Cultural identity and the dilemma of “in-betweenness” in selected Arab-American and Jewish-American novels

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2019

ABSTRACT

The In-Between status is a position that a diasporic/migrant subject occupies while s/he is attached to two worlds. One of them is the home of origin and the other is the host home. This attachment is of two types. The first type is that which involves a severe confusion concerning both places and how to identify with each one of them. This confused attitude might result in either assimilation with the host country and a formation of a sense of inferiority about anything connected to the home of origin, or it can result in an exclusive style of life in which diasporic/migrant subjects detach themselves from the host society and practice their own religion and culture while nurturing a sense of superiority over the mainstream culture in the host country. The second type is the hybrid one through which the diasporic subject comes to maintain a good relationship with his/her home of origin and simultaneously live and communicate with the host society with a sense of responsibility towards it. That is, they maintain a sense of belonging to both cultures and the two halves of their hyphenated identity are reconciled. This hybrid position is what Homi K. Bhabha calls the third space which encourages creativity and civil communication. It is a manufactured space that one makes effort to attain. It is a new home in the imagination that heals the rift of the identity.

The study focuses on the formation of the image of home as it is very crucial when it comes to the problematic phase of the 'in-between' status. Some of the reasons behind migration is related to matters connected to the confinement of the body within rigid cultural patterns the defiance of which can lead in some cases to violence against the body, whether in the domestic private space or the public political one. It is also connected to constraint of liberalisms and inhibition of freedoms that renders home to be conceived as an exile for citizens. The Jewish-American and Arab-American narratives under study demonstrate this aspect of 'home as exile' and reflect the amount of culminating suffering and anxiety that direct the native's gaze towards the West. The liminal situation between home as 'exile' and the West as 'haven' is tackled in the Arab-American texts of Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine* (2001), and Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006); and is manifested also in the Jewish-American texts of Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986), and Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* (1995).

The In-Between status that contributes to the crisis of identity for many diasporic/migrant subjects does not confine itself to specific territories particularly a territory known as the

home of origin. The home can be an ideal image in the minds of the diasporic/migrant subjects but still they are attached to it in terms of the home culture that they keep and maintain while living in the host country. In this case, the concept of the nation plays a significant role in the making of kind of exclusion the migrant or diasporic community is prescribing upon itself.

The aim of the study is to investigate how the selected narratives handle the issue of diasporic/Migrant people who succumb to an identity crisis that in many occasions remain enduringly incurable. It illustrates the various images of home (whether 'ideal' or 'exilic') and its impact on the dilemma of identity. It also highlights the way according to which the narratives suggest solutions to that identity crisis.

My approach to this topic is done through the lenses of diaspora and migration theory as I am analysing issues of identity connected to the East vs West within the migration/diaspora spaces; I also rely on gender theory when it comes to female migrant/diasporc figures who experience inferiority/superiority complex connected with the home of origin. Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence are utilized to explain identity dilemmas within Eastern spaces influenced by the Western colonial and cultural hegemony. Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity is also used to show the flexibility of the subject's identity, though it is still connected with the concepts of a nation, collective memory and common history. The notion of 'exile' is also used to explain the migrant/diasporic subject's tendency to leave the home of origin after experiencing a cultural identity crisis within an imagined liminal space.

DEDICATION

To the memory of my beloved mother

And

To my dearest most cherished father

And

To the ones who have always been there,

my brothers,

Shujaa, Husam, Bilal and little Ayub.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the President of the University of Human Development in Sulaimanyah/Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Dr. Mariwan Ahmed Rasheed, for his constant support since my first preparations for my PhD. Without his permission to pursue my studies, I would not have reached this far in my academic endeavours. His continued concern in following up my work has only overwhelmed me with more yearning for success and achievement. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Ali Qaradaghi, the Concessioner of the University of Human Development and our spiritual father, whose vision of progress and knowledge and whose belief in human potential always inspire me. Furthermore, special thanks are due to Dr. Rauf Kareem Mahmood, Dean of the College of Languages at UHD, my boss and mentor, for all the facilities he provided and all the encouragement he offered throughout seriously critical times while I was conducting my PhD study.

