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Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

BEING THE OTHER: MULTICULTURALISM, DIASPORA AND SEARCH OF IDENTITY IN DIANA ABU-JABER'S NOVELS

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Hande DAĞ ERDOĞAN

Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı

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EGE ÜNİVERSİTESİ

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Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü'ne sunduğum "Being the Other: Multiculturalism, Diaspora and Search of Identity in Diana Abu-Jaber's Novels" adlı yüksek lisans tezinin, tarafımdan, bilimsel ahlak ve normlara uygun bir şekilde hazırlandığını, tezimde yararlandığım kaynakları bibliyografyada ve dipnotlarda gösterdiğimi onurumla doğrularım.

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YÜKSEK LİSANS

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PREFACE

The emergence of the postcolonial theory begins with the decline of the colonial activities across the globe. The end of the twentieth century brought about a new form of nationalism. The old liberal-conservative model replaced with the international nationalist model created irreversibly remarkable transformations in political, economic and socio-cultural relations. World War II proved the threat of nationalist activities and the necessity of international corporation. Nationalism, directly and indirectly, led to the assimilative discourse creating "us versus them" mentality nourishing the ethnic hatred against the *other* encouraged by colonialism. The impact of the globalization and the mass migration movements in the aftermath of the World Wars prepared the ground for the occurrence of cross-cultural identities. The study of Orientalism as an academic discipline dates back to the eighteenth century when the occupation of the Egyptian territories by the French power took place. Even though the term, "Orient" was reinterpreted by Edward W. Said in the 1970s, the "Orient" formerly started to be studied out by a group of educated-cultivated class, French Savants, who were in charge of gathering information about the Eastern world. In the postcolonial literature, as Said argues, the transnational protagonists are in a constant transmission as the outcome of acquiring a hybrid self. Diasporic consciousness, which stems from leaving their original homelands, results in the necessity for reinventing a new metaphorical self in the postcolonial context: the transnational identity. Transnational Arab American belonging involves the Arab heritage to be amalgamated with the American identity. The hyphen is digested in which polyvalent cultures and distinctive identities are intertwined in multicultural America. In the light of the postcolonial theory, by focusing upon the historical evolution of the Arab identity, I aim to elaborate the literary identity of Diana Abu-Jaber as a respectable American novelist with Jordanian roots. In contrast to the early literary works, the *Mahjar* literature has been transformed into a universal entity rather than being categorized as the periphery of American literature in the postcolonial world.

İZMİR HANDE DAĞ ERDOĞAN

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ÖZET

Kolonyalizmin kaçınılmaz bir sonucuna ilişkin olarak, diğer etnik gruplar gibi, Arap asıllı göçmenlerin de köklü kültürleri ve toplumsal değerleri gözardı edilerek Anglo-Amerikan toplum düzenine asimile olmaları beklenmektedir. Ürdün asıllı Amerikalı bir yazar ve Portland Eyalet Üniversitesi'nde profesör olan Diana Abu-Jaber, romanlarında, arada kalmış kimliklerin psikolojisini incelerken, çokkültürlülük, diaspora ve kimlik arayışı temaları üzerine eğilmektedir. Abu-Jaber'in romanlarında ana karakterler, hem Arap hem Amerikan kimliklerine sahip çıkmaya çalışırken, öte yandan öz kimliklerini yeniden inşa etmek için mücadele etmektedirler. Abu-Jaber, sürgünlerin sahip olduğu iki kimliklerine de yabancılaşmadan, Arap Amerikan kimliğini özümseyerek, öz kimliklerini inşa etmeleri gerektiğini öne sürmektedir. Bu bağlamda tez çalışması, çok kültürlü yapı ve diasporanın kaçınılmaz sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan eski ve yeni kimlik arasındaki ikilemi, Diana Abu-Jaber'in ön plana çıkan iki romanı, *Arabian Jazz* (1993) ve C*rescent* (2003) üzerinden incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bir diğer konu ise, Diana Abu-Jaber'i, Postkolonyal ve Arap Amerikan edebiyatını temsil eden bir yazar olarak, Türk okuyucularına tanıtmaktır. Bu tez, Abu-Jaber'in bahsedilen iki romanındaki kimlik sorununu, Postkolonyal kuram bağlamında değerlendirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Kolonyalizmin sonuçlarını göz önünde bulundurup, Edward W. Said'in eleştirel teorisi, *Şarkiyatçılık* ve Postkolonyal kuramın diğer önemli öncülerine de gönderme yaparak, Batı'nın Doğu algısını ve sürgünlerin "tireyi" özümsemesi ve "ev" kavramını yeniden inşa etmelerini kapsayan, Mehcer edebiyatındaki kimliğin karmaşıklığını da içine alan bir inceleme yapılması amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Postkolonyalizm, Arap Amerikan Edebiyatı, Mehcer Edebiyatı, Diaspora, Şarkiyatçılık

ABSTRACT

In relation to the inevitable result of Colonialism, as in the case of other ethnic groups, immigrants with Arab roots have also been expected to be assimilated into the mainstream, Anglo-American society, disregarding their rooted culture and social values. Diana Abu-Jaber, as a Jordanian American novelist and professor at Portland State University, accentuates upon the themes of multiculturalism, diaspora and search of identity in her novels whilst elaborating the psyche of in-between identities. Protagonists in Abu-Jaber's novels struggle to reinvent their own selves whilst trying to preserve their both Arab and American identities. Abu-Jaber puts forward the claim that exiles must reinvent their selves by embracing the duality of Arab American identity without being disloyal to either. Within this context, the thesis study aims to explore the dilemma between the old and the new identity as the inevitable result of multicultural structure and diaspora, in Abu-Jaber's two significant novels, *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2003). Another concern is to introduce Diana Abu-Jaber to Turkish readers as an influential novelist of the Postcolonial and Arab American literature. In this context, this thesis evaluates the identity problem in Abu-Jaber's two novels, within the frame of the Postcolonial theory. Regarding the results of Colonialism, an analysis is intended to be carried out about the Western perception of the East, and the complexity of identity in *Mahjar* literature, including how exiles could digest the "hyphen" and reconstruct the concept of "home" by centering upon Edward W. Said's critical theory, *Orientalism*, and alluding to the ideas of other significant pillars of the Postcolonial theory.

Key Words: Postcolonialism, Arab American Literature, *Mahjar* Literature, Diaspora, Orientalism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEING THE OTHER: MULTICULTURALISM, DIASPORA AND SEARCH OF IDENTITY IN DIANA ABU-JABER'S NOVELS

I. INTRODUCTION

Roots are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places.[1]

Ethnicity and cultural diversity are significant characteristics of the United States that nourishes the shaping of American society. The object of identification, as Galtung states, is a national, a cultural entity, the sum total of language, religion, shared myths of traumas and glories; and the people who are the carriers of the culture in space and through time.[2] However, as a result of the colonialism, identity crisis sits at the center of the postcolonial literature which crucially altered the self-definition on both individual and national terms. In regard to the changing atmosphere in culture and politics, the problems caused by the colonialism are being elaborated that turns the ethnic writing into a powerful tool for cross-cultural countries. The term "Orient" known as the exotic "other" which was reinterpreted and coined by Said[3] enabled postcolonialism to be a respectable field in the academia today.

The first chapter of this study is upon the significative theoretical concepts which aim at comprehending the postcolonial theory and its relationship with the culture and identity. Multiculturalism and diaspora provoked by colonialism, brings about many dimensions that reorient the postcolonial literature. While defining colonialism and postcolonialism with its prefix in a detailed approach, it is going to seek answers to a series of fundamental questions like what home/hyphen is, whether there is a stable home or not and which language writers with the hyphenated identity should

[1] Salman Rushdie. *Shame*. London: Vintage Books, 1995, p. 6.
[2] Johan Galtung. "The Emerging of European Supernationalism". International Journal of Sociology, Vol. 24, No. 2/3 (Summer-Fall, 1994) p. 148-165.
[3] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1978.

adopt while writing. The aftermath of colonialism brings about many questions and problems like above to be dealt with in the postcolonial world. Sir Thomas More claims that utopias have a significant part in human relationships. More's *Utopia*, published in 1516, showcases a visionary order with a perfect system of law, government, and other social arrangements.[4] It is a fact that Anglo-Saxon culture has been a powerful determinant in defining what other groups must become. The approach which created the concept of the *Self* and the *non-Self*, has resulted in the degradation of the weaker by the powerful throughout the human history. Rooted in the collective subconscious, that gradient becomes a powerful social force, preparing people for acts of heroic compassion and solidarity with Self as well as for the rejection, including the extermination of other.[5] As Galtung states, each ethnic group is obliged to adapt itself to the values of the mainstream society and all have inarguably experienced both physical and psychological displacement.

The second chapter aims to describe the historical evolution of Arab American identity and its reflection upon *Mahjar* (emigration) literature whilst touching upon the media as a strong determinant in defining and conducting the collective subconscious. Diasporic literature addressing the question of self, seeks for cultural independence and universality. Rather than representing for a minority group, it moves beyond the stereotypes. Within this context, ethnic writing has become a major component for articulating and reinventing the identity in the postcolonial world. The dissolution of the empire system after 1945, which directly led to the decolonization period, enabled many nations to gain their independence. The dehumanizing effects of the colonialism and the chaotic situation of the colonized people stimulated the emergence of a globally new perspective in culture and politics. In the postcolonial order, even though American government enacted laws to protect minority groups, it is still a difficult process to demolish the stereotypical portrayals of the Arab and the Muslim and other ethnic groups and prejudices against them in social life. The doctrine of the *survival of the fittest*, had already stimulated ongoing debates resulting in race categorization, dividing

[4] See Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.
[5] Johan Galtung. "The Emerging of European Supernationalism", p. 149.

people into two groups: the superior and the inferior. *The Frontier Thesis*[6] by Frederick Jackson Turner and the *Manifest Destiny*[7] launched by John O'Sullivan, in his essay, "The Great Nation of Futurity" helped the formation of the early imperialistic activities of the United States to move forward. In other words, the European or the descendant of the European nations endeavored to melt themselves into a new race of men as Crévecoeur[8] wrote. The outcomes of the colonial period encouraged the imperialistic attitudes and in the aftermath of colonialism, American hegemony started to compete with European countries to become the dominant power over the weaker countries. Those powers regarding their own national interests, considered non-European communities to be civilized which was perceived as an obligation of the *white man's burden*.[9] However, America's melting pot theory which emphasized the emergence of a "homogeneous American" was an illusionary process as Temple states:

> [...] the pride that Americans have in their ethnic roots is one of the abiding strengths of both the United States and Canada. It shows that the theory which called America a "melting pot" of the world's people was never really true. The thought that a single "American" would emerge from the combination of these peoples has never happened.[10]

With the impact of globalization and the emergence of new nationalistic movements for cross-cultural societies, the center and the periphery relationship gained a new dimension. Rather than symbolizing for a strictly standardized model of society system, it transformed into a multiculturalist and polyvalent structure. Akam states in his book that only a transnational America promised to unify the particular with the universal, or difference with community, on the grounds of democratic culture.[11] Thus, melting-pot theory never happened due to the massive influx of the "new immigrants" in the twentieth century that challenged the definition of *new* American identity. Xenophobia was an inevitable outcome of the colonialism which was predominant among the

[6] See Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Frontier Thesis", 1893.
[7] See John O'Sullivan, "Manifest Destiny", 1845.
[8] See J. Hector St. John Crévecoeur, "What Is an American", 1782.
[9] See Rudyard Kipling's poem, "The White Man's Burden", 1899.
[10] Bob Temple. *The Arab Americans*. Mason Crest Publishers. Philadelphia: 2009, p. 9.
[11] Everett Helmut Akam. *Transnational America: Cultural Pluralist Thought in the Twentieth Century*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2002, p. 45.

Anglo-Saxon society. Labeling the Arab immigrants as "uncivilized, corrupted and dangerous" to the American values, the gap between the mainstream society and the "other" groups gradually deepened. The uncontrolled influx of the immigrant groups encouraged the American government to adopt the necessity of assimilationist policies and discrimination in public spaces. In other words, the existence of the immigrant groups was perceived as a big threat to be dealt with. Today, As Nydell argues, like other ethnic groups, through personal contacts and increased media exposure, the Arab immigrants are still learning how "outsiders" should live.[12]

Dating back to the dissolution period of the Ottoman Empire, the third chapter is about the historical roots of Arab American identity. The Arab population who started a huge migration movement to the North America as a result of the globalization, with the hope for better economic opportunities paved the way to the reinvention of a new identity. As Haddad points out in the aftermath of the World War II, when the American society was reinventing itself as a pluralistic society, immigrants from the Arab world found themselves publicly and deliberately excluded from the mainstream of American politics.[13] Besides neglecting their history, the cultural values of the immigrant groups, could not find a reputable place in the mainstream society. As Cainkar argues, immigrants experienced an America that appeared open for a redefinition of its own identity to accommodate the participation of its new citizens, but they experience it as racist and unreceptive to their concerns. Like other ethnic communities living in the United States, many Arab Americans experienced the complexity of possessing two different identities. On the other side, the 9/11 attacks caused a paradoxical historical moment. Up to that time, Arabs and Muslims, who had been perceived as the "other", experienced extensive institutional discrimination, government targeting, and public attacks.[14] The terrorist attacks urged the American media to portray Arabs as "terrorists",

[12] Margaret K. Nydell. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide to Westerners*. ed. by George W. Renwick. Maine: Intercultural Press Inc., 1987, p. 1.
[13] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad. *Not Quite American: The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States*. Baylor University Press, 2004, p. 48.
[14] Louise A. Cainkar. *Homeland Insecurity: The Arab American and Muslim American Experience After 9/11*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011, p. 263.

or, more recently, as the enemy of all cherished Western values.[15] The Arab population were considered as a direct threat to the American society.

The last chapter is about the representation of Arab American identity and its evolution on the way to the reinvention of the identity through the characters in *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*. In the 1970s, the amalgamation of different culture styles was present. The "self" and the "other" started to be used widely as the reinvention took place in terms of global, social and cultural transformations in the American society in the aftermath of the colonialism. Decolonization gathered people together from different backgrounds as a result of increasing globalization and global trade that creates a cross-cultural society order. Postcolonialism, introduced in the late 1960s, by Edward W. Said, with his book *Orientalism*[16], brought about a new challenge to the Western perception of the East. Postcolonialism, which was met with a remarkable interest by the academia in the 1970s, has become a very influential literary theory which paved the way to the analysis of the literatures of the colonized nations since then. Homi K. Bhabha, who used the term, "hybridity", argues that it is a major feature to challenge the power of the colonizer. In relation to the increasing importance of the postcolonial studies, Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture* that:

> Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations within the new world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance.[17]

Edward W. Said, focusing on exploring the stereotypes about the Arab identity, challenges the margin between the West and the East. Said claims that "us vs. other" mentality is going to result in a distorted perception of the Arab identity leading to the self-alienation and loss of identity. Arab Americans, without any discrimination of the examples of other minorities in history and today, have experienced identity crisis in both individual and communal terms.

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[15] Haddad, p. 48.
[16] See Edward Said, *Orientalism*.
[17] Homi K. Bhabha. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 163.

