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**ARAB MOTHERS AND THEIR AMERICAN DAUGHTERS: READING
SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ'S "THE INHERITANCE OF EXILE" IN THE
LIGHT OF EDWARD SAID'S THOUGHTS ON EXILE**

Sevil SOYLUKAN

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

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	Tezin Adı	Türkçe Adı : Arap Anneler ve Onların Amerikalı Kızları: Susan Muaddi Darraj'ın "The Inheritance of Exile" adlı eserinin Edward Said'in Sürgün Üzerine Düşünceleri Işığında Okunması

ÖZET

Bu tez, Susan Muaddi Darraj'ın *The Inheritance of Exile* adlı eserindeki Arap kadınlarının ve onların Amerikalı kızlarının yaşadığı sürgünlük tecrübeleri (exilic experiences) ve sürgün olmanın sonuçlarını Edward Said'in sürgün, ev ve yersizlik kavramları ışığında analiz eder. Said'e göre sürgün, tecrübe edilmesi korkunç bir şeydir ve yabancılaşma, özlem, depresyon, duygusal bozukluklar ve ait olamama, sürgün olmanın getirdiği süregelen problemlerdir. 'Ev konseptinin sorgulanması' ve 'ait olamama' kavramları Arap Amerikan edebiyatının ana temalarıdır ve bu kavramlar, kitaptaki kadın karakterlerinin deneyimleriyle tanımlanır ve geliştirilir. Darraj'ın kadınları için ev kelimesi, genel bir tanımı olmadığı için, farklı anlamlar içerir ve farklı duygular ifade ederken, yersizlik kelimesi de kaybolma hissini açığa çıkarır. Sonuç olarak, Edward Said'in sürgün kavramı ve sürgünlük deneyiminin sonuçları, Susan Muaddi Darraj *The Inheritance of Exile* eserindeki kadın karakterlerinin yaşadığı sorun ve duygularla örtüşmektedir.



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SUMMARY

This thesis analyzes, the exilic experiences and its consequences of Arab women and their American daughters in Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile* in the light of Edward Said's notion of exile, home and displacement. Said defines the word exile as terrible to experience and for Said; alienation, nostalgia, depression, emotional breakdowns and unbelonging are the ongoing problems of being an exile. Questioning of home and unbelonging are the major themes of Arab American literature and these concepts are defined and developed through the experiences of the women characters in the book. For Darraj's women, the word home refers to different places and conveys different feelings as there is no general definition of it , whereas, the word displacement reveals the feeling of being lost. To sum up, Edward Said's notion of exile and the consequences of having exilic experience coincides with the problems and emotions experienced by the female characters of Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile*.

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Introduction

Immigration is always a big challenge for the people who have to or willingly immigrate to another country. Immigrants not only stay away from their countries and families but also leave their cultures, traditions, and languages behind. On arriving at the new land, they have to learn how to cope with the new physical environment, language, culture, and traditions and they live in isolation till they find a job and start making friends. Discrimination, economic hardship, and prejudice are already problems they may face during the migration experience.

The pull and push factors are almost the same for the immigrants in every part of the world. While the availability of the jobs with better pay, better health services, and education, freedom, and democracy can be thought as pull factors; poverty, lack of job opportunities, lack of education and health services can be accepted as push factors. Moreover, the USA, with its economic opportunity, political consistency, and better living standards, attracts the attention of the Arab immigrants to this country.

Arabs have migrated to the US in three different periods: 1880-1945; 1945-1967; and 1967-the present. Diversity of Arab immigration to the States has contributed to the Arab American literature positively. The multi-generations of Arab American authors have gone from strength to strength with their breadth and variety of artworks, and they have succeeded to make their voice heard both in the United States and Europe. Their works are translated into different languages, and the number of their readership is increasing day by day.

Arab American literature has different phases, and each phase has its uniqueness. For instance; The early Arab immigrant authors intention is to show ways to keeping Arab identity in the new land, second-generation Arab American authors who have witnessed important events such as 1967 war, 1973 war, and the Gulf war in 1990 and faced with many issues of racism, hatred, and discrimination in the US, has pointed out the political issues and written about the reflection of these issues on the Arab community in the States.

Among the second-generation Arab American authors, there is Susan Muaddi Darraj whose works are awarded by relevant American literary communities. Besides, she is a feminist, and her essays on Arab feminism have appeared in many anthologies. Her works are unique in terms of reflecting the psychological and social situations of the Arab exiles in the States. Her characters are the ones who are psychologically exiled, displaced by leaving their homes and coming to the United States hoping for a better life and they believe that they will come back to their homeland one day, and they become hybrid in identity and character. She writes about everyday life and points out the issues Arab exiles suffer. In this study, one of her prominent work *The Inheritance of Exile* is going to be analyzed by the light of Edward Said's thoughts on exile. Edward Said is specially chosen for analyzing the characters in Darraj's work since he was also an Arab American exile, and he suffered from displacement and unbelonging through his life. Said (2001) states that exiles are in a "perilous territory of not-belonging" (177) and in many works of Arab American literature exile is the central theme, the characters are shown to be somewhat traumatized by various events which are occurred during the time of getting accustomed to life in the States.

It is believed that Said's notion of exile and exilic experience will shed light on the examination of the work of Susan Muaddi Darraj since he is an exile and has works written on being exile and displacement. The women characters in *The Inheritance of Exile* tell the readers what the exilic experience is via their attitudes, thoughts, and feelings towards a new home, new life. The author also enlarges the issues of assimilation, and where one's 'home' is—which Said mainly discusses in his works.

Said's thoughts on exile are crucial to this study for loading different meanings to home and cultural displacement. Since he speaks from an exile's point-of-view, readers gain a sense of knowledge about how and why people leave their home country behind and go on to establish a new 'home' in a foreign country. By using Said's thoughts on exile throughout this thesis, how exile is portrayed in a work of Arab American literature, how the female characters in the book struggle to understand

where 'home' is and how they experience the concept of displacement is going to be explained in detail.

In this thesis, the term 'exile' refers to a person who has left their homeland and family behind for various political, social, or economic reasons. In this discussion of the exilic experience, the term is used to refer to anyone who is forced to or has chosen to leave his or her country behind to establish a new "home" in a foreign country.

In the first chapter, brief information about the Arab immigration waves to the States and the effects of these migration waves on Arab American literature will be explained, and the effects of 9/11 attacks on Arabs and Arab American literature will be given in detail. Then, the life of an Arab American writer Susan Muaddi Darraj and her contribution to the Arab and Arab American literature will be explained in the second part of this chapter.

In the second chapter, first of all, the life of Edward Said will be studied with the help of his autobiography *Out of Place*. His exilic experiences throughout his life have shaped his views on exile, and those views of him are one of the essential factors in shaping this study. The second part of the chapter is entirely dedicated to his thoughts on exile. This part consists of Said's thoughts on exile and his ideas of having an exilic experience. The quotations of this part are mostly taken from his work *The Reflections on Exile*. His thoughts on being an exile and exilic experience will highlight both the physical and psychological condition of exile women characters in *The Inheritance of Exile*.

The third chapter serves general information about the situation of the Arabs in the United States, especially before and after 9/11 attacks, and it serves a piece of detailed information on stereotypes of Arab American women. In the first part, the elements shaping the Arab family will be given, while the second part will discuss the gender roles in the Arab families.

The last chapter will discuss the exilic experiences and its consequences of

Arab women and their American daughters in Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile* in the light of Edward Said's notion of exile, home and displacement. The concept of home and displacement will be deeply analyzed in terms of Arab mothers and their American daughters in the light of Said's ideas on exile and displacement.



CHAPTER ONE - THE HISTORY OF ARAB IMMIGRATION TO THE STATES AND ITS IMPACTS ON ARAB AMERICAN LITERATURE

The definition of Arab American literature can be found in several authors work. Steven Salaita considers writers' ethnic origin as irrelevant. In his article, *Vision: Arab-American Literary Criticism* (2000), he claims that if a writer does not contribute to the Arab- American community by producing literary works, the works of this writer cannot be evaluated and studied under the name of Arab American literature. He also points out to a situation where a writer without Arab roots but with significant contributions to the Arab community. He concludes that anyone who has Arab or non-Arab descent who contributes to the Arab American community through literature is accepted as an Arab American writer.

Writing in Arabic is not a proper way to speak for the Arab American field because to write in Arabic limits itself for the Arab readers only; thus, it serves not for Arab Americans. Salaita says,

“Most Arab Americans write in English; this is perhaps the most distinguishing feature between Arab and Arab-American authors. The first mistake Arab- American writers often make is trying to write back towards a pure Arab heritage” (2014:2).

In his book, *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide* , Steven Salaita gives the commonly accepted definition of Arab American literature as “Arab American literature consists of creative work produced by American authors of Arab origin and that participates, in a conscious way or through its critical reception, in a category that has come to be known as Arab American literature” (2011:4) , however he thinks that this definition does not cover the term aptly. To him, Arab American literature includes other writers, who do not have an Arab origin, to make the field diverse and heterogeneous. In other words, Arab American literature should be a heterogonous literary tradition that includes works both Americans of Arab descent

and Americans of non- Arab descent who participate in the development of the field.

In her article, *Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments*, Lisa Suhair Majaj thinks that there is no single definition to describe Arab American literature as there are two opinions on Arab American identity and Arab American literature also. One opinion she states that Arab identity is relocated to Arab-American identity and the Arab culture, language, and sensibilities are preserved in Arab-American identity. In this view, she says, "Arab-American literature is in essence Arabic writing in English" (2008:6). The other opinion she points out is that Arab American identity developing from U.S. land, is characteristically an American identity that is linked to the US ethnicity under the name of "multicultural," and Arab-American literature reflects this multicultural identity.

These two very different definitions of Arab American literature arouse the debates on the theme of the works under the name of Arab American literature. While some scholars claim that Arab-American literature must have Arab identified topics, others believe that limited ethnic topics will weaken the literature. For Darraj what makes Arab-American literature different from other ethnic works of literature is "its close engagement with political events overseas," and she adds "it might be argued that Arab-American identity is a transnational rather a hyphenated identity" (2008:7). Lisa Suhahir Majaj states that Arab American literature is not a production of a specific group of writers. She says it multinational literature. According to her, Arab American literature is exceeding the national borders to deepen its roots in the world's well-known multicultural literary tenets because of its close interest in the political events of the Arab world.

1.1. The Arab American Literature Before and After 9/11

Throughout history, Arab Americans, especially the ones from Palestine, have been suffered a lot because of the decisions their government made after the 1948 war. Instead of helping its citizens to establish a new life in Palestine, it stood against them

and let them feel exiled and displaced from their homes. The state of being exile did not affect them only physically, leaving the homes; families and memories behind made them feel emotionally exiled, too.

Arab immigration to the US is characteristically divided into three waves: the first one is between 1885 and 1945, the second wave is from 1945 to 1967, and the third from 1967 to the present. The first wave of Arab immigrants consisted mainly of Lebanese Christians who rejected their Arab identity and preserved their cultural and social links to their home country while seeking assimilation in the US and they looked for their rights to be classified as white citizens (Naber,2006; Saliba,1999). The second and third waves of Arab immigrants, on the contrary, were less eager to assimilate to the new home since, they have included mainly Muslims and Arabs with strong Arab national identities (Saliba,1999: 311-12). After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the growing political tensions between the US and the Arab world aroused a "rising ethno-political consciousness" among the Arab-American community, and this situation, according to Nadine Naber, was "the beginning of [this community's] social, political and cultural marginalization" (2006:3).