Moreover, I would like to thank all the staff members at the Higher Committee of Education Development in Iraq, the party which granted me the scholarship and gave me the opportunity to pursue my studies. Throughout the period of this thesis, they have been supportive and cooperative. Their work was so accurate and their system was up to the level of their mission. Special thanks to Dr. Zuhair Abdul-Ghani for his hard work in supporting the scholarship program and deep gratitude is due to Dr. Abdul-Hakim Al-Rawi, may God Almighty rest his soul, for all the inspirational talks and advice he gave to us throughout this educational experience.

I would also like to thank the staff members at the University of Essex, especially at the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies, for their efforts to create a perfect learning environment and provide the students with the best facilities to enhance their progress and enrich their journey of learning. I particularly thank my supervisor, Dr. Jak Peake, for his invaluable guidelines and insightful suggestions which opened many venues for analysis and thoughtful assessments. His encouragement and patient work in checking my writing and my argumentation played a great role in helping my curiosity for learning snowball and boosting my motivation to do more. Other people who deserve best gratitude are Dr. Owen Robinson and Dr. Fatima el-Issawi, the supervisory board members whose insightful remarks and constructive criticism paved the way for the semi-final shape of my thesis. I was also lucky to have Owen again as my internal examiner with the brilliant Dr. Geoffrey Nash from the University of Sunderland as

external examiner, who, with their professional vision, made my viva experience a beneficial one.

Worth mentioning here are my friends who were always ready to help especially Dr. Majeed Midhin, Dr. Rasha Al-Shalabi and Dr. Mahmood Darraj who encouraged me a lot and gave me much of their time to discuss many points relating to argumentation and methodology. Their support was really important for the formation of my early research ideas. Many thanks are also due to Dr. Melissa Shales and Dr. Stephanie Driver who helped in technical matters to put this thesis in its final form. Moreover, I cannot forget the people who helped me fight the sense of homesickness; they are my dearest friends and flatmates, Raihana Mohammed and Dr. Rewayda Abo-Alsabeh. Their love and care made me feel as if I were at home with my family.

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INTRODUCTION

In a world characterized by magnificent development in terms of science and technology as well as constant migrations and global mobility, cultural identity is far away from being fixed. Borders that used to confine a certain people within its territories could symbolize guardians of traditions, norms and cultural tenets. However, nowadays they have lost their powers of the old times. Borders, real or imagined, become a space for negotiation and translation of cultures. Migrants and diasporic people are the most affected by the border and its role in reforming one's cultural identity. This thesis aims at examining the space in which identity dilemmas occur due to a number of forces in selected Arab-American and Jewish-American novels. All these novels tackle the theme of 'In-Betweenness' wherein two cultures are involved and a choice should be made to choose either one of them or to negotiate to occupy a hybrid space. My objective will be to provide an analysis of the aesthetic representation of the dilemma of cultural identity for Arabs and Jews who migrate to the US or are born there to migrant parents or grandparents and how they grapple with that dilemma. The problems facing these groups, as they are presented in the literature under discussion, are various and far from homogenous due to a number of social and political imperatives relating to the host country. My selection of the works of literature under study depends on the subject matter that they present which focuses on identity transformation in line with gender issues, orthodox traditions, East vs West challenges, and the quest for the ideal home. Though they seem to have different cultures, Arabs and Jews share a lot of cultural convictions and religious restrictions. Many progressive Arabs and Jews could only find themselves in 'exile' while living within their own communities. Others who are abiding by the orthodox teachings of their sects refuse to mingle with the host society and prefer exclusion. Through analysing the aesthetic representation of the identity dilemma, I scrutinize the reasons that lead to the inner conflict for the characters and the manners that they manifest to reach a resolution of that conflict.