The conclusion part is meant at clarifying the changing voice of the literature in the postcolonial world as a result of the international nationalism, multiculturalism and hybridity. By virtue of housing various cultures and identities, American literature is affluent. Arab American literature is in the existence in the United States for over a century. However, it has been recently recognizable as a part of the ethnic literature. Transformations in social and cultural terms have urged Arab Americans to produce literary works without any censorship to open a new path for manifesting their presence and voices besides contributing to the substantial world of literature in the United States. Salman Rushdie argues that the distinguishing feature of our time is mass migration, mass displacement, globalized finances and industries.[18] The globalization has irreversibly altered the socio-cultural structure. The case of identity still continues to be a very controversial issue in the postcolonial literature as well as in socio-cultural politics. Regarding the words of Salman, it is also explicit that a new order has already emerged. The term, "third world literature", coined by the colonizing powers was used to represent the literature of the other. Diana Abu-Jaber, as a Jordanian-American writer, strengthens her argument about why one could not embrace both identities instead of choosing a "side" and reconstruct a new identity. In parallel to what Abu-Jaber argues, Temple states that this ethnic diversity made Americans a divided people; proud to be Americans, but proud also of their ethnic roots.[19] As a hyphenated writer, Abu-Jaber, by giving wide publicity to the self-discovery stages of main characters in *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2003), portrays her characters as individuals who are in search of their personal identities rather than retaining a communal one or being accepted by the society they live in. According to Abu-Jaber, identity is a debatable issue beyond being nationalistic. She argues that it should only define the individual, not the individual with the society. The complexity of "home" is an inevitable outcome of being displaced by the will of the individual or not, culminating in identity crisis. Immigrants in the new land are constantly caught in a state of uncertainty. As Abu-Jaber remarks, "home" is an illusionary concept in multicultural countries. In this sense, individuals have to reinvent

[18] Salman Rushdie. "Step Across This Line". Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002. London: Vintage, 2003, p. 45.
[19] Temple, *The Arab Americans,* p. 9.

their own interpretation of identity. In *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*, the protagonists labeled as the "other", struggle to establish a certain tie with their other halves whilst stimulating the reader to question and comprehend the identity crisis of displaced people. Experiencing the exploration of the self and the world, exiles are subjected to a journey of discovery which lead them to question the meaning of the "hyphen" to construct a stable identity without rejecting their duality. Abu-Jaber, portraying them from a very universal point of view, paves the way to comprehend the cultural limbo of the immigrants rather than representing them as the "other" to the western canon. By doing this, Abu-Jaber aims to eradicate all outdated stereotypes and prejudices against the Arab American identity thus far. Within this context, the identity transformation comes with a better understanding of the "hyphen" through self-exploration and the discovery of the world.

II. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

2.1. Multiculturalism

The United States of America was born and developed - at times with tragic results – along lines of diversity.[20] For the very reason, it is not likely to mention about the existence of a single identity or a strict cultural model in a multicultural community. Multiculturalism is the inevitable result of the presence of people living on the same continent from different ethnic backgrounds where the homogeneity is neutralized. Each group, representing their own cultural practices, contributes to the formation of a new polyvalent American culture.

Culture can be succinctly explained as the common experience of a distinct group of people. Multiculturalism which comes from a distinctive concept referring to the cultures of the masses is a much broader term to be defined. In multicultural countries like the United States which houses people from various parts of the globe, it is not likely to focus on one single center, but many centers. Within this context, culture can be considered as the combination of multiple cultures at one place. Since the early years of the establishment, American society has been claimed to be the embodiment of a perfect *melting pot*. However, this utopic definition of American society has turned into a *salad bowl* as the immigrants from all over the world started to migrate to *The*

[20] Anthon Julian Tamburri. *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*. Montreal:1991, p. 12.

Promised Land, following their own interpretation of *American Dream*. In relation to the formation of the American identity, Tamburri mentions about the presence of an:

> Americana-kaleidoscopic mosaic precisely because the socio-cultural dynamics of the U.S. reveal a constant flux of changes originating in the very existence of the various differentiated ethnic/racial groups that constitute the overall population the U.S.[21]

The growing tendency for the migration to the North America promised the new immigrants as well as the Arab population new opportunities to pursue their lives in a foreign country. American society was in a severe need of labor force to deal with the vast fields of the new continent in order to become a reputable power in the world. In the discussion of identity, the concept of "beyond" implies a more sophisticated interpretation. Bhabha explains that the 'beyond' plays a key role in the multiculturalist societies:

> [T]he beyond is neither a new horizon, nor leaving behind of the past. [...] we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.[22]

Due to the combination of various differences and cultures, Tamburri concludes that literature is likely going to continue to be rooted in heteroglossia:

> [...] a dynamics of the conglomeration and agglutination of different voices and reading strategies which, contrary to the hegemony of the dominant culture, cannot be fully integrated into any strict semblance of a monocultural voice or process of interpretation. The utterance, therefore, will always be polyvalent.[23]

Abu-Jaber, as a hyphenated writer, tries to maintain a connection between dual identities rather than otherizing them. By doing this, the literature is bounded to Arab

[21] Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 48.
[22] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 157.
[23] Tamburri, p. 51.

American identity while constituting a new form of literature which is prosperous and universal.

2.2. Diaspora

Diaspora originally comes from Greek, from diaspeirein "disperse", from dia "across" and speirein "scatter". The term "Arab Diaspora" which refers to Arab immigrants, defines people with Arab roots who emigrate from their homelands to non-Arab countries.

Diaspora and identity feed each other. Diaspora which comes from "being scattered" portrays itself as the inevitable outcome of diasporic identities. In brief, it comes out of migration movements bringing about socio-cultural complexities and language barriers besides political issues. There are two kinds of diaspora which are distinct from one another: forced and voluntary type of migration. Forced type of it contains language problems while voluntary type of migration involves proficiency in the language of the target country. Immigrants are prone to establish a diaspora or join an existing one. As Landau states in his study, reasons for diaspora could be numerous, which vary from economic opportunities or more liberal regimes, or both, simply as personal choices as well.[24] In this sense, the United States is considered as the *Promised Land* where everyone has so-called freedom of choice, regardless of their origins or identities they hold.

Immigrant groups or immigrant individuals in diaspora, lose their context of certain factors that are shaping their identity conscious. When it lacks, the duality is inevitable. Historians describe the psychology of exile as the loss of context:

> Many studies tell of how, during colonialism, large populations of people were torn away from their birthplaces or ancestral villages and transported as slaves or indentured servants to new lands where they labored and from where other generations departed for the metropoles of former colonial states.[25]

[24] Jacob M. Landau. "Diaspora and Language". The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Croom Helm, 1986, p. 77.
[25] Brian Keith Axel. "The Context of Diaspora". Cultural Anthropology, Vol.19, No.1 (Feb., 2004), p. 28.

As highlighted in the quotation, the outcome of experiencing diaspora brings about people suffering from the duality of identity who were torn away from their backgrounds for several reasons. Through assimilation and any form of it that refers to the discriminatory attitudes and activities, identity crisis takes a more contradictory course, blurring the historical and cultural values of the assimilated group. According to Axel, these discovered features, no matter how transformed in the "host country" and no matter how distant they live from their homelands, are seen to endure in diasporic cultural life today.[26] In the postcolonial world, diasporic consciousness is indispensable. American supremacy has been effective in giving shape to the socio-cultural relationship between the mainstream society and the immigrant groups. The values of the Anglo-Saxon culture directly or indirectly played a key role in shaping the features of the immigrant groups. The term "Anglo-Saxon" derives from northern Germanic tribes – the Saxons and Angles – that invaded England in the fifth and sixth centuries, displacing other tribes.[27] As they continue "Anglo-Saxon or one of its variants, WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) denotes a northern European cultural and institutional complex of ethnic traditions fused with, and dominated by the English who were the first to settle North America in large numbers and to begin the process of colonization.[28] White supremacy as a strong determinant prepared the ground for the assimilationist policies against the minority groups who immigrated to North America. To look beyond the past, it is true that American policy against the Native Americans obligated the forced assimilation of the native settlers to the mainstream culture. Assimilation being adopted as the official policy of the American government despite the land agreements and promises for the cultural autonomy subordinated the lives of native settlers. As in the cases of other ethnic groups, Arab Americans as a minority group, experienced similar kinds of discrimination and they were never accepted as "real" Americans by the Anglo-Saxon society who considered themselves as the absolute "owners" of America. On the other hand, the importance of the Enlightenment held a very significant role in the Western colonialism which was considered as a necessary phase

[26] Axel, "The Context of Diaspora," p. 28.
[27] Aguirre; Turner. *American Ethnicity*, 1995, p. 42.
[28] Ibid, p. 43.

in defining a "moral, religious and scientific superiority" against the other. These claims have been used to justify a hierarchy of cultures, a ladder of civilization at one end of which stands the jungle and at the other Western art and culture.[29] Assimilation, in the racist discourse, assumes a view of the world in which people are divided into races: it is based on a conception of differences among people as having fundamentally to do with the traits they inherit, or supposedly inherit, by virtue of being part of some gene pool.[30] It is clear that diaspora brings about assimilation and duality. Assimilation as the degradation of the other caused by the racist discourse subordinates the self. On the other hand, racism produces its effects in the conjoined spaces of culture, power and subjectivity. One of the ways in which racism works is by distorting, discrediting and dismissing the past – the past, that is, of the peoples, societies and cultures it subjugates.[31] Tamburri states that in the practices of assimilation brought by the racist codes, discrimination social and political spheres encompasses a remarkable part:

> That is to say, a type of ideological chiasmus, disguised by homonymy, seems to develop in this situation, as if the dominant culture were saying to the ethnic group, *of course, we're all Americans, but there are Americans and then there are Americans,* in which case the signifier, "Americans" figures as a polyvalent term whose various signifiers can be utilized or discarded according to the exigencies of the situation.[32]

As Tamburri concludes, the immigrants come to understand that the new world is not *the land of hospitality*.[33] Rather than promising new opportunities for the immigrant groups, it served for strict social codes, discriminatory policies and prejudiced attitudes. In the postcolonial world, survival is a challenge for the immigrant groups. Colonialism and racism, as physical and cultural domination, force their victims to – literally – lose their memory.[34] In cultures where racist discourse is predominant, the mainstream is on the center and the non-mainstream is on the margin. Colonialism, racism and other

[29] Jordan; Weedon. *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World*. London: Blackwell: 1995, p. 293.
[30] Jordan; Weedon. *Cultural Politics*, p. 256.
[31] Ibid, p. 297.
[32] Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 46.
[33] Ibid, p. 38.
[34] Jordan; Weedon, p. 299.

forms of hegemonic practices play a key role in reinventing identities, cultural values, political attitudes, names and even the psychologies of the targeted group. The struggle against colonialism necessarily involves cultural politics. It involves renaming. It encompasses the reshaping and rewriting the history. In domineering Western conception of history, culture and civilization, the dominant power appears as subjects while the oppressed group are perceived as objects. As Jordan and Weedon remark: "White people have culture – Christianity, science, technology, education – which they may give to the Natives or the ethnic minorities. White people *make history* – they do things, they make progress – while *the other* sits on the sidelines.[35] The history of Western racism and domination over the minority groups does not contain discrimination only about the skin tone and other physical differences. It also includes trivializing the rooted history of the targeted group as well as neglecting their cultural practices, identities and respectability among the society they live in.

Racism is an insusceptible entity. It is not simply that it provides justification for economic exploitation and political domination. The problem is that racism penetrates to the very core of who we are. It is one of the primary influences negating - or affirming – our sense of individual and group worth, passing final judgment on the value of one's history, culture and language, of one's intellect and physical appearance.[36] In this regard, as in many others, one cannot escape the burden of race.[37] It is a matter of fact that racism makes certain claims about culture, history and intellect – about who has them and who does not; that it makes certain claims about the body – about beauty, ugliness, sexuality; and that it makes assertions about character – about what different categories of people are like. These beliefs, attitudes, feelings are not individual: they are the property of collectivities, of groups, of society.[38] And they all result in the discrimination of the other. Being white represents a sociological category which emphasizes the unspoken privilege and power. Its existence derives from the construction of the other; in other words, the designation of those groups held in lower

[35] Jordan; Weedon. *Cultural Politics*, p. 302.
[36] Ibid, p. 252.
[37] Ibid, p. 303.
[38] Ibid, p. 253.

esteem, possessing less power and fewer opportunities in society.[39] As an outcome of the assimilation, the cultural identity of the subjugated group are devalued. The mainstream group symbolizes a sociological category that defines the privilege and power in the communal order.

Muslim groups and the Arabs react against the white racial categorization. Immigrants assert that it forms a distinct other identity as a shield against the white-dominated order in the American society: Muslims are more likely to claim an "Other" identity and resist a white racial classification, hinting that the Other identity may serve as a means of asserting one's own cultural distinctiveness while simultaneously distancing oneself from the mainstream. Or it may signify a response to mainstream discrimination targeting Muslims.[40] In other words, 'being white' in a racially hierarchical society implies possessing control over how others place you within that hierarchy.[41] On the scale of civilization, it is White people who are advanced and people of Colour who occupy lower positions. The aspects of human culture which Western rationalism has banished as Other – sensuality, emotionality, intuition, bodily expression – are those associated with women and people of Colour.[42] The point is not that people of Colour – people whose natural skin colour is black, brown, red or yellow – do not appear in dominant narratives of the past. [...] *they appear not as the subjects of the history but as its objects*.[43]Assimilation as the very painful stage of the targeted group that experiences the struggle for being accepted to the mainstream society changes the context of the identity within the time. Being assimilated requires to forget beyond the past, common values and origins. Haddad portrays a simple reflection of early Muslim immigrants in the United States who came to the country when racism and nativism were paramount:

> [...] they followed the patterns of integration and assimilation that refashioned them into American citizens. Their names were anglicized,

[39] Ajrouch; Jamal. "Assimilating to a White Identity: The Case of Arab Americans", Vol. 41, No. 4, p. 860-861.
[40] Ibid, p. 873.
[41] Ibid, p. 864.
[42] Jordan; Weedon, *Cultural Politics*, p. 294.
[43] Ibid, p. 298.

> Muhammad became Mo, Rashid became Dick, Mojahid became Mark, and Ali was recognized as Al. They dug ditches, laid down railroad tracks, peddled, and later opened grocery stores and other businesses that catered to ethnic needs. Their children went to public schools and worked in factories. They enlisted in the American military during the First and Second World Wars and served with distinction.[44]

As the second-class citizens of America, Arab immigrants came together to preserve their values. A very influential Muslim speaker, Syed Abu Al-Hassan Ali Nadvi argued that Arab people could establish a separate community in the United States without leaving their roots. He stated in a speech that:

> You, therefore, are in America not merely as flesh and blood, not simply as Indians, Pakistanis, Egyptians, Syrians... but as Muslims, one community, one brotherhood. You are Ibrahimi and Muhammadi. Know yourself. You have not come here to lose your identity and get fitted into this monstrous machine or to fill your bellies like animals.[45]

Fathi Osman, an internationally recognized Islamic scholar encouraged Muslims to engage in the society rather than isolation. Haddad states his ideas about Osman that the United States as an open venue for the development of new ideas and new visions. He challenged the Muslims of America blessed with this freedom to lead the revival of Islam in the world. They can envision new and unlimited possibilities and help bring about a brighter future".[46] As understood, Fathi Osman simply rejected separation and tried to understand the American society. It meant a necessity for the integration of the Arab immigrants rather than a matter of choice. In parallel to Osman's guidance, Salam Al-Marayati argued that the choice is not between isolation and assimilation, but must be engagement with the society, taking America at its promise and working within the system to breach the walls of the other.[47] Considering the ideas of Arab leaders, it is

[44] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 4-5.
[45] Syed A. Hassan Ali Nadvi. *Muslims in the West: The Message and Mission*. London: Islamic Foundation, 1983, p. 111.
[46] Haddad, p. 39.
[47] Salam al-Marayati. "Formulating an Agenda of Political Actions for North American Muslims," p. 64-69.

referred that early Arab immigrants were generally more prone to preserve their memories and ethnic roots. This generation of immigrants was not well-educated and mostly led their lives upon agricultural activities. Isolating themselves from the American society, they represented a more conservative group of immigrants in contrast to the upcoming generations. They tried to keep their interaction limited with the American society on account of the fear of being assimilated. However, the children of the Arab *mahjar* (diaspora) became integrated with the American society. It was not likely for the second and third generations of Arab immigrants to study Arabic at school or isolate themselves from the social environment. Besides, they only had the opportunity to speak at home. Within this context, the process of assimilation was much more rapid.

Anglo-American efforts to unify all diversities under the umbrella of a single identity or the melting pot theory only represented the process of Americanization that gave the priority to protect American values. As Zanden argues that culture is not static, but undergoes continuous change.[48] America, rather than symbolizing the structure of melting pot, pluralism has been predominant where the heterogeneity enables the distinctive groups to be clustered. To be integrated in the Anglo-Saxon society is linked with the assimilation of the targeted group. However, the meaning of the integration includes the elimination of the discrimination, racist codes and negative stereotypes without referring to ethnic or racial origins. According to the socialists, disregarding the biological diversity, integration requires the acceptance of the notion that it is as good to be an Arab American as to be a white American. As Zanden summarizes in his book, assimilation involves processes whereby groups with distinctive identities become culturally and socially fused together. It is a response by which some minority-group individuals undertake to lose their distinct minority-group identity and to fuse themselves socially and culturally with the dominant group.[49] The assimilative practices and discrimination indirectly contributed to the psychological diaspora of the targeted group besides being physically torn from their homelands.