For Ludescher, the first Arab American wave of immigrants, as well as the first phase of Arab American literature, started with the immigrants from Greater Syria (Iraq- Lebanon- Jordan- Palestine- Syria- Turkey) because of the political situation at that time (2006: 93). When Arabs first arrived at the States, they were willing to assimilate to the American way of life and forget their identity as Arabs to find appropriate jobs and live as Americans with all rights the government gave to its citizens (2006: 93). According to Read, "Most of these early arrivals were working-class émigrés from Greater Syria seeking better economic opportunities for their families" (2003: 210). The first wave of immigrants came to the States with the idea of living in the States temporarily; their aim was to work for two or three years in order to collect some prosperity and then to return to their homeland where they would be accepted as wealthy with the money earned in The States and gain some prestige (Hitti,1923; Naff,1985, 1994; Suleiman,1994, 1999). These early immigrants were settled in colonies in cities like New York and Boston with the dream of returning

home one day.

The history of Arab American writing starts with the first immigration wave of Arabs to the States. Early Arab American writers such as Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran, and Mikhail Naimy used different medias such as journals and newspapers to make their voices heard by both Arab and American society. The first writers' group the Mahjar, which means 'immigrants' consisted of some Arab American writers from the first wave. According to Hassan and Newman, "Between 1890 and 1940, Arab immigrants published numerous Arabic language newspapers in the US, the first of which was launched in 1892" (2006: 6). They aimed to inform the Arab community about how to preserve Arab identity in the American-born generation and deal with the hardships of the new land. 'Al Mahjar' group turned to the literary organization Al Rabita al Qalamaiyya (the Pen League) by Kahlil Gibran, Ameen Rihani, and others by 1920s (Younis, 1995).

These authors, who wrote in Arabic as well as in English, were aware of the necessity of building a bridge between the East (their culture) and the West (American culture) to prevent the problems of the culture gap. Specific themes appeared in the works of authors who belong to the Pen League. Among these themes are the need to get rid of the peddler lifestyle; admiration for American life and also the hatred of American materialism; a longing for change in the Arab world; concern about political issues of the homeland. Therefore; their works had essential impacts on Arab American literature. In addition to his Arabic works, Ameen Rihani wrote an English translation of *The Quatrains of Abu'l-Ala*, (1903); a poetry collection called *Myrtle and Myrrh* (1905); a novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911); a collection of political essays, *The Descent of Bolshevism* (1920); a collection of essays, *The Path of Vision* (1921); a collection of mystical titled *A Chant of Mystics* (1921). Gibran published seven works in English: *The Madman* (1918); *The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems* (1920); *The Prophet* (1923); *Sand and Foam* (1926); *Jesus the Son of Man* (1928); *The Earth Gods* (1931); and *The Wanderer* (1932). Mikhail Naimy, another Mahjar writer who produced work in English, wrote the religious stories *The Book of Mirdad* (1948) and also he translated three Arabic works into English: *Kahlil Gibran: A Biography*

(1950); *Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul* (1952); and a collection of his Russian-inspired short stories, *Till We Meet* (1957).

With the death of some of the Pen League's members and the return of others to the Arab world, the Pen League broke up by 1940, and till the 1970s they produced only a few literary works characterized as Arab-American. Despite reaching a big success, works such as Solom Rizk's *Syrian Yankee* (1943) and Vance Bourjaily's *Confessions of a Spent Youth* (1960), Lisa Suheir Majaj points out that they still "revealed the pressure on [Arab-American] authors to ignore or distance themselves from their Arab identity" (2005:27). Even though these writers who were the founders of 'the Mahjar' group and 'the Pen League' later had a significant effect on the developing of Arab American literature, they were, unfortunately, neglected by Western writers and critics for being not enough to be included in the American mainstream literary tradition.

The second stage of Arab American literature started after World War I with the second wave of Arab immigration to the United States. World War I was a turning point in the history of Arab American society due to the fact that most Arab American immigrants viewed themselves as temporary settlers. The critic Michael Suleiman defines these people as the ones who were in, but not part of American society (1999:4). Before they arrived in the States, they planned to save money and go back to their homeland. In the end, they saved their money, lived in row houses, gathered often, encouraged intermarriage, go into an interaction with relatives and people from the same town and religious group, and kept their distance from Americans. The role of Arab American women played in the new country, and the kind of work appropriate for them was a concern for the period (Suleiman, 1999).

During this period, many political changes have taken place in the world due to World War I and its effects. The date was a boiling point for both the history of the United States in general and the history of the Arab Americans in particular. After World War I, for Arab Americans, there was a falling-out of communications they had with their homelands and the community had to use their resources since the relatives in the homeland could not support them physically and emotionally, so, they started to

feel the obligation of being adapting themselves to the American community. With the strict immigration quotas in the 1920s, there was an increase in the community's sense of isolation, and this situation encouraged a feeling of communal unity and solidarity. Many Arabs took part in the US. Army in World War I, and they developed a patriotic attitude to America and made them feel that they were now part of the American community. Only after World War I, notes Suleiman in *Arab-Americans And the Political Process*, "the Arabs in the United States become truly an Arab-American community" (1994:43). As a result, the reflection of the process of Arab American assimilation was seen in the works like *Mt. Lebanon to Vermont* written by George Haddad in 1916 which tells an immigrant story and his love for his adopted country, and *The Rainbow Ends* written in 1942 by Ashad Hawie that tells Ashad's experience in American Expeditionary Forces in World War I.

In the face of their eagerness on becoming Americans, Arab Americans soon found that there would be obstacles on the road to assimilation. According to the Naturalization Act of 1790, citizenship was only for "free white persons", so, they were accepted as racially inferior, and they were not allowed to be American citizens. In 1914, Lebanese immigrant George Dow's demand for getting American citizenship was denied on the basis that he was Asian and did not belong to the white race. The Syrian community resolved the problem by declaring that they were Arabs and, consequently, they were the members of the Caucasian race (Suleiman, 1999: 6-7). Though George Dow was finally admitted to citizenship, the problem of race was not solved completely. The Arab American communities' insistence on proving their racial status as white made them be through a series of court cases between 1909 and 1915 and again during the 1940s. During the course, as Lisa Suhair Majaj states in her essay *Arab-Americans and the Meaning of Race*, a connection was made between "western European, Christian identity and whiteness" and "non-European, non-Christian and non- white identity" (2000:323). According to Majaj, these obstacles like racism against non-European, and the rejection of non-whites for the citizenship that prevented early Arab Americans from assimilating themselves to American culture. To be accepted as a part of the American society, Arab Americans tried to "stress the

aspects of their culture that were acceptable to Americans and to downplay those aspects of their culture that were alien to Americans" (2000: 328).

When the second generation of Arab Americans became adults, most of them did not speak Arabic, and many had only very little knowledge of their Arab heritage. Evelyn Shakir, a well-known critic of the second generation of Arab American writers, compares the writers of the first and second generation and concludes that; the first generation of Arab American writers did not hide their ethnicity, their foreignness and they produced more; on the other hand, their American born children dressed and behaved like 'regular Americans' and hoped to be accepted as one of them; thus they were busy with assimilating themselves instead producing a work of art (1993–1994). Arab American writers during that period did not handle ethnicity or identity issues, as their primary interest was assimilation within American society so that they could gain acceptance by Americans and have a place in the world of American literature. Vance Bourjaily, Eugene Paul Nassar and William Peter Blatty, are major Arab American writers of this period. These writers did not identify themselves as Arab Americans and they sought to be a part of the circle of mainstream American literature. Vance Bourjaily wrote *The End of My Life* (1947) and *Confessions of a Spent Youth* (1960); Eugene Paul Nassar's *Wind of the Land* (1979); and William Peter Blatty's works *Which Way to Mecca, Jack?* (1960) also, *I'll Tell Them I Remember You* (1973) are the popular books of these writers.

With the third wave of Arab immigration to the States, Arab American literature has a new phase in terms of developing a new Arab American literary tradition. The third wave of immigration started in 1967 to the present. There were important events that directed life and views of Arab Americans towards the United States and at the same time, Arab American literature. Political events after 1967 war made Arab Americans recognize their identity problem and aroused the awareness of their heritage. The Arab-Israeli conflict that engendered hatred toward Israel and the United States was the most momentous event in the Arab world at that time. This situation led to the Arab Americans embraced their own culture and their origin as Arabs. Another event during this period was 1972 Arab oil embargo that caused a war

between Egypt and Israel in 1973. This event was important since America changed its foreign policy in the Middle East. All these events grew the tension between the United States and the Arab world; therefore, the Arab society in The States came face to face with problems like hatred, prejudice, and discrimination. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad tells the atmosphere during those times in *Not Quite American? The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States*;

“The community is still in the process of being formed and reformed as policies by the American government regulate the flow of immigrants from the Arab world. Legislation limiting immigration, as well as American foreign policy and the prevailing American prejudice against Arabs, Muslims, and Islam, have at times accelerated and at other times impeded the integration and assimilation of the community into American society.” (2004:2)

The consequences of that foreign policy and increasing prejudice shaped the Arab American literary works. One of the most prominent figures of Arab American literature, Lisa Suhair Majaj, in her essay *Two Worlds Emerging: Arab-American Writing at the Crossroads*, tells how she felt herself marginalized and alienated from both of the societies as being a daughter of an American mother and a Palestinian father when she was a child. She had difficulties in developing her Arab American identity because of the lack of resources on Arab American literature. (1996:69)

The Civil Rights and Black Power movements opened the way to the immigrants to speak about their rights and their ethnicity. Arab-Americans took heart from the publication of works by African Americans, Asian Americans, and others; so, they focused on to write about their ethnic heritage and find audiences and also publishers. Those writers came from a variety of countries like Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Lebanon, and they were mostly Muslim, better educated, and more engaged with Arab culture and politics. Writing in English, using American literary

traditions like free verse and the lyric poem, those Arab American writers published their works in American literary journals. Publication of the Arab American Anthologies *Wrapping the Grape Leaves: A Sheaf of Contemporary Arab-American Poets* (1982), that is edited by Gregory Orfalea, and *the Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American- Poetry* (1988), edited by both Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa, stated the existence of Arab American literature and writers, presented Arab-American poets to the audience. Those anthologies also had importance for creating a sense of literary community among Arab American writers that were a necessity for forming a literary tradition. Prominent poets of this period are Naomi Shihab Nye, Jack Marshall, Sam Hazo who began to write and publish their poems that were related with their Arab identity and what had been lost because of the assimilation process. The other noticeable poets Mohja Kahf and Suheir Hammad were against the idea of assimilation and discarding their Arab culture; moreover, the questioning of identity and belonging found a place in their works.

Famous writers and their novels such as Elmaz Abinader 's *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey* (1991), and Diana Abu-Jaber 's novel *Arabian Jazz* (1993) succeed to take the attention of both audiences and critics at that time. On the way to become visible as a subgenre of American ethnic literature authors came together and worked on collections such as Joanna Kadi's *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (Kadi 1994), Naomi Shihab Nye's *The Space Between Our Footsteps: Poems and Paintings from the Middle East* (Nye 1998), Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash's *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (Mattawa and Akash 1999), Pauline Kaldas and Mattawa's *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction* (Kaldas and Mattawa 2004) . One of the most important anthologies, which collects the works of Arab American feminist writing is *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* edited by Joanna Kadi. Kadi defines her book;

“... a new map, created by writers, activists, artists, poets, teachers, a mother and daughter team, and two (blood) sisters. We are lesbians, bisexuals, and heterosexuals; of

different generations; working class, middle class, upper-middle-class; women born in the Arab world and women born here.” (1994: xvii)

She believes that this collection is a beginning for providing a ‘helpful map’ for those both women and men who are dealing with the problems of culture, identity, history, and activism. Lisa Suhahir Majaj thinks that this work “address issues of identity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political activism, race, and class, chart the quest for belonging and the search for a home capable of encompassing the voices of Arab-American women from a variety of backgrounds” (2008:5). Arab American women writers are not as lucky as their male counterparts. Being Arab women in America did not make them feel free in their writings due to the rules and traditions of their Arabic origin. Lisa Suhahir Majaj thinks that when Arab American women criticize the patriarchy in their society, they are mostly blamed for disrespecting their own culture and praising the Western lifestyle. (Majaj,1999:75).

