No. 4, (2009), 62.
[70] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 12.
[71] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 97.
[72] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 81.

then, I don't know. What happened? The silly girl wanted attention. She met your father in her second year [of studies] and she just wanted attention. We just weren't enough for her. I'll tell you, we couldn't believe it. This man, he couldn't speak a word of our language, didn't have a real job. And Nora was so—like a flower, a real flower, I'm telling you. It seemed like three days after she met that man they were getting married. A split second later she was pregnant. I know for a fact her poor mother—your grandmother— had to ask for a picture of the man for her parish priest to show around to prove he wasn't a Negro."[73]

This scene is illuminated, according to Abu Jaber herself, by an incident from Abu Jaber's life as a student, when one of her professors asked the author to change her last name. Portia advises Jem to change her name and "make it Italian maybe, or even Greek, that might help some," using the same words that Abu Jaber's professor said.[74] When asked if Portia saying "make it Italian" resonates with Abu Jaber's professor's remark concerning her name, Abu Jaber, in an interview with Robin E. Field, states: "It probably came out of that. This professor said, 'If you publish under Abu Jaber, people are always going to think of you as the ethnic writer. You should absolutely change it to an American name and just go for it.' Obviously I didn't."[75] While searching between her two worlds, Jem realizes that she does not fit in the Arab world, where she observes the negative features that come from her father's ethnic roots. Jem rejects the long engagement with her cousin Nassir, and instead she chooses to stay in her mother's land where she will go to school and explore the reasons for racial hatred and other prejudices towards possessors of hybrid identities. Although the novel does not end with a clear resolution, we observe some steps which Jem is about to undertake and create for herself a home and selfhood in her adopted land. She turns away from his father's house and leaves in order to create herself. The novel reads: "She didn't think she would live there again. The house looked strange as a shipwreck in a sea of country fields and telephone wires threading Euclid to the rest of the world. It could be for Matussen, a private home,

[73] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 293.
[74] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 294.
[75] Robin E. Field, "A Prophet in Her Own Town: An Interview with Diana Abu Jaber," *MELUS* 31, No. 4, (2006), 212.

a place to create his life. But she had recognized, as hikers turned to face her, the mystery of this hate, something she could crack only by going into it: back to school."[76]

The title of the novel symbolically is linked to Matussem, who has a passion for jazz and believes drumming may serve as a connecting bridge for various ethnic groups. "The Jordanian hospital worker with whom Arabian Jazz opens is trapped in the cruel mask of Oriental speak:' I am Matussem Ramoud, many year in U.S. of A. You, by Allah, most interesting person I seen in America.'"[77] As a displaced Palestinian and immigrant in the USA, Matussem marries an Irish American, who died of tuberculosis when the couple visits Jordan. Like his daughters, he is haunted by Nora's memories, trying to relieve his sadness by the sounds of drum and connecting the living with the dead. The novel sometimes has a rich poetic structure and nostalgic longing for the loss of something precious. "He [Matussem] believed that any music was prayer, sending a message out to the sky. Nora was always his audience; she was *over there* listening. He knew that drumming—its sounds and intensity—had the power to penetrate the heavens and earth."[78] In addition, Matussen is haunted by the dreams of childhood in Jordan and the general loss in relation to Palestine. Like many Palestinians, Matussen wanders between two worlds and feels homeless. As an immigrant, he does not fit in Euclid, in the U.S., whereas only memory brings him back to his original home. The novel reads: "Euclid' lost to the world was Matussem's private land, like the country his parents tried to leave as they made lives in Jordan, as they let go of their children's memories and let them grow up as Jordanians. Matussem was only two when he left Nazareth. Still, he knew there had been a Palestine for his parents; its sky formed a ceiling in his sleep. He dreamed of the country that had been, that he was always returning to in his mind."[79]

Arabian Jazz presents diverse immigrant ethnicities that comprise the U.S., and through the characters, Abu Jaber tries to cross the ethnic, religious and cultural boundaries. Like Salwa from Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, who has sexual affair with a drug addict named Jake, Melvina does the same with a junkie named Larry, while Jem enjoys a short-term relationship with Ricky. The relationship between Jem and

[76] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 362.
[77] Judith Grossman, "One Desert to Another," *The Women's Review of Books* 11, no. 2, 23.
[78] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 16.
[79] Abu Jaber, *Arabian Jazz*, 260

Ricky Ellis (half-Onondaga) is the best example that shows such boundary crossings. The lovers belong to different ethnic groups and show a considerable age difference, but they also have something in common—dual identities and the epithet of "Others."

Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent* (2003), was a great success which enriched Arab American fiction by her critical approach to the cultural and social aspects of life that exists in Arab America today. *Crescent* was published ten years after *Arabian Jazz* and during that period of time, Diana Abu Jaber had not only become more mature as a fiction writer, but also perfected the craft of storytelling. The title of the novel itself resonates with the art of storytelling which is a tradition in Arab culture. "Habeebti," tells Sirine's uncle (the main character), "here is something you have to understand about stories: They can point you in the right direction but they can't take all the way there. Stories are crescent moons, they glimmer in the night sky, but they are most exquisite in their incomplete state. Because people crave the beauty of not- knowing, the excitement of suggestion, and the sweet tragedy of mystery."[80] Alongside various topics such as identities, multiethnic groups, longing for home, self-creation and the motif of food which are depicted in *Crescent*, storytelling is an important motif that identifies the novel. Each chapter opens with a story narrated by Sirine's uncle, who narrates about his cousin, Abdelrahman Salahadin, and the ensuing portion of each chapter is then narrated by Sirine. In relation to that "mysterious" character (Sirine's uncle) and his role in storytelling, Salaita states: "Each chapter begins from his point of view, with his telling a story that is allegorically relevant to the novel's action. It recalls Alameddine's focus on the story as a profound element of Arab culture and history."[81]

As we have stated before, the voice of Arab American female fiction writers has been raised loudly in the twenty-first century. These authors have attempted hard to depict Middle Eastern culture and history and have labored to abolish the negative image of the Middle East and Arab Americans that has been shown or presented in the American media. In an article about Diana Abu Jaber and Elmaz Abinader, and the effort towards self-creation undertaken by Arab American women writers, Salwa Essayah Chérif writes: "Abinader and Abu Jaber investigate the interconnectedness of the past and

[80] Diana Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 384.
[81] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 104.

the present in the making of the Arab American female self and create a space of self-invention for Arab American women where they negotiate a new sense of self in the layers of a buried ethnic and female past. They use memory and the journey to the past of their female family members and fictional characters respectively, in order to examine the implications of their own ambivalent perceptions of self and to devise a constructive way of dealing with the present."[82]

The novel itself meets all the criteria to be placed among cotemporary Arab American fiction due to its thematic content and various motifs which it depicts. Abu Jaber in her *Crescent* gives voice to identities which are linked by the motif of food. The plot and the characters circle around Nadia's Café, in a neighborhood called "Tehrangeles" in Los Angleles, a non-Arab location, and around Sirine, who stands as the protagonist of the novel. Sirine, like Jemorah and Melvina of *Arabian Jazz*, has dual identity— Arab and American. Her "wild blond hair" shows her American part, while her "pale skin" which she has "protected" and has the color of "skim milk" shows her Arab identity. "Sirine," writes Brinda J.Mehta "confronts the multiplicity of diaspora in her cooking as a reflection of her ontological duality as an Iraqi-American. In other words, her culinary explorations in the kitchen reveal the in-betweenness of her position as the daughter of an American-Christian mother and Arab-Muslim father who is nevertheless deprived of both sources of parental identification as a result of their untimely death in Africa."[83]

It seems Diana Abu Jaber has been preoccupied with the question of dual ethnicity and the implications of "milky white skin" since her childhood. Discussing Alice Evans' "Half-and-Half: A Profile of Diana Abu Jaber" after the publication of *Arabian Jazz*, Salaita quotes: "even though Syracuse had a large Arab American community, even though she and her two sisters were surrounded by uncles, aunts, and cousins who lived in or visited the community, even though they were encouraged to identify with their Arab heritage, they were told to stay out of the sun to protect their milky white complexion so they could pass as white Americans."[84] While portraying

[82] Salwa Essayah Chérif, "Arab American Literature: Gendered Memory in Abinader and Abu Jaber,"*MELUS* 28, no. 4,(2003), 208.
[83] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 204.
[84] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 101.