[48] James W. Vander Zanden. *American Minority Relations*. 4th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1983, p, 275.
[49] Zanden. *American Minority Relations*, p. 376.

2.3. The Postcolonial Theory: Hyphe(n)ation

The term, Postcolonialism, that is used today as a collective term for various kinds of theoretical approaches, is a very significant factor in relation to the problems of politics, society and culture. The theory, which comes out as a result of the Colonialism, marks to a set of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine culture, literature and the history of former colonies. What puts the "post" in Postcolonialism is the history of colonialism which is a prefix, meaning after. Within this context, its criticism examines the effects of imperialistic practices in the postcolonial communities. Today, this definition is equal to embracing the diversities and gaining a polyvalent structure of what is known as knowledge in the past. In literary terms, the postcolonial theory deals with the literature written in previously or currently colonized communities. The aftermath of decolonization has challenged the minds of early assimilated groups including questions about the new order after the decolonization, besides language barriers and cultural differences. Colonialism has binary descriptions. In brief, the early example of colonialism is militaristic that describes the physical domination and occupation of territories. The other form of colonialism is civilizational which deals with the assimilative practices occupying the culture of the subjugated group. The period following the end of the decolonization, witnessed the emergence of new concepts in terms of cultural, political and other global issues.

Edward W. Said, an influential Palestinian American literary theorist, who is considered as the precursor of the Postcolonial theory, clarified how European/Western colonizers perceived the "Orient" which was considered as *the mystical other*. He argues that the Orient has been otherized or marginalized due to lack of knowledge and imagination, in his book, *Orientalism.* Said, reinventing the orient, paved the way to introduce the East to the Western canon in a more realistic tone. On Said's argument and other prominent figures of the theory, Postcolonialism aimed to focus on the oppression of communities and cultures who were ruled under colonization. The term, "hybridization" and "mimicry" used by Homi K. Bhabha, created a great sense of awareness about the neglected cultures before the colonization. According to Bhabha, the difference between the "Self" and the "Other" are to melt away due to the hybridity. According to Galtung's theory, the "Self-Other" and "Good-Bad", creates two axes of

nationalism, representing the Self, the (super-,sub-) national, collective Self; the Other is considered as the rest of the world, the on-Self. In relation to issues of the "self" and the "identity", Colonialism has left its all complexities to the Postcolonialism to be handled. Terms of "unhomeliness" and being torn in "exile" gave rise to the question of what home means to the colonized groups. Postcolonial theorists are describing this situation as a state of limbo, without holding certain or definite identity. Said, in his study titled *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*[50] aims to describe the situation of the colonized people who are caught between two cultures as a result of the colonial history. In parallel to the ideas of Abu-Jaber, Said argues that the "Other" has to reinvent a new identity as an individual without demanding the approval of the mainstream society.

Identity is a tool that defines both one's individuality and the characteristics of a particular social group. However, [e]thnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual.[51] According to the West, the concept of "mainstream" is one of the most important necessities in a society. Adapting oneself to the mainstream is considered to be a must for every single person who lives in that society. Identity is also a concept which is formed according to the requirements of the mainstream in multicultural societies. Every person is expected to obey the rules of the mainstream for being accepted or not to be excluded by the society. In the postcolonial world, identity is closely linked to the hyphenation. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said argues that:

> Throughout the exchange between Europeans and their 'others' that began systematically half a millennium ago, the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an "us" and a "them", each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident. [...] the division goes back to Greek thought about barbarians, but whoever originated this kind of "identity thought", by the nineteenth century, it had become the hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe.[52]

[50] See Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 2000.
[51] Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 21
[52] Edward W. Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1993, p. 266.

In this context, the tendency for discrimination against the "Orient" becomes inevitable. Tamburri states that the usage of the hyphen does not only symbolize for a linguistic element but also an ideological construct which emphasizes upon the unwillingness of the mainstream for the integration with the other.[53] The symbol, "hyphen (-)", initially represented the dominant group's reluctance to accept the newcomer. Marshall Grossman in his essay states that a colonializing sign that hides its ideological and therefore, subjugating force under the guise of grammatical correctness.[54] Bhabha argues that "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.[55] Rather than being labeled as the other, Bhabha points out that hyphen is a passage of time that leads to the emergence of cultural hybridity in moments of historical transformation. Like Said, Bhabha is well aware that social differences are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project - at once a vision and a construction - that takes you "beyond" yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present.[56] His definition refers to the implication of a new kind of internationalism. In this new order, the new internationalism directly deals with the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the social displacement of the refugee.[57]

The meaning of the hyphen has dramatically changed in the postcolonial context even though it initially represented the North American's hesitation to accept the newcomer.[58] In the postcolonial world, it means that the long neglected rooted literatures must be studied, comprehended and valued.

III. THE EMERGENCE OF THE POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

[53] Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 17.
[54] Marshall Grossman. "The Violence of the Hyphen in Judeo-Christian," p. 44.
[55] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 158.
[56] Ibid, p. 159.
[57] Ibid, p. 161.
[58] Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 28.

History has to be presented as nationalism triumphant when subnationalisms no longer stood in the way, leading, for instance, to *la grande nation*.[59] This statement justifies the theories that had been long adopted by the U.S., on the way to rise as the mainstream. Haddad describes the Arab community as immigrants from the Arab world are, in a manner of speaking, veterans of the struggle to modernize and westernize in the context of the colonial and post-colonial era.[60] Like other immigrant groups in North America, the Arab immigrants, beyond question, experienced assimilative and discriminative practices. The Arab identity as the "weaker" newcomer in the North America was expected to be formed in regard to the values of the mainstream. In *Reflections on Exile*, Said states that all nationalisms have their founding fathers, their basic, quasi-religious texts, their rhetoric of belonging, their historical and geographical landmarks, their official enemies and heroes.[61] According to this statement, the new immigrants in the new land had to adapt themselves in the way of the first settlers to survive. However, in time, it is known that successful nationalisms created the "self" and the "non-self" psychology which paved the way to the emergence of "otherization" as the capitalist versus the communist, the European versus the non-European and so forth. As Said argues, a clash between the two becomes inevitable. Bhabha states that the Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity.[62] According to Galtung's ideas, the Western perception of the West is quite clear. Oriental despotism became the catch-all formula, incorporating the Sultan (Satan) in his harem with highly refined tastes enjoying boundless luxury, including more women, [...], no concept of private property.[63] (For detailed information, see *Arabian Nights*) The depiction of the Eastern culture is either inadequate or incorrect. It is also clear that a negative perception of the East is predominant. Demolishing such strong archetypes is not easy for the mind of the colonizer. Galtung states that the basic

[59] Galtung, "The Emerging of European Supernationalism", p. 163.
[60] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 15.
[61] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 181.
[62] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 162.
[63] Galtung, p. 153.

Self-Other gradient can be used to mobilize against the Arabs.[64] This ideology is very critical because the destruction of the "other" can turn into a very simple action:

> When the U.S.-led coalition legitimated by Security Council Resolution 678 managed "with all necessary means" to evict Iraq from Kuwait - in no way conceding that there might be room for doubt and negotiation, killing at least 200,000 Arabs in the process - all archetypes had already coincided in the creation of a pathologically solid Self-Other gradient. Killing came easy. [65]

In Galtung's words, nationalism represents for Eurocentric, racist and negative ideology. Rather than serving for the interest of a community, nationalism has a slippery ground to be miscomprehended which exacerbates the racist discourse and discriminatory practices.

The representation of the Arab identity holds stereotypical definitions that lacks from objectivity. Immigrant identity is closely linked to racial concerns in the notion of the West. Immigration to the United States includes the experience of being placed into a racial hierarchy, which becomes one of the primary means by which identity is established.[66] The identity of the immigrant groups was disregarded by the strict Anglo-Saxon rules which subordinating the future lives of the *newcomers*. In a totally different country when compared to the former one, the Arab population lacked of "meaning" in their own identities. For the American population, assimilation of the Arab immigrants was a common process. As one of the major factors accelerating the assimilation process of the Arab immigrants, veiling holds a significant role. As Haddad states the majority of the Muslim women in the United States during the 1960s, did not veil since it was regarded as the part of the cherishing old customs.[67] In order to accelerate the assimilation process, the Arab immigrants struggled for adapting themselves to the framework of the American identity. As a tool of the racist discourse, Arab immigrants also encountered with Zionism:

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[64] Galtung, "The Emerging of European Supernationalism, p. 159.
[65] Ibid, p. 155.
[66] Ajrouch; Jamal. "Assimilating to a White Identity," p. 860.
[67] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 13.

> By the 1940s, the Arabic-speaking immigrants in the United States began to feel uncomfortable as the Zionist campaign for the recognition and support for the State of Israel became intense. One of the slogans adopted by the Zionists had a very big influence that pointed at the eradication of Arabs: *Pay a dollar, kill an Arab*.[68]

In the contribution to the Arab hostility in the North America, media was also a powerful tool to intensify the racist discourse and discrimination in which I touched upon in the second chapter.

The Arab community has suffered from not only cultural conflicts but also political instabilities. Arab prejudice made them realize that unification was an urgent need to protect and introduce themselves to the mainstream. Arab hostility and constant attacks organized by Israeli powers, which awakened Arab population to foster unity and strength, paved the way to the formation of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, (AAUG) in 1967, formed by graduate students, professionals, university professors, lawyers, doctors and veterans of the Organization of Arab Students (OAS). Haddad states that the prevailing American hostility towards Arabs during the 1967 Israeli pre-emptive strike against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, and the immigrants' awareness of the ignorance of the American public about the facts of the conflict in the Middle East, led to the formation of the first organization to assume a hyphenated identity and coin the term *Arab-American.*

A series of conflicts among the Arab groups made the situation more complicated than before. The tension between the Christian Arabs and the Muslim Arabs paved the way for the creation of a complex and different identity. Whereas the Christian group was more prone to be titled as more American, the latter group preferred to follow their own traditional values. As Haddad states a substantial number of the new Muslim immigrants brought a different identity, one fashioned by the devastating experience of the Israeli attack of 1967 and the catastrophic Arab defeat, the failed Arab counterattack in 1973, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the massacres of Sabra and Shatila in 1983. The Lebanese civil war, in which the Maronite Christians colluded with Israel against the Palestinians, led to Muslim distrust of Arab

[68] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 17-18.

Christians. The formation of AAUG brought about a huge distrust towards Arabs that became the target of the Zionist lobby: The Arab activists were portrayed as spies and propagandists for foreign interests.[69] In response to such a chaotic atmosphere, American government conducted its assimilationist policies to regulate the flow of immigrants from the Arab world so as to accelerate the assimilation process: Legislation limiting immigration, as well as American foreign policy and the prevailing American prejudice against Arabs, Muslims, and Islam, has at times accelerated and other times impeded the integration and assimilation of the community into American society.[70]

9/11 attacks have significantly opened a different page in the relations of Arab and non-Arab people in the United States. Until 9/11 attacks, with the increasing number of the immigrant population, the negative perception against the Arab gradually began to change in reverse. Particularly, the second wave of Arab immigrants that belonged to the middle class and well-educated group partly altered the prejudices against Arabs with knowing this rooted culture. Ajrouch and Jamal state that the post-9/11 world has directed attention to the religion of Islam in a stigmatizing way, making the religion both more prominent in the everyday language of Americans, but simultaneously more negative. Events following 9/11 including the War on Terror, the emergence of Homeland Security, the Patriot Act, as well as more micro-transformations such as heightened security at airports, have altered the lives of Middle Eastern Americans in many ways.[71] As Najla Said states in her book that "the attacks of September 11 were twenty-two years away, but the words "Arab" and "Muslim" were already synonymous with crazy, violent terrorists.[72] Eliminating such prejudiced perceptions of the Arab identity in the minds of the American society was not easy.

3.1. Arab American Case

The migration of the Arab population to the United States in the course of the dissolution period of the Ottoman Empire, gained momentum in search of economic, social and religious opportunities. According to the census data, until the foundation of Republic of Turkey, almost one million Ottoman Arabs left their homes. The majority

[69] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 19-20.
[70] Ibid, p. 2.
[71] Ajrouch; Jamal. *Assimilating to a White Identity*, p. 863-864.
[72] Najla Said. *Looking for Palestine*. New York: Penguin Books, 2013, p. 52.

of the immigrant groups were non-Muslim who identified themselves as Syrian Lebanese or Christian Arabs. In other aspects, the growing interest of the European powers over the Middle East region urged the migration movements preparing a convenient order to pursue exploitative activities. The potential of the Persian Gulf Region had formerly been discovered during the Crusades for its rich oil reserves and raw materials by the European powers. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the diversity among the Muslim American and the Arab American is still being debated today. The Arab community in the United States is noted for its diversity, which is evident in its ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, sectarian, tribal, and national identities.[73] Assimilation and discriminatory attitude against the Arab population have been very decisive in the transformation of a "tolerable" Arab identity. As Nydell argues, Westernization is controversial but inevitable.[74] Arabs were the native people of Arabian Peninsula and Arabic-speaking people opposing the domination of the Ottoman rule that controlled all ethnic and tribal groups in the empire. Arab Americans are believed to be immigrants mostly from Syria who left their homelands as a result of a political chaos brought by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. Haddad states that:

> These immigrants resented Turkish designation, since many were running away from Ottoman conscription and oppression, as well as the Asia designation since it excluded them from becoming citizens. By 1899, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began to add the sub-category of 'Syrians' to their registration. [...] Among themselves, they talked about being 'wlad 'Arab', (children of Arabs), a reference to the language they spoke.[75]

The surveys have concluded that there was an intense immigration movement from Syria to the United States following the 1900s. However, those immigrants were known as *Syrians* who are known as Arabs today. Arab American identity is an umbrella term which has many subcategories prospered from different ethnicities in the Arab region.

[73] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 2.
[74] Margaret K. Nydell. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide to Westerners*. Renwick. Maine: Intercultural Press Inc., 1987, p. 1.
[75] Haddad, p. 4.

Immigrants from the Arab world reflected a variety of minority and ethnic communities that constituted the population of nations including Armenians, Assyrians, Chechens, Circassians, Kurds and Turcomans, who were subjected to the Arabization programs of Arab governments since their independence. The majority of them dissociated themselves from Arab identity after they emigrated. Some of them were identified as Arabs or as Arab Americans, others set up lobbies in Washington, collaborating with pro-Israeli groups, and were engaged in defaming Arab nations.[76] 1924 Johnson-Reed Quota Act remarkably limited the number of immigrants to the United States. The act is also known for completely excluding immigrants - the Japanese in particular - from Asia. The 1924 Immigration Act also included a provision excluding from entry any alien who by virtue of race and nationality was ineligible for citizenship. The most basic purpose of the 1924 Immigration Act was to preserve the ideal of American homogeneity.[77]

The great distance of the *new* world from the *old* world have resulted in a big struggle for the Arab immigrants to form a stable identity in order to adapt themselves to the new culture in the United States. Whereas trying to pursue their past traditions of the old world in the new *home*, the immigrant families had been allured by the concepts of freedom, individualism and equality. Within the time, the assimilation of the Arab identity began to accelerate since the interaction with the old home diminished. Although many older immigrants struggled to follow their old customs and traditions and continued to speak their native languages, it became impossible for the second generation of immigrants and its aftermath. In particular, the second generation of immigrants and their children immediately endeavored to Americanize themselves by imitating cultural values of the American society so as to become part of it which is not so easy, however.

According to the data of the Census Bureau, Arab people differ from each other in terms of their religious beliefs and physical appearances:

> The first wave of immigration from Arab lands came largely from the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, most of these people

[76] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 6-7.
[77] See Johnson-Reed Quota Act, 1924.