While Arab and Arab American people had had a stable and peaceful life in the new land, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 made their life hell. They became a target in the eyes of the American people. Many Arab Americans suffered from overmuch suspicion, prejudice, blame, and hatred after this devastating terrorist attack. This event became a turning point for immigrants from Arabic –speaking countries and their descendants because, after this attack, these people started to assert their ethnic identity as Arab American and the word Arab, as Joanne Kadi mentions, is a way to realize the Arab identity and connects the Arab Americans to their brothers and sisters in Arab countries. (Kadi, 1999) After the tragic events of 9/11, President George W. Bush stated that America did not wage war against a particular ethnicity or a religion, the war was against the terrorists. Though these words seemed to be comforting for the Arab American community, the government's official actions were opposite to this comforting atmosphere. The laws such as mass arrests, closed-door hearings, background checks, secret detentions, detention at borders and no-fly lists significantly affected Arab and Muslim American immigrants who are either citizens or permanent residents of the USA. These laws also impacted Arab and Muslim non-immigrants, so-called aliens, that a group includes people who are in the United States

legally as students, business people, and temporary workers. Arab American neighborhoods became easy targets for FBI, the Border Patrol, and the other law enforcement agencies because of having the same religion and national origin with the terrorists who attacked the Twin Towers. They had persistent visitors from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) that made them feel insecure and despised. Arab American students and workers were harassed in their schools or at their workplaces. They were subject to discrimination in their companies, institutions, and workplaces.

Many women were forced to take off their hijabs. Normal life for Arab American people was not possible anymore. Public places became dangerous for them; therefore, many Arab American people, especially women who wear hijab, stayed at home and did not go to work or even shopping. Some women stopped wearing headscarves in order not to attract attention; parents kept their children home from school and did not let them play outside. Arab American Christians started to wear crucifix outside their clothes to show that they were not from the same religion with the terrorists, and unfortunately, people lost their jobs because of their ethnicity. Arab American community leaders of educational, religious, and cultural institutions struggled for explaining more about Arab American history, culture, and their contributions in order to break down prejudices and mistaken thoughts on Arab American people. Churches, synagogues, and civil rights organizations warned their citizens not to be prejudiced to and blame innocent people. All the struggles were in order to change the wrong image of Arab Americans that was created by the media and racist people. Arab Americans had the worst years there because of the event, and this event led to the popularization of a new concept 'Islamophobia'. It refers to discrimination, fear, and prejudice against all Muslims or Islam. After 9/11, the role of Arab Americans and Muslims changed in their society. They were visible anymore even though; some tried to hide their ethnic and religious identity, many of them boldly defended their society against the haters and even the law enforcement and the government agencies. They won new friends, allies and public recognition.

After the 9/11 attacks, Arab American literature has become visible under the name of ethnic American literature. As a result, and a reaction of these racist, inconvenient behaviors of American people, the Arab American writers insistently studied their ethnic background and told the whole world that they did not forget their Arab heritage and still defend their identities as Arabs. Furthermore, in their works, they criticize American discriminations toward Muslims. They also started to criticize the United States political stance for the Middle East. Family, home, the question of belonging, nostalgia, American lifestyle, displacement, and the development of identity have become the most popular themes in Arab American writings until the present time. There were some outstanding women writers who identify themselves as both Arab and American reflect their ethnic backgrounds in their works. Lisa Suhair Majaj, Mohja Kafh , Diana Abu Jaber and their works are the good examples to this period of American literature.

1.2. An Arab American Author: Susan Muaddi Darraj

The author of *The Inheritance of Exile*, Susan Muaddi Darraj is Associate Professor of English at Harford Community College in Bel Air, Maryland, she also gives lectures in John Hopkins University, at the same time, she is a faculty member in Fairfield University.

Her life story begins after her father's decision to emigrate in 1967 to look for work in the States. Like most of the exiles, her family's intention was only a temporary stay until they saved enough money. She was growing up in Philadelphia and in New Jersey like most of the immigrants prefer to settle down. Her childhood, like many immigrant children, had full of stories her parents told about 'back home'. However, these stories about 'home' and 'being Palestinian' did not mean much to her because "Palestine is neither a place you can locate on a map of the world nor a nation that others recognize" she says in an interview by Zahie El Kouri in 2019.

Therefore, Palestine was only in the stories of her parents for her. She loved the times while listening to her father's exciting stories about his childhood years in Taybeh, their village outside of Ramallah. In summers, most of July and August, her parents enjoyed 'going home' Taybeh, and those times were the ones when she felt she did not belong to her homeland as an American born daughter. Not totally involved either culture or a place, Susan Muaddi Darraj, just like all the Arab American children, lived in between two cultures; an isolating place that is also called 'thirdspace'.

"It was just thrilling to hear that I'd won an American Book Award," says Darraj, who started her writing journey with a short story when she was only nine. She grew up in a house which was surrounded by the sounds of poetry as both her father and her uncle were poets, and reading was highly encouraged. Thus, her willingness to step into the world of literature was not surprising for her family.

Because of the inadequacy of the books by Arab American authors, she did not know any of the works about her origin. She met the famous writers like Bell Hooks, Alice Walker, June Jordan and also, she discovered some African American writers who helped her understand "two-ness" that is to say, to see yourself through the eyes of others — meant to her a lot to realize what Arab and Arab Americans were for the Americans perspective. During one of her interviews, she says that there are misconceptions about Israel/Palestine case and Arabs in America. According to her, it is believed that the Arab American community poses problems as they are different and unable to adapt to life in the US, and they have no contribution to the country itself. She reacts the hostility against her own community and thinks that there should be many books, a lot of stories that mirror the lives and experiences of young Arab Americans and their families. She believes that literature is the only way to reach millions of people all around the world and collapse the stereotypes of Arabs and Arab American in the U.S.

Writing means much to her; "I have to write stories down. It is just part of who I am. It's something that sustains me. I feel alive when I write." There's a kind of magic

that happens. It's also how I understand the world," she says in an interview with Mary Carole Mccauley in 2016.

She enjoys writing linked short stories which give her a chance for exploring specific moments in time, offers a camera view of a particular place and enables her to jump from one time to another, and last but not least, she enjoys linking together these characters in her works.

She has two short story collections. One of them is *the Inheritance of Exile*, that will be examined in detail in the following chapters, was published in 2007, and the other collection is *A Curious Land* was published in 2016. Susan Muaddi Darraj became the winner of both American Book Award and Arab American Award with *A Curious Land*, that is about the natives of a Palestinian West Bank village, Tel al-Hilou. Darraj's characters in the book struggle to find the meaning of home and question the ideas of connection, memory, and belonging. Even though the stories in the book are mostly set in a small Palestinian village, they offer insight into an East culture while showing the common humanity that unites us all.

She is also the editor of Scheherazade's *Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing*, which was published in 2004. It builds a bridge between the two cultures, West and East, and it is the collection of the essays of the writers who delineate the genre of Arab Anglophone writing. The book depicts the cultural experiences of people with Arab identities in the West. Etal Adnan, Diana Abu-Jaber, Naomi Shihab Nye, Suheir Hammad, Elmaz Abinader, and many others are the contributors, and they explore the difficulties of writing in and for a culture not wholly their own. The essays chosen for the book were the keystone of the study of writing by women writers of Arab origin who find themselves between two cultures, two worlds that are often at odds.

She has a part in the volume for the MLA's Approaches to Teaching World Literature Series on Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz. She belongs to the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), the Radius of Arab-American Writers (RAWI), the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), and the Society for Children's

Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI). She currently serves as a Board Member of RAWI and is a professional member of the PEN America Center.



CHAPTER TWO- EDWARD SAID AS AN ARAB AMERICAN EXILE

2.1. The Life of Edward Said

As a Palestinian American academic, political activist, and literary critic, Edward Wadie Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935, Palestine, and he was a son of Wadie Said, a Palestinian American businessman, and Hilda Said, a Palestinian housewife. Edward Said was a secularist and did not support any specific religion, although his family practiced Greek Orthodox Christianity. Said had a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University and he got both his master's and PH.D. degrees in English Literature from Harvard University. He wrote his first book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* in 1966, and it was also an expansion of his doctoral dissertation. During his lifetime, he wrote many books, and among them, the most outstanding ones are *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1974), *Orientalism* (1978), *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1981), *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), *On Late Style: Music and Literature against Grain* (2006). His memoir *Out of Place* was written in 1999. Besides his books, many articles were published in literary magazines. Edward Said was teaching at Columbia University till he died from leukemia in 2003.

Out of Place (1999) tells Edward Said's life from 1935, when he was born in Jerusalem, to the mid-1960s, when he was a university student in the States. In the memoir, Edward Said explains the hardships of being an exile and the impacts of exilic experience on his way of life and his decisions throughout his life. He shows that his life is full of inconsistencies that derive from being an exile even from the early years of his life. In the opening of the memoir, Said explains the paradox of his name, which both shaped his life and his works. For Said, the chief irony of his identity starts the contradiction of his own name: "Edward, a foolishly English name, yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said" (1999:23). He describes how in later years he would, depending on the social situation, prefer to use either his English name or

his Arabic one. "All families invent their parents and their children," he says, but he finds that there was always something wrong with the way that he was invented: "Yet the overriding sensation I had was of always being out of place" (1999: 22). He reveals that he always suffered from not being fully adapted to the societies he was in and confessed that he was always out of place.

The memoir starts with Edward's family departure from Palestine to Lebanon, then Egypt after the war in 1948. In Cairo, he went to school at St George's, an American School, and later Victoria College, which molded itself on the tradition of the elite public schools of Britain. He was keen on reading novels and listening to concerts of classical music. He was a lonely boy, and his excellent English skill as an Arab child was the thing which both made him feel displaced at school in Cairo, and it also opened new windows to the world history and made him aware of the world policy against his homeland.

Hilda Said, Edward Said's mother, was born in Nazareth and she had a Palestinian father and a Lebanese mother. Wadie Said, Edward Said's father, was an American citizen and later in his life, he changed his name Wadie to William, and he journeyed first to Liverpool, in his late teens, and then he started to work as a waiter on a transatlantic liner to New York. In America, he was both a salesman and a university student. He worked for the American Expeditionary Force in France in 1917, got the citizenship, and founded a painting company in Cleveland. He turned back to Palestine in 1920, and Edward Said told us that he had "quite abruptly turned sober pioneer, hardworking and successful businessman, and Protestant, a resident first of Jerusalem and later Cairo. This was the man I knew" (1999:28).

Said tells us that his parents were completely different from each other, and he was always in between them, struggling for meeting their demands, and he tried to make them proud of him. Young Edward felt the pressure of meeting the different demands of both parents, but at the same time, he was seeking to reach their love and favor. So, the young Edward grew up, 'sliding' between his relationships with his parents and striving ceaselessly to satisfy them in their personal ways. His father was

characterized as an imposing patriarch – with full of energy, ambitious, and commanding: "a devastating combination of power and authority, rationalistic discipline, and repressed emotions" (1999:29). Wadie Said's control on his son was, as Edward Said described, like a 'regime' that led to a never-ending and disturbing sense of never having achieved enough. Unlike his father, Said's mother Hilda was his "closest and most intimate companion for the first twenty-five years" of his life (1999:30). His relationship with his mother was not perfect, and he felt that she would sometimes take out her affection or attention from him. Therefore, her behaviors, at those times, caused him to feel lonely. In the following, he describes her sudden changed behaviors:

“Between my mother's empowering sun-like smile and her cold scowl or her sustained frowning dismissiveness, I existed as a child both fortunate and hopelessly miserable, neither completely one nor the other” (1999:32).