My primary sources comprise of migrant/diaspora genre novels; Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine* (2001), and Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) are related to the Arab-American corpus[1]. Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986), and Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel*

[1] Arab-American literature is an ethnic literature consisting of literary works written by American authors with Arab origins residing in the United States. The Arab Diaspora in America started in the late 19th century with the Arab migrations to the US from the Ottoman Empire. Scholars agree that this literature started with Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid* and the works of the *Mahjar* Poets, including Gibran Khalil Gibran and Mikha'il Na'ima.

(1995) belong to the Jewish-American body of literary output[2]. All these texts deal with migrant characters who left their home of origin for a better life in the West, or diaspora characters whose parents have left the home of origin for again a better life in the West. The authors themselves have experienced the same issues that they have registered in their novels, mainly the situation of being 'in-between' two cultures and the dilemma stemming from it. They have aesthetically delineated the complexity of migration or diasporic life and the cultural challenges that play a significant role in the hybridization process dealt with by the individuals involved.

Throughout this thesis, I aim at highlighting the manner in which these texts provide an example of a migrant or a diasporic subject's problematic exertion to construct a hybrid space and achieve self-realization. I focus on how the texts depict both Arab and Jewish situations wherein the factor of the West's superiority and modernization play an important role in problematizing one's own cultural identity and causing a sense of alienation from the home of origin and its traditions. The motif of gender is incorporated within my study as it is closely related to the idea of modernization and feminist calls for equality and liberation. The texts foreground the issue of gender and consider it as an essential aspect that problematizes cultural identity for migrants and diasporic people. The image of ideal home is of paramount significance when it comes to matters of belonging, hence it is also tackled in this study to reflect on the anxiety of the individual when he/she finds themselves in an alien hostile environment, a situation confronted by both Arabs and Jews. I also aim at showing how the texts emphasise the horrors of violence and war and their role in disturbing the image of home. Memory of violence in the home of origin or in the host home contribute to the identity crisis and the sense of loss for migrants and diasporic people.

To achieve these aims, in each chapter I apply theoretical discourses on the politics of cultural identity relating to home, gender, diaspora and migration, under a main topic of East vs West and diaspora vs homeland. I engage these discourses in dialogue with the literary texts to reflect how the texts represent the inner conflict and shattered sense of self as a result of being exposed to two cultures. In addition, I argue that the 'liminal' space contributes to the problematization of identity for migrants and diasporic figures due to many factors associated

[2] Jewish-American literature is an ethnic literature written by American writers of Jewish origin. It is primarily written in English but it also includes writings in other languages, the most important of which is Yiddish. This literature started with Sephardic immigrants who arrived in the US in the 17th century. They experimented with memoirs in the beginning and continued to produce other literary genres in the later centuries. Most notable voices of this type of literature belong to Emma Lazarus, Gertrude Stein, Abraham Cahan, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth.

with cultural and social acceptance of the individual by the group, whether this group is one's own community or the host society. My approach to this topic is done through the lenses of cultural theory as I am analysing issues of identity connected to the East vs West and migration; I also rely on gender theory when it comes to female migrant figures who experience an inferiority or superiority complex connected with the home of origin. Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence are utilized to explain identity dilemmas within Eastern spaces influenced by the Western colonial and cultural hegemony. Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity is also used to show the flexibility of the subject's identity, though it is still connected with the concepts of a nation, collective memory and common history.

Having done so, I exhibit how the texts illustrate the different factors that result in identity dilemmas of 'in-between' situations and also show the possibilities of resolving those dilemmas. The thesis leads one to observe that despite cultural differences, Arab and Jewish aesthetic representations reflect the same anxieties when it comes to matters of home and identity.