Sirine's Arab American look and the Arab male students, who are regulars in Nadia's Café, Abu Jaber writes: "The Arab families usually keep their daughters safe at home. The few women who do manage to come to America are good students—they study at library and cook for themselves, and only the men spend their time arguing and being lonely, drinking tea and trying to talk to Um-Nadia, Mireille, and Sirine. Especially Sirine. They love her food—that flavors that remind them of their homes—but they also want to watch Sirine, with her skin so pale it has the bluish cast of skim milk, her wild blond hair, and her sea- green eyes."[85]

The café and the kitchen owned by Lebanese Um-Nadia, not only stand as a linking bridge to various ethnic groups, but they also connect Sirine's memory of the past with the present. The novel reads: "Sirine learned to cook professionally working as a line cook and then a sous chef in the kitchens of French, Italian, and 'Californian' restaurants. But when she moved to Nadia's Café, she went through her parents' old recipes and began cooking the favorite—but almost forgotten—dishes of her childhood. She felt if she were returning to her parents' tiny kitchen and her earliest memories." [86] As the novel develops, Sirine falls in love with Hanif El-Yyad (Han), an Iraqi political exile and a professor of linguistics in Middle Eastern studies. Their love affair becomes a key topic of discussion among students, exiles, white Americans, and Latin Americans. Such discussions among these groups contribute to making the café "the core of *Crescent*'s ethnic borderland, serving as the central locus of interethnic and intercultural interactions."[87] The café is visited daily by regular guests who have different ethnic backgrounds and for many of them it has the meaning of "home." The exilic characters and students mingle together and share their homelessness, where the food cooked and the aromas of the food remind them of their homes in "Old Countries." They kill their homesickness and boredom through food and tea—the elements which bind them, over which they bond and share their cultural, social and emotional experiences. In relationship to students' loneliness and missing of home in Abu Jaber's *Crescent*, Layla Al Maleh writes: "The sights, smells, food, and sounds of the native land are summoned

[85] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 19-20.
[86] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 22.
[87] Carol Fadda-Conrey, "Arab American literature in the ethnic borderland: cultural intersections in Diana Abu Jaber's Crescent**,"** 194.

up in a celebratory fashion, awakening body and soul simultaneously. But the passion is mixed with the sorrow of exile and the pain of longing for *temps perdu.*"[88]

The Arab students in the novel come from different geographical nodes in the Arab world and have different cultural heritages. Diana Abu Jaber builds a bridge to connect these ethnic groups by understating the national and cultural diversities that exist among them and allowing them to represent a composite Arab identity. In relation to this issue, Carol Fadda-Conrey writes: "The names of the Arab students from Egypt and Kuwait-Schmaal, Jenoob, Shark, and Gharb, which in Arabic mean North, South, East, and West, respectively-signify distinct geographical entities that can be interpreted as individualized characteristics challenging the reductive attributes the term Arab often generates."[89] Since Abu Jaber herself stands in between two worlds, she has learned the art of boundary crossing by linking together interesting cultures and ethnic groups. The students who have left their homes far behind, have no other choice but to share their cultural issues, their stories and their everyday concerns in the country where they seek their own self-discovery and selfhood. "This ethnic positioning of characters," as Layla Al Maleh puts it, "to forge identity beyond the boundaries of an insular community, is what rescues the work from the pitfalls of the rigid essentialism at times exhibited by other émigré works."[90]

The motif of food not only brings different cultures and ethnicities together, but it also stands as the motif through which the plot generates love and stability. Food for Sirine "is synonymous with love, prayer, creativity, and healing. Nine-year-old Sirine learns this contact language, and at thirty-nine still uses it for translation, to connect and communicate with everyone around her."[91] Thirty-nine years of her life have passed, and none of her former lovers seems to attract her as Han does. "The memories of all her past boyfriends are so faded, it is as a magic page had lifted and the tracing of their faces disappeared. None of them has managed to interest her in getting married, having children, or even moving away, which she'd somehow always assumed was the point of

[88] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 33.
[89] Carol Fadda-Conrey, "Arab American literature in the ethnic borderland: cultural intersections in Diana Abu Jaber's Crescent**,"** 195.
[90] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 33.
[91] Loraine Mercer and Linda Storm, "Counter Narratives: Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*" *MELUS* 32, No. 4, (2007), 40.

having a boyfriend."[92] She regards Han as a connecting bridge in regard to her Iraqi half, and perhaps as her eternal love. Um-Nadia is aware that a new love is about to emerge, a "contemporary love story a kind of *1001 Arabian Nights,*"[93] for she has cooked *knaffea* which due to its delicious taste and smell "brings even wild animals home." [94] When Sirine serves *knaffea*, we notice the emotions that she has for Han. "'Some knaffea, sir' she says, and when Han looks at her the feeling of it stirs inside her like an ache in her neck and shoulders. She has an impulse to sit and feed him by hand."[95] Sirine observes Han as a person who reminds her of her father's ethnic roots, and through him she attempts to explore her identity and self-completion. Along with the sexual desire, it seems that Sirine's physical contact with Han in some way fills the gap of her Arab half. "The intimate proximity of Han's body comes back to her now, the scent of his skin echoed in the rich powder of spices. Desire saturates her, filing her cells, and her sense of reserve instantly gives way."[96]

Abu Jaber openly illustrates intimate relationship between Sirine and Han. We observe a few erotic passages throughout the novel. It seems that the author pushes the boundaries of traditional Arabic decorum with sexual passages in the novel. We read: "When he kissed her, the backs of her thighs go soft and her and her breath dissolves and her eyelids float over her eyes. She wants to press one hand against her sternum. Instead, her hands slip over his shoulders and she moves even closer."[97] Abu Jaber received criticism for such sexual scenes; Layla Al Maleh writes: "Oddly enough, it was not the Arabs who objected to the occasional explicitly sexual scenes in her work but the Americans. Abu Jaber tells how she was approached by a high-school teacher in Texas and asked to 'black out [...] four offending paragraphs [... so as] to include the book in [the] curriculum.' She was both angered and amused by the 'irony of blacking out scenes of love-making in a book that's concerned with the depiction of violence, unjust wars and

[92] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 40.
[93] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel," *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 124.
[94] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 44.
[95] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 43.
[96] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 124.
[97] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 87.

dictatorship.' 'We all already know this,' she says, 'in America, love gets bleeped, the violence stays.'"[98]

Politics is an unavoidable issue in Arab American writing and particularly with reference to the events occurring in the Middle East. Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent* was written prior to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, but still the author cannot escape such issues as anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S., the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime, and other antidemocratic governments worldwide which increased the figures of exiles in the U.S. The U.S. conflict with Saddam's regime deepened the existing prejudices towards Arabs in the U.S, and Abu Jaber undertakes a task of "humanizing" Arabs and Muslims by translating their rich and multicultural heritage for American and non-Arab readers. In addition, despite depicting diverse Arab ethnicities, Abu Jaber creates Um-Nadia's café as a "Third World" and populates it with Turks, Iranians and Latin Americans. In an interview with Robin E. Field, she is asked if she acted like a cultural translator of Arab culture, and about the reason she chose to write about Iraq. Abu Jaber replies: "After the experience with *Arabian Jazz*, I knew that *Crescent* was going to be read in that way, and so I just said, 'All right, I want to write about Iraq. I want to write about this wonderful legacy.' In terms of cultural representation, I really wanted to convey the richness and the depth of the cultural wealth of Iraq. The more I studied it, the more I felt so strongly about that project. There is this treasure there that we don't know anything about-people have no idea what's in Iraq.… This was before the whole second conflict was going on, after the first Persian Gulf War—it would have been about 1999, 2000—-and I just thought, 'I want people to know.' I wanted to talk about the identity of the cradle of civilization; I wanted to talk about poetry. I wanted to talk about all the things that I am obsessed with and that are important to me, and I hoped it would be important to other people**."**[99] In the very beginning of Abu Jaber's novel we observe the same historical moment as in Kahf's *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*—the U.S. bombardment of Baghdad but this time the sky does not look "greeny" due to the U.S. shots, "but it's white because white is the color of an exploding rocket. The ones that come from over the river, across the fields, from the

[98] Layla Al Maleh. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature*, 34.
[99] Robin E. Field, " A Prophet in Her Own Town: An Interview with Diana Abu Jaber," *MELUS* 31, no. 4, (2006), 212.

other side of an invisible border, from another ancient country called Iran."[100] The "exploding rocket" reminds us of the First Persian Gulf War, and as Gregory Orfalea put it, "we are dropped in the eighties in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war. The spur to immigration is not adventure, but survival, though there is still the element of dream."[101] Abu Jaber's scene of bombardment shows a terrified young boy named Hanif, dreaming of how to "cross into the land of bright-women,"[102] and indeed, as the novel develops he will meet a real "wild blond hair" woman with whom he will play a crucial part in regard to the aesthetic values and ending of the novel.