Said was not himself. He was displaced even in his own house. His parents' mobility, from Palestine to British-ruled Egypt in Cairo, caused to adaptation problems at school, at last, he was expelled from Victoria college. After he was expelled from the college, his parents decided that "he had no future in the British education system" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2001:3) and therefore, they sent him to Mount Hermon preparatory school in Massachusetts. Studying in a different country did not cure his sense of loneliness. Even though school life in America was often emotionally difficult for Said, he was a bright student who could speak several languages and played the piano well. However, unfortunately, he was still a lonely and displaced boy.

After successful but full of desperate years at Mount Hermon, he enjoyed the times in Princeton. He completed his Ph.D. on Joseph Conrad. In Harvard, then, he took up a position and began his academic career at Columbia University in the Department of Comparative Literature. At the university he worked for, Dr. Said played a more active role as a spokesman for the Palestinian cause; he became a

member of the Palestine National Council in 1977.

Edward Said, a British born to a Christian Arab family, who completed his education in Western schools and participated in the academic world, was often an outsider although he was surrounded by both Arabic and American cultures. He claimed that he did not fully belong to one as he wrote in *The Nation* in 1991; "I've never felt that I belonged exclusively to one country, nor have I been able to identify patriotically with any other than losing causes".

Said was attacked by the supporters of Israel who accused him of supporting terrorism, as he defended Palestinians in written statements and interviews as victims of Israeli brutality.

Edward Said lectured at more than 150 universities and colleges in the United States, Canada, and Europe. His works include *Orientalism* (1978); *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (1995); *End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (2000); and, *Power, Politics, and Culture* (2001) were translated into fourteen languages.

Orientalism is Edward Said's revolutionary work in postcolonial studies. The work which was published in 1978, has been both praised and criticized by the academic world. In his work, Said illustrated the manner in which the representation of Europe's 'others' has been established as a part of its cultural dominance. *Orientalism* tells the history of how the west, especially Britain and France, and it tells the process to deal with the "otherness" of eastern society, customs, and beliefs. Said explains the reason for studying on orientalism in the following:

"I study orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires (British, French, American), in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced" (2017:1116).

He was diagnosed with leukemia in 1991, his treatment had begun in 1994 and had been under constant medical supervision till his death from leukemia on September 25, 2003, in New York.

2.2. Edward Said's Philosophy of Exile

The concept of exile corresponds to a process that includes political, cultural, and economic dimensions as well as being geographically displaced. Because of the relationship between culture and identity with all aspects of life, memories of pre-and post-exile are transmitted from generation to generation through social relations and literary works. Today, many people and groups are forced to live outside their own countries as a result of political decisions about military conflicts and ethnic cleansing, or they may willingly decide to live in a different country for various opportunities.

The concept has been approached by many scholars, and it has become the subject of hundreds of books, essays, and articles, and as a social phenomenon, it has been defined with the help of notions like hybridity, displacement, assimilation, otherness and challenged identity. Edward Said is one of the academicians who have made studies on the concept of exile and has a primary place in exile studies.

Edward Said, as an exile himself, defines the word exile as; "is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (2001:137). For Said, the reason for preventing someone from feeling himself in harmony with his real home is the condition of being an exile, and this situation leads to a hole between the man and his native land, which cannot be filled completely. The emotional and mental breakdowns that exile leads to in their new lives can never be forgotten or even overcome. To point the global pervasiveness of the exilic experience, Said says, "We have become accustomed to thinking of the modern period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement" (2001:137).



Hammid Shahidian (2000:76), John D. Barbour (2007:293), Nejme Khalil Habib (2008:88) and many other writers agree with the Said's definition of exile. For them, exile is a constant state of loss, and an exiled person is the one who forever desires to return. John Barbour also captures the idea of changing force of being exile by saying "Exile involves orientation, or being pointed toward something distant, and also disorientation, or feeling lost and at odds with one's immediate environment" (2007: 293-94).

According to Said, exile is against the life circle of humankind, and it disconnects people from their native lands. People on exile do not only lose the connection with their native land but also, they are deprived of traditions, which make them feel like a part of society. As Said says: "it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (2001:138).

Exile forces people to live in a state of alienation and uncertainty. While struggling to live in an alienated world and trying to adapt themselves to it, there are some negative attitudes arouse among exiles not only to those who share the same fate with them but also to the ones –non-exiles- the people who live outside the exilic circle because they are at their own homeland. Said explains the nature of this feeling;

“Exiles look at non-exiles with resentment. They belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place. What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?” (2001:143)

For an exile, to lose all these pleasures of belonging to a society, not to have a place so-called home, and to know that not to be a part of a place forever definitely cause the hatred and enmity towards the ones who have what the exiles do not. People in exile do not belong to anywhere, they do not have a homeland, and they are not of any place forever because they are in a continuous condition of moving. The life of an exile passes through one place to another without having any connections to a specific

place like home. Edward Said, in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000), makes a comparison between those who travel more with no single home and those who have spent all their lives in one single place with one home and one culture only. (185-6)

Exiles are always in a dream of coming back home one day, which does not happen mostly. According to Said, exile is "never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure. Exile, in the words of Wallace Stevens, is "a mind of winter in which the pathos of summer and autumn as much as the potential spring are nearby but unobtainable" (2001:148). Said resembles the life of exiles with the three seasons of nature to emphasize that the life in the homeland is a natural event, but the life in exile is an extraordinary phenomenon, and it is a life outside the seasonal circle. The rhythm of nature, familiar feelings, and the comfort of settled living cannot be experienced by the exiles.

Said says, "Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal; but no sooner one gets accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew" (2001:149). According to him, people on exile feel both senses of displacement and being out of place, and even though they think that they get accustomed to their new life, they can be deceived easily by the exile's continuous changing power which makes life unstable and arouses the curiosity on what the tomorrow will bring for them. Said explains this uncertain condition as;

Perhaps this is another way of saying that a life of exile moves according to a different calendar, and less seasonal and settled than life at home (2001:149).

In short, exiles, whether they want to emigrate themselves or be exiled face the challenges of having a new life, with the effects of the traumas they have experienced. Life in exile shows differences depending on an individual's personal background, history and motivations so, some exiles may deal with the challenges of the new environment and create a "normal" life for themselves easier than others. It is important to remember that, as Edward Said stated: "to think of exile as beneficial, as

a spur to humanism or to creativity, is to belittle its mutilations. Modern exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical. It is produced by human beings for other human beings; it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography” (2001:138). Therefore, while some exiles successfully build new lives in a host country, many exiles have experienced unbearable suffering through traumas that can ruin their lives and make it impossible to have a new start (Frykman 2001).



CHAPTER THREE – BEING AN ARAB AND ARAB AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES

During the early waves of immigration, Arab were largely silent and invisible (Shakir,1997) and most Americans had no direct knowledge of them. Being invisible was related to negative stereotypical images like a backward, antihero, and/or wealthy sheiks that Arab people often complained about (Salaita, 2005: 149). However, after 9/11, Arabs suddenly has become hyper-visible, and moreover, they are portrayed as enemies of democracy and modern life, as well as terrorists and these negative images of them have made them targets in the eyes of the American people. (Ajrouch, 2004; Bayoumi,2008; Haddad,2004; Jamal & Naber, 2008; Michael, 2003; Orfalea, 2006; Salaita, 2005; Shaheen, 2001, 2002, 2005;)

Even though Arab women cannot be seen as dangerous as the Arab men, the images of them have been seen negatively, too. They are not associated with the modern images of western women since they are silent, obedient being and oppressed and also, they are identified as harem girls, belly dancers, or passive and obedient women dressed in black from head to toe with no identities and "they are always mute" (Shaheen, 2002: 6).

They have been represented ,Jarmakani implies in his work *Disorienting America: The Legacy of Orientalist Representations of Arab Womanhood in US Popular Culture* , as "a continuum of images that cast them as hyper-sexualized (in the sexually lascivious harem), as void of presence and the victim of oppression (behind the veil), or as somehow both (the transparently veiled belly dancer)", images which "have been persistent markers of a US relationship with the 'Orient' for over a century" (2004:1-2).

There are some reasons of why these stereotype images of Arabs linger in American culture. According to Mango; the first reason is “the various media continue to present negative images; struggles and problems in the Arab world affect the way that people look at Arabs; positive images are missing in the media;” secondly “some

people of Arab ancestry do not reveal their ethnicity and thus remain invisible (most likely because of anticipated negative reactions from others who have been exposed to the media's stereotypical portrayal of Arabs)" (2008:3). Unfortunately, the wrong repeated stereotypical representations of Arabs become rooted in the mind of the American people so that, people are surprised when they learn that Arab women can get an education and emerge in the business world in Arab countries. Furthermore; American people get confused to hear that there are Arab feminists in the Arab world, too.

The condition of Arab American women in the US is one of the essential parts of this study due to the fact that this thesis focuses on the stories of Arab and Arab American women and their experiences in the work of Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile*.

3.1. An Arab American Family

Arab/ Arab American women's position in the US has close relations with the dynamics of traditional Arab families because of the fact that family, according to Aswad (2005), is the most important social institution in Arab culture. According to her "other institutions, political, religious and social, may compete for importance, but seldom succeed." and " women play a vital role in the family" (2005: 147). No matter which religion they follow, all the Arab families have highly patriarchal family structure (Abudabbeh, 2005). Joseph (1996) wrote that "patriarchy is powerful in the Arab world because age-based kinship, values, and relationships are crucial socially, economically, politically, ideologically, and psychologically" (1996:14). In the family unit of Arabs, traditional gender roles have substantial importance. The head of the family is the father, and he is the most potent protective figure. The authority is respected by all the members of his family. In an Arab family, the mother's primary roles are child-rearing and taking care of the household (Barakat, 1985).

Since the family is the cornerstone of Arab culture, marriage is valued, and divorce is not approved. According to Cankar and Read (2014), in marriages, the

critical issue is the compatibility, not love, and the people of Arab society support the idea that arranged marriages are as successful as a love match and both types of marriages can be found among Arab Americans.

Divorce is an issue that women is mostly the victim. In the case of divorcing, family members put pressure on married couples not to divorce, even if both partners are not happy, and especially if they have children. However, as told by Aswad (1999), the pressure on women to stay in the marriage is stronger in the family. In addition to pressures, the woman's hesitation to end a marriage deepens if she does not have a job or any other economic resources. Fears for domestic violence and losing the children are other reasons that force women to stay in the marriage (Cainkar & Del Toro, 2010; Hajjar, 2004). These problems for the first-generation immigrant women are more challenging to handle since they may not speak English, may live far away from their natal family, and maybe reluctant to take their problems outside of the family. Due to "fear, cultural differences, language barriers, and lack of understanding and capacity to negotiate the system" the better solution is to stay silent rather than looking for help from women shelters (Cainkar & Del Toro, 2010: 6). Furthermore; some immigrant women stay in the marriage for fear that their husbands can be expelled from the US (Cainkar, 2000; Kulwicki & Miller, 1999) or they can lose their residency rights after divorcing (Cainkar & Del Toro, 2010).

By Arab American community members, Arab American female is thought that they are not the same and also better than American females because Arab American females can control their sexuality. They control their sexuality by their manner in public, by limiting their relations with males outside of the family, and by dressing modestly (Ajrouch; 2004).

3.2. Gender roles in an Arab Family

Even though the Arab world is varied and includes many subcultures, there are significant traditions and ideologies that are universal within the Arab population. One of the distinctive characteristics of the Arab community is its attitude toward gender roles.

Gender role is a term that is defined as "socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women" by WHO (World Health Organization). The idea of gender roles, according to Cainkar and Read "inform a multiplicity of matters of appropriateness, including public behavior, social relationships, education, occupation, health, marriage, and divorce" (2014:1), they also point out that there is not a general frame for appropriateness because not all Arab American families have the same gendered norms. These norms may be more flexible or stricter, and attitude of a family towards the gender roles show differences depending on social class it belongs to, and the ties they develop in the United States.