1. In-Between/Liminal Spaces

Though modern concepts of hybridity show that colonialism belongs to the past, its effects, histories and cultures continue to manifest themselves in the present time. The dominant nations of the past have always suffered from an anxiety which gives way to the dominated to resist the dominant. That anxiety is the ambivalence which characterizes the discourses of colonialism and culture. Ambivalence is not only attributed to the dominant but it also characterizes the dominated. This ambivalence is brought about as results of two cultures coming to exist next to each other. And this situation is what Homi K. Bhabha calls "hybridity". In terms of ethnicity and culture, hybridity can be defined as the accessing of two or more ethnic identities by the individual. Bhabha believes in the hybridity of cultures, that is, in the impurity and mixedness of cultures especially in a postcolonial world. Cultures are always interacting with each other and hence cultural mixedness will be the result. However, Bhabha emphasizes *hybridization* more than *hybridity*. He emphasizes "hybridity's ongoing process"; which means that cultures are the result of attempts to stop the flow of cultural hybridity's. He focuses on the borderlines of cultures; on the in-between space and what happens there. That in-between space is what he calls the *liminal*. He states that [t]hese in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs

of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[3]

Antony Easthope states that "Bhabha's hybridity can be seen as a position or effect in between existing positions. Bhabha's term 'interestices' means to respond to Derrida's account of difference as spatial differentiation."[4] Cultural difference is the product of in-between spaces. It is an "interstitial passage between fixed identifications."[5] It is the space where one can interact with the Others, influence them and be influenced by them. The liminal, or what happens in-between cultures, is responsible for creating new cultural meanings. For Bhabha, the location of culture is in the signification, in the constant creation of meanings and not in the physical borders between nations. This location is spatial as well as temporal. The liminal can be seen in post-colonial social spaces and it participates in the creation of their new identities, that is in their becoming.[6]

1.1. Definition of 'In-Betweenness'

The location of 'in-betweenness' is applicable to those who live between borders, in-between homeland and host country. Borders are "distinct in that they presuppose a territory defined by a geopolitical line: two sides arbitrarily separated and policed, but also joined by legal and illegal practices of crossing and communication."[7] For most migrants and diasporic peoples, borders are crucial physical or imaginary lines; they either frequently cross them or imaginatively live in them. They experience this kind of life on the margins of nations. The border life obliges one to redefine concepts like history, identity and community. Borders always result in contradictions and ambivalence because those who dwell in-between them always gaze at "the realm of the *beyond*."[8] Homi Bhabha states at the introduction to his landmark *The Location of Culture*:

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[3] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2009, p.2 and Huddart, David, *Homi K. Bhabha*. London & New York: Routledge, 2006, p.7.

[4] Antony Easthope, "Homi Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity, or Derrida Versus Lacan" in *HJEAS*, Vol. 4, No. 1 / 2 , Theory and Criticism [Part 1] 1998, p.146 http://www.jstor.org/stable/41273996

[5] Ibid.

[6] David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*. London & New York: Routledge, 2006, p.7.

[7] James Clifford, "Diasporas", *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994). Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365, Accessed: 07-01-2018 22:36 UTC. p.304.

[8] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Routledge: 2004), p. 1.

> The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past….Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.[9]

This 'beyond' or 'in-between' position always disturbs conventional paradigms of thought because of the fact of shuttling between two or more places. Any binary opposites will end up negotiated and reformulated as a result of this movement. The physical border crossing is definitely leading to an imaginative one. Therefore, Homi Bhabha projects this imaginative crossing to conventional ideas about identity and subjectivity which traditionally depend on binary oppositions, like self/other, native/foreign, master/slave. These oppositions proved dysfunctional and inappropriate in a postcolonial world. Bhabha encourages the adoption of the 'art of the present' which signifies a habit of mind that rejects those oppositions and regard the crossing as a positive status that appreciates moments in which cultural differences are articulated. This thesis shows that the texts under study reflect the notion of 'art of the present' as the protagonists refuse to accept fixed oppositions and are alert to positive aspects of the crossing.

For Bhabha the idea of a 'sovereign' or essentialised subject is not accurate. He believes that identity is a discursive product. So, identity is always in a state of flux. And as the border is a space of new possibilities and new narratives, identities of both individuals and groups are liable to many transformations. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood — singular or communal — that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative signs of collaborations, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[10] In a similar vein, James Clifford states, "Transnational connections break the binary relation of *minority* communities with *majority* societies—a dependency that structures projects of both assimilation and resistance."[11]The characters presented in the selected Arab-American novels and Jewish-American novels here are reflecting this transformative identity within the liminal space.