As well as the Iraqi-Iran conflict, Abu Jaber portrays the U.S. military involvement in Iraq and the deaths of many civilians due to the U.S. bombardment of Iraq. In addition, *Crescent* mentions thousands of innocent deaths because of the U.S sanctions against Iraq, tackles the stereotyping of Iraqis and Muslims both in the U.S and Iraq, and addresses the issue of the thousands of refugees who fled as a result of Saddam's cruel regime. Abu Jaber, as Salaita puts it, "also takes on issues of racism in conjunction with her exploration of immigration and exile. One reason why Um-Nadia owns a restaurant is that she bought it from another Arab owner whose business declined when FBI agents frequented in search of terrorists following the Gulf War."[103] In the incident when Sirine is looking for Han, who has decided to leave the U.S., the novel reads: "The speaker's voice rises and Sirine stops inside the doorway to listen. 'Now according to UNICEF, fifty thousand Iraqi adults die because of U.S. sanctions every year, and five thousand children die in Iraq *every month* because of the American embargo on food and medicine.… In the past few years, tens of thousands of people have fled Iraq—many of them are professionals, trying to escape the terrible economic and political situation.'…'The speaker's voice rises again and Han turns back for a moment to listen to him. 'Let me tell you all something,' the man says, his voice charged with emotions. 'Let me just tell you this. America simply cannot continue to pillage the natural

[100] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*,15.
[101] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel," *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 123.
[102] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 16
[103] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 101.

resources and economies of other countries, to heap its desires and values, its contempt and greed on the back of others, and not expect there to be the consequences."[104]

Politics as an integral part of life plays an important role in the emotional state of the characters. Hanif decides to return to Iraq due to the longing for his mother, exilic emptiness, and non-belonging. His return to Iraq is mixed with the fear of being executed by Saddam's men, for he may be regarded as a political dissident who has been living in a hostile country. Hanif's decision to return also creates loss and uncured emotional wounds in the heart of his lover, and the love story remains as incomplete as the symbol of novel's title itself. *Crescent* reads: "[Han's] voice trails off as he gazes at the bedroom window. Sirine follows his gaze and remembers the night that he climbed out the same window. It seems now like it happened a very long time ago. 'Things have changed,' he says. 'I need to return, while my mother's still alive. I want to see her one more time, to be with her—it's something I should have done years ago."[105] Sirine's grief due to the lost love is mixed with angst and fear in relation to Han's possible persecution by Saddam's regime. She tries to find the right person who would give a right answer in regard to Han's fortune. Sirine knows that Cristobal is from El Salvador and she draws parallels between him and Han; even though they have completely different national and cultural heritages, and different personal histories, they share similar exilic fortune due to the political climate in their countries. "What will happen to Han now? What will they do to him? It seems that Cristobal must somehow know the answer to that. But, of course she thinks, he doesn't; they're from different counties, how could he know such things?"[106]

While *Crescent* deals with different themes and motifs which Abu Jaber interweaves artistically, one can trace similarities between it and her *Arabian Jazz*, particularly in regard to bringing ethnicities together by means of relationship or engagement. While *Arabian Jazz* shows the two sisters' relationships with Larry and Ricky, in *Crescent* we observe the engagement between Victor Hernandez, who has Mexican ethnicity, and Um-Nadia's daughter Mireille, of Lebanese ethnic roots. "This treatment of ethnicity," writes Salaita, "is generally understated throughout *Crescent*,

[104] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 324, 325.
[105] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 333.
[106] Abu Jaber, *Crescent*, 344.

which makes it an aesthetically different novel from *Arabian Jazz*, which explores ethnicity explicitly, sometimes in parody."[107] *Crescent* underlines the suffering of human nature, the loss, longing of the lonely hearts and love that "takes off, it never really lands, it never grows."[108]

Diana Abu Jaber stands as a pivotal figure in contemporary Arab American fiction. Her contribution to the development of Arab American literature has multiple layers of importance. She not only stands out as an author who interconnects her Arab American characters with characters of other ethnicities, but has also drawn the attention of many literary critics both in America and in the Arab world. "Her first novel, *Arabian Jazz* (1993), was the first work of modern American fiction to reach a wide critical and commercial audience."[109] By depicting the negative and positive sides of Arab American exiles, Abu Jaber has managed to abolish stereotypes about Arab Americans and to humanize them in contrast to grand and popular American and European narratives. "Her semiautobiographical 1993 novel *Arabian Jazz*," writes Tanyss Ludescher, "produced a flurry of controversy because it broke an unwritten rule in the Arab American community that members should not criticize Arabs and Arab Americans in public. In her imaginative and comic novel, Abu Jaber lampoons American society, attacking, in particular, anti-Arab bigots, as well as Arab society. Despite her final acceptance of both communities and her thoughtful meditation on the vagaries of living with a hyphenated identity, some readers were offended by her grotesque stereotypes of Arabs."[110]

Abu Jaber's writing is among the first to use women as storytellers conveying their memories of the past in her Arabian *Jazz* which was published in 1993, a year before the Radius of Arab American Writers was established in 1994 using the Arabic word for "storyteller," "rawi," as its abbreviated name. Diana Abu Jaber has played a crucial role for decades in regard to the development of Arab American literature, and her work has influenced many women writers to raise their silenced voices in a feminist manner against all kinds of injustices and power abuse, whether masculine or

[107] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 106.
[108] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel," *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 124.
[109] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*, 96.
[110] Tanyss Ludescher, "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature," *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 104.

institutional. Despite the fact that she has been criticized from both Arab American and American readers, Abu Jaber sheds light on problems of exile and other forms of displacements and interlinks ethnicities who share common exilic concerns whether the character is a nurse, a drummer, a cook, a chef, a kitchen porter, or an intellectual.

Conclusion

My project has been to underline and explore various aspects that make Arab America and to delineate the main concerns facing Arab American communities on the soil of the United States today by bringing together various Arab American writings by authors who have different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. I have presented both male and female authors and included varied literary genres such as memoir, autobiography, poetry, and fiction, in which the authors strategically employ their literary skills with the effect of dismantling existing negative stereotypes about Arab Americans and anti-Arab discourses whether originating in the United States or in Western Europe. Contemporary Arab American writers have, in addition, criticized negative traits which exist within Arab America and in the Arabic-speaking world, and thus have contributed a great deal to internationalization of translated Arab culture and to bringing together the two complementary worlds—the Arabic-speaking Middle East and the West.

Undoubtedly, the greatest merits in bringing opposing worlds toward greater understanding by means of the idea of universalism belong to Edward W. Said. As a universal and exilic intellectual, Said stands in between his peculiar brand of postcolonial theory and ethnic studies. In his memoir *Out of Place*, while underlining the issue of exile, he makes clear the impossibility of avoiding the political implications in his postmodernist and postcolonial theories, especially when the question of Palestine is concerned. His investment in the Palestinian cause provides a literary and cultural wellspring for younger contemporary Arab American writers while his status as a symbolic figurehead among Arab Americans helps to legitimate Arab American literature. "There is a tendency," writes Ilan Pappe, "to separate Edward Said's theoretical work on literature and culture from his writings on Palestine. The two themes were dealt with in distinct books and essays where not only the content but also the style differed. In both fields, however, it is possible to trace a dialectical relationship between them."[1] Said politicizes the condition of exile by interconnecting it with all the misfortunes experienced by displaced Palestinians and those Palestinians who have lived in the Occupied Territories since the creation of Israel. As an exilic intellectual, Said

[1] Ilan Pappe, "The Exilic Homeland of Edward S. Said, *Routledge.* Vol 8 (1), (2006), 9.

raised his intellectual voice in defense of Palestine and the condition of being displaced, a voice which he held onto passionately until his last hour. "Said," as Ilan Pappe puts it "'the exiled intellectual' or, more precisely, 'the exile intellectual' was attractive to Jewish intellectuals far more than Said 'the Palestinian'."[2]

Unlike Said, Ihab Hassan in his autobiography *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography* (1986) depoliticizes the issue of exile. Hassan does not treat the exile as an imposed act, but rather as the result of individual choice and will. While rejecting his Egyptian ethnic roots and embracing American ideals and Western philosophy, Hassan never feels himself to be an exilic intellectual but rather works towards his self-creation and plays a significant role in the development of American postmodernism. Hassan writes, " "The day came: the Egyptian government sent me on a generous Government Fellowship to study in America for Ph.D. in electrical engineering, and later to return to help build the Aswan High Dam. I studied for a Ph.D. in English instead, and stayed. I have never felt exile in America; I have felt only the freedom of self-creation."[3] Unlike Said, who continually underlined the Palestinians' wish to return to their homeland, Hassan is satisfied with the condition of self-exile and refuses to return to the country that gave him birth.