Within Arab cultures, there are clear distinctions regarding gender roles. The behavior of men and women is strictly defined and formed on the basis of a patriarchal system, in which men are dominant (Krenawi & Graham, 2000). In most Arab households, the man has the responsibility to work and support his family financially, while the woman's primary role is to provide emotional support for the family and oversee household responsibilities. According to Espiritu (2001), Arab people pay attention to the preservation of female chastity and traditional gender roles, and women are kept out of work outside. The few women who work outside of the household often terminate their careers as a result of marriage or pregnancy (Grossbard-Shechtman & Neuman, 1998).

In traditional Arab cultures, women are expected to meet the roles of being as good wives (Haj-Yahia, 2000a). In order not to be excluded by other family members, most Arab women must respect to males like fathers, brothers, husband, and in-laws of the family. This respect extends to the mother/father-in-law when she gets married.

Transmitting culture, national, and religious identity to the next generation often depend on these gender roles (Ajrouch, 1999; Cainkar, 1988, 2004; Read & Oselin, 2008). Arab immigrants, in general, often have traditional family lives in the American mainstream because there is a strong desire to preserve ethnic culture by implementing the key elements of their culture like cooking ethnic meals and keeping the daily rituals belongs to the homeland. Arab women play a significant role in ensuring the transfer of culture to future generations as they engage in more about “negotiations between sets of values and cultural ideals that often seem incompatible” than men (Shakir,1997:10). Some Arab Americans think that preserving and following to cultural traditions is vital for conserving an ethnic identity, thus; women should stay at home and be busy with daily chores (Aswad & Bilge, 1996; Ghanea Bassiri, 1997). Other Arab Americans believe the idea of gender equality and support women’s education and employment (Haddad & Smith, 1994).

3.3. The impacts of Arab Culture on Arab American Women

The Arab American writer Susan Muaddi Darraj claims that the feminist slogans “The personal is political” and “The political is personal” are inappropriate for Arab American women because they have to fight in two arenas; the first arena is home, and they fight against sexism that is personal, and the other arena in society and the fight against racism is political. It is inevitable that these women who have to fight against sexism and racism have had identity conflicts (Helms,1990; Smith, Burlew, Mosley & Whitney,1978).

In comparison to the presented studies on other ethnic groups, "very little is available on Arab Americans, their culture, school experiences, or learning styles" (Nieto, 2003:167). For most Americans, Arabs and their life-style are "frozen" in history, that means they seem to resist any change (Said, 1979; Steet, 2000).

Also, there is not much research about the lives of Arab American women who are expected to live within the boundaries determined by their culture of origin. One of the most comprehensive works that give clues about the life of Arab American

women in the US is Read's (2004) *Culture, Class and Work among Arab American Women*. This work includes some statistics on family size, in- group and out group marriages, education, and place of women in the workforce and religiosity.

After a detailed research process; Read has reached some results that reflect the condition of Arab American women in the US. According to the results of the education and workforce participation of Arab American women, Read (2004) has reached that 1/3 of working-age Arab American women have a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 91% of them are proficient in English. Despite the high rates of educational achievements and proficiency in English of them, Arab American women have a lower place in the workforce when it is compared to other immigrant women. Production ability of female and traditional gender roles for domestic duties seem to be the most potent forces that keep the Arab American women away from the workforce despite the high socio-economic status, higher education, and English proficiency.

The negative impacts of Arab culture on the position of Arab American women in American society have also researched by (Aswad & Bilge, 1996) and the results have shown that despite huge amount of different cultural diversities of Arab immigrants, patrilineal family construction and family are the most important elements of Arab American community and the women's participation in the public is discouraged because of the responsibilities and duties of them as family keepers. Transmitting culture, national and religious identity to the next generation often depend on gender roles (Ajrouch, 1999; Cainkar, 1988, 2004; Read & Oselin, 2008) and the Arab mothers are responsible for carrying gendered norms and behavioral codes to their children.

Religiosity is another issue that has an impact on the lives of Arab American women in American society. According to Read (2004), religiosity is higher among lower socio-economic Arab American families, and she also notes that strong religious identity – without considering whether she is Muslim, Christian or Jewish, is a barrier for Arab American women employment due to the fact that faiths tend to be connected with traditional gender roles.

In order to make the voices of Arab American silent and oppressed women, who are trapped between gender roles and norms, audible, there are some writers at work. Works of Arab American women writers have been like the portraits of the issues of the daily lives and concerns of the people in the community. Arab American women writers have challenged the labeled typical image of Arab and Arab American women through their works. According to Hoyt the works of Arab American women writers' refuse three stereotypical images of the Arab and Muslim woman: "that Arab women are oppressed by Islam, particularly by wearing the veil; Arab women are exotic and erotic 'others' who are seductive objects without agency; Arabs and Muslims are terrorists or support terrorism, which reflects their 'backwardness' and 'fanaticism'" (2006:43). Plus fighting against the stereotypes, Arab American women writers have intended to find a place for themselves as an ethnic group in America by speaking both aspects of their Arab and American cultures. The place they want to get is in between cultures that belong to neither.

CHAPTER 4 - ARAB MOTHERS AND THEIR AMERICAN DAUGHTERS IN DARRAJ'S *THE INHERITANCE OF EXILE*

4.1. What Is Home For An Exile?

Rosemary Marangoly George explains the primary connotation of 'home' as "the 'private' space from which the individual travels into the more massive arenas of life and to which he or she returns at the end of the day. Also, in circulation is the word's wider signification as the larger geographic place where one belongs: country, city, village, community" (1996:11). Basically, home both as a place and space, as Elizabeth Kenworthy Teather explains; "become[s] part of us - of our identity"; and also home is an "ideal melting of place, culture and beloved people" (1996: 2).

In Arab American contexts 'home' as Lisa Suahir Majaj thinks; "may refer to the Old-World homeland, to a domestic ethnic US home, to the broader home of an Arab-American community, to a home in American culture achieved through assimilation or multiculturalism, or to a transnational home-space that refutes singular geographical or cultural or political orientations" (2012:209). According to her, 'home' is a space, and it is "shaped by cultural, political, social, religious, familial, gendered and geographical factors" (2012:209). So, all the factors, Majaj mentions, cannot be separated or omitted.

The concept of home is one of the indispensables of Arab American literature. Most of the works of Arab American literature, 'home' helps the characters to question their own identities and find their own true selves. It is also one of the prominent themes in *The Inheritance of Exile*. The novel focuses on the lives of exiled mothers; Siham, Layla, Huda and Lamis, and their American daughters, Nadia, Hanan, Reema, and Aliyah. Throughout the novel, the characters question their identity, the reasons for being in the US, and whether they belong to the community.

Even though the protagonists are the daughters, the contribution of the Arab mothers in the creation of stories cannot be denied. Exile shapes the identities of all

the women characters by reminding them of the past traumas and helps them question their own identities by depicting their present experiences and plans. The stories of the daughters are about the daily experiences in the US, whereas, their mothers' stories are mostly set in the past and these stories are about both their memories belong to Palestine and their immigration and settlement experiences in the US. It is not surprising that these women mentioned in the story question the concept of home because home is what one desires from society. As there is no singular home-space for everyone, the definition and conception of a home vary in terms of gender, generation, or even the religion. There are two breeds of homes: the first breed refers to a home that is assimilated and/or Americanized. Those houses are the ones that have been entirely influenced by the American culture, tradition, and lifestyle; in other words, they are Americanized. The second breed refers to homes in which only Arab traditions are survived and, moreover they resist to American culture and attitudes.

The women characters in Darraj's work struggle to find homes for themselves between Arab and American cultures. Since home perception differs from person to person, a precise definition of the house may not be the right approach. In Darraj's work, While the concept of home means the traumas of the past, nostalgia, and hope for back home one day for the mothers, the meaning home depends on daughters' daily experiences and their plans.

In *The Inheritance of Exile*, the concept of the home is especially questioned by two characters; Hanan and her mother, Layla. Hanan has always been a difficult child for her mother, a woman of strict adherence to her traditions. She rejects her Arab identity and opposes the Arab traditions imposed by her mother. Although Layla is in constant discussion with her daughter about this matter, she is upset about her daughter's unhappy states at home. Layla, Hanan's mother, thinks that her daughter's displeasure is due to her discontent with the house where they live as a family: "Maybe our modest row house in South Philadelphia, with the used dining room set and the worn, burgundy carpets, will not satisfy her" (103). Layla is right that the house in which they live does not make her daughter happy, however, what makes her wrong is that she thought this was due to an old neglected house, however, the real reason

behind Hanan's rejection for her own home is her mother's extreme traditional demeanor. Hanan is not content with living a house controlled by her mother whose mind, Hanan says, has a "dividing line between Arabs and Americans, who faced off against each other like boxing opponents" (87). As a person who rejects Arab identity, living in a house controlled by a mother who is closely tied to her Arab traditions is nothing but a living hell. Living with a person who opposes American traditions and refuses to adapt to the American way of life is very difficult for someone who sees himself as an American. It is inevitable that two people who cannot agree on the traditions are in constant discussion about this issue. In her own fortified room where she feels safe, Hanan questions her identity and states the reasons for never-ending fights with her mother;

"When she was finally in complete silence, sitting on her bed and gazing at the pillows lined up like soldiers at the front line of a cultural war, when she finally felt safe in her fortified room, she decided she was not an Arab. Her father was an American, born to Arab parents, but her mother had not been born here—she had grown up in the hilly town of Ramallah, had fled a series of wars, had left behind camps strewn with shrapnel, legless corpses, wailing women, and eyes too weary to weep. However, Hanan had been born right here, in Philadelphia, in St. Agnes Hospital on Broad Street, and she had lived here all her life, (...) This was where she was from, and who cared if she shoved her foot in someone's face?" (75-76)

Hanan thinks that she is an American and rejects all the teaching of Arab heritage. She defines the tension between her mother and herself as a "cultural war," and this cultural war strengthens the feeling of homelessness. The only place Hanan feels safe is her own room because this is where she can only find her true identity, her American identity. By resembling the pillows to the soldiers to stand against the invasion of Arab culture, Muaddi Darraj makes us think that Hanan's room is the only

place where she can escape her mother and find her identity as American. As her parents' home offers her no respite, it is quite reasonable for her to move to a place where she can feel at home, and it is not Arab dominated. Undoubtedly, Hanan's decision to live away from her parents' house as a single girl gets her mother frustrated because, in a traditional Arab family, the idea of a child, the gender does not matter, living in a different house on her/his own before getting married is not acceptable. Despite all the objections of her family, she starts to live in Aliyah's flat where she feels herself free. Darraj does not give much detail of Hanan's new flat but mentions about Layla's sudden visits to check if she sleeps with a boy or not. The next house where she moves to after getting married to John is close to the campus, in which John works as a lecturer. It is located in University City, on 38th Street, behind the University of Pennsylvania campus. It is an old townhouse and an expensive one whose down payment is made by John's parents as a wedding gift. Hanan describes her new home as a 'nest,' and she loves it as much as she dislikes her parents' and she makes a comparison between two houses;

“Our home, the one with the dark red front door, had a small backyard with thick green grass that John said I'll love until I had to mow it in the summertime. I'd never mown the grass before, *but I doubted I'd mind*. It had to be better than sweeping off the cement block that served as the backyard of *my parents' row house* pushing the debris and stepped-on cockroaches into the back alley. I hated that backyard, ever since I was a little kid” (117).