The in-between space is a site of empowerment. The majority of migrants are involved directly in the transmission of cultural tradition and legacy of both that of the homeland and the

[9] Ibid., p. 1-2.
[10] Ibid., p. 2.
[11] James Clifford, Diasporas, p. 311.

host country. They do not accept without negotiation invalid customs as they are prescribed by the mainstream. The migrant can act as an agent of change. Therefore, traditional knowledge can be refashioned to signify unexpected meanings because it is influenced by cultural resources of other places. Bhabha calls this action 'restaging the past'.[12]

Accordingly, the subject becomes produced from the process of *hybridisation*. His or her identity is contrived from a variety of sources and materials The concept of hybridity has proved to be a vital "way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity." The loss that fixed ideas evoke in migrants and diasporic subjects comes to be altered into "a hopeful new paradigm where motion, multiplicity, errancy, unpredictability, hybridity and impurity are gleefully welcomed."[13]

Homi Bhabha further sheds light on the impact of the border on received binary knowledges. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory of the uncanny, he explained the border as a space that can evoke uncanny feelings for migrants and diasporic subjects. Freud defines the uncanny as the experience of confronting something in reality that we have already regarded as imaginary or when we suddenly recall or see something which has long been hidden or forgotten. For Bhabha, the uncanny can be explained as the confusion of received cultural narratives of individual and group identity within the 'border' space. It is a point in time when forgotten or concealed elements in that cultural or national construction return to haunt the subject. This uncanny confusion contributes to a traumatic condition or anxiety. Bhabha's uncanny serves as a signifier that every exclusionary strategy put forward by any kind of discourse will finally be haunted by those who are excluded, marginalized or persecuted. Those who cannot be represented via conventional and received mainstream narratives will return as unhomely figures. Hence, this type of uncanny has the power to disturb those binary oppositions employed through discourse used by nationalists and colonialists. I have employed this notion of 'uncanny ' to illustrate how characters, especially Arab Americans come to handle their identity dilemma and how the uncanny helps in transforming them into hybrid characters.

The role of cultural production here is paramount. For Bhabha, the migrant genre in literature can illustrate the dilemma of those marginalized figures like migrants from previously

[12] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 3.
[13] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialsm* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010) p. 254.

colonized territories and refugees and thus disturb received conventional paradigms of thought in order to reflect the world's hybridity and difference. In such literature, cultural differences are shown as unrepresented, uncanny presences referring to people with experiences of displacement. Bhabha argues that "the critic must attempt to fully realise, and take responsibility for, the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present"[14]

Discourses of power pose a challenge for hybridization. They can be used in literature and media to marginalize some forms of identities by applying a stereotyping method that puts obstacles in front of new forms of hybrid identities.[15] These discourses of power tend to classify people into categories of 'us' and 'them'. They tend to fashion identities for minorities according to their interests that define who is authentic or not. R. Radhakrishnan also points out the paradox between critical theories that promote hybridity and difference with the actual experiences that diasporic subjects and migrants have in their countries of residence.[16]

Dialectical pairings like white/non-white, Orient/Occident, etc, are rejected when it comes to the new concepts of hybridity. Andrew Smith says that "Such strategies and hierarchies are threatened when we look closely at the borderline between communities, at the threshold of what we call 'cultural differences', and realize how implicated different identities are in and with each other."[17] The in-between space has become the place in which translation and negotiation happen and hence it is the place where the meanings of culture come to be created. Smith states:

> So 'hybridity' can become a term *not* for the mixing of once separate and self-contained cultural traditions, but rather for the recognition of the fact that all culture is an arena of struggle, where self is played off against the purportedly "other," and in which the attempts of the dominant culture to close and patrol its hegemonic account are threatened by the return of minority stories and histories, and by strategies of appropriation and revaluation.[18]

Many countries, including those of the Middle East, have become multicultural—or we can say also hybrid—due to global migration as well as the effect of the cultural hegemony of the colonial era. This hybridization can happen within a context of equality, mutual respect, and