> were referred to as 'Syrians' rather than 'Arabs'. In the early 1900s, those from Palestine were considered Palestinians. But in 1948, Palestinians lost official designation of their birthplace because of the creation of Israel in Palestine. Because of the variety of different lands from which Arabs originate, their appearance varies greatly as well. While many are olive-skinned, some Arabs are white and some are black. About 90 percent of the immigrants from the first wave were Christians; immigrants today could be either Christian or Muslim.[78]

That became the identity of choice, as argued by Philip Hitti in his *The Syrians in America*, who insisted that Syrians were distinct from the Turks and have made great contributions to human civilization.[79] As Lo states, the Muslim community in the United States is not predominantly Arab, and most Arabs in the United States are not Muslims. The U.S. community reflects the complexity and diversity of Muslims on a global scale. It is far from being monolithic. It is derived from Sunni, Sufi and Shi'i sects and from diverse ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds.[80] Lo asserts that Muslims who migrate from secular and less conservative societies, such as Turkey, Eastern Europe, Malaysia, South Africa, and some West African countries tend to be less involved in local Muslim communities of the adopted country. Muslims from less secular, more culturally conservative societies, such as North African countries, Egypt, Palestine, Sudan, Somalia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian subcontinent, tend to be active and constantly involved with local Muslim communities.

In the 1970's, which was the high point of Arab migration to the United States, cultural nostalgia remarkably grew among the newcomers. That nostalgia brought a sense of ethnicity to Muslim communities in the United States, which resulted in the process of self-identification and self-differentiation of the American Muslim.[81] In other words, the Arab immigrants felt the necessity of reinventing their own identities. The immigrants of the 1970s often tended to accuse the earlier immigrants of degrading the

[78] <http.//www.census.gov> (the official site of the U.S. Bureau of the Census contains information about the most recent census taken in 2000.
[79] Philip Khuri Hitti. *The Syrians in America*. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924, p. 4.
[80] Mbaye Lo. *Muslims in America*. Maryland: Amana Publications, 2004, p. 9.
[81] Ibid, p. 97.

significance of Islamic traditions. Rather than stressing commonalities with American culture and religion they put the emphasis on the differences. They were confident that Islam is the perfect way, and the cure for all that ails America.[82] In 1984, the Arab American Institute (AAI) was established when James Zoghby split from the ADC. It encourages Arab-Americans to participate in the American political system, working to get Arab-Americans to vote and to run for the office. The organizations were cemented by a perception of Zionist stalking of their activities and intimidation of their speakers, and by a deep commitment to the American democratic process. They expected America to live up to its proclaimed values and placed their trust in the American judicial system and the guarantees of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.[83]

9/11 attacks deeply urged Anglo Americans to cultivate a remarkable distrust against Arab immigrants or vice versa. The Arab profile in the eyes of American public and the media sharply gave a rise to the "other" threat to the American survival after 9/11 attacks, subordinating the fragile unity between the two: Several Israeli leaders had for several decades been identifying Islam as an international threat to be eliminated across the globe. The attacks of 9/11 revealed a growing consensus among many of the Beltway pundits and the press that Israel and America are co-victims of Islamic hatred of Judaism and Christianity.[84] The direct attack of 9/11 brought about an insecure atmosphere to the unity and peace in the United States which led to a series of measures to be taken against the Arab immigrants. The status of the Arab has reached the most negative level up to that time. For the Muslim population, the most distressing measure adopted by the American government in response to 9/11 attacks was HR3162, commonly known as USA PATRIOT. (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) The Act of October 24, 2001, lifted all legal protection of liberty for Muslims and Arabs in the United States. It sanctions the monitoring of individuals, organizations, and institutions without notification to keep them in confinement.[85] When all considered, the aftermath of 9/11 hardened the living of many Arab immigrant challenging as they have been identified as "terrorists" in the

[82] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 24-25.
[83] Ibid, p. 22-23.
[84] Ibid, p. 41.
[85] Ibid, p. 42.

American society and the media. Derogatory stereotypes encouraged by the racist discourse caused the Arab immigrants to be portrayed as the misfits in the society. After 9/11 attacks, the American government was engaged in the intervention with the definition of a new Islam:

> The measures include a declared war on a Muslim definition of the role of women in society. The American government has set up a bureaucracy in the Department of State specifically engaged in liberating the women of Islam. [...] Textbooks in Muslim countries are being monitored by the United States embassies for anti-western, anti-American, or anti-Israeli content. It appears to many that the only "Islam" that can be taught in one approved by the CIA. –my emphasis- Other measures include the monitoring of NGO's, civic, charitable, and religious organizations.[86]

American support for the autocratic regimes that appear to be the clients of American interests, and the recent American declared war on terrorism, implemented through regime change in Afghanistan and Iraq and widely perceived by the Arab and Muslim world as a war on Islam, appear to fit the same pattern.[87] Therefore, the Arab immigrants remained very skeptical about American policies in the Middle East. Western intervention of Arab nations accelerated American hegemony over the region since the 1950s, that it manifests itself today in the American support of Israeli and its policies in Palestine and the surrounding Arab states. As an outcome of the negative portrayal of Arab identity, immigrants with Arab roots rarely identify themselves as Arab Muslims unless they come from the Gulf area or try to make a linguistic or geographical distinction. For the third wave of immigrants, the word, Arab, has become a secondary modifier of identity, which is in a state of flux depending on context. Their primary identity can be Shi'i, Muslim, Lebanese, Arab, or American, depending on the circumstances that demand differentiation.[88] The Arab immigrants endeavored to be Muslims who offered Islamic values as well as simultaneously trying to be American citizens. However, as Haddad concludes, while freedom of thought is a right for all

[86] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 43.
[87] Ibid, p. 16.
[88] Ibid, p. 27-28.

Americans, there seems to be an exception if the Americans are Arab or Muslim. The policy of "You are either with us or against us" appears to have no room for an independent interpretation of what it means to be Muslim in the words of Haddad.[89]

According to the historical data, from the 15th century until the end of World War I, the Middle East countries consisted of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and part of northern Africa ruled by Turkey, which was then called the Ottoman Empire.[90] Following the end of the 1800s, a growing interest emerged to seek for new opportunities in the North America among people in the Middle East region due to religious concerns and huge economic burdens. Many Arab people left their homelands in search of pursuing a better future for their families in the *Promised Land*. The great majority of the first wave of Arab immigrants were not professionals and mostly lived in rural areas. Haddad states that Arab people from the Syrian Province of the Ottoman Empire (today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine/Israel) began arriving in the United States in the 1870s. They were rural migrant laborers hoping to make money and return to live in their homelands. Their success, the deteriorating economy in the Middle East, and the subsequent famine precipitated by World War I, brought about 4,300 additional Muslims to the United States between 1899 and 1914.[91]

At the end of World War I, another large group started to immigrate to the North America after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire by the Allied Forces. For religious factors, while the clash between Christians and Muslims held a significant role, another faction between Muslims and Arab Christians brought about discriminatory practices in the region. The Ottoman rulers of that time who were Muslims and on the other side, Christian Arabs who were being influenced and supported by Americans with educational improvements, establishment of churches and health services increased the tension between Christians and Muslims. The establishment of the missionary schools in the Middle East urged the assimilation of the young Arab population. Heavy taxation and increasing influence of Britain and France over the region were primary factors for the Arab immigration wave to America besides the strict policies of the Ottoman rule

[89] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 45.
[90] Temple, *The Arab Americans,* p. 19.
[91] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 3-4.

against minority groups. In the words of Abu-Lughod, citizens within the Ottoman Empire were feeling less secure and more oppressed.[92] By 1899, the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) began to add the sub-category of "Syrians" to their registration.[93] Haddad states that their success, the deteriorating economy in the Middle East, and the subsequent famine precipitated by World War I, brought about 4,300 additional Muslims to the United States between 1899 and 1914.[94] However, the flow of immigration was interrupted during World War I. Subsequently, it was curtailed by the National Origin Act of 1924 that reduced the quota by restricting the number of immigrants from the Middle East to 100 persons per year.[95] The immigration quota system in the 1920s, the depression of the 1930s, and World War II were effective in preventing further Arab immigration to the United States.

The second wave of immigration movement broke out after World War II, especially after 1967. Unlike the first wave, the second wave of immigration was well-educated and mostly came for better educational purposes. Many consisted of members of the upper class in their nations who attended Western educational institutions and spoke very good English. Temple states in his book that the majority of the second wave of immigration occurred in 1967 after Israel defeated Syria, Egypt, and Jordan in the Six-Day War. By 1961, Abdo A. Elkholy stated that the total number of Muslims of Arab origin in the United States was 78,000, the majority of whom were from Lebanon. The other estimated 30,000 were from Eastern Europe (Albania and Yugoslavia), Pakistan, Turkey, with a few Tatars from the Soviet Union.[96] The Immigration Act of 1965 which ended the quota system that had previously limited the number of people who could come to America from Arab lands, laid the groundwork for this huge flow of immigrants. Since 1967, this constant flow has allowed thousands of Arab people to escape the fighting that has plagued their homelands.[97] It is obvious that the political tension and the unrest forced the Arab population to leave their homelands. Unlike the

[92] Abu-Lughod. *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe*. London: Saqi Books, 2011, p. 20.
[93] A. Mokarzel Salloum. "Can We Retain our Heritage", p. 36-40.
[94] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 3.
[95] Ibid, p. 4.
[96] Abdo A. Elkholy. *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation.*. New Haven: College and University Press, 1966, p. 5.
[97] Temple, *The Arab Americans*, p. 43-44.

first immigrant movement, the large part of the second wave of immigrants mostly consisted of the middle and the upper-class urban backgrounds who graduated from foreign educational institutions established by the missionary groups in the Arab lands:

> The second wave of immigrants came after the end of World War II, when the United States assumed responsibility for the security of the oil fields in the Middle East, and recruited students from the newly independent Arab states to study at America universities with the expectation that once they returned to their home countries they would constitute an important asset to United States interests.[98]

During the 1970s and 1980s, American interests related to the need for oil over the Middle East brought about many conflicts between the U.S. government and some Arab countries which increased the level of discrimination against Arab people living in the United States. On the other hand, media as a powerful tool which demonstrated Arab people as *terrorists* because of their traditional dressings and customs aroused hatred in American society. Efforts of well-educated Arabs with the establishment of different organizations including the Association of Arab American University Graduates, the National Association of Arab Americans, and the Arab American Institute slightly changed the negative view of Arab people. Haddad states that: "Indeed, surveys of the media have documented the *demonization* of Arabs, Islam, and Muslims as the monolithic "outsiders", the essential "other", whose beliefs and customs are characterized as inferior, barbaric, sexist, and irrational-values worthy of repeated condemnation and eradication.[99]

Surveys carried out thus far, Arab American immigrants are dispersed throughout the United States; two thirds of them living in ten states, living in California, New York, and Michigan today. They appear to favor urban areas as about half of them live in twenty large metropolitan areas with the highest concentrations in Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. About a quarter of them are Muslims (Sunni, Shi'ites, and Durze) and constitute a minority within the Arab American community, the majority of whom are Christian with a small Jewish minority.

[98] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 5.
[99] Ibid, p. 15.

They are also a minority within the Muslim-American community, which includes South Asians and African Americans. The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) reports in all of its communiqués that there are seven million Muslims in the United States. An estimated three million Arabic-speaking people (and their descendants, a few of whom are in their sixth generation) now live in the United States, constituting about one percent of the population, the majority having arrived during the last third of the twentieth century.[100] However, the complexity of the Arab community and the Muslim constitute a very important part of the overall population in the U.S. today. The Arab identity is still being debated. Religion to religion, region to region, origin to origin, they are quite distinct from each other. Surveys carried out in the future, may enable a better explanation for the diversity of the Arab population in the U.S.

3.2. *Mahjar* Literature: The Flourishing of Ethnic Writing

Arab American community, gone through a long history of migration, is remarkably distinct. This diversity is explicit with the existence of the third and the fourth generation of Arab American immigrants besides the arrival of recent immigrants to the United States. In contrast to one another, recent immigrants have been more prone to identify themselves with their Arab heritage and the former with the American, and later Arab American. The distinctive features of Arab Americans, differences in the cultural practices in the Arabian Peninsula form another aspect of this complexity. Within this context, even today, this diversity makes the Arab American identity brings about more complicated definitions than before. Yet, it also serves for the emergence of a substantial mixture of Arab and American values which is reflected through literature.

In relation to the debates about the formation of Arab American identity, many different approaches are existing. However, as a hyphenated writer, Majaj discusses in her article that Arab American identity is a transplanted Arab identity, preserving Arab culture, maintenance of Arab language and involvement in Middle Eastern politics. Her second view is that Arab American identity ought to be considered in American context and American frameworks of assimilation and multiculturalism.[101] What is important in this statement that this long-debated identity is the reinvention of something new and

[100] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 2-3.
[101] See Lisa Suhair Maja's website article. "The Hyphenated Author". Al Jadid Magazine.

distinctive out of the combination of Arab and American identities. For this reason, the second definition enables a more sophisticated understanding of Arab American identity today, when considered that preservation of the national identity is not practical in the structure of multicultural societies.

As touched upon in previous chapters, as well as in the politics, the diversity in the definition of identity brings about important questions to be elaborated in the literary context as well. Some Arab American writers think that literary work is a project of cultural translation. Adjusting the Arab identity to the codes of the American culture or vice versa, brings about the loss of context. At this point, as Abu-Jaber also argues, translation from Arabic to English or vice versa, results in the loss of meaning and emotion. On the other hand, literary works that are produced in English could be considered to convey Arab themes to the American readers. For some, Arab American literature is an *American* literature like any other ethnic writing, which demands for an outstanding effort to comprehend the ethnicity. That is because, Arab American works are expected to deal with immigrant issues in the United States or the identity problem experienced by the second and the third generation of Arab Americans. Within this context, topics which lack these discussions in the literary works are not likely to be considered Arab American.

When analyzed from the eye of Arab readers, the changing tone of the postcolonial literature is very likely to be criticized for not reflecting the Arab values, also in writing about censurable topics, like homosexuality, gender equality and feminism. This approach brings about a new field to be studied besides emphasizing upon ethnic writing: feminism and gender in the postcolonial novel. Abu-Jaber is criticized by the Arab population at homeland, like many hyphenated writers, for representing them as inferior to the American society or not truly portraying the Arab identity as it is. However, it is not likely to write about a single identity in a globalized world or a community by only focusing on the negative or the positive sides of the target identity. By reason of the fact that all identities are melted away as a result of living in a multicultural society, individuals are expected to adopt their selves to this constant change. However, the resent or the reaction against it among the Arab population,

mainly stems from the racist discourse and discriminatory notion of the Anglo-Saxon society against the "Orient" since from the colonial period and to even today.

Arab immigrants, mostly Christian Syrian-Lebanese, are known to have arrived to the United States in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century according to the U.S. census data. Syrians and Lebanon immigrants in the United States were the most educated and enlightened people in the Arab population. This group after the 1860s, started to migrate because of the political and social oppression at home, which later contributed to the revival of Arabic language, culture and literature in their host country. These Arabs formed a diaspora (*al-mahjar*, in Arabic) with its own Arabic newspapers and literature[102] but with meaningful political connections with their home country.[103] Syria, which became the mandate of the French power after WWI, and the oppression of the Turks over the region reflected a pessimist tone in the writings of the *Mahjar*. Escaping from the chaotic atmosphere of the dissolution period of the Ottoman rule and the French occupation of the time urged Arab writers to write about their experiences at homeland. As dispersed people, the desire for cherishing the memories of *yesterday*, a tendency immediately showed itself to manifest their values and identity in the literature which was written in Arabic. However, within time, it became inevitable to interact with the mainstream society in which Arabic language began to lose its efficiency, especially among second and third generation of Arab American population. It should be noted that the desire for writing and publishing in Arabic enabled them to establish a tie with their old hometown. They talked about their problems, hardships of being immigrant, and also daily themes related to the Arab world in general. The majority of the first *Mahjar* writers and poets were heavily inspired by the Western style. Many of them were Christians and were usually acquainted with at least one foreign language, generally French or English.[104] In poetry, in particular, they were heavily influenced by the Whitman style. The Arab newspaper, "Kawkab Amrika" (American Star) is only an example to this pattern, which was published from 1892 to 1908. Another newspaper, El-Huda (The Guidance), established in 1908, is still very

[102] Al-Na'uri. *Adab al-Mahjar* [The Literature of Diaspora]. In Arabic. Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1967.
[103] Sten Pultz Moslund. *Migration Literature and Hybridity: The Different Speeds of Transcultural Change*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 89.
[104] Moslund. *Migration Literature and Hybridity*, p. 89.

popular in New York, which is published weekly. These newspapers, pamphlets, magazines, and many others played a key role in the emergence of migration literature in the United States.