However, moving out of South Philly, which is the first stop for immigrants since the eighteenth century, living in a townhouse not a row house and marrying a middle-class American man with an Irish origin does not erase the status of being exile Hanan has inherited from her parents' Palestinian origin. When two senior colleagues of John ask her where she comes from, meaning the region of the Middle East, she replies as “From 10th and Tasker” and laughs even though she knows what they are really asking, and she recognizes the inappropriateness of what she says “I was making a

joke. I grew up here in Philadelphia” (123-124). *The city* of Philadelphia is where Hanan definitely identifies herself. She belongs to Philadelphia, she was born in there, in St. Agnes Hospital on Broad Street, and she has lived here all her life (81). The narrator tells the feelings of Hanan to her city while she is driving Delaware River, and then into the industrial area of the city, "her city, her home, and roots" (76). The city of Philadelphia is Hanan's real home, and this is the place where she feels comfortable, where she enjoys spending time on her own or with her friends, where has full of living memories of her childhood and adulthood. Hanan, the daughter of an American man, believes that Philadelphia is her real home despite people's attempts to exclude her by pointing out the origin of her name.

Darraj has demanded the concept of “exile” and “home” to remind her audience what Said defines exile: “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (2000:181). This definition implies a deep sorrow for losing the homeland, culture, tradition, and even the language that all form the self. The concept of home, both literally and metaphorically, becomes a central point for the exiles in Arab American texts.

All the mothers in the book, contrary to their daughters, suffer more being in a totally different world than they own once. The new world in which they are exiled is quite different from their old world in terms of culture and way of living. The efforts of these women, who have grown up with the values of the East, to adapt to the values in the West bring with them some problems. These problems make them feel sad, desperate, and displaced, and these feelings increase the nostalgia for their homeland. There are so many reasons for leaving one's homeland, memories behind and decide or forced to live in a new country. As Said emphasis, "Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you" (2000:183). The concept of home hosts different meanings for two Arab exiled mothers; Huda and Layla. For those people who lived in refugee camps and survived in challenging living conditions, for them, the home means an escape, but at the same time, it means pain. Even though being an exile evokes negative thoughts; there are also some positives sides of leaving

one's home behind. In 'Reflections of Exile' Edward Said states, "Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure" (2000:186). These women came to the States in hopes of being welcomed and living on equal footing with other people there. Getting married to an Arab American man means leaving the family behind in that filthy camp; however, it also means emancipation from the hell. The situation of family members left behind and forced to live in severe conditions in refugee camps raises the question of the concept of home to these exiled, but 'lucky' women and what is left behind leads to sorrow and longing.

The Arab mothers, who have lost all their family connections with the homeland, are tightly stick to their traditions and try to turn their new homes into their lost home. Traditions are stories, beliefs, customs, and rituals passed from one generation to the next, and they help bind the exiles together. Traditions represent a part of a culture, and they remind the exiles that they are part of a history that defines their past, and shapes who they are today. Being exile, according to Said, "disallows individuals to benefit from the nourishment of tradition [and] family" (2000: 174). He also emphasizes that without the ties of the traditions, family, and community, the exile is always in the sense of 'not belonging.' In her work, the author details the efforts of Arab mothers who are struggling to cope with the negative emotions of being exiled. As it is mentioned in the previous chapter, Arab immigrant mothers in the U.S. have an important role in transmitting the culture and tradition of their own roots. Because of this role given to them, mothers are always in an effort to maintain traditions by cooking traditional foods, decorating their rooms with Palestinian embroideries, arranging meetings with the Palestinian friends and watching Arabic films together. Darraj uses traditions to tell the reader how the mothers try to hold on their traditions to have that sense of belonging in an unfamiliar world.

In order to overcome the feeling of exile, the characters make considerable efforts to nourish from their traditions. Siham is one of the characters in the book who strictly adheres to her traditions. Among others, she is known for her indulgence on blue beads. As soon as she enters her new house, the first thing she does is hang the blue beads on the walls in her bedroom: "It was a blue glass stone, with an eye painted

on it, a charm that hung in every home in Jerusalem. “To ward off the Evil Eye” (25). Decorating the houses with blue beads shows Siham desires to follow in the tradition of her own origin in order to make her new house like the one in Palestine.

Embroidering is also a tradition which almost all the women in the book like doing. It connects them to their homeland and their family in Palestine. Siham was “embroidering a small coin purse for herself, using the black and red design of the Palestinian villages” (22). Siham has also praised her embroidery skills, and this tradition also helps her to earn money because she sells them to the Italian market. Her house is full of her products. Siham is not the only women who do handicraft. Layla is another mother who does handicrafts and makes money from them. She learned these skills in the refugee camp, and her mother and aunts had done it for years for a UNRWA program that offered to pay for their products. These traditions have passed from the mother to her daughter, and Layla taught her daughter how to do it and this craft, which is part of the Arab roots she rejects, has helped her meet the needs of her child. Besides making money, these baskets are indispensable decoration products for them.

The traditional food prepared by the ‘culture bearers,’ the mothers, at home is also a way of keeping the family together, remembering and reminding the traditions to the young generation and also keeping the memories alive in the host land. Throughout the book, some ethnic foods are mentioned in order to show how the characters, especially the mothers, are in need of getting a connection with their roots. Food, both as “substance and symbol” (Wilk 1999: 2), carries people to different times and places through “experience or meaning in reference to the past” (Holtzman 2006: 363). Food provokes both the feeling of nostalgia and the sense of belonging to a group. For example; Siham cooks ‘Warak dawali’ and ‘magloubeh’ for a medicine student George who he is from Syria, and he has newly arrived at the US, ‘mansaff’ and ‘laban’ for her special guests, ‘malfoof’ for commemorative of her husband’s death; Lamis prepares a table with the traditional mezzeh: yogurt, cheese cubes, cucumber salad, hummus, and pita bread before a serious talk between Aliyah and her father. Watermelon seed shells and Turkish qahwa are the ones like a must for the reunions of mothers; besides, the fragrance of mint is a traditional feature of Arab

houses. "Every Arab mother grew peppermint in her garden or, in her mother's (Lamis) case, in the pot on the ledge of the kitchen window" (49). Tea with mint, like qahwa, is a routine of the daily lives of the characters in the book and the tea prepared after each dinner is one of the traditions belonging to their own culture and persistently continued in their new land. The smell and the taste of it remind them of the old days in Palestine. Aliyah imagines his father sitting in the kitchen, reading her story while he is sipping her mother's tea prepared with fresh mint leaves, Hanan helps her mother prepare tea with mint leaves after dinner because boiling tea with fresh mint leaves is one of their favorite routines. All those ethnic foods prepared by the mothers are not only to establish a bond with the past, but also to ensure that traditions are passed on to the next generation. Following the traditions keeps the family's ethnic identity alive, although they are living in America, far from their homeland.

Social gatherings have roles in terms of nourishment of the culture. Caroline Nagel explains that immigrants with a similar background tend to stick to one another as a group, she says "there is little indication that culture itself is contested" (Nagel, 2001: 252). In other words, even they live away from their homelands; many migrants pursue to create ties that keep the old traditions and beliefs alive. Mothers who isolate themselves from social life in America come together at least once a week to share their problems, to remember the good old days and to have some fun together. They watch Arab films and make comments on the characters in the characters in the movie. Another tradition that makes them happy and helps them connect ties to their homeland is reading coffee cups. Lamis explains the importance of this tradition for herself saying it is just like and oxygen that helps her live;

After we drained our coffee cups and let the grounds dry inside, Huda read our fortunes for us. She is an expert in this, once predicting when my youngest son would be born. I don't know why I semi-believe in these little superstitious rituals, but maybe it's because I was raised breathing it, accepting it like air in my lungs (58).

Despite all the struggles, Arab mothers know that these new homes in the new land, as Said says, would never have the comfort and serenity of their old homes. Of course, the comfort-offering houses Said mentioned were not the houses in the refugee camps that formed after the war. The stories of refugee camps have an important place in Arab American literature. As they are a part of some Arab exiles lives, Darraj put emphasis on the living conditions of the camps through the lens of an exile. Hanan spends almost all her life hearing the life in the camps from her mother, Layla. A camp with "cement shacks with hastily thatched roofs, children running barefoot on dirt paths, sidestepping donkey dung as they scampered about, old men sitting on wooden crates playing tarneeb with a badly worn deck of cards. The women in the camp wore clean but threadbare clothes and flashed smiles that displayed missing teeth" (121) overwhelm both Layla and Hanan every time they remember. Sometimes she asks her mother about the details to make the picture vivid;

Was there food?

Not much.

Was there water?

Barely.

Were there schools?

Not really.

What was there?

Only the hope of a better life.

Only my family.

Only love.

How did you leave?

Your grandparents struggled to get work permits or even visas, but it didn't work. They snuck us all in through Canada instead, so when I met your father and we married, I became a citizen through him. (...) Your grandfather had to go back home. He died there, in that filthy camp (121).

Layla's narration of unsuitable conditions for a standard living of the refugee camps and what holds them onto life reaches the depths of the readers. During a visit

to 'back home' Ramallah, She showed her American citizen husband her whereabouts before getting married. Ramallah was the country he had always heard tales about, but that he had never seen. He got upset when he saw the terrible conditions of the refugee camp where she used to live. He stayed speechless against the view in front of him "You lived like that? He seethed for days afterward" (91). The scenes of inhuman conditions of the exiles in the refugee camps may be familiar to the refugees all around the world.

4.2. The Feeling of Unbelonging

The theme displacement is one of the major topics in Arab American literature. According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, *displace* means — to remove from the usual or proper place and *specifically*: to expel or force to flee from home or homeland and as *an example*: *displaced* persons. As a noun, displacement means — the act or process of *displacing*: the state of being displaced. By looking at the definition of the word, it can be concluded that the concept of displacement is a physical departure, either willingly or unwillingly, from one place a person belongs to a new one, - from familiar to unknown. However, actually, the word has a more profound sense in terms of its causes /consequences; its physical/spiritual effects; its internal/external conditions. It leads to wounds inside that need to be healed.

Based on his own life on exile, Said (2012) states that displacement is a result of exile: "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (173). Most of the women in Darraj's work suffer from the pain of displacement, feeling lost, and being out of place. Besides, longing for a sense of nationalism, they also endeavor to overcome the language barrier and feeling of homelessness. Said in "Reflections on Exile," describes nationalism and the human's natural desire for belonging:

"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 (2012:176).

In her book, the author Darraj tells the loneliness and displacement of her characters; she describes the deep holes caused by the adaptation problems of them. Like most of the Arab American writers of the 1980s and later, Muaddi Darraj also “seek[s] to assert an identity and express solidarity” by using their characters. (Al Maleh, 2009: 433). Darraj’s exiled women miss to belong to a single place, and they want to feel as if they belong to one particular group and community, thereby, without a sense of community, family, and tradition, the exile is continually in a state of not belonging. According to Edward Said, "The exile's world is that of displacement and dislocation: non-exiles belong in their surroundings [...] whereas an exile is always out of place" (2012:180). Moreover, an exile, according to Said, does not belong to each of the worlds; thus, they are always out of place.

The feeling of displacement stated by Said is felt by one of the Arab mothers who got married and settled in the United States. In the story ‘New World,’ Siham feels the displacement as she walks through to Chestnut Street in the elite part of the city:

“However, 1012 Chestnut was nothing like their tiny apartment above the flower shop. Its white front steps, edged by a beautifully carved stone rail, descended elegantly to the sidewalk. The door, made of dark wood, featured a round, brass knocker in its center, like an eye. Like the Evil Eye painted on her blue stones. She stared up at the windows, awed, and suddenly sad” (25).

Siham compares the houses, the one, a townhouse she sees in the Chestnut Street and the row house apartment she lives in Tasker Street. While living on Tasker Street, which is the place of choice for all immigrants, does not make her feel different, her little visit to the elite part of the city makes her feel ‘displaced.’ That part of the city belongs to American residents, and her place of residence is home to other

immigrants. The communities of South Philly is told by Hanan:

“...South Philly, maybe because of the immigrant communities that turned street corners into gathering places and where a row home often housed four families. South Philly consisted of a steady stream of Irish who hadn't ever stopped arriving, even decades after the potato famine; the Italians, mostly from Sicily, who invariably set up pizzerias, selling tomato pies they never consumed at home but which they learned was apparently very Italian; the Vietnamese, who pooled together the money of several families and bought and managed Chinese food shops and restaurants, because nobody seemed to notice the difference and because most people still felt pissed about the war” (111).