[14] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 13.
[15] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting identities*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 209.
[16] R. Radhakrishnan, *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Location*, P. 174.
[17] Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies." Neil Lazarus. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (Cambrdge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 248.
[18] Ibid. , p. 252.

tolerance. Nevertheless, selectivity and discrimination cannot be avoided entirely due to the tough material and institutional realities inside the societies of the most unprejudiced countries.[19] So living in 'in-between' spaces has its own challenges. And here the multicultural or hybridized subject experiences marginality and hence a distorted sense of belonging whether to his/her own community in the host country or to his/her own original homeland. In the light of this argument, I will focus on the process of Westernization taking place within Arab and Jewish communities inside their homelands before the experience of migration to probe the factors that leads to identity dilemmas.

Further, I will discuss the issue of Westernization and assimilation after migration and diaspora experiences for both Arabs and Jews. Primarily, the word "diaspora" was first used to describe the dispersal of the Jews around the world. However, it has come to be used in contemporary cultural analysis to refer to various migratory groups like the Irish, East Europeans, Asians, Arabs, Africans[20], etc., all seeking refuge or a better life somewhere else rather than their home of origin. The term comes to refer to itinerant figures and groups like, immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community"[21] Diasporas also refer to "longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future. Diasporas also connect multiple communities of a dispersed population."[22] The concept of diaspora comes to provide "a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a 'homeland'."[23] Within the concept of diaspora, the notion of borders and homeland are of primary significance. All the texts under this study provide representations of a lacuna between borders, physical and imagined simultaneously, and a confusion as to where can one find home.

Avtar Brah vividly connects relocation, an essential feature of diasporic life, with pain of loss; she points out that "[t]he word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience." She adds that nevertheless, they make a space for new beginnings. "They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide,

[19] Ibid., p. 251.
[20] Michelle Keown et. al. (eds.), *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2009), p. 1.
[21] Totolyan, 1991, p. 4-5.
[22] James Clifford, p. 304.
[23] Avtar Brah, p. 180.

reassemble and reconfigure."[24] Migration must incorporate connotations like "adaptation to changes, dislocations and transformations, and the construction of new forms of knowledge and ways of seeing the world."[25] The effects of migration can take a long time that exceeds the point of arrival. It reformulates thinking and feeling and readjusts one's mode of being in the world.[26] Therefore, my concern in this study is to investigate the sense of loss and its role in paving the way for new beginnings or we can also say, showing the way for a new understanding and conceptualization of homeland and belonging.

Robin Cohen regards diasporas as communities of people whose circumstances led them to live together in one country and they all recognize that 'the old country' from which they have come is always demanding their allegiance and yearning. That old country is "a nation often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore"[27] and always recurs in their memory. In most cases, the connection of the individual to his/her diasporic community is informed by the shared history of migration and also to the sense of co-ethnicity with those who come from the same origin or from the same old country.[28] It is very obvious here how the sense of community is of considerable significance for the diasporic individual. That sense functions as a trigger for looking back across time and space to another location and to maintain cultural affiliations and emotional connections to it.

John McLeod says, "it is tempting perhaps to think of diaspora peoples as migrant peoples, and indeed many living in diasporas certainly are. However *generational differences* are important here."[29] Children who are born to migrants might have the host country's citizenship. Yet, "their sense of identity and subjectivity borne from living in a diaspora community can be influenced by the 'past migration history' of their parents or grandparents that makes them forge emotional, cultural and imaginative bonds with more than one nation." McLeod goes on saying that the emotional link those children might have to a faraway place in their imagination can be very strong even if they have not visited that place ever.[30] So in the

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[24] Ibid., p. 193.
[25] Mark Shackleton, *Diasporic Literature and Theory—Where Now?* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. ix.

[26] Russell King et. al. (eds.), *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. xv.
[27] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1997), p. ix.

[28] Ibid.
[29] John McLeod, p. 237.