The 1910s refers to a significant period of literary transformation. *al-Rābiṭah al-Qalamiyah* (الرابطة القلمية in Arabic; The Pen League in English) also known as *al-Mahjar*, the first Arab American literary society was founded. Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran and many others were the important figures of the movement. Until the dissolution of the society, which followed the death of Gibran in 1931, The Pen League served for lifting Arabic literature from imitation and promote a new generation of Arab American writers. Members of the league, also synthesizing the East with the West, endeavored to forge a literary link between the Eastern and the Western worlds. In the words of Majaj, by blending Arab poets like Al-Mutanabbi, Al-Farid with Homer, Virgil, Milton, Emerson and Thoreau, they tried to create a new form of American literature. Early literary Arab works in the United States tried to familiarize the "exotic" as Majaj puts it. Producing literature within a new genre of Arabic and American, early writers were more prone to distance themselves from Arab culture, so as to be accepted by the white American. Abraham Rihbany and Salom Rizk are examples to this pattern. This narrative strategy naturally stemmed from the outcome of the heavy assimilationist atmosphere in the United States. On the other hand, the chaotic situation of the war time, that it put the status of Arabs vulnerable to any kind of threat. Within this context, they assumed that it was a much safer path to follow the American pattern in their writings. As Dawn states, there is convincing evidence that the prevailing ideology of Arab nationalists in the twentieth century was formed in the 1920s, from Islamic modernist roots. However, it is not possible to determine first authorship and influences, but a number of Arab nationalist publications and authors can be identified.[105] As a result of the lack of communication with the home culture, the assimilation process of the Arab Americans gained a momentum more than before. During such a time, literary production was also in a serious diminishment. Arab identity was more marginalized in

[105] C. Ernest Dawn. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism*. 1st edition. University of Illinois, 1973, p.10.

contrast to the American identity. There was a strong hesitation about reflecting Arab American identity and culture in literary works.

The 1960s also refer to a turning point in the history of the United States, when the Civil Rights created a new atmosphere in the politics, social, ethnic and literary terms. The literature of the other, including African American, Jewish American, Asian American and Arab American, were given the chance for speaking about their ethnic roots and diversities. The second wave of Arab immigrants which included better educated and politically conscious immigrant groups in contrast to the earlier immigrant groups, identified themselves more comfortably. In relation to the case of what is considered as the third world literature or the literature of the other, Majaj draws attention to the vitality of defining the self; in the opposite case, others will be engaged in defining who you are. Regarding the period from 1967 to 9-11 and beyond, combined with the negative media exposure, it has become more difficult to preserve a positive portrayal of the Arab American identity. Under a series of strict racial definitions, the Arab and the Muslim in general, have been targeted for their dressing styles, skin color, name or accent at U.S. airports. Abu-Jaber talks about the cultural violence of the United States to hasten the process of assimilation in "Arabs and the Break in the Text" that the white American expected the Arab to "lighten hair, thin the lips, change the name, cover the dress, hammer down the accent, stash away the strange gods, the poetry, the ancient disturbing pointless old stories.[106] As understood, eliminating the stereotypical prejudices about the Arab American identity is not easy.

Abu-Jaber, like many American writers with Arab roots, has been criticized for degrading Arab values at home or not reflecting the real Arab identity, and for not producing more American literary works in the United States. However, the aim of the hyphenated writer is not to marginalize the hyphen that are contained as the other but to construct bridges between the hyphen and the identity, terminating the "us versus them" mentality. As Majaj remarks, Arab American literary works are inseparable part of Arab and American cultures since they nourish one another. Ethnic writing is still in the process of creation. Arab American writers deal with not only about the Arab identity,

[106] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "Arab American Literature: Origins and Developments". American Studies Journal: Number 52 (2008), p. 132.

but also about American values that is produced out of the combination of the two. Ethnic writers accept that literature has undergone a transnational form of literature beyond being nationalistic. When taken into the consideration, ethnic writers in the early period, struggled with explaining themselves that they are not "betraying" to their origins. Therefore, they were more prone to praise their first identities while being more cautious about their American identity. Besides the language problem, they were not free about deciding upon themes that they are going to write about. When considered the interventionist and assimilationist policies of the U.S., it is true that the literature of the other has also been undervalued. Deciding whether other narratives should be allowed or not has also challenged strictly protected American values up to that time, with the beginning of the decolonization period. One of the many questions that ethnic literature addresses is the negative stereotypes of members of ethnic/racial groups which are not part and parcel of the dominant culture.[107] Thus, the goal of ethnic literature is to impart knowledge of customs, characteristics, and language, of the various racial and ethnic groups.[108] In other words, for the other, ethnic writing is a tool for claiming that "they" are also a part of that country.

Ashcroft states that the world is in a constant flux of change, so is literature. Moving beyond conventional notions of literary comparison based on an identification of language and culture, the postcolonial novel addresses the complex location of English-language literatures embedded in more than one national or regional culture.[109] According to this explanation, it is clear that literature has gone beyond its borders. Ethnicity is a very striking characteristic of the American society in which all diversities are blended together. It is also as important as for the rest of the world as the ultimate result of increasing globalism. Ethnicity, described as a strong word, pertains common values, experiences, memories, norms and beliefs, is deeply attached to a person's or a community's identity. As a broader definition upon the ethnicity, it is the notion that ethnicity is not a fixed essence passed down from one generation to the next. Rather, ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each

[107] Tamburri. *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*, p. 12.
[108] Ibid, p. 13.
[109] Ashcroft; Mendis; Gonegal; Mukherje. *Literature of Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, 2012, p. 5.

individual in the words of Fischer. Ethnicity also serves for the core of the literature of the colonized. Postcolonial literature deals with the problems and the consequences of the decolonization of a country or a nation. It is still being experienced that the independence of formerly colonized people have brought about a series of identity complexities and self-alienation, along with the interventionist attitudes of the former colonizer powers.

The early interaction of the West with the Arab world took place even before the colonial period. For the Arab world, it begins with the personal notes of the immigrants, diaries or letters that write about their experience in the United States. The study of the "Orient" dates back to the Crusades that Islam started to be discovered as stated in the preface. In 1798, with the invasion of Egypt by Napoléon Bonaparte, a very educated group called *Savants*, arriving from Europe, began studying the East, and collected detailed information about Egypt and its surroundings. At that time, ideas about the Orient began to emerge in the mind of the Occident in the late eighteenth century. In the creation of the Middle East Studies, Antoine Galland[110] secures his position as a very effective figure in shaping the Oriental Studies in Europe, by translating *Arabian Nights*, or also known as *The Thousand and One Nights*, from Arabic into and French. The translation of these stories opened the way to the study of Islam and Arabic language and literature as an academic discipline in Europe and the rest of the world.

Edward W. Said stimulates a very radical change related to the concept of the Orient by pointing out that the "East" and the 'West" are inseparable since they define and feed each other. Said claims:

> [t]he Orient is not only adjacent to Europe: it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative.

[110] Antoine Galland (1646-1715), an important French orientalist, scholar.

> The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.[111]

Besides nourishing the literature, multiculturalism has brought about a series of problems related to the language and the literature in addition to the long-debated political issues. In *Out of Place*, Edward W. Said's sentence from his personal experience gives a very brief point of view of this problematic situation: "I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt. Out of this clash, he realizes that neither of them is his first language.[112] In relation to the unsolved problems of the postcolonialism, the complexity stems from the hidden agenda based on a hierarchical view of English language that kept English literature in a privileged position when compared to the ethnic writing styles.[113] Particularly, ethnic writers of the second and the third generation of the United States mostly write in English about *Arabness* and their complexity of the identity issue, without having any familiarity with the Arabic language, land or cultural tie.

Transculturation as a very influential concept, describing the cross-cultural experience is accompanied by Bhabha's hybridity, which comes out of its process of opening [...] a third space within each other elements encounter and transform each other.[114] It also refers to the relationship between the self and the other. Out of the combination of the two, a new identity occurs. Transculturation shows itself in the literary form as well. Hybrid characters are perplexed between the edges of two cultures in search of the self. In the postcolonial novel, rather than symbolizing for a limited understanding of the self, hybrid protagonists rise up as very powerful figures who are fortified by holding two identities. In the context of Homi K. Bhabha's theory, "mimicry" which means imitating the mainstream to be accepted, the identity issue gains a different perspective. It is for sure that children of immigrants have paved a new

[111] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1-2.
[112] Said, *Out of Place*, p. 4.
[113] Ashcroft; Mendis; Gonegal; Mukherje. *Literature of Our Times*, p. 5.
[114] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 191.

path in the formation of a totally different identity from their parents, as a result of abandoning customs and traditions of the old town. Indeed, they have wholeheartedly reacted against being labeled as the other or foreigner because of their physical differences, accents or dressing styles. Their struggle to assimilate themselves brought by speaking English without a foreign accent, dressing and acting like an American hastened the process of Americanization.[115]

Globalization justifies the characteristics of the contemporary literary and cultural studies that it manifests itself in the polyvalent forms of cultures, identities, and differences come together as the inevitable outcome of the globalization. As Moslund remarks, our age is an age of constant mobility and the literature is no exception to this rule:

> Reading the literature of globalisation, the whole world appears to be on the move. It is the grand spectacle of a virtual surge of people flowing across the surface of the globe: refugees, exiles, expatriates, international vagrants, guest workers, immigrants, globetrotting travellers and package tourists, wanderers of all kinds crisscrossing the planet and all its national, ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic borders. It seems that we are witnessing a massive international and transnational defeat of gravity, an immense uprooting of origin and belonging, an immense displacement of borders with all the clashes, meetings, fusions and intermixings it entails, reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world's countries and cities.[116]

In the novels of Abu-Jaber, cross-cultural characters reflect the psychological state of the immigrant experience. The existence of hybrid protagonists reveals a strong and free portrayal of the Arab American identity which forms a new structure of identity out of this clash and this new individual can also travel liberally between their edges. This new individual is free from the limitations and moves beyond common stereotypes. Apart from all these, the complexity of the language and the substantial framework of the

[115] Temple, *The Arab Americans*, p. 8.
[116] Moslund, *Migration Literature and Hybridity*, p. 1-2.

ethnic literature contribute to the innovation of the postcolonial novel, flourishing it with different themes, perspectives and opinions.

3.3. The Impact of Media

The power of media is indisputable in shaping the literature as much as the cultural politics. The negative portrayal of the Arab identity in the American media is remarkably dominant since the early years of the Arab immigration. Surveys of the media have documented the demonization of Arabs, Islam, and Muslims as the monolithic "outsiders" or the essential "other" whose beliefs and customs are characterized as inferior, barbaric, sexist, and irrational – values worthy of repeated condemnation and eradication.[117]

Recent attacks and terror crimes by the extremist groups play a key role in the tension between the Arab and the non-Arab. These attacks have also been decisive factors that provoked the ethnic hatred and prejudiced portrayal of the Arab identity. In other words, the Arab identity has become more vulnerable to the racist discourse. As described by Jordan and Weedon, racism is a cultural and institutional phenomenon, not fundamentally a matter of individual psychology, not of racists or prejudiced individuals. It is deeply ingrained within the dominant social structures and signification systems of contemporary Western societies.[118] Racism is described as a discourse and imagery provides such ideological justification. Racist ideology creates us-versus-them mentality– that, unlike us, they are uncivilized, debased and lazy; that they are in need of strong discipline; that they can stand the heat, the dirt and hard manual labour; that they don't really have a bad life; that it is God's will for them to serve us; that they are no better than cockroaches.[119] In parallel to this statement, American media's pattern of Arab definition relies upon the idea that "they are not like us" which normalizes the racist discourse against the other in the mind of the dominant culture.

Majaj states that Jordanian American novelist Diana Abu-Jaber considers race as both a marker of exclusion and a site of contestation. In the early years of postcolonialism, gaining acceptance of both Arab and American readers was almost

[117] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p. 15.
[118] Jordan; Weedon. *Cultural Politics*, p. 253.
[119] Ibid, p. 258.

impossible. However, the changing tone of ethnic writing as a result of globalization, created a more universal background and a better understanding of the oppressed groups through the reinvention of hybrid identities. In her short story "At the Continental Divide", as a newly arrived Jordanian American immigrant, Jamil, is pointed at by the police because of his dark skin: "Oh, A-rab, one of them. Worse than niggers aren't you? Kill your own babies and mothers, bomb planes with Americans on them... A-rab scum"[120] This prejudiced approach started to diminish as the mixing of two cultures gained momentum. In her early years, as an immigrant family in the United States, Abu-Jaber states that her family also faced with the truth of racism like any other immigrant family. Abu-Jaber's experience also indicates that culture is the property of the West, primarily of White men in racist discourse. This Eurocentric view of culture maintains an opposition between a modern, enlightened, progressive West and less-developed societies which are seen as quintessentially tradition-bound. The traditions in question are unenlightened, often irrational, untouched by modern technology and industrialization.[121]

To touch upon the recent history, the Arab world was harshly undermined by the American media in Iraq War, in 1991. In the propaganda surrounding the war, the West was portrayed as modern, enlightened and democratic, fighting to rescue a small independent state from annexation and dictatorship. Enlightened Western intervention had dire effects on the Iraqi people. In 1991, as a direct result of US bombings, a great number of Iraqis died. As a result of ethnic hatred, human killing became easy. The West claimed that it was necessary to achieve military and political aims: to humiliate Saddam Hussein, to drive him from power, to keep the price of petrol cheap in the United States of America.[122] In relation to the war, the British Press, on 23 January 1991, in the newspaper, *Guardian,* portrayed a very negative image of Iraqis and described them as "mad dogs" who fought to destroy, fire and kill wildly. They were considered as killing machines.[123] The Iraqis were people led by a man who is evil, mad, defiant and monstrous – the quintessential vicious Oriental. Lack of reason, lack of

[120] Diana Abu-Jaber. "At the Continental Divide", Writer's Forum 17 (1991), p. 147
[121] Jordan; Weedon. p. 293.
[122] Jordan; Weedon. *Cultural Politics,* p. 298-299.
[123] "Mad Dogs and Englishmen". *Guardian*. 23 January 1991.

justice, ruthless cruelty and fanaticism govern the Iraqi leader and his troops. They kill and destroy using cowardly tactics. Unable to think for themselves, blindly obedient, cowardly, ruthless and fanatical – they are mad dogs. After 9/11 attacks, the perception of the United States and the European countries against the Arab world and Islam has negatively changed. Haddad states that Al-Queda attacks of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center and Pentagon are repeatedly depicted as having *changed America forever*.[124] The direct attack to the Trade Center and Pentagon aroused a big shock among both Americans and immigrant Arabs causing a severe feeling of suspicion and insecurity. Furthermore, this attack has become a turning point in both American society and foreign policies which sharpened the tension between American citizens and Arab immigrants. Rather than targeting Arab population, Muslims and also Islam have become the target as the guilty of the attack.

Abu-Jaber's description of the Arab identity in the American media occupies a significant part in both novels. Dialogues between the family members hold a remarkable place throughout her narration. The portrayal of the American media is blamed for placing the negative categorization of Arab people in the minds of Anglo-Americans. Abu-Jaber states that the media has a very big impact upon the prejudices created by non-Arabs. She states in an interview that she invited a group of friends to visit Jordan. And one of her colleagues remarks that "he likes to take baths" which depicts the prejudiced behavior of non-Arab people against the Arab. According to Abu-Jaber, the nasty and weird portrayal of Arab people directly stems from biased media representations. The Arab identity is described as uncivilized, savage and inferior. To reinforce this mentality, in particular, the precautions taken by the American government and its agencies helped the creation of an unrestful atmosphere among the Arab immigrants in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. Many government agencies including CIA, INS, FBI, IRS, the Department of State and the United States Customs Service worked together to sustain a "moderate" Arab identity to eliminate the terrorist activities. However, the question is still unanswered in the minds of Arab Americans: What kind of Arab or Muslim model could America tolerate particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks?