Throughout the story, Siham makes comparisons of her home in the US with her old home in Jerusalem. The comparison of two cities also means the comparison of two lives, life before and after the wedding.

“By October the leaves on the occasional tree in South Philadelphia began to change colors. The trees in Jerusalem were mostly olive trees, and they didn't change colors” (27).

The color-changing leaves represent her tidal life of the US, while the evergreen leaves of olive trees represent the regular life in Jerusalem. Siham is aware of the two worlds that are very different from each other.

Some characters in the book meet the experience of displacement in the very early days of life in the States. For instance; after spending some years in UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) camps,

Reema's mother Huda reached to the new land at the end of four years of struggle to get the visa. Huda's father promised young Huda that they would not have to run anymore, and they would find safety and peace in the States, so she hoped that life in the States would offer them good living conditions and equality at the same time. This little girl who came to America with beautiful dreams understood how brutal life was for immigrants even from the early days of school. This emotionally charged story starts with a sudden fire drill ends with the little girl hiding under the desk first and then locking herself in a closet. It was her first day at school, and the little girl identified the fire drill, which was suddenly playing, with the sounds of bombs falling on them. She locked herself to the janitor's closet to hide and never went out till her mother came and persuaded her that it was just a fire drill and not a bomb attack. She felt herself as 'the other' even at the very beginning of her life in the States. She tells the rest of the story;

“They let me return home rather than finishing the day. It was better anyway because everyone in school now knew who I was—the new girl with the short haircut, who was older than everyone else and barely spoke English. The skinny boy who really was a girl. The kid who hid in the janitor's closet because the fire drill scared her. The girl whose mother had to come to school and talk to her on the speaker in a funny language that sounded like spitting” (170).

Also, she tells how her classmates humiliated her:

“Some of the classmates looked at me strangely, and many laughed. One girl told everyone I was dirty because I was wearing the same Phillies shirt, but in the camp, we wore the same clothes two or three days in a row unless we got dirty or sweated in them. However, I never made that mistake in this country again. Your

father always asks me why I buy so many clothes. "Just leave me alone on this issue," I tell him" (170).

In the novel, mothers' troubled life and depression in the new land stem from traumas of a displaced life. Throughout the book, Darraj clearly depicts how Layla has troubled with the life in Philadelphia, her failure to adopt this new environment and the depression she is in by letting her character question her past experiences, the life in the States and the resulted traumas. Among the other characters in the book, Layla is the person who has experienced the adaptation problems most. The Arab mother, who does not see any positive aspect of life in this country, cannot save herself from the feeling that she is always displaced. Layla, who lives with a constant longing for the homeland, is perhaps the unhappiest person of the novel. She thinks that she is the only one in the family who suffers most from living in the States because her husband was born in here and their daughter Hanan gets already accustomed to life there. One of the heartrending memories of Layla that makes her feel as displaced is when her eight –year old daughter Hanan does not want her mother to attend the Parents' Day at school. Because she talks "differently from the other parents," she may get Hanan "teased for at least a month." (89) Due to her Arabic accent, her daughter thinks that she does not fit into the environment there. The morning of the parent's day at school, Michel realizes how sorry her wife is and asks what makes her so sad. She explains:

"Hanan's school has Parent's Day today, when the mother or father spends the day with the kids, going to all their classes and meeting their friends and new teachers. (...) And she asked me not to come. ... She's embarrassed about my accent. I felt it from her before, but not like this" (90).

Her husband Michel does not say anything; he just smiles and squeezes her hand to show that he understands her, but Layla knows that Michael cannot understand her real sorrow, He cannot know how hurts deep inside for a mother not to attend a Parents' Day just because of the Arabic accent she has. She thinks that Michael has no idea

about how "terrible to experience" to be an "other" for the eyes of her own daughter. She thinks that she is an exile but her husband not, thus, he never understands her real feelings, he never feels and thinks the same as he does because he has never experienced the stressful life in the refugee camp, he never becomes an outsider, never feels displacement in the States.

Sense of displacement can be felt even in one's own country or in one's home either. The fact that a person cannot feel even a part of his / her own house is regenerated with Hanan. She does not like her Arabic name, the house she lives in with her family and also her family's lifestyle. She gets pregnant out of wedlock, and this case promotes the problems that cannot be repaired. Hanan is not happy with living her parents' house due to her mother's impositions of Arab culture and Arab lifestyle on her, so she is just like an exile and a displaced person even in her family house. To escape from the sense of displacement, she first moves to Aliyah's house, then she and her husband John own a house that she calls it their "own island" and it is "far from South Philly where (her) friends lived" (106). She craves to create a new world for herself where she feels she belongs to. She wants to "stamp every room" in the new house "with (her) impression, to mark it for (her)self" (106). She wants to decorate the rooms with the baskets she weaves. Her plans for using these baskets to stamp every room show that; even though she says she is an American, she emotionally has ties with her Arab origin and this origin helps her escape from the sense of displacement.

Moving out of South Philly, having a townhouse not a row house and wedding an American of Irish descent do not erase her being an exile she has inherited as an American of Palestinian origin. In the novel, for example, John thinks it is suitable to define Hanan's condition in the American society as 'ethnic,' however, Hanan does not like the word that makes her different, out of place (125). Another scene in which she feels herself displaced when a friend of John's from the university, who is working on Muslim women's engagement in politics in the Middle East, asks for help to Hanan to read her book for 'authenticity' (139). When Hanan says that she is not an Arab, her father was born in the US. Also, her 'mother is actually an immigrant', and the colleague responds that 'Hanan is a distinctly Arabic name'(139). Another scene when

Hanan's Arab identity becomes a center of the conversation is when two senior colleagues of her husband ask her origin;

“From which region do you [Hanan] hail?”,

"From 10th and Tasker," I replied, laughing. However, neither Farrington nor Keriakis cracked a smile. Farrington looked confused, and John looked like he would collapse.

"... But where in the Middle East do you come from?" he repeated as if I had not understood the question.

“Lebanon, Egypt?” (140-141)

Hanan does not expect to be a prominent figure of the meeting with her Arab origin. She realizes that she is different from these people, she is labeled as 'other', and this situation makes her feel displaced. Although she herself denies her Arab origin, she cannot change the fact that she is always an Arab for the others.

The concept of home carries different meanings for people in the same family sometimes. Aliyah, she is one of the daughters in the book, realizes that she does not belong to the place where her parents called home on her visits to her relatives in Palestine. Her experience with the city and the people there helps her understand that Jerusalem does not mean the same for her as for her parents:

“So I wasn't going to the home Baba had been born in. I never could return to that because it had been replaced by a walled-in city to which my dark skin and last name denied me access. Even worse, I couldn't gain access to Sidi's and Kareem's world, partly because of my Americanness, my accent, and partly because they didn't really see me as part of their lives” (66).

Aliyah's state of being “in-betweenness” makes her feel displaced. She is disappointed by her half American half Arab position that alienates her from both

cultures. Aliyah's condition can be explained by the terms 'hybridity' and 'thirdspace'. The conception of identity resulting from cross-cultural refraction is conceptualized by Homi K. Bhabha under the term "hybridity". He states that the hybrid identities which emerge from the dislocation of individuals are favorable for the construction of new identities. Bhabha explains the new identity as :

For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. ... The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. (Bhabha, 1990:211)

All things considered, hybridity is a third space, a new site where the identity is constructed as a consequence of cross-cultural refraction.

Edward W. Soja further develops a new perspective on the term "thirdspace" in his book *Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (2012). 'Thirdspace' is defined by Soja as "a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (2012:2). He makes use of bell hooks's notion of resistance— that can be explained as a space for resistance. hooks asserts that marginality is a site of potentiality for cultivating our capacity to resist and to find alternatives for a new and better world. As Soja puts it, "Thirthing produces what might best be called a cumulative trialectics that is radically open to additional othernesses, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge" (2012:61). In other words, thirdspace

is full of options for fourth-, fifth spaces, and it is a site of openness that let hybrid identities develop themselves.

Aliyah explains how her hyphenated identity affects her relationship with her fiancée Kareem with the following words; “There was a hyphen there, connecting the two things that created me: the one that drew me to him and the other that kept me at a distance” (65-66). Aliyah feels that her half American identity is inappropriate both for living in Palestine and having good relations with her relatives and her fiancée.

Assimilation is a way to escape from unbelonging to the society they live in. People who are assimilated in a society become akin to others by learning and using the customs and culture of the new society. The process of assimilation takes time, and it cannot be expected that Arab immigrants become assimilated into an alien culture immediately.

Compared to other women in the circle, the necessity of adaptation is mostly felt by Siham. She tries to adapt to the new so-called- ‘cultural things’. She gets adjusted to the shapes of the streets, apartments, and moreover, she tries to adapt to personal relations. Because of the problematic social and political conditions of Palestine, Siham and Nader realize that they need to be assimilated into the new world since they know that they cannot go back to Palestine anymore. Although they are quite decisive about the adaptation, they are still afraid to disappear entirely in the new country. Darraj puts elements like the blue eye (a charm believed to ward off evil) and food to prevent that their characters' sense of loss.

Siham is enthusiastic about sharing her new life, new experiences with her family in Palestine. She sends mails her sister and tells the life, different cultures, and traditions there. In order to escape from the sense of displacement and unbelonging, she starts listening to English music like the jazz music, and the songs of ‘Miles Davis in an effort "to be infinitely more American" (10).

The theme of language and culture are the points in the novel that symbolizes both the necessity for adapting to the new land and the link to sustain connections with the homeland. Learning a new language means learning a new culture, too, and the mothers in the novel either reluctantly or willingly learn and use English to have a comfortable life in the States. English is the thing, which surrounded the characters in the novel in the US, a country that is still foreign to them. The struggle to learn English is a reminder of their secondary position as exiles in the new land.

In the novel, it seems that the mother Siham dedicates so much time, money, and effort to turn herself into an American, so she takes up English courses and practices her English "like a religion" with the help of a primer and an Arabic - English dictionary that her husband buys for her. She takes up English classes at a college, and her professor thinks, 'she is one of the most advanced students in the class'. She tries to be more American as possible as she can, so she may feel that she also belongs to the new world like her husband. Darraj gives some details of Siham's efforts to be an American in the following:

She was sitting one November afternoon in this room. As she embroidered an octagonal cross-stitch pattern on a black mesh background, she listened to a Miles Davis cassette tape. It was part of her effort to be infinitely more American, like watching the news and grilling hamburgers. She would conquer jazz music just as she had the others, and her English professor had loaned her his cassette of Davis's music. (28)

In order to fit in the community, she lives in and to accommodate herself to her husband's life, who is fluent in English and familiar with the community in Philadelphia, Siham tries her best to learn the language and culture belongs to the new world.