[30] Ibid., p. 237-238.

light of both Robin Cohen and John McLeod's postulations, I will focus on the migrant and diasporic subject's preoccupation with matters relating to the home of origin, whether they are political or social, and their direct/indirect effect on his/her life in the host country. I also will examine the third-generation diasporic subject's concern about identification with a home and a tradition to terminate an anxiety primarily originated from that sense of loss and confusion.

1.2. Difference Between Generations

Diasporas are composite communities. They are created out of different migratory experiences and histories. Their loyalties to their country of origin vary from one individual to another and from one generation to another. Therefore, "all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'."[31] Hence, among Arabs and Jews, each sect of them constitutes a variety of stands when it comes to the location of home and the imperatives of their cultural obligations.

Obviously, the first generation of migrants relate themselves to the host country in a manner that is different from that of subsequent generations. They are haunted by memories from the country of origin and also "by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities."[32]

Generations will have different experiences as men and women concerning gender relations. Even if the first generation tries to impose gender policies of the home of origin on subsequent generations, that will not go without some modifications according to the policies of the host country. Avtar Brah says, "The reconfiguration of these social relations will not be a matter of direct superimposition of patriarchal forms deriving from the country of emigration over those that obtained in the country to which migration has occurred."[33] The clash between the generations is explicitly manifested in both migrant and diasporic Jewish and Arab texts in America. Mohja Kahf and Rebecca Goldstein present examples of this exploration as the old generation can symbolize the past or religious orthodoxy of the home of origin. The descended generation is trying to keep a balance between the demands of the former generation and their actual life demands in the host society. This situation experienced by the second or even the third generations can be interpreted through the lenses of 'in-betweenness' discourse.

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[31] Avtar Brah, p. 184.
[32] Ibid., p. 194.
[33] Ibid.

1.3.Excluded Communities

The problem of excluded communities in the diaspora is also a factor contributing to the dilemma of identity for those who cannot deny the effect of the border crossing and its compelling role in their lives. The texts under study look into this issue as a serious one working within the overall spectrum of identification problematic. McLeod highlights some of the causes behind the inclination to exclude the "Other":

> Diaspora peoples often remain ghettoised and excluded from feeling they belong to the 'new country' and suffer their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against... Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants who have found themselves demonised in many Western locations and subject to unsympathetic treatment by state institutions.[34]

He continues in this vein saying that when migrants move from their country to another, they start to initiate a new home in the new location. They arrive with baggage, whether in "the physical sense of possessions or belongings", or "the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviours and values. This can have consequences for the ways in which others may or may not make migrants feel 'at home' on arrival in a new place."[35] Similarly, Avtar Brah points out that "[t]he question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulations of 'belonging'."[36] In accordance with McLeod and Avtar's argument, this thesis speculates this issue of excluded communities in the diaspora and attempts to highlight the way Arab and Jewish writers approach this significant issue in relation to orthodox traditions and religious obligations.

1.4.The Notion of an Ideal Homeland (The Dream of Return)

When some migrants turn their gaze toward the faraway home of origin, it might represent to them an ideal and felicitous place where all difficulties and agonies of being "out of place" will be erased. It seems like a refuge from any possible act of bigotry and racism. Thus, from this imaginative conception, a desire of return emerges. However, mostly this journey

[34] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialsm* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010) p. 239.

[35] John McLeod, p. 244.

[36] Avtar Brah, p. 192.

back home does not prove fruitful concerning home being ideal. But it might be useful when it comes to obtaining new experience about one's homeland and the people there. The reality of this home is different from the way the migrants might imagine it. This home is more likely to exist beyond both the home of origin and the host country. This thesis also focuses on physical and imagined returns. In Alameddine's *I, The Divine*, there are constant and regular visits to the home of origin. In both Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Roth's *The Counterlife*, there is a physical return for investigation and discovery; while in Goldstein's *Mazel*, there is an imagined return through going back to tradition.