It seems that Said's writings and his loud protest for the unresolved Palestinian cause prepared the space for a wide range of contemporary Arab American writers who come from vastly different countries and cultures. Within the term "contemporary Arab American" authors my scope includes poets, novelists, literary critics and autobiographers who started writing during the 1990s to the present day, who have resided or dwelt in the United States and have Arab ethnic backgrounds. It should be emphasized that these authors do not necessarily intend to produce political literature, but rather to translate the culture, tradition and various aspects of their ethnicities into a viable American cultural vocabulary. Yet it is politics which, in a way, dictates the rhythm of their writing, in particular the question of Palestine and the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001. Aside from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the destruction of

[2] Ilan Pappe, "The Exilic Homeland of Edward S. Said, *Routledge.* Vol 8 (1), (2006),18.
[3]Ihab Hassan, "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance," *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 15.

the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings by terrorist attacks, there are other secondary landmark events such as the Lebanese Civil War, the Iraqi-Iranian War, Gulf War I and II, the Balkan Wars during the 1990s, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the U.S. War in Afghanistan that directly or indirectly have drawn the attention of Arab American writers. These wars, primarily in Muslim-majority countries, increased the presence of people of Arab background (as well as people of non-Arab Muslim background) on U.S.' soil after September 11, 2001. The best example which illustrates the fact that politics is inevitable in the Arab American writing is Laila Halaby and her novel, *Once in a Promised Land*. Halaby opens with ethnic characters who are almost assimilated, but as the plot develops, the politics comes in. When asked by Jayne Benjulian whether the story is about professional Arab American couple and their will to embrace the American values, Halaby states: "Actually, I wanted to see what would happen to a very successful immigrant who had something happen to him—an accident—and how it would affect him. In my mind, I started with the accident and worked backwards. I also wanted to explore their relationship and the things that get said and don't get said. In terms of it featuring my book, 9/11 probably didn't come until the middle of it. While I was working on this book, 9/11 had already happened."[4]

Events of September 11, 2011, deepened the existing prejudices towards Muslim Americans as well as Arab Americans, who became a target of suspicion for possible terrorism. Muslim Americans have been regarded as a source of evil and terror even prior to the event of hijacking four U.S. planes. Post 9/11 concocted new doctrines fuelling religious hatred and anti-Muslim feeling in the United States, and Bush's Cabinet declared "war on terror" by suggesting that Muslim Americans might be regarded in a manner similar to how Japanese Americans were regarded after Japan's kamikaze attacks on the U.S. during World War II. "Today," writes Moustafa Bayoumi, speaking during the U.S. presidency of George W. Bush, "the government uses both political repression and cultural fearmongering against Arabs, South Asians and Muslims in the United States. Through its 'designer' laws, the Bush Administration seeks to isolate and restructure these communities by creating a broad category of suspicion based almost

[4] Jayne Benjulian, "Conversation with Laila Halaby February, 2008," *A Room Of Her Foundation* (2008), par.10.

exclusively on the combination of national origin, ethnicity and religion." [5] As we have observed, Arab American authors have not grouped themselves based on religion, but from the secular ground, they nonetheless pack together in challenging anti-Islam discourse and show that Muslim Americans are an educated and moderate population, in works that often express tolerance, human values, and a clear vision in multicultural America.

While exploring contemporary Arab American literature and Arab American subjects at large, we have observed another phenomenon, best exemplified by Gregory Orfalea. The importance of mentioning Orfalea in this conclusion is manifold. First, he has been cited many times throughout our thesis due to his outstanding contribution to the development of Arab American writing. Second, he was born and raised on the West Coast of the United States, which invites interesting examination of possible divergences between the U.S. East coast and West coast with respect to Arab American literary works. Third, Orfalea's work is the most suitable example for summing up, in a different fashion, what has been written in the preceding chapters. In addition, Orfalea has experienced both the East and West Coast for he had lived and worked in Washington, D.C. and his maternal side of the family moved to California from New York. He has expressed himself in fiction and nonfiction writings, poetry, memoir, and short stories, a historian of Arab Americans, literary theorist and a humanist. In regard to his attachment to his Lebanese compatriots, similar to the bittersweet memories of their homelands expressed by other Arab immigrants to the U.S., Orfalea writes: "'Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry,' Auden said of Yeats. Say that Mad Lebanon hurt me into the history. For Lebanon substitutes as well Syria, Palestine—the entire Arab world hurts one into leaving, and penning some explanation of the reasons to come to America, to try to find a place, even in the snow, to plant a fig tree."[6] His writings encompass Arab America, starting from the early waves of Arab immigration, and including studies of the literary endeavors of the first Arab immigrant writers in the U.S., the geographical spread of Arab Americans, anti-Arab tendencies and stereotyping on American soil, and the role which contemporary feminist Arab American authors have played in the writing of

[5] Moustafa Bayoumi "Arab America's September 11," *The Nation*, 22 (September 25, 2006), 22
[6] Gregory Orfalea. *The Arab Americans: A History*, xvi.

fiction. Orfalea, not incidentally, does not forget to mention Edward Said's work and theories, particularly when writing about Arab and Arab American stereotyping in the novels written in English after World War II. He also discusses Arab American double identities, assimilation, Palestinian desire to return, and the diverse ethnic backgrounds of contemporary Arab American authors, including his own.

In his non-fiction book *Angeleno Days* (2009), which consists of memoirs and essays, Orfalea tells his personal stories about his childhood in Los Angeles which are linked to Arab American subject matter, while he also discusses the Arab American novel and Arab American stereotyping in fiction, mainly since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. Orfalea's father moved West from Cleveland, whereas his mother moved from New York. "It is hard to say if race figured into the Orfaleas coming West, but it might have. Cleveland had an old Syrian community and the Orfaleas had, in fact, been of its pioneers in the late nineteenth century. Was it hard to get ahead in the Midwest with dark skin and your father gone broke?"[7] Orfalea discusses the relationship between Jewish and Arab communities in New York and Los Angeles, respectively East and West Coast, stating that interethnic relationships in L.A. are milder and less politicized than is the case in N.Y. The memoirs reads: "Though it is true that Syrian Jews and Arabs both toiled in the New York garment factories, the huge number and political influence of American Jews in New York marginalized the Arab American community there. This never happened in Los Angeles, where the two communities are closer in number and not as politically extreme (granting that the assassination of an Arab American leader by the JDL. occurred in L.A–Alex Odeh)."[8]

Yet, as Orfalea notes in his writings, the Israeli state has antagonized the Arab world, and there is anti-Arab stereotyping from a number of authors who have Jewish background. Due to the marginalization and anti-Arab strain, many writings by Arab Americans show Arab Americans who live double lives, including some of the characters which we have mentioned in preceding chapters when discussing Arab American fiction. In the article "Arab American Experiences," Kathleen Christison states: "'Edward Said writes in his essay on exile, *After the Last Sky*, that '(…) There has been no misfortune

[7] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 117.
[8] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 8.

worse for us than that we are ineluctably viewed as the enemies of the Jews.… *Before the Flames* is very much a personal account-based on more than 125 interviews conducted by Arab American author Gregory Orfalea over a four-year period of the century-long Arab migration to the U.S. It is written as a result of Orfalea's realization that he was himself 'not one, but two . . . that I was descended from a people considered to be an enemy of America, though indeed we were not at war with any Arab country. In some ways, the Arab Americans live the oddest double life of any ethnic group.'"[9]