Layla, the mother from the refugee camp, unlike Siham, has an intense hatred for being in the States. Her failure to speak English keeps her alienated from the new world. She has no ambition to learn the language or to interact with people in the States because she still hopes to back to Palestine. She is ultimately against the culture, tradition, and even way of living of the new land. Moreover, she never feels herself safe in here and misses her homeland more every time she faces to face with the difficulties living in the States. She tries to overcome the sense of alienation and displacement by remembering the happy times in her homeland. She even rejects to use English at home despite the fact that she is married to an American born man. She thinks that the new homeland does not offer her a peaceful life. Her son died in her womb, and she has a daughter, Hanan, who rejects her Arab identity, plus her husband Michel is battered for his money. According to her, life in Philadelphia is not the one she can stand for being a part of it that means; she does not belong to this place both physically and mentally. Among all the characters in the novel, only Layla is aware that she is displaced and her yearning for Palestine will never end. The memories of Palestine, her homeland, keep haunting her. She feels sickness for missing her home because of the painful circumstances that forced her to leave due to the war, but at the same time, she feels nostalgic towards the homeland. According to Friedman "homesickness . . . is a cryptogram; the word opens up into opposites: sick for home and sick of home" (2004:191). She never accepts anything new; she does not even change the old furniture as she always believes in returning to real home one day. She is too much keen on her traditions, and she speaks mostly Arabic at home, not English and her English, Hanan thinks, "was still burdened after twenty-six years in America" (74). At first, when Hanan was a child, Layla was much more careful about her English as she wanted to be enough for her daughter and not to embarrass her in school activities but then, as the time passes, when Hanan has become a grown-up, Layla insists on talking in Arabic with her daughter Hanan whose Arabic is not good enough for Layla. Layla especially uses Arabic while she is angry with her daughter or when she does not contend with the situation she is in. Once Hanan drives the two of them in her small red Ford Escort to the airport to take her cousin Rola who comes from Ramallah, they start to discuss;

“Hanan, go out of this lane,” her mother commanded.

“Too fast. We want to be there alive.”

For some reason, that calm, haughty exterior jangled her nerves, even though Hanan was used to it. She swerved sharply, spitefully, into the middle lane, hoping to unnerve her mother.

“Crazy girl,” her mother said calmly, clicking her tongue against her teeth reproachfully.

“I’ll show you crazy, Mama,” Hanan laughed, swerving back into the left lane, then back again to the middle.

“Why are you so crazy?” her mother asked her in Arabic.

“Because I’m your daughter!” Hanan replied, in English, on purpose.” (76)

Layla's insistence on speaking Arabic manifests itself under challenging conditions:

American coffee?” Mama asked, opening the freezer door. “I thought I—yes, here it is,” she said. She pulled out a bag of Arabic ground coffee and switching to Arabic, added, “You girls forget everything when you live away from your families.” “That American coffee tastes like dirty water. (108)

Hanan, although her mother asks in Arabic, answers in English:

“I know you like living here,” Mama said in Arabic, “and you and Aliyah must feel like you have so much freedom in your lives now.”

“That’s exactly how we feel,” I answered in English.

She noted my answer, but persisted in Arabic, her lips hissing around every letter. “Neither your Auntie Lamis

nor I are happy with this arrangement. It's just not right, Hanan." (108)

Both examples above show that Layla intentionally speaks Arabic, especially when she wants to remind their own Arabic culture and traditions to her daughter Hanan whose Americanized behaviors and way of living are flatly contradicted her Arab roots. Layla thinks that neither her husband Michel nor her daughter Hanan understands her dilemma and her troubled life in western society, her feeling of loneliness and deprivation. She does not feel herself belong to the life in the new land and she cannot think that she is part of a "home created by a community, language, culture, and customs" as Edward Said (2012) says in *Reflections on Exile* (176). The exiles are regarded as outsiders in the US for having a language barrier and difficulty of understanding and adopting American customs. Because of the failure of adapting to American customs, Layla becomes tense and worried about her daughter Hanan's Americanized way of life. She is always in a fight with her daughter to teach her Arab customs and traditions. The conflicts between the mother and her daughter, who are quite different from each other, are handled in many parts of the book. One of the scenes when Layla criticize Hanan for her rude behavior to one of the family members;

"The worst was the recurring memory of the time she had taken a seat next to her elderly uncle Ibrahim during a family gathering and had crossed her ankle over her knee. While she tried to chat with her impenetrable uncle, everyone else in the room—her parents, cousins, aunts, and uncles—had either glared at her or shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Only later that evening, when everyone had gone home, and she was washing dishes for her mother, had she been told that the bottom of her foot had been plainly visible and facing Uncle Ibrahim." "So?" she'd said, using her fingers to funnel a

stream of warm water into the belly and down the insides of a serving bowl.

“You never do that!” her mother had exclaimed. “It’s an insult to show someone the bottom of your foot—everyone in that room is going to be talking about it. My brother Ibrahim will probably never come here again.”

“Mama,” Hanan persisted, her irritation flooding over her like the water now spilling over the sides of the bowl.

“Mama, how can he be mad at me for something I didn’t even know I was doing?”

Layla, who is highly committed to their traditions, is afraid that her daughter will forget their own culture and she will be lost in the States. She always struggles for keeping Arabic traditions and memories alive because, as a mother, it is her duty to teach them to the next generations in order not to be assimilated into the American way of living. As she says, "Oil and water don't mix," referring to Americans and Arabs. Layla's rejection to learn a new language, to communicate with people around, and to assimilate in the States make her feel forcefully displaced and she is the only character in the novel, the reader can feel her resistance against adopting a new society. Layla’s inability of assimilation can be explained as a reason for the confusion of immigrants’ cross-cultural experience. Edward Said states the reason for confusion;

The question of ‘traveling theories,’ suggesting the idea that travel generates a complex system of cultural representation that depends not on power but on motion and willingness to go into different worlds, use different languages, and understand the multiplicity of disguise, masks, and rhetoric. (qtd. in El-Aswad:235).

Not only the events that take place outside the society but also some situations in the community may cause the person to question his / her belonging. For instance; Layla feels jealous and also angry when Siham brags about her new dishwasher, while

the rest of the mothers in the community cannot afford because of the economic condition they are in. This fancy machine reminds her wealthy life once she had in Palestine and she compares her luxurious life in Palestine with her poverty in the States;

My father could have been wealthy also—he had owned half the farmland in the village! God knows what it was worth now, especially in a prime location like Jerusalem’s outskirts. But now, in Philadelphia, we shared even our walls with our neighbors. I counted pennies painstakingly, because I had four children who eventually would need college money, and I rarely bought new dresses or fancy clothes—and here was Siham with a fancy, expensive new machine, to remind me of what had been lost! (61)

Lamis’s words are an indication that she cannot forget her past, her memories of immigration and dislocation. Siham’s fancy machine reminds Lamis her status: she is an immigrant with an ‘inheritance of loss and exile’: “But now, in Philadelphia, we shared even the walls with our neighbors” (p.64). Facing this reality makes Lamis overwhelmed and sad. She reacts this situation more emotionally than the others and accuses Siham of breaking the feeling of unity and forgetting all of the difficulties of being an exile in Philadelphia, especially she gets angry to her as she breaks the ties of sisterhood they have at the first day they meet. She intends to remind Siham about the roots, the memories full of sorrow because their ‘common bond’ was their ‘only salve’. Then she blames herself for having a “class conscience, she has developed for years” (62). Even though they do not have the same economic situation, they are all outsiders, displaced exiles; coming from Palestine with only one bag and a lot of good old memories belong to the homeland.

Darraj's second-generation characters of the book have no similar experiences with their mothers in terms of assimilation and adaptation. The daughters born in exile, have no direct experience of the Palestine, homeland, and they are in between the

traditions their parents try to transmit and their direct involvement in American society. The second generation, according to Salaita, "replaces Arabic with English, traditions with individualism, and working-class origins with upward mobility" (2007: 62).

Hanan, as a second-generation, is the opposite of her mother. While her mother is questioning the reason for coming to the States, for Hanan, living in there is a part of her own dreams. So, Hanan is very eager to assimilate to the new life and culture. She attends college, makes new friends, and finds a job to keep in touch and blend in with the society around her. She leaves her parents' house because of her strict mother who always criticizes her for inappropriate behaviors as an Arab woman, and she puts some distances between her parents and herself not only physically but also emotionally, she has premarital sex. She weds to Irish American John, a research assistant of sociology, then, their marriage ends, according to Salaita "not because of unbridgeable cultural differences" but because of "more general—and common—factors: conflicts between Hanan and her in-laws; different visions of the future; a lack of fundamental trust in one another's level of devotion" (2011:81). Hanan opposes all traditional beliefs, and with her lifestyle, her decisions, and her behaviors, she is entirely free of the roles Arab society has set for her.

Conclusion

The concept of exile is one of the most controversial areas of our time and includes migration, displacement, minority rights, global mobility, and political culture in academic studies. It means a willing or an unwilling adventure, and it begets losing home or adaptation to life in new surroundings. There are plenty of hindrances that the exiles face in the new land and some of them are language barriers that limit communication between those residents in the US and the exile, discrimination and humiliation due to skin color and origin, being accepted as the 'other' since the exile is portrayed as not attached to American traditions and way of life and not to mention, nostalgia that most of the Arab born exiles suffer greatly. Therefore; It is not surprising that those subjects are covered in the works of Arab American writers who are also the exiles or the children of exiles.

Exile, displacement, and hybridity are major key concepts in Arab American literature. Arab American writers, like Susan Muaddi Darraj and many others, face and study many issues like racism, hatred, and discrimination in America and their works reflect the psychological and social situations of the Arab exiles in the States.

The Inheritance of Exile is one of the precious works of Arab American literature in terms of depicting the life stories of exile women and their psychological battles with exilic experience which is not something that people would usually want to go through, unless they willingly adapt, assimilate and establish a new life in the new land.

The concepts of home and unbelonging which are the parts of Darraj's women's exilic experience and also the recurring themes of Arab American literature are deeply analyzed in the light of another Arab American exile Edward Said. Throughout his life, from childhood until his death from leukemia, Edward Said could not escape the sense of unbelonging. He was sometimes treated as the 'other,' and he also experienced some particular emotions, like loneliness, despair, alienation, and he mostly suffered from nostalgia because they look forward to returning to his homeland one day, but for several reasons, he could not. According to Said, people in exile do not belong to

anywhere; they do not have a place, so-called home because they are in a continuous condition of moving. Living in exile is an obstacle to keeping traditions alive and enjoy life. However, Said states that the word exile does not always have negative connotations. Exiles can take advantage of the country they live in as an exile. They may hope to have equal rights, better opportunities for education and work, and a safe life that their homeland cannot offer.

The women characters in *The Inheritance of Exile* show different attitudes towards life in the new land. While the daughters –seem to fit in the new society, their mothers, however, refuse to assimilate because they desperately cling to their own customs and traditions and hope to go back to their homeland one day. Hanan's mother Layla is an excellent example of an exile who does not want to be a part of the life in the States, and she even criticizes the others for being accustomed to the American customs and traditions. Siham, on the contrary, come to the States willingly with the hopes of a better future, and she works hard to be like an American as possible as she can to adopt the life in the States.

The concept of displacement is also discussed via the experiences of the characters in the book. Aliyah, for example, on her visit to Palestine, realizes she neither belongs to the US, nor does she belong in her native country. Siham's short visit to Chestnut street, the elite part of the town, makes her feel displaced because this part of the city belongs to the American residents. The language barrier for the Arab mothers that leads to a sense of displacement has also been mentioned.

This study also explores the various definitions of home from Arab mothers and their American daughters' perspectives. In *the Inheritance of Exile*, home, both literally and metaphorically, is a place in which the characters shape and find their identities in the US. In other words, in the novel, home is both a place for challenging the difficulties of being an exile and also a place for finding the self in a different world. In the book, home for Layla is Ramallah, Palestine; however, her daughter Hanan calls South Philadelphia as home.

In this study, the concept of assimilation is also discussed. The experience of exile varies from one person to another. While Some exiles, like Layla who suffers from alienation and unsuccessful assimilation due to her hope of going back one day, never try to adapt to the new life in America; the others, want to fit themselves in the melting pot. Siham and Nader want to be Americans, and they see the United States as the land of dreams and opportunities for a better future.

Arab exiles settled in the United States cope with the language barrier and they are mostly treated as the 'other' because they cannot keep up with the American culture and traditions and do not have enough English language skills. They also experience some particular emotions, like loneliness, despair, alienation, and they mostly suffer from nostalgia, and they hope to return to their homeland one day. So, it can be concluded that Edward Said's thoughts on exile and its drawbacks show parallelism with the problems and experiences of the characters in the work of Susan Muaddi Darraj's *The Inheritance of Exile*.

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