So the idea of home in the mind of the migrants or the diasporic might be detached from the actual experience of homeland that they might be able to visit frequently. Avtar Brah states that " 'home' is a Mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'."[37] Though the migrant might be lost because the actual homeland does not resemble the imaginary one, the emotional hold on their lives is definitely inevitable. In my study I also search into the trope of 'return' and how far it is connected to the Arab and Jewish imaginary conceptualization of migration and identification.

Conventional ideas of 'home' and 'belonging' are usually static referring to the individual as firmly connected to a community within a specific geographical location. Discourses of nationalism, ethnicity, or 'race' as models of belonging tend to define the individual as a component of a homogenised group. However these models do not go along with a world where migrancy has become a common phenomenon. The global migration has changed individuals' relations to places and hence changed the way they define themselves. In such a world, new models of identity should be invented so that the mobile and perilous 'in-between' position would be perceived as a site of new possibilities and making new hybrid homes.[38]

2. Arab American Writing

In her analysis of multi-ethnic literature, Martha J. Cutter suggests that in a world of "continual migration, global citizenry, and transnational circulation of literary texts, characters, and authors themselves", the meaning of being American has acquired a meaning that is devoid of the "border line". She states:

[37] Ibid.
[38] John McLeod, p. 248.

> In the past, many traditional ethnic texts found their place within the canon of US multi-ethnic literature because they were written in America or concerned various kinds of hyphenated Americans. Nevertheless, these texts often compel the realization that the US cannot be grasped in bordered, territorial terms.[39]

She explains that the place of America is both inside and outside; it is local and global, both surrounded by borders and "unbounded by national lands". This idea alludes to the hybridity of multi-ethnic literature and its role in reformulating the concept of American identity to encompass the element of difference. This type of literature has its basis in the symbolic concept of the "American". "Yet it also forwards the cross-pollination of this concept across national borders, even as it accepts into its figurative and physical spaces new articulations of multi-ethnicity that ultimately renovate the concept of America itself."[40]

Arab-American and Jewish-American literature reflect this characteristic that Cutter illustrates. They represent America as the space in which they dwell but not without challenges that play a significant role in developing the American half of the hyphenated identity. Meanwhile, they also have an impact on the American readership in general, drawing its attention to the minute details of transnational cultures dwelling on American soil. They express the anxiety and uncertainty that ethnic groups generally experience to reach a point of view which can be shared with the rest of Americans.

Early Arab-American writers provided good representations of transnationalism. Their literature, characterized by themes of border-crossing and hybridity, represents a kind of common ground comprising East and West. Those writers take the responsibility of reconciling the two poles and removing misunderstandings about each culture. Their work aspires to arrive at a harmony between the different traditions and it is different from later Arab American work which emphasises the element of dislocation and its subsequent agonizing predicaments. The hybridity they portray has "undoubtedly helped them negotiate the 'identity politics' of their place of origin and their chosen abode with less tension than their successors."[41]

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[39] Martha J. Cutter. "Editor's Introduction: Space, Land, and the Global Environment of Ethnicity" in *MELUS*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Fall 2013), p. 6.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Layla Al Maleh. "Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview" in Layla Al Maleh (ed.) *Arab Voices in Diaspora*, (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2009), p. 4.

Early Arab writers hoped for acceptance by mainstream America. "Such focus on Americanization was a natural result of early nineteenth century xenophobia, the restrictions on immigration to the U.S., and various tensions over who was to be included in the definition 'American.'[42] Many of them preferred to adopt the genre of autobiographical writing in which they chronicled their migration experience. Those writers recorded their journey and its difficulties and they also expressed their apology for having left their country of origin behind. Among these writers are Asaad Yacoob Kayat, Abraham Mitri Rihbani, George Haddad, Ashad G. Hawie, Salloum Rizk, and George Hamid.[43] Immigrant autobiographers writing in English aimed at orienting themselves within the U.S. context to assert themselves as U.S. citizens, as virtually Americans.[44] Those autobiographies tend to idealize the American life.

2.1.The Pen League

Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), one of the early most prominent Arab-American writers, established the literary collective *Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya* (the