We have already discussed the issue of Arab American assimilation and the main Arab American subgroups that faced difficulties in adopting American values (in Chapter Four), and yet it is worth mentioning Orfalea's points of view in relation to this process. In the above-mentioned article Kathleen Christison writes: "for second generation Arab Americans growing up during the Depression and World War II, Orfalea says, 'Arabic was a tongue whispered in warmth or shouted when a glass was broken at the dinner table. It was not the language that made friends or secured work, and it certainly was not useful in assembling a field rifle in the army. … The majority of Palestinian immigrants, on the other hand, who arrived after 1948, have tended to assimilate far less well—for several reasons, Orfalea concludes. They were predominantly Muslim and were therefore spiritually and culturally separate from the earliest Arab immigrants and from American society. They were better educated and therefore stepped into social strata 'that required them to hide their views.'"[10]

We have discussed above the roles which have been played by grandchildren of the first Arab Americans in the development of Arab America, and Orfalea himself is a typical example. He was born in Los Angeles to a Syrian-Lebanese Christian parents. In an interview with Ray Hanania at the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, discussing the immigration in his book *The Arab Americans: A History* (2007), Orfalea says: "My parents were in this country for a hundred years. My grandmother Nazera Orfalea came in 1890 from Zahle (Lebanon), and she was one of a thousand of the first Arab women in the United States"[11] Orfalea gives an overview of Arab and Arab American stereotyping in English-language fiction before and particularly after 9/11,

[9] Kathleen Christison, "Arab American Experiences," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 4 (1988), 129.
[10] Kathleen Christison, "Arab American Experiences," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 4 (1988), 130.
[11] Ray Hanania, "Interview with Gregory Orfalea," January 2, 2007.

where the Arab characters have been described as anti-heroes, evildoers and potential terrorists. This stereotyping was not so evident in the novels written before 1948. The stereotyping comes mostly from the authors who have Jewish background, because "the establishment of the state of Israel came on a wave of extraordinary American sympathy for the plight of Jewish refugees fleeing the atrocities of Nazi Germany. Many of the post-World War II American novelists were Jewish–Bellow, Mailer, Shaw, Roth, Malamud, Singer. Though it would be wrong to conclude that these authors had identical views on Israel (Roth, for one, showed subtle, satiric doubt in *The Counterlife*), most were enthusiastically Zionist and wrote tortured, compelling fiction on the legacy of Holocaust." [12]

Orfalea discusses four types "of novels that have appeared in English since the end of World War II in which Arab characters are found: spy thrillers; historical tour de force and adventure stories; novels of oil blackmail and international financial pressure; and finally novels that have nothing to do with the Middle East." [13] Orfalea considers Leon Uris and many of his followers (James Michener, Ken Follet, and others) as producing unending stereotypes of Arabs. In relation to this the task of the novelist, as Orfalea suggests, is to "unveil" the truth. "Beauty, as Keats suggested, is critical, too, the beauty of language and its truth evoked in moving language that gives us readers a twinge inside, or the Houseman-like hair-raise on the back of the neck."[14] It seems the truth has not come to light by most English language authors of post-WW II, but rather it has been dimmed and veiled. "D.H. Lawrence said that the novel is the great book of life, and it is true that life is not tidy and that tidy novels are lifeless. But a novel needs a center of gravity. It needs to cohere even as it leaps; it needs to present a world that is plausible, human, and striving for the light, however pulled to darkness it may be." [15] While reading Orfalea, one can trace Edward Said's influence not only in Orfalea but as we have mentioned, in many other Arab American authors, regardless of the genre they employ. When discussing the stereotyping in English novels, Orfalea writes: "First, the post-World War II novelists produced works that embodied a centuries-old Western

[12] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 184.
[13] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 168.
[14] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 168, 169.
[15] Gregory Orfalea, "The Arab American Novel" *MELUS 31*, no 4 (2006), 116.

attitude: that the Orient (and the Near East) is an alien, exotic realm inhabited by essentially subhuman figures who are to be analyzed, erotically enjoyed, then subjugated."[16]

In relation to stereotyping between the authors before and after World War II, Orfalea draws different lines. He compares Lawrence Durrell's *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957) with Leon Uris's *Exodus* (1958). "The avoidance of stereotyping," writes Orfalea, "is not just a matter of grinding a single scene to imaginative powder. Durrell gives us street scenes in Alexandria in which the attitude toward existence is salubrious in itself. (…) The skin of Ethiopians isn't 'black', but 'plum-blue.' Chaos and terrorism are not in Lebanese eyes, but their skin is 'pewter' in cast." [17] Leon Uris on the other side, despite the general stereotyping of Arabs as filthy thieves, cowards and double dealers, goes even further in exaggerating the Arab stereotyping. When discussing Uris's novel *Exodus*, Orfalea writes: "Early in the book, a British brigadier talks about 'Arab sellouts' and Arab collusion with Germany during World War II. The connection between Arab and Nazi is often made by Uris." [18]

Anti-Arab attitude and stereotyping is very common, not only in the United States but also in Western Europe. Orfalea writes about his own experiences due to the color of his skin. "I find myself" as he puts it "after ten years of political and literary focus on the Middle East and its immigrants to this country returning to earlier years, more immediate roots. People who ask me where I'm from do a double-take when I say 'California.' And then they say, 'No, before.' And I say, 'Heaven.' And then they say 'Before that.' And I blurt, 'You mean Syria?"' [19]

Rather than dealing with authors who commit stereotyping, Orfalea discuses the Arab American novel and the Arab American authors, who combat stereotypes. He mentions novelist Vance Bourjaily and poet Samuel Hazo. It is worth to emphasize that Bourjaily did not romanticize Arab characters in his novel *The End of My Life* (1947), the book which achieved enormous success after World War II. "Jack Aldridge praised it in his own landmark book, *After the Lost Generation* (1951): 'No book since *This Side of*

[16] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 183.
[17] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 170.
[18] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 172.
[19] Gregory Orfalea, " Seedlings: The Germination of a Writer's Life," *The Antioch Review* 51, No.1 (1993),97.

Paradise has caught so well the flavor of youth in wartime, and no book since *A Farewell to Arms* has contained so complete record of the loss of that youth in war.' (…) He [Bourjaily] did, include penetrating, non-patronizing, but humanized portraits of the Arabs in Beirut: 'The Arabic- speaking people are warm people with a long tradition of hospitality. They offer enmity where enmity is offered them; they respond to friendliness with friendliness; they are, except when angered, or when one tampers with their customs or ceremonies, humorous, humble and wise.'" [20] Bourjaily's portrayal of Arab characters is realistic in comparison to the contemporary Jewish American authors such as Uris, Bellow, Shaw, and Mailer.

Bourjaily with his fourth novel *Confession of Spent Youth* (1960, released in 1986) did not stand alone in defying the stereotypes about Arab Americans. Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and Mona Simpson's *The Lost Father* have played an important role in relation to non-stereotyping of Arab American characters. We have mentioned in our thesis that post-9/11 era has produced notable Arab American scholars and authors who have directed the Arab American fiction toward the true art, and have checked the tide of the Arab stereotyping that has existed for a century in the English novel. But again, there are still some publishers in New York who hesitate to publish any fiction that deals with realistic portrayal of Arab America. In relation to this Orfalea states: "Who are the existing new voices publishing first novels since September 11, 2001? Interestingly most are women. They include Laila Lalamy, a Moroccan American; Mohja Kahf, a Syrian American; Alicia Erian, a Lebanese American; Liala Halaby, a Palestinian American; and 2007 winner of the first ever Arab American Book Award for the Novel, Libyan American Hisham Matar."[21]

While reading Orfalea, we get the impression that, while having a critical eye for cultural, literary and historical issues, he has a keen sense of poetry wherein he prefers to cite Byron, Keats, and Shelley, and also possesses a wide knowledge of English literature, mentioning great pens such as D.W Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, Lawrence Durrell, as well as many other living or dead authors of English fiction. Above all, Orfalea is a first-rank humanist. He links Shelley's role of the poet to the role of the

[20] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 181.
[21] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 186.

novelist and the true artist, where he writes: "Shelley called the artist 'an unacknowledged legislator' ─ the conscience of human race. It is to that lonely explorer of the mysterious depths of the human soul in all its joys, sorrows, hates, and loves that the problem falls. Vision, humanity, and honest pen—along with courageous publishers—may yet go where politicians fear to tread." [22]

Arab American literature and Arab American studies, as a new and growing subject has developed rapidly in the twenty-first century. Arab American authors and literary critics have proven to be mature intellectuals. They were few or undeveloped voices in the time of earlier crises but soon after they have unmasked discourses of anti-Arab sentiment and Islamophobia. It is worth mentioning that these intellectuals do not split along the lines of religion or their countries of origin, but instead find common ground from which to tackle complex discourses which misinterpret their rich and diverse culture. Put differently, they foster the idea of Arab America and contribute to enriching the American literary tradition. Arab American fiction writers are American citizens. Many were either born or grew up in the United States. What makes them ethical human beings and intellectuals is the fact that they have never forgotten their heritage and have represented the history of their "Old Countries" in realistic and critical ways. From "nostalgic narrators" and "America's original sand niggers,"[23] they have emerged as critical observers of culture, religion, and racial prejudices, and even found themselves among finalists in poetry prizes. They neither create literary "hoaxes" nor gaps between ethnicities and nations, but through their fiction they build bridges which connect people who inhabit the same planet and share the same sky.

vv

[22] Gregory Orfalea, *Angeleno Days,* 191.
[23] Steven Salaita, *Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics,* 21.