[124] Haddad, *Not Quite American*, p, 1.

IV. THE REPRESENTATION OF ARAB AMERICAN IDENTITY *ARABIAN JAZZ* AND *CRESCENT*

In relation to the duality of identity, Najla Said describes an Arab as an individual whose native language is Arabic.[125] However, this definition is surely inadequate for the upcoming generations when compared to the first generation of Arab American immigrants. In Abu-Jaber's novels, particularly young Arabs are generally well-educated and have more American features than their parents while the first immigrant groups are primarily engaged in meeting their survival needs. Each main character portrays multiple stories out of which it is born a hybrid. However, it is a matter of fact that they find themselves torn, even more than their parents were, between different sets of values.[126] Majaj states that the protagonists struggle to find homes for themselves between Arab and American cultures, stymied by the complexities of their mixed identities and the inability of those around them to understand that complexity.[127] Regarding the first immigrant Arab families, it is true that the tradition-oriented Arab men and women are more prone to consider their social customs and restrictions as complimentary to the status and nature of women, rather than being repressive.[128] Characters of both novels are in a constant clash between the old and the new form of Arab identity. In their inner worlds, successful or not, content or discontent, all characters are homeless immigrants who experience trauma, in-betweenness and loss in every facet of life. Protagonists severely long for a home, a familiar place to them, in search of self-fulfillment.

In *Arabian Jazz*, the clash between the old Arab and the new version of Arab identity, represented by Jemorah and Melvina sisters, is an important issue. The controversy between the two identities, results in the self-discovery experience of the sisters besides dealing with the crisis of retaining two different kinds of ethnicity. Aunt Fatima is one of the well portrayed characters to this pattern who considers herself and her nieces as Arabs, rather than Americans. Aunt Fatima represents the old values in the old hometown, arguing that a "good" Arab girl should be married to an Arab, preferably

[125] Najla Said. *Looking for Palestine*. New York: Penguin Books, 2013, p. 18.
[126] Nydell, *Understanding Arabs*, p. 11.
[127] Majaj, "The Hyphenated Author," p. 9.
[128] Nydell, p. 55.

from the family, before she enters into thirty. Furthermore, marriages to cousins ensure that money, in the form of a dowry or inheritance, stays within the family.[129] Sisters, Jemorah and Melvina are constantly forced to question their Arab roots as much they do not have any sense of belonging to it. Aunt Nejla tells girls that "America is no place for young girls" (99). Relatives, living in Jordan, constantly remind the sisters that America is not a "safe" home to them. They were caught between their American mother and Arab relatives who always reminds them "the mirage would someday melt and they would be back in the family home where they *belonged*" (99). Sisters, representing the new generation of immigrant characters, are responsible for inventing their own interpretation of identity which leads them to self-maturity.

Diana Abu-Jaber describes *Crescent*, as the story of an Iraqi-American chef, Sirine who cooks in an Arabic restaurant in Los Angeles and falls in love with an Iraqi immigrant. Hanif, a well-educated man with Arab roots and a professor at UCLA, is portrayed as a mysterious man who suffers from being an exile as Shalal-Esa states. Sirine and Hanif are depicted as lost, complex but emotional and respectable type of immigrants who suffer from being displaced. The self-voyage of Sirine begins with her instinct for tracing her past in which she does not feel any sense of belonging. However, the stories she listened from her ancestors and the ingredients she uses at her café reveal that she gets drawn into her origins. In this sense, Sirine's story demonstrates a self-voyage in which she seeks answers to her questions about her past. Despite considering herself as an American, she cannot deep down deny her Arab roots as well. Hanif plays a key role for introducing Sirine with her Arab identity. Rather than being stuck in exile, Sirine is in search of her new self as in the case of Jemorah and Melvine sisters in *Arabian Jazz.*

As Edward W. Said argues, Abu-Jaber seeks to alter the prejudiced point of view of the Western perception toward the Orient. In both novels, unlike the negative portrayals of stereotypical Arab identity, she points out that Arab identity deserves to be reanalyzed and valued through the Middle Eastern characters in the postcolonial novel.

4.1. Jordanian American Novelist: Diana Abu-Jaber

[129] Nydell, *Understanding Arabs*, p. 80.

Diana Abu-Jaber, blends biographical statements through her fiction, who is born to a Jordanian father and an American mother. Like the protagonists in her novels, Abu-Jaber questions her Arab American identity as a diasporic individual. In one of her interviews, Abu-Jaber states that she grew up immersed in the fantastical stories told by her father, a Jordanian immigrant, who shuttled the family between upstate New York and Jordan during her early years. As an outcome of growing up with totally diverse cultures, Abu-Jaber masterfully applies this diversity in her literary works.

Abu-Jaber highly uses biographical elements in her novels which focus upon identity, culture and diaspora. Her portrayal of protagonists severely suffers from identity crisis whilst struggling for rising as respectable individuals in multi-cultural American society. It is observed that the reflection of Abu-Jaber's past to her style of writing is very effective which makes her characters distinctive. The main characters in her novels are generally women, as in *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent,* and each represents a different generation of Arab identity. She perfectly imposes the notion that constant change is a must in the course of time. The sense of nostalgia subordinates the transformation of the new self.

Abu-Jaber's novels also reflect scenes from her childhood years when her family had to deal with the prejudices of non-Arab people. Abu-Jaber states that her family experienced racism and cultural intolerance because of their Arab identity as well. She states in an interview that her dad at various times worked as a supervisor at a hospital. He had union people under him that were always going on strike. She states that she can remember at times during a strike people would call the house and yell racial epithets on the phone. Abu-Jaber is the only one who can speak Arabic among her sisters although they look much more traditionally Arab as she states. Abu-Jaber considers "race" as a false concept which she describes it as a complete social construction, basically signifying nothing. The stories told by her father, enables her to have a powerful influence on her imagination, in terms of what to write about, the style of language, and the form of her stories took as Abu-Jaber speaks out. Patriarchal codes occupy a big space in her own life as well who were raised with a very traditional conservative society: "Which is: You are not to go out, you are not to be wild, you are not to be loud, you must be respectful and always ask permission. Everything is circumscribed, and

everything is watched. The idea that you pass directly from your parents' house into your spouse's house, and your spouse then takes charge of you. And you start having your family and doing things in the preordained way". Abu-Jaber highlights the depiction of the "good" and the "bad" in the society: "In America, he constantly reminded us that we were good Arab girl; we weren't allowed to go out to parties or school dances. But then he encouraged us to study singlemindedly, to compete as intensely as any boy, and to always make our own way in the world". She states that her father calls her "Bedouin" as she moves around for work since there is a certain rootlessness which is also a significant characteristic of being displaced.

In an interview with Andrea Shalal-Esa, Abu-Jaber states that life was a constant juggling act, acting Arab at home but American in the street. In the words of Shalal-Esa, the struggle to make sense of this sort of hybrid life, or "in-betweenness," nourishes Abu-Jaber's fiction. At this point, writing about immigrant experience is a very close concept to Abu-Jaber that she describes it as one of her literary obsessions. According to her, leaving behind one's home country means ambiguity since it is unpredictable what about to happen in the new land. She describes it as an incredible experience and journey besides being a real process of loss for some people. For this reason, Abu-Jaber explains why she is very interested in what the loss of a homeland means for someone. In *Crescent*, through the voice of Hanif, she touches upon the fragile parts of ethnic literature. Hanif states that, Western styles, are considered *safe*. Writers whose works are more accessible to American readers, somewhat like Dickens, with his large casts of characters, plain prose style, and broad humor are approved", he simply states (108). Abu-Jaber is aware that translation in literature results in the loss of context and emotion. Trying to translate Hemingway into Arabic is like trying to translate a bird into a river. Not only do you have to translate the words, you also have to try and translate the feelings and ideas for all kinds of things from one culture to another – like what faith or courage is" (131). Abu-Jaber's success to utilize from the immigrant stories and the portrayal of characters in her novels proves her ability to combine them along with her powerful literary skill of fiction.

Abu-Jaber speaks highly of other hyphenated writers, intellectuals and artists who experience any kind of exile. She states that they tend to describe themselves as a

new tribe. They gather together to discuss or to describe since they are aware that going back to the homeland is not possible, but reinventing a new identity of their own is a must. In this sense, Abu-Jaber appreciates Edward W. Said as being a very good example of it, who is able to create a new "home" in his writings. In parallel to the opinions of As Abu-Jaber, Gilles Deleuze, a significant French philosopher of the twentieth century, similarly states that the aim of the literature should be to cross the border. This statement clarifies the definition of hybridity by Homi Bhabha. One-sided worldview is no longer a conceivable approach to the postcolonial world. Because cultures, identities, and languages are already intermingled with one another, presenting a cultural mosaic of the world out of its diversities. The literature of our century represents for a state of perpetual transformation rather than being homogeneous.

4.2. Exile

> *Identity-who we are, where we come from, and what we are- is difficult to maintain in exile.*[130]

Being displaced is one of the powerful themes of the Postcolonial literature. In the aftermath of decolonization, physical exiles have turned into something intangible which refers to the psychological exile of the displaced. According to Edward W. Said, exile is described as the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home.[131] As Said explains, exile is one of the saddest fates since it does not only mean years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, but also meant being a sort of permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home, and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable with the past, bitter about the present and future.[132] Said, himself as an exile, claims that the overriding sensation was being out of place.[133]

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[130] Edward W. Said. *After the Last Sky. (Palestinian Lives)*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986, p.16.
[131] Said, *Reflections On Exile*, p. 178.
[132] Said, *Reflections On Exile*, p. 369.
[133] Said, *Out of Place*, p. 3.

Said establishes a significant tie between nationalism and being exile. He confirms that nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. In other words, the tie between the two is like Hegel's dialectic of servant and master, compossibility informing and constituting each other. In this sense, nationalism indirectly prepares the ground for exile. Exile redefines the concept of *home.* While misplaced identities are in search of a definite home, artificial boundaries set up by the mainstream society result in "us versus other" mentality and identity crisis. Said, as also being a member of an immigrant family in the American society, experiences this complexity in his family life as well. His daughter, Najla Said talks about this duality as a result of having two different identities in her memoir: "And was I really Arab? I didn't understand how I could be. My father, the English professor, spoke Arabic sometimes with my mom and had family in Lebanon but sounded and seemed perfectly American to me".[134] Through her early years, his daughter blames her parents for not being able to "fix" her enough. To go beyond its meaning, exile is described as the inevitable fate of the displaced, who are constantly torn between different identities. As Said asserts, beyond the frontier between "us" and the "outsider" is the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time peoples were banished, and where in the modern era immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons.[135]

In the light of Said's description of exile, the protagonists in Abu-Jaber's novels to form a stable identity for themselves, Jemorah and Melvine sisters, the cousin Nassir in *Arabian Jazz*, Sirine and Hanif in *Crescent* experience serious identity conflicts about whether to act like more Arab or more American. Melvine and Jemorah sisters who are major characters of *Arabian Jazz* are in a constant clash between their past and the present as an inevitable result of their duality. Even though they never feel fully Arab in their inner worlds, they are constantly reminded not to forget their roots by their Arab aunts. However, they find themselves living in a heavily assimilationist U.S. context.[136]

[134] Said, *Looking for Palestine*, p. 52.
[135] Said, *Reflections On Exile*, p. 181.
[136] Majaj, "Arab American Literature: Origins and Developments," p. 1.

As Majaj states, Arab aunts, rooted in the background of the Old world, play a key role in the continuity of the identity crisis of Jemorah and Melvine sisters. Arab aunts always say that America is a fantasy world and one day they are going to be ready to return their *real* home. Ajrouch and Jamal state that the racial identity is one key element of assimilation, signifying the likelihood of success in the host country.[137] In other words, being white in a racially hierarchical society implies possessing control over how others place within that hierarchy.[138] This ideology which triggers the discrimination and racist discourse against the other results in the pool of ambiguity and confusion for homeless immigrants.

The experience of other people living in diaspora, forces Arab immigrants to make a choice between their old and new identity. In contrast to the past meaning of the hyphen, Arab immigrants still prefer to define themselves with the new meaning of the 'hyphen', which emphasizes on their existence in the United States. On the other hand, they are still in search of forming a stable identity. As they can neither disregard their historical and cultural roots nor fully adapt American ways, they feel to choose between the two. The hyphen itself is not adequate to define a unique identity as it contains both Arab and American values but provides a view rather than a direction. In relation to the experience of getting caught between the two identities, Sandra M. Gilbert's lines from her poem titled, *2085*, clarifies this situation:

> It is 2085, you are walking on a dirt road;
> [...] you are my blood-kin, a seventeen-year-old girl [...]
> come from New York to find lost ancestors,
> or have you always been here? [...]
> my words stand in the fields beside you –
> stones, dead trees- the way the land you walk through
> stood behind me, an unknown monument.
> And now the road unfolds and shines ahead

[137] Ajrouch; Jamal. "Assimilating to a White Identity," p. 862.
[138] Ibid, p. 864.

like the history neither of us understands.[139]

As understood from the poem, Gilbert tries to reveal the truth that one cannot erase his/her past and he/she is doomed to follow the traces of the undeniable past much as one has no emotional boundary to the *old* home. In parallel to Gilbert's description of psychological exile, Jemorah, as one of the rootless characters in *Arabian Jazz*, is unable to have any sense of belonging to a place: She thought she'd contracted homesickness from her father that it was passed on like a gene to the child of an immigrant. Any place might look like home: suburban neighbourhoods, apartment buildings, far-flung country houses; the desire quick in her veins. She was lost (299).

Nassir, the cousin of the Ramoud sisters, is a rootless traveler. However, he is one of the strongest characters in *Arabian Jazz*, who is able to digest the hyphen of his identity. Nassir says: "There is nothing unique or magical about the Middle East; it shares xenophobias and violences with all the rest of the world" (329). Nassir's reaction to Jemorah's desire to make a new start in her life and her decision to marry and live in Jordan is clear. While Jemorah thinks she would not be such an 'outsider' in Jordan, Nassir claims that they are all exiles in any place: "To be the first generation in this country (America), with another culture always looming over you, you are the ones who are born homeless, bedouins, not your immigrant parents" (330). Nassir describes it as being torn in two, getting two looks at a world, and having never a perfect fit (330). As a homeless character, he studies in England, and learns about how the historians love to cut the world into East and West, chop, chop, to reassure themselves of their superior isolation, right-thinking, et cetera. [...] That is why, he tells Jemorah that what she hates in this place she will find in other places" (333). Nassir says that people who come to America, the immigrants, they think that this is just another place like home, a thing they will be able to hold and understand" (339). In reality, they suffer from living in a place they do not feel any familiarity to it. Nassir tells Jemorah that "they spring from exiles and refugees, and the place of their origins is swept away" (340), believing that home does not exist for them. According to Jemorah, 'home' is an important since

[139] Sandra M. Gilbert. "2085". The Missouri Review 10.2 (1987), p. 170.

everyone is in the need for a particular land, a location, for anyone to live, to have that land to call home" (339).

Sirine, born in America with Iraqi roots, in *Crescent*, tries to create a familiar sound, image or feeling to her Arab origin. In contrast, Hanif who was forced to leave Iraq, accompanied by political conflicts and chaos, feels the agony of being displaced from his roots and family in his soul. Hanif describes exile as "living in between worlds so they are not really anywhere. He describes this duality as an exile from the self (183). Sirine concludes over the exile as a "project" to be achieved about how to live in the new country and let go of the other (53). Being on exile is a constant state of mind. Exiles are not satisfied with the past or the present since they do not feel quite Middle Eastern and not enough American. Considering this duality, they need to reconstruct their own identities. Rather than pitying upon their state of duality, Abu-Jaber's exile characters feel an obligation to establish a new narrative of an identity that lead them to self-maturity and a better understanding of their "other" halves. Self-discovery becomes inevitable when the complexity comes out. Experiencing 'unhomeliness', both the immigrants and American-born immigrants rove through places where they do not belong. Being on exile is unhealed. Exiles are not satisfied with the past and the present, or the future since they are not quite Middle Eastern and not enough American. That is because, they have to reconstruct their own identities. Rather than living in the agony of the displacement, all exile characters feel an obligation to establish a new narrative of an identity, leading them to self-maturity and developing a better understanding of their "other" selves.