Bibliography

Primary bibliography

Abu-Jaber, Diana. *Arabian Jazz*. New York: Harvest, 1993.

——. *Crescent*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Darraj,Susan Muaddi. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Halaby, Laila. *Once in a Promised Land*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

——.*West of the Jordan*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

Kahf, Mohja. *E-mails from Scheherazad*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003.

——.*The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006.

Majaj, Lisa Suhair. *Geographies* of *Light*. Washington D.C.: Del Sol Press, 2009.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. New York: Greenwillow Books (HarperCollins), 2002.

——.*Tender Spot: Selected Poems*. Bloodaxe World Poets 5, 1st UK ed. Northumberland, U.K.: Bloodaxe Books, Ltd, 2008.

Gregory Orfalea. *Angeleno Days*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Hassan, Ihab. *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Said, Edward W. *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Secondary bibliography

Abdulhadi, Rabab, Evelyn Alsultany, Nadine Naber, guest ed. "Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab American Feminist Perspectives." Special issue of *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 5 (2005). http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/.

Abdurraqib, Samaa. "Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature." *MELUS* (*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*) 31, No.4, Arab American Literature (2006): 55-70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029682.

Abudi, Dalya. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier*. Leiden • Boston: Brill, 2001.

Ashcroft ,Bill and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Bacon, Francis. The *Essays or Counsels, Civil of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans and the New Atlantis*. Ed. Jim Manis. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.

Banita, Geogiana. "Race, Risk, and Fiction in the War on Terror: Laila Halaby, Gayle Brandeis, and Michael Cunningham." *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory:* 21.4 (2010), 242-68. ussc.edu.au/s/media/.../101201_Banita_LIT_essay_as_published.pdf.

Barbour John D. "Edward said and the Space of Exile." *Literature and Theology*, Vol.21, No.3 (2007): 293-301. litthe.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/3/293.abstract.

Bayoumi, Moustafa. "Arab America's September 11." *The Nation*, 22 (September 25, 2006): 22-26. www.thenation.com/article/arab-americas-september-11.

Berman, Jacob Rama."The Barbarous Voice of Democracy: American Captivity in Barbary and Multicultural Specter." *American Literature,* 79, No.1, March 2007: 1-27. EBSCO database.

Benjulian, Jayne. "Conversation with Laila Halaby, February, 2008." A Room Of Her Own Book Club. *Foundation* (2008): para.4. http://www.aroomofherownfoundation.org/docs/Promised_Land_guides.pdf

Bertens, Hans. *The idea of the Postmodernism: A History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Boosahda, Elizabeth. *Arab American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Bridge, John Whalen-. *Political Fiction and the American Self*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Bose, Purnima."The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf." by Mohja Kahf, *Indiana Magazine* of *History*, (2009), Vol. 105 Issue 1: 90-91. EBSCO database.

Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.

Castro, Joy, "Nomad, Switchboard, Poet: Naomy Shihab Nye's Multicultural Literature for Young Readers: An Intreview with Naomi Shihab." *MELUS* (*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*) 27, No.2 (2002): 233.236.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/3250610

Christison, Kathleen. "Arab American Experiences." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17, No.

4 (1988): 129-131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2537298.

Coleman, David. "Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family. Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, 18, (1993): 1-10. http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/8184/9241

Darraj,Susan Muaddi. *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praegar, 2004.

——. "Understanding of the Other Sister: The Case of Arab Feminism." *Monthly Review,* Vol.53, Issue 6 (2002): 15-25. EBSCO database.

Davis, Hilary E., Zine,Jasmin and Taylor, Lisa K. "An interview with Mohja Kahf." *Intercultural Education,* Vol.18, No. 4, (2007): 383–388.

Durczak, Jerzy, "Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan's confidential criticisms." *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992): 4-12.

Eagleton, Terry. "Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory (An Interview*)*." *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 25, (2005): 254-269. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047460.

Elizabeth Dehab, F. "On Edward Said, Scholar and Public Intellectual*." CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.4 (2003): 1-8. http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss4/1.

Essayah Chérif , Salwa, "Arab American Literature: Gendered Memory in Abinader and Abu-Jaber." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 28, No. 4 (2003): 207-228. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3595307.

Field, Robin E. "A Prophet in Her Own Town: An Interview with Diana Abu-Jaber." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 31, No. 4, (2006): 207-225. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029690.

Ghazal, Jen'nan. "Family, Religion, and Work among Arab American Women." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *66*, No.4 (Nov.2004): 1042-1050. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600181.

Gindi, Hoda. "Edward Said and Critical Decolonization." *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 25, (2005), 9-11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047444.

Gindi, Nadia. "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place." *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 284-298. http://www.jstor.org/stable/521951.

Grossman, Judith. "From One Desert to Another." *The Women's Review of Books*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1993), 23. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4021655

Hanania, Ray. "Interview with Gregory Orfalea." January 2, 2007. Accessed on October 24, 2011. Video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8069469669627759101.

Harasym, Sarah. *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York &London: Routledge, 1990.

Hashim, Ruzy Suliza . "Notions of Home for Diasporic Muslim Women Writers" *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, Number 4 (2009)**,** 545-556. http://slim.ukm.my/solls/Batch6.pdf

Hassan, Ihab. "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance." *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 13-21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40152554.

——. "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir." *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 207-222. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40059921.

Hassan ,Waïl. S. "Arab American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations." Journal of Comparative Poetics, No. 22, (2002), 7-35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1350048.

Heath, Jennifer. *The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore and Politics*, 6. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008.

Holdeman, David. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Howes, Marjorie and John Kelly. *The Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hunt, John L. and Henry L.Hunt. *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* London: Tavistock Street, Covent Garden,1924.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York and London: Routledge, 1988.

István Dobos, "Autobiography." *WEBFU [Wiener elektronische Beiträge des Instituts für Finno-Ugristik],*(2003), 1-9. webfu.univie.ac.at/texte/dobos3.pdf.

Jackson, Joab, "Remade in America: Parkville Writer's Short Story Collection Explores Adult Lives of Immigrants' Children." *City Paper,* posted on 8/22/2007, para.1-15. www.citypaper.com/eat/story.asp?id=13995

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Limited, 2001.

Judith, Grossman. "One Desert to Another." *The Women's Review of Books* 11, No. 2. (1993): 23. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4021655.

Kahf, Mohja. "A Controlled Burn of Memory. Book Reviews: *Flawed Landscape: Poems 1987-2008* by Sharif S. Elmusa and *Geographies of Light* by Lisa Suhair Majaj." *Banipal* 38 (2010). http://www.banipal.co.uk/book_reviews/68/flawed-landscape-by-sharif-s-elmusa/. Accessed on December 17, 2012.

Kiberd,Declan. *Inventing Ireland*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Kulczycki, Andrzej and Arun Peter Lobo. "Patterns, Determinations of Intermarriages Among Arab Americans." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, No.1 (Feb., 2002): 202-210. JSTOR. National Council on Family Relations. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3599788.

Lal, Vinay. "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said." *Emergences.* Vol.13, No 1/2 (2003): 105-115. www.vinaylal.com/ESSAYS(POK)/exile4.pdf.

Layton, Rebecca. *Multicultural Voices: Arab American and Muslim Writers*. New York: Chelsea House, 2010.

Leighton, Angela*. Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems*. Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Levinson, Deirdre. "The Apprenticeship of Edward Said-Out *of Place: A Memoir* by Said, Edward" *The Threepenny Review.* No. 82 (2000): 8-9.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/4384944.

Long, Kate. "Roots: On Language and Heritage: A Conversation with Naomi Shihab Nye." *World Literature Today.* Vol. 83 Issue 6 (2009): 31-34. EBSCO database.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Ludescher, Tanyss. "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 31, No. 4 (2006): 93-109. Avail. from Academic Search Elite EBSCO.

Majaj, Lisa Suhair. "New Directions: Arab American Writing at century's End." *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*. Khaled Matawa and Munir Akash, ed. (Bethesda, MD: Jusoor, 1999): 67-77.

——. "On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections." *Meridians: Feminism,Race,Ttransnationalism.* Vol.2, No.1 (2001): 113-126.

——. "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian+ American Women's Literature." *Thaqafat*. No.7/8 (2004): 251-264. www.uob.edu.bh/uob__files/436/issue7-8/7_8_246_248.pdf.

——. "Arab American Literature: Origins and Developments." *American Studies Journal*: No. 52 (2008). www.asjournal.org/archive/52/150.html, Accessed on December 30, 2012.

Maleh Al, Layla. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature.* Amsterdam, New York: Radopi B.V., 2009.

Mercer, Loraine and Linda Storm, "Counter Narratives: Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 32, No. 4, (2007): 33-46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029830.

Najjar, Deborah Al . "Interview with Lisa Suhair Majaj." *International Feminist Journal of Politics.* 9:3 (2007): 402–409. http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals.

Najmi, Samina. "Naomi Shihab Nye's Aesthetic of Smallness and the Military Sublime." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 35, Issue 2 (2010): 151-171. EBSCO database.

Naous, Mazen. "*Arabian Jazz* and the Need for Improvising Arab Identity in the US." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 34, No. 4, (2009): 61-80.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/20618100.

Newman- Marcy, Jane Knopf. "Lisa Suhair Majaj. Geographies of Light." *Arab Studies Quarterly.* Vol. 34.No. 2 (2012): 121-131. www.plutojournals.com/asq/.

Orfalea, Gregory. *The Arab Americans: A History.* Northampton, Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2005.

Schaefer, Heike. *America and the Orient.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001.

Said, Edward W. *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

——. *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Salaita, Steven.*Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

——.*Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

——."Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), p. 146-168.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/25115271.

Sarkar, Parama."[untitled]", *MELUS* 31, no. 4, (2006), 263-265
http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029698.

Solar, Milovoj. *Suvremena svjetska književnost*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1982.

Bibliografija

Primarna bibliografija

Abu-Jaber, Diana. *Arabian Jazz*. New York: Harvest, 1993.

——. *Crescent*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

Darraj,Susan Muaddi. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Halaby, Laila. *Once in a Promised Land*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007.

——.*West of the Jordan*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

Kahf, Mohja. *E-mails from Scheherazad*. Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003.

——.*The Girl in Tangerine Scarf*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2006.

Majaj, Lisa Suhair. *Geographies* of *Light*. Washington D.C.: Del Sol Press, 2009.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. New York: Greenwillow Books (HarperCollins), 2002.

——.*Tender Spot: Selected Poems*. Bloodaxe World Poets 5, 1st UK ed. Northumberland, U.K.: Bloodaxe Books, Ltd, 2008.

Gregory Orfalea. *Angeleno Days*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009.

Hassan, Ihab. *Out of Egypt: Scenes and Arguments of an Autobiography*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.

Said, Edward W. *Out of Place*: *A Memoir*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Sekundarna bibliografija

Abdulhadi, Rabab, Evelyn Alsultany, Nadine Naber, guest ed. "Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab American Feminist Perspectives." Special issue of *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies.* Vol. 5 (2005). http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/.

Abdurraqib, Samaa. "Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature." *MELUS* (*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*) 31, No.4, Arab American Literature (2006): 55-70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029682.

Abudi, Dalya. *Mothers and Daughters in Arab Women's Literature: The Family Frontier.*

Leiden • Boston: Brill, 2001.

Ashcroft ,Bill and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said.* London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Bacon, Francis. The *Essays or Counsels, Civil of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans and the New Atlantis*. Ed. Jim Manis. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007.

Banita, Geogiana. "Race, Risk, and Fiction in the War on Terror: Laila Halaby, Gayle Brandeis, and Michael Cunningham." *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory:* 21.4 (2010), 242-68. ussc.edu.au/s/media/.../101201_Banita_LIT_essay_as_published.pdf.

Barbour John D. "Edward said and the Space of Exile." *Literature and Theology*, Vol.21, No.3 (2007): 293-301. litthe.oxfordjournals.org/content/21/3/293.abstract.

Bayoumi, Moustafa. "Arab America's September 11." *The Nation*, 22 (September 25, 2006): 22-26. www.thenation.com/article/arab-americas-september-11.

Berman, Jacob Rama."The Barbarous Voice of Democracy: American Captivity in Barbary and Multicultural Specter." *American Literature,* 79, No.1, March 2007: 1-27. EBSCO database.

Benjulian, Jayne. "Conversation with Laila Halaby, February, 2008." A Room Of Her Own Book Club. *Foundation* (2008): para.4. http://www.aroomofherownfoundation.org/docs/Promised_Land_guides.pdf

Bertens, Hans. *The idea of the Postmodernism: A History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Boosahda, Elizabeth. *Arab American Faces and Voices: The Origins of an Immigrant Community*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003.

Bridge, John Whalen-. *Political Fiction and the American Self*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Bose, Purnima."The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf." by Mohja Kahf, *Indiana Magazine* of *History*, (2009), Vol. 105 Issue 1: 90-91. EBSCO database.

Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.

Castro, Joy, "Nomad, Switchboard, Poet: Naomy Shihab Nye's Multicultural Literature for Young Readers: An Intreview with Naomi Shihab." *MELUS* (*Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*) 27, No.2 (2002): 233.236. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3250610

Christison, Kathleen. “Arab American Experiences.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17, No.
4 (1988): 129-131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2537298.

Coleman, David. “Masculinity's Severed Self: Gender and Orientalism in *Out of Egypt* and *Running in the Family. Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne*, 18, (1993): 1-10. http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/8184/9241

Darraj,Susan Muaddi. *Scheherazade’s Legacy: Arab American Women on Writing*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praegar, 2004.

——. “Understanding of the Other Sister: The Case of Arab Feminism.” *Monthly Review,* Vol.53, Issue 6 (2002): 15-25. EBSCO database.

Davis, Hilary E., Zine,Jasmin and Taylor, Lisa K. “An interview with Mohja Kahf.” *Intercultural Education,* Vol.18, No. 4, (2007): 383–388.

Durczak, Jerzy, “Out of Egypt– Ihab Hassan’s confidential criticisms.” *Studia Anglica Posnaniesna*, XXIV, (1992): 4-12.

Eagleton, Terry. “Edward Said, Cultural Politics, and Critical Theory (An Interview*).*” *Journal of Comparative Poetics,* No. 25, (2005): 254-269. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047460.

Elizabeth Dehab, F. “On Edward Said, Scholar and Public Intellectual*.” CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 5.4 (2003): 1-8. http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss4/1.

Essayah Chérif , Salwa, “Arab American Literature: Gendered Memory in Abinader and Abu-Jaber.” *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 28, No. 4 (2003): 207-228. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3595307.

Field, Robin E. “A Prophet in Her Own Town: An Interview with Diana Abu-Jaber.” *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 31, No. 4, (2006): 207-225. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029690.

Ghazal, Jen’nan. “Family, Religion, and Work among Arab American Women.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *66*, No.4 (Nov.2004): 1042-1050. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600181.

Gindi, Hoda. “Edward Said and Critical Decolonization.” *Journal of Comparative*

Poetics, No. 25, (2005), 9-11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047444.

Gindi, Nadia. "On the Margins of a Memoir: A Personal Reading of Said's Out of Place." *Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 20, The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative Authors Writing in Foreign Languages (2000), 284-298. http://www.jstor.org/stable/521951.