4.3. Caught in Cultural Limbo

Diana Abu-Jaber, like her protagonists in *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2003), also experiences the feeling of being dislocated that constantly pushes her into the psyche of finding a "home" for herself as he states in a recent interview: "My dad moved us around a lot between the United States and the Middle East, and around the United States. I know that I've inherited that some nomadic wanderlust, and also that feeling of missing a homeplace, of trying to find where it is".[140] Abu Jaber's novels, *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent* explore common points related to the formation of the true

[140] Robin E. Field. "A Prophet in Her Own Town," p, 217.

identity. Exile is the most important theme in both novels. Their struggle to find a stable identity refers to the experiences of the immigrant in general. As Said argues, the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever.[141]

In *Arabian Jazz*, mother, Nora, tries to construct a new home for her daughters by telling them their home is America (78), in contrast to the heavy influence of Arab relatives, who consider Jordan as the "real" home for the sisters. Hence, Jemorah and Melvine are torn between their ambiguous roots and their lives in America after their mother's death. Nora's death drags girls into a severe identity crisis which ends in self-alienation as well. Half-Arab, American-born sisters, Melvina and Jemorah, are unable to fit in with their American half. Both sisters deeply feel the burden of the loss of identity and home. The struggle for finding a home, turns sisters into "homeless" characters with traumatic memories. Jemorah and Melvina are in a constant clash with the sense of belonging to a place. Jemorah's identity crisis gives rise to her self-awakening that she caused her to feel a deep desire of a rebirth, the longing to move more fully into her own life" (11). She is in a severe clash with herself, longing for a change in her life that she knew she would have to do something herself to change her life. She was going to quit her job (133). On the other hand, father Matussem constantly questions his decisiveness, wondering whether he was turning away from his origins, away from knowing by staying in America or not (186). Sirine and her lover, Hanif in *Crescent,* struggle to establish a tie with the other half of their hyphenated identity. In essence, Sirine who has no emotional boundary to her Arab homeland, as a woman born and raised up in America, takes a journey into herself after she meets her exile lover.

The relationship between the hyphen and the nation is intermingled in the postcolonial world. According to Aycock, individuals with the hyphen are in a constant struggle in their inner worlds. Because the hyphen is incomplete, there is nowhere to go. He asserts that the hyphen only supports, but it does not connect. In relation to the duality of identity, he argues that living with a hyphen is existing between two cultures, walking upon an eternal bridge with barriers and guards at both ends.[142] However, in the

[141] Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," p. 178.
[142] Wendell Aycock. "Hyphen-nation," p. 43.

literature of Abu-Jaber, this duality nourishes the self of the exile which urges them to construct a new form of identity freed from any strict cultural codes.

4.3.1. Double Consciousness in *Arabian Jazz*

Arab at home, American in the streets.[143]

Arabian Jazz (1993) is the story of an immigrant family, who left their homeland, Jordan, and moved to America. The Ramoud family is described as homeless immigrants whose journey is accompanied by tragedy, in-betweenness and loss. American-born sisters, Jemorah and Melvina, who are in a serious clash with the hyphen of their identity, live with the widowed father of the family, Matussem Ramoud. As they get older, both still suffer from the duality of their identity that is worsened by the early death of their American mother, Nora Ramoud. Abu-Jaber portrays, American-born, half-Arab sisters, Jemorah and Melvine as fighters who are unable to locate themselves. Melvina defences self-reliance as a great standing in one's life, stating that take liberty or death and nothing in between (47). As the elder sister, Jemorah deeply suffers from the failure of describing herself and the meaning of the hyphen like other immigrants who struggles for achieving reconciliation. Abu-Jaber argues that home is only possible in one's mind. Jemorah's trauma of not belonging comes much harsher after her mother's death. Since, mother Nora reminds her daughters that their real home is America, they begin to question their Arab roots after the disappearance of the mother from their lives. Experiencing maternal loss, they find themselves totally excluded from the society they live in. After their mother's death, Jemorah is "swept along the world's currents, swimming in loss and other children are different, at great distances from her" (80). In the words of Said, Jemorah, as an exile, is more prone to recreate a new world, the exile's new world, to overcome her loss.[144] Sisters are also the target of the Aunt Fatima, as well as fighting against mainstream society because of their physical differences. In the novel, it is stated that Melvina uses Vaseline to force her curly blue-black hair down (12) like her father Matussem, whose

[143] Abu-Jaber, *The Language of Baklava*, p. 5.
[144] Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," p. 181.

hair is plastered down with something like shoe wax" (194). Jemorah's difficulties due to her physical appearance during her years at school. She is unapproved by her friends, for having an uncommon name and a darker skin: "The other children taunted Jem because of her strange name, her darker skin (92). Peachy Otts is Jemorah's only friend in the school bus. Within the time, she learns to ignore the others and turn a blind eye to obscene questions, searching for her weakness. She learns how to close her mind, how to disappear in her seat, how to blur the sound of searching voices chanting her name" (92-93). Besides the denial of their American self, Jemorah is not fitted to Arab customs as well that Aunt Fatima describes her as "a wild-American girl, painted and cunning, not appropriate for any of their sons (10). Jemorah, an isolated young woman, turning into thirty, is still unmarried who waited year after year for the desire to marry, to love a man passionately (11). But Jemorah thinks that young men were drawn to her as they found her 'exotic' with her olive colors and inkwell eyes. She states that she feels unrested under their gaze, trapped like an animal (37).

Aunt Fatima represents for the new generation of Arab immigrants who enjoys American culture. Throughout the novel, she harshly criticizes her nieces for being too pale unattractive to draw men and for not wearing a little bit Maybelline (52). Aunt Fatima's list of what she cannot stand about her life almost consists of her total discontent with the physical appearance of her nieces "who are going to send her to the mental hospital with so much worries about who they are going to marry and Melvina's Queen of World attitude - why does she have to dress like that every minute and why does not Jemorah file her fingernails and use cuticle stick?" (110). However, Aunt Fatima is content with the skin color of her nieces who states that girls did not get 'Irish Catholic skin of their mother since she thinks that Irish skin is horrible when it starts aging. Fatima is a pragmatic character, utilizing from her American identity: "She lived among Americans, in places they had built, among their people, but despite this she wanted to keep herself, her family, and a few friends apart from the rest. She wanted what Americans had. It was in appropriate to mingle. Americans had the money, but Arabs, ah! They had the food, the culture, the etiquette, the ways of being and seeing and understanding how life was meant to be lived" (360).

Unlike Aunt Fatima, Portia, as the symbol of the white Anglo-Saxon society, considers Jemorah as an open threat to American values. According to Portia, sisters are going to be definite Arab misfits. Portia's verbal attitude justifies that Arab American sisters are savage and impure. As Majaj states, Jemorah, the half Jordanian, half American protagonist of *Arabian Jazz,* experiences the racial tensions around Arab American identity: "For Portia, this Arab taint (294) is nonetheless recuperable into a framework of white ethnicity: lipstick and hair lightener will help make her more of an American.[145] Sisters do not look like their American mother. They do have darker skins, which make them more Arab as Aunt Fatima says. For instance, Jemorah learns how to disappear in her seat in the school bus at an early age. Portia disgusts from the word, Arab, who considers Matussem is worse than a black man (294). Portia perceives being Arab as an illness to be recovered from, saying to Jemorah, she wants to save whatever of Nora's clean blood is left" (295). Portia, as a symbol of the mainstream culture, is very obsessive with making sisters look like Americans, disregarding their "useless" Arab roots. Due to racial degradation, their identity crisis puts them into a black hole of consciousness.

Aunt Fatima represents for the cultural dilemma caught between the conservative Arab identity and the new culture who immigrated to America with her husband, Zaeed, in the 1960s after her brother, Matussem. For Aunt Fatima, America is a place to escape. As Shakir argues, Jordan is also a place that the Ramoud family want to forget. For Aunt Fatima, it represents dark memories and guilt where she had to bury alive one newborn sister, so that her brother, Matussem would have enough to eat.[146] Fatima is burdened by her dark memories in the old hometown. At the age of sixteen, Fatima is picked up by Israeli soldiers and put in prison for several days with no explanation. When she is released and finds her way home, no one in her family asks about what happened.[147] Family pressure plays a decisive role in the lives of the sisters after their mother passed away. Aunt Fatima has a great influence in the novel with her strong patriarchal narrative that increases the degree of complexity in the lives of sisters

[145] Majaj, "Arab American Literature," p. 9.
[146] Evelyn Shakir. "Arab American Literature," p. 13.
[147] Mattawa Kaldas. *An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction*. University of Arkansas Press, 2004, p. 175.

as highlighted throughout the novel: “Twenty-nine. Thirty this September. That gives the aunts a little less than four months to deploy forces. This is marriage-emergency in their book. If you turn thirty without a contracted male, you’ll be diagnosed as terminal spinster” (9). After their mother’s death, relatives in the old country, constantly reminds sisters about the evilty of men: “avoid men, [...]; you don’t know what they can do to you, what they want to. Each summer, visiting Auntie Nabila or Lutfea or Nejla would take Jem’s face between her hands and examine Jem’s lips to see if she’d been kissed” (9). Aunts in the old town remark that Jemorah is a “good” girl for defending herself against the male attention (10). On the other hand, Aunt Fatima, as the matchmaker in the family, also struggles for preserving the Arab side of the family. However, the newborn Arab American children are totally different from the first and the second generation of Arab immigrants. She says that young Arab men are allured by wild-American girls, not boring-Arab cousins. Fatima told Matussem that this was her curse, retribution for her unspecified “sins” (10). In Aunt Fatima’s life, Pontifical Committee at St. Yusef in Syracuse is a significant gathering place of Arab people in America where they pursue their old traits. Abu-Jaber gives a detailed description of it in the novel. Among their duties they listed: marriage makers and shakers, preserves of Arabic culture and party throwers, immigrant sponsors, and children-police” (52). In short, it is a place for matchmakers who look for good Arab girls and boys to marry. Melvina describes this committee as a place for feeding their virgins to their raging gods of macho domination and chronic dissipation, referring to herself and Jemorah and Arab young women who are expected to marry up with good Arab boys (51). While dealing with their dual identities as individuals, sisters also suffer from the conservative values in the old country, complicating their duality. Arab relatives, constantly making them remind of their Arab identity as the “real” one: “Beautiful babies! You come back to home soon, come back to Old Country, marry the handsome Arab boys and makes for us grandsons!” (77). Unlike Nora, Aunt Fatima and other visiting Arab relatives constantly remind Jemorah and Melvine that they “belong” to Jordan and return there one day.

Nassir is the hybrid, well-educated cousin of Jemorah and Melvina. Despite showing up through the last chapters, he is an essential complementary figure of the

novel. Nassir's ideas open a new window for Jemorah and Melvina, in relation to their chaotic situation. Nassir says that most of the immigrants consider America as a second place like home, a thing they will be able to hold and understand" (339). Unlike sisters, Nassir is portrayed as the most stable character throughout the novel despite his dual identity. He is very successful at digesting the hyphen of his identity, who achieves a better understanding of his duality via education and constant mobility.

Father Matussem is a humble, gracious Arab father whose hair is all black then and curly, like his daughters (76). His American wife, Nora teaches him how to speak a new language, how to handle his new country (188). After his wife's death, he feels isolated, and drumming becomes his life. Music is Matussem's escape (187). Every May, he drives to the local hardware store and brings home lawn decorations of deer, flamingos, and Disney characters the way some people bring home stray animals" (109). He is well aware of his exile as an immigrant family in the United States that they cannot continue their lives as Arabs, or as real Americans. Noras's parents blame Matussem for their daughter's death and cannot stand seeing their grandchildren as it hurt to see much of their daughter mixed up with the body of her *murderer* (85). This situation deepens Matussem's agony in his inner world. Like his sister, Fatima, Matussem also considers America as a place of perfect forgetting (86). Like his daughters, Matussem deeply suffers from not only the complexity of having a dual identity but also the loss of his beloved companion in life. In a conversation with Matussem, Train's opinions about mobility and being rootless, are very effective. He begins to embrace his conflict as Train continues to explain: "[i]f you're the kind that lives on and on in one place, then you're always dreaming about going away. And if you're like me, always going, then you dream about staying put. It's the human curse" (249), and concludes "stay where your heart is, Big Daddy" (250). Matussem lives the fear of getting lost in Jordan, putting him away from going back to his past: "Euclid, lost to the rest of 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" 260). Father Matussem is portrayed as a deep person, considering his placed past and loss when he walks the gravel road (260). He experiences self-doubt in relation to his staying in America, in denial of his roots: "He

was afraid of being swallowed up too, like his relatives, back into that history" (187). Fouad, representing Arab values in *Arabian Jazz* states that American life is like eating clams - cannot digest, for the majority of the Arab immigrant families in the United States (255).

Through the loss, agony, ambiguity and getting caught between the two identities, exile characters struggle for comprehending their complexity, achieving a step of self-maturity at the end. It is true that the space and the loss are complicated enough not to bridge the space with travelling, marriage or a love affair as Jemorah says (321). Unlike Melvina, Jemorah's identity crisis is more intense who works at a job she hates, or tries to be good enough, wanting people to like Arabs (328). However, in her thirties, Jemorah discovers herself, attempting to make a new start in her life. Nassir, who is an influential figure in the lives of the sisters, finds the cure for homesickness in mobility. He is very successful at developing a better understanding of belonging that is going to come with constant mobility and self-exploration. He calls himself "a professional nomad" that Melvina agrees, describing it as a family trait (342). Jemorah's identity conflict also puts her in an effort to comprehend her father's inner world as an exile. She wonders who her father is, in this country without shadows (99). Jemorah questions her father's identity, wondering what language he thought in, and concludes his displacement was a feature of his personality" (98). Jemorah thinks that her father's displacement is the core of his identity which greatly contributed to his self. She describes his father's steady eyes as if they were taking in the whole of the world and all its expanse of loneliness (98).

As exile characters, sisters represent for the new generation of Arab American immigrants who totally differ from their ancestors. Besides the generation gap between the first and the second generation of the immigrant families, Arab American individuals who were born and grown up in the United States, are more capable of adapting themselves to the American society. Out of this duality, Jemorah and Melvine become successful at finding a new path to the creation of their new selves without the pressure of Arab or American values. As a natural requirement of the hybridity, the protagonists innerly experience a self-voyage on the way to the self-maturity rather than being drawn into a perpetual identity crisis. They neither disregard their cultural

heritage brought by their ancestors nor withstand against the American culture they live in. At the end of the novel, the experience of self-voyage turns Jemorah and Melvine sisters into powerful hybrid individuals freeing them from cultural and social oppressions caused by both their family members with Arab roots and the discriminative American society. However, on the way to achieving self-maturity, the duality of identity is a necessity for stimulating them to construct the new self.

4.3.2. Self-Discovery in *Crescent*

> *[…] exile as a project to be achieved about how to live in the new country and let go of the other.*[148]

Abu-Jaber describes *Crescent*, as the embodiment of a cultural project to be accomplished. She states that the novel is not merely about Iraq, it is about politics, it is about exile. In other respects, it is a simple human story about love and fear that can transcend culture and have an immediacy that speaks to a lot of different people.[149] *Crescent* is the story of an American-born woman with Iraqi roots, Sirine who is in search of belonging and of her roots in the "other" home.