Grossman, Judith. "From One Desert to Another." *The Women's Review of Books*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1993), 23. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4021655

Hanania, Ray. "Interview with Gregory Orfalea." January 2, 2007. Accessed on October 24, 2011. Video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8069469669627759101.

Harasym, Sarah. *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. New York &London: Routledge, 1990.

Hashim, Ruzy Suliza . "Notions of Home for Diasporic Muslim Women Writers" *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, Number 4 (2009)**,** 545-556. http://slim.ukm.my/solls/Batch6.pdf

Hassan, Ihab. "Marginal Literature at the Exploded Center: An Okinawan Instance." *World Literature Today*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1997), 13-21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40152554.

——. "Coming to America: Fragment of a Memoir." *Religion & Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 2/3 (2003), 207-222. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40059921.

Hassan ,Waïl. S. "Arab American Autobiography and the Reinvention of Identity: Two Egyptian Negotiations." Journal of Comparative Poetics, No. 22, (2002), 7-35. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1350048.

Heath, Jennifer. *The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore and Politics*, 6. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2008.

Holdeman, David. *The Cambridge Introduction to W. B. Yeats*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Howes, Marjorie and John Kelly. *The Cambridge Companion to W.B. Yeats*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hunt, John L. and Henry L.Hunt. *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* London: Tavistock Street, Covent Garden,1924.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York and

London: Routledge, 1988.

István Dobos, "Autobiography." *WEBFU [Wiener elektronische Beiträge des Instituts für Finno-Ugristik],*(2003), 1-9. webfu.univie.ac.at/texte/dobos3.pdf.

Jackson, Joab, "Remade in America: Parkville Writer's Short Story Collection Explores Adult Lives of Immigrants' Children." *City Paper,* posted on 8/22/2007, para.1-15. www.citypaper.com/eat/story.asp?id=13995

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Limited, 2001.

Judith, Grossman. "One Desert to Another." *The Women's Review of Books* 11, No. 2. (1993): 23. JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4021655.

Kahf, Mohja. "A Controlled Burn of Memory. Book Reviews: *Flawed Landscape: Poems 1987-2008* by Sharif S. Elmusa and *Geographies of Light* by Lisa Suhair Majaj." *Banipal* 38 (2010). http://www.banipal.co.uk/book_reviews/68/flawed-landscape-by-sharif-s-elmusa/. Accessed on December 17, 2012.

Kiberd,Declan. *Inventing Ireland*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Kulczycki, Andrzej and Arun Peter Lobo. "Patterns, Determinations of Intermarriages Among Arab Americans." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64, No.1 (Feb., 2002): 202-210. JSTOR. National Council on Family Relations. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3599788.

Lal, Vinay. "The Enigmas of Exile: Reflections on Edward Said." *Emergences.* Vol.13, No 1/2 (2003): 105-115. www.vinaylal.com/ESSAYS(POK)/exile4.pdf.

Layton, Rebecca. *Multicultural Voices: Arab American and Muslim Writers*. New York: Chelsea House, 2010.

Leighton, Angela. *Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems*. Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Levinson, Deirdre. "The Apprenticeship of Edward Said-Out *of Place: A Memoir* by Said, Edward" *The Threepenny Review.* No. 82 (2000): 8-9. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4384944.

Long, Kate. "Roots: On Language and Heritage: A Conversation with Naomi Shihab Nye." *World Literature Today.* Vol. 83 Issue 6 (2009): 31-34. EBSCO database.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Ludescher, Tanyss. "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 31, No. 4 (2006): 93-109. Avail. from Academic Search Elite EBSCO.

Majaj, Lisa Suhair. "New Directions: Arab American Writing at century's End." *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*. Khaled Matawa and Munir Akash, ed. (Bethesda, MD: Jusoor, 1999): 67-77.

——. "On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections." *Meridians: Feminism,Race,Ttransnationalism.* Vol.2, No.1 (2001): 113-126.

——. "Visions of Home: Exiles and Return in Palestinian+ American Women's Literature." *Thaqafat*. No.7/8 (2004): 251-264. www.uob.edu.bh/uob__files/436/issue7-8/7_8_246_248.pdf.

——. "Arab American Literature: Origins and Developments." *American Studies Journal*: No. 52 (2008). www.asjournal.org/archive/52/150.html, Accessed on December 30, 2012.

Maleh Al, Layla. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Anglophone Arab Literature.* Amsterdam, New York: Radopi B.V., 2009.

Mercer, Loraine and Linda Storm, "Counter Narratives: Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 32, No. 4, (2007): 33-46. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029830.

Najjar, Deborah Al . "Interview with Lisa Suhair Majaj." *International Feminist Journal of Politics.* 9:3 (2007): 402–409. http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals.

Najmi, Samina. "Naomi Shihab Nye's Aesthetic of Smallness and the Military Sublime." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 35, Issue 2 (2010): 151-171. EBSCO database.

Naous, Mazen. "*Arabian Jazz* and the Need for Improvising Arab Identity in the US." *MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature Of The United States)* 34, No. 4, (2009): 61-80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20618100.

Newman- Marcy, Jane Knopf. "Lisa Suhair Majaj. Geographies of Light." *Arab Studies Quarterly.* Vol. 34.No. 2 (2012): 121-131. www.plutojournals.com/asq/.

Orfalea, Gregory. *The Arab Americans: A History.* Northampton, Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2005.

Schaefer, Heike. *America and the Orient.* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001.

Said, Edward W. *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage Books, 1992.

——. *Reflections of Exile and Other Essays.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Salaita, Steven.*Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader's Guide*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

——.*Arab American Literary Fiction, Cultures, and Politics.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

——."Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11", *College Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), p. 146-168. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25115271.

Sarkar, Parama."[untitled]", *MELUS* 31, no. 4, (2006), 263-265 http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029698.

Solar, Milovoj. *Suvremena svjetska književnost*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, 1982.

Curriculum Vitae

Ismet Bujupaj was born on June 4, 1957 in Pejë (Peć), Kosovo and grew up in Istog/Istok, Kosovo, where he completed elementary and grammar school. In 1976 he enrolled in studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Pristina, Department of English language and literature, and graduated in 1980. After graduation, he began his teaching career in the same grammar school where once he was a pupil. While as a student and after graduation Mr. Bujupaj frequently visited the United Kingdom and spent some time there. In addition, he lived in the United States of America and Germany for a long period of time. After the Kosovo War, he came back home to Kosovo and worked as a translator for various International Organizations. In 2006, he enrolled in Masters' degree studies at the Faculty of Philology in Pristina, Department of English literature where after two years (2008) he defended his master thesis written in English entitled "Life and Art in W.B. Yeats". Since 2004, he has been working as a lecturer of English at FAMA University College in Pristina, Kosovo, and its branches in Prizren, Gjilan and Mitrovica, teaching over 900 students per semester, while flying to Zagreb on a regular basis from 2009-2012 to pursue his doctoral degree at the University of Zagreb.

Životopis

Ismet Bujupaj rođen 4.lipnja 1957 u Pejë (Peć), Kosovo, a odrastao je u Istog/Istok, Kosovo, gdje je završio osnovnu školu i gimnaziju. 1976 godine je upisao studije na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Prištini, Odsjeku za engleski jezik i književnost, a diplomirao je 1980 godine. Nakon diplomiranja, svoju karijeru nastave je započeo u istoj gimnaziji gdje je nekoć bio učenik. Tokom studija i nakon diplomiranja je često posjećivao Veliku Britaniju i proveo neko vrijeme tamo. Zatim je dugo vremensko razdoblje živio u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama i u Njemačkoj. Nakon rata na Kosovu, vratio se kući na Kosovu i radio je kao prevoditelj za razne međunarodne organizacije. Tijekom 2006 godine je upisao magistarski stupanj studija na Filološkom fakultetu u Prištini, Odsjek za englesku književnost, gdje je nakon dvije godine (2008) branio svoj magistarski rad napisan na engleskom jeziku pod nazivom „ Life and Art in W.B. Yeats“ (Umjetnost i zivot kod W.B.Yeatsa). Od 2004 godine je radio kao predavač engleskog jezika na FAMA University College (FAMA Koledž Sveučilište) u Prištini, Kosovo, i njezinih ogranaka u Prizrenu, Gnjilanu i Mitrovici, predavajući više od 900 studenata po semestru, dok je na redovnoj osnovi putovao u Zagreb tijekom 2009-2012 godine da bi nastavitio doktorski studij na Sveučilištu u Zagrebu.