Sirine, American-born young woman, Iraqi-American chef, lives with her uncle's calm library of a house nearly all her life who isolates herself from thoughtful walks or relationships for the fear of falling into love. Her father and uncle are from Iraq, and the mother is from Santa Barbara, California, no brothers or sisters. Sirine has a white and pale skin with her wild blond head of hair, and her sea-green eyes" (20). At a young age, Sirine loses her parents, who are Red Cross relief workers, when she is nine years old, and she subsequently lives with her uncle. Despite living with her Iraqi immigrant uncle, Sirine feels like she does not know anything about her Iraqi heritage. As Majaj states, Sirine is distanced from her Arab identity and in search of a sense of meaning. Viewed as simply white because of her skin color, she experiences a constant sense of dislocation and homelessness. The novel charts her search for a sense of

[148] Abu-Jaber, *Crescent*, p. 53.
[149] Field, "A Prophet in Her Own Town," p. 216.

homecoming to the complexity of her selfhood, a search played out through her relationship with an Iraqi exile in Majaj's words. Unable to establish a tie with her real home, Iraq, Sirine describes herself as a woman who is always in search of a home: "even though I live here, I hate this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow, concluding that her home is "work" (132). Sirine lets herself stray past the stage of sleep and even past the stage of remembering, and she wanders into the stage of soul-searching" (39). Hanif, the Iraqi exile lover of Sirine, plays a key role in the self-awakening of Sirine, reminding the echo of love for her Arab roots.

Despite being seemingly a love story, Sirine takes a self-voyage, exploring her Arab roots after she falls in love with an Iraqi exile, Hanif who teaches linguistics at UCLA. In other words, Hanif opens a window for Sirine which leads her into a self-discovery. Hanif, Sirine's lover, is a university professor who teaches Islamic history and Arabic literature. Hanif is an exile. As an exile, he develops a better understanding of culture than Sirine, as well as teaching about life, art, faith and love. Hanif answers Sirine's questions about Islam – she is curious, not having been raised with formal religion" When Han talks to Sirine in Arabic, she is mesmerized by the beautiful sounds of the language which she called "poem" or "more like love in Arabic" (157). Hanif tells Sirine he sees "an Arab woman in her – an aristocrat, ancient royalty" (161), after giving the silk scarf of his sister. He triggers Sirine's curiosity to Arabness who serves as helper to complete Sirine's self-awakening, learn more and embracing her roots.

Cafés and restaurants hold a significant part in the fiction of Abu-Jaber. It brings people together to communicate and share memories, creating a convenient environment for the nostalgia. In Shalal-Esa's words, Abu-Jaber knows that cafés create their own cultural environment, their own micro cultures. And, in Sirine's life, cooking represents for the combination of new and old traditions. By using her Arab immigrant father's old recipes, Sirine establishes a tie with her forgotten past and her other identity. In this sense, Nadia's Café is a symbolic, runaway place of immigrant students and people, creating its own unique atmosphere. It is located in the middle of an Iranian neighborhood, set in an old converted house (65). To Sirine, café is much more than a working place or a home where she makes observations about Arab people as well. Cooking is a form of remembering her past for Sirine who learned about food from her

parents. Even though her mother was American, her father always said his wife thought about food like an Arab" (56). Sirine learns how to cook professionally working as a line cook and then a sous chef in the kitchens of French, Italian, and "Californian" restaurants (22). After she moves to Nadia's Café, she goes through her parents' old recipes and begins cooking the favorite – but almost forgotten – dishes of her childhood. She feels as if she were returning to her parents' tiny kitchen and her earliest memories" (22). Sirine defines her identity with cooking. She cooks to remember her past. In particular, "the back kitchen is Sirine's retreat her favorite place to sit at a table chopping carrots and thinking her thoughts where she can look out the window at the back courtyard and feel like she is child again, working at her mother's table. Mondays are for baklava, which she learned to make by watching her parents" (65). Sirine remarks that she learned how her parents loved each other when they were making baklava together (66). According to Sirine, like other Arab foods, baklava is the most important one (66), because it cheers the (Arab) students up as they feel themselves at home in Nadia's Café for a moment. The Arabs feel the lack of Americans' intimacy who "do not have time or the space in their lives for the sort of friendship" (22). And for the Arab students, the café turns into a little flavor of home. They love Sirine's food since the flavors remind them of their homes" (20).

Abu-Jaber portrays Arab immigrants as lost, and emotional people, who suffer from being exile. Around the café, there are the same groups of students from the big university up the street, always so lonely, the sadness like blue hollows in their throats, blue motes for their wives and children back home, or for the American women they have not met" (19). Mireille warns Sirine about Arab men, coming to the café, who visibly dislikes them and their views: "All these guys really want is to get us back into veils, making babies, and I don't know what, nursing goats or something. You watch out, I'm telling you" (43). Mireille describes Arab men as "half-animals and half-something else" (43). She is the symbol for echoing the long-established negative stereotypes about the Arab identity. Unlike Mireille, Um-Nadia thinks that the portrayal of the Arab character positively changed within the time. She asserts that Arabs do not believe in those old-time ways anymore. The new Arab identity represents for an advanced civilization (342). Um-Nadia has a significant impact upon Sirine's

experience of being exile and how people react to it. She knows that the loneliness of the Arab is a terrible thing; it is all-consuming. She talks to Sirine that Arab men come to the café because they make something like a home in their new country, America which helps most of them stay, some not (94). In the café, Sirine enjoys the "comforting and delightful and deeply familiar sounds - the immigrants' special language of longing and nostalgia" (124). Abu-Jaber, through the observation of Sirine, portrayals remarkably positive image of Arab students in denial of the former stereotypical description of the Arab people. At Nadia's Café, Sirine thinks of words like "terrorist" while gazing at many exchange students and immigrants from the Middle East" (22). But her gaze runs over the faces and all that come back to her are words like *lonely*, and *young*" (22). Arab people at Nadia's Café, are more likely to tell their stories about how painful it is to be an immigrant (22). With respect to being an immigrant, Hanif says to Sirine that immigrants are always a bit sad right away from the start anyways. According to him, leaving one's hometown is like leaving a part of your identity. He concludes that there are all kinds of reasons why, but the big one is that you cannot go back" (142). He gives an example to clarify his situation that his family cannot go back to Iraq since it does not exist anymore. He states that Iraq is a new, scary place due to its political conflict. "When your old house doesn't exist anymore, that makes things sadder in general" (142), Hanif concludes about his ideas of home. For Hanif, Nadia's Café is the place where he could cherish his past and get rid of his exile. His description of the kitchen as a place where his mother, aunts and the neighbours were always telling stories deepens the meaning of the kitchen for Sirine more than before (67-68). Being in the kitchen reminds Hanif of good memories with his family and his old life in Iraq. In Sirine's kitchen, he achieves to attach himself to a solid ground, saving him from drifting in loss. Iraq has an important place for Hanif, where he left behind his memories, family and identity. It is also the place where he is devastated by. Hanif experiences the painful times of his country when it was under Saddam's power – poverty, fear and dirt reigned. He talks to Sirine about the nights how impossible to sleep when the sky flashed with bombs along with his nightmares of flying in pieces through air as he described (329). Iraq is a magnificent place, but it is also the place where one could hear gunfire and soldiers in the street, never feeling entirely safe,

always wanting to run far away (82). When Sirine talks to her uncle about Hanif's complicated nature, her uncle explains her that it is because "he is an exile – they are all messed up inside" (53). Hanif accepts that the fact of exile is bigger than everything else in his life. Leaving his country is like a part of his body was torn away (182). He describes exile as "a dim, gray room, full of sounds and shadows, but there is nothing real or actual inside of it (182). Hanif says that he lived in America with a gang of other immigrant friends – all of them half-crazy with missing home, their parents, their language, their food (347). For Hanif, Sirine is a great hope to get rid of his own exile. He sees Sirine as the opposite of exile and his key to being alive" (158). Sirine does not believe in the concept of God who does not belong to any of the identities she is supposed to cling onto. Hanif does not believe, either. They are both on exile, in search of their selves as only individuals.

For the exile characters who only cherish their origins and neglect the mainstream culture they live in, preserving their ethnic identity is a tiring experience as Abdelrahman remarks. Abdelrahman knows that he might be free, but he is still an Arab. He states that "no one ever wants to be the Arab – it is too old and too tragic and too mysterious and too exasperating and too lonely for anyone but an actual Arab to put up with for very long" (54). Sirine's uncle comments upon this duality that "it is the Arab disease. According to him, this experience feels like the C.I.A. is following them around (130). On the other hand, media is a very defining factor in the lives of the Arab immigrants. A well-educated Arab, Aziz says that Americans are prone to think that Arabs are potential "terrorists". As touched upon in the media chapter, the negative stereotypes and prejudices against the Arab identity undermine the practice of living together. Like many others, they are uncomfortable with the unpleasant perception of the Arab identity by American society they live in. Another significant observation is made by Jenoob who says that American media also negatively portrays the Arab image on the TV, in the movies or cartoons where they are shooting someone, bombing someone, or kidnapping someone (222). As Jenoob concludes, the Arab identity does not only represent those people who make their choices at the extreme. This perception of the Arab identity contributes to the subordination of the self while deepening the gap between the mainstream society and the other.

Unlike Jemorah and Melvine sisters, in *Arabian Jazz*, Sirine does not primarily suffer from racial degradation, because she is very "white" as much as her American mother. The discovery of her Arab identity stands for an emotional search of belonging. Sirine is fond of her Arab roots who says that she is "not really all-American" (76). However, she also feels guilty that she cannot speak Arabic, despite growing up around Arabic conversations and she feels the presence of Arabic somewhere behind her mind, like a ghost language - crisp, clear, and ocean-blank (131). Although she could only speak only a few words of Arabic, she remarks that the sound of the language soothes her. People react with astonishment with Sirine's nationality when she says she is half-Arab (231). In this sense, she becomes very successful at developing a different argument about her duality that she may have somehow inherited her mother on the outside and her father on the inside (231). Sirine, as a symbol for the cross-cultural protagonist in the novel, turns into a very powerful entity who is nourished with her hybrid identity inherited by her parents.

V. CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of the colonial rule, ethnic literature has been a very ascendant tool for cross-cultural countries. As Homi Bhabha indicates, the jargon of our times has changed since the collapse of the Colonialism, creating *postmodernity, postcoloniality, postfeminism,* and replacing the former ones. Regarding the colonial powers, Galtung states that, like other civilizations, they have much to be proud of in art, science, technology, and social constructions based on rules rather than rulers, with liberty from popes and emperors and more democracy. But they have disproportionately much to be ashamed of in their relations toward the unchosen Others.[150] Enhancing the formation of new identities via ethnic writing, the Postcolonial theory turns into a very influential tool of the "other" which revolts against the self. Abu-Jaber, in parallel to what Said argues, aims to evaluate the re-shaping of individual identities, rather than keeping them on the margin of the mainstream culture. Her portrayal of protagonists as individuals who have been suffering from a constant identity crisis and their strong desire for finding a safe home, are undeniable components of her writing style. Her argument is inclined to how they can achieve to construct a stable identity, by digesting the strict archetypes of the oppressive society they live in.

The civil rights movement and multiculturalism ethos emerged in the 1960s and 1970s that stimulated Arab Americans to be redefined as discussed in the related chapter. Some socialists have termed this period as an outcome of the ethnic revival. The politicization of ethnicity enabled immigrant groups with Syrian or Lebanese descent to be identified as Arab Americans.[151] The 1960s that marked a significant period introduced words like ethnicity, other, exile, hyphen and hybrid identity to be used. The *Orient*, reinterpreted by Edward W. Said, in the late 1960s, has paved the way for the emergence of Postcolonialism as a significant intellectual discourse in literary studies as well. The theory has intensely dealt with the issues of identity – the "self" and the "other" - and reformation of national identities besides revitalizing of history, language and domination in the colonial experience. In relation to his aim of writing *Orientalism,* Said states that his project is to describe a particular system of ideas, not

[150] Johan Galtung. "The Emerging of European Supernationalism," p. 165.
[151] Randa A. Kayyali. *The New Americans: The Arab Americans*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006, p. 61.

by means to displace the system with a new one.[152] Said also seeks answers to these questions: How does a hyphenated writer represent other cultures? What is *another culture*? Is it the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion or civilization)? Said concludes that a hyphenated writer must be universal and free from any political or literary constraints. As the other significant writer of the postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha argues that the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with *newness* that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; *it renews the past*, refiguring it as a contingent "in-between" space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The "past-present" becomes part of necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.[153]

The roots of Arab-American literature begin with the Pen League or *al-Rabita al-qalamiyya* established by Ameen Rihani in 1920. Rihani, a Lebanese American, the precursor of the *mahjar*[154] literary movement, paves the way to the creation of a new study field. As the first generation of *mahjar* Arab-American poets and writers, they wrote about the psyche of the exile, cultural dilemma and embracing the duality of identity. The 1940s marked the dissolution of the Pen League since many members of the league passed away. The 1990s ran into the transition period when the hybridity broke out with the mixture of two identities through literature. The postcolonial literature and the 1970s marked for a literary transformation from the strict Western canon to the transnational literature as a result of globalization. From that time, this transformation has paved a wide horizon of literary perspective across the globe. Questions like what it means to Arabs to be an American, whether Arabs suffer from exile or not, and whether immigrants are successful at embracing their duality are still being debated today in the context of the Postcolonial theory. It is certain that exile leads to self-discovery. All exiles are homesick for an imaginary concept of home which stemmed from the lack of belonging and meaning. Therefore, studying the postcolonialism forms a creative invention into existence in Homi K. Bhabha's

[152] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 325.
[153] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 164.
[154] *ar*., al-mahjar; literature of the exile, Arab American literature; *tr*., sürgün edebiyatı, göç (mehcer) edebiyatı.

understanding on the interpretation of the post. Bhabha justifies that there is a return to the performance of identity as iteration, the recreation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration.[155] So, in the structure of a postcolonial world, the human condition is no longer possible to be described by traditional identity markers like nationality, origin, settlement, dwelling, roots, birthplace or bloodlines.[156] Today, multiculturalism is described as a "cultural mosaic" rather than serving as a melting pot.

On the effective role of the language, ethnic literature aims to eradicate the negative stereotypes about the "other" ingrained in the dominant culture. The hyphen, rather than labeling the immigrant as the other as it is in the past, it is now used to indicate that there exists a second identity plus to American in the postcolonial world: Arab. However, the paradox of identity formation is still going on. Diana Abu-Jaber argues that ethnic literature helps to dislocate negative stereotypes rather than being categorized as the third world literature. As a multicultural writer, she develops a very pragmatic approach for the reinvention of the identity in the new world which is multilayered and composed of many cultural strands. She represents the Arab identity and culture as being complex, but also emotional, demonstrative and gracious. In *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber explicitly discusses the complexity of identity formation, the meaning of the hyphen, the cultural dilemma, the devastated inner world of the exile and the story of them to achieve emotional maturity. Abu-Jaber's description of in-betweenness is inclined to the idiom of being in the purgatory. Characters are in a constant search for "belonging" besides dealing with the meaning of the hyphen. In *Arabian Jazz*, American mother Nora, paves the way for the self-exploration, who advises her daughters to be bold enough to find their selves. In this context, mother figure represents for the struggle for attaining a real self. The dream is also the justification of what Abu-Jaber conveys her message through her protagonists to stimulate exploring the self, rather than making a preference between Arab or American identity. Thus, the best appropriate way to seek an answer to the complexity of identity in the postcolonial world is the challenging argumentation from Abu-Jaber's

[155] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 165.
[156] Moslund, *Migration Literature and Hybridity*, p.2.

food memoir, *The Language of Baklava*, in which she criticizes why there must be only one home.[157] In that sense, having a complete identity requires a long voyage into the psyche of the exile.

The flourishing of the *Mahjar* literature is still hard to categorize in the academia today. It is unique and free from any literary standards. It is definite that there are many invaluable ethnic writings, which have not been published or discovered yet. What is known today, *al-Mahjar* or immigrant writers and poets, have contributed to the creation of a such literary genre in the United States and the study of Oriental Studies across the globe. In relation to the existence of this new genre of literature, Rushdie indicates that a new novel is emerging, a post-colonial novel, a decentred, transnational, inter-lingual, cross-cultural novel.[158] In this context, the aim of the hyphenated writer is not to otherize the Orient that is confined in the periphery, but to construct bridges between dual identities. Diana Abu-Jaber, as a hyphenated American writer with Jordanian roots, concludes that reinventing a new identity and the search for home seem to require travel and self-exploration. It is transnational. It is still evolving.

[157] Abu-Jaber, *The Language of Baklava*, p. 328.
[158] Salman Rushdie. *Step Across This Line*. London: Vintage, 2003, p. 57.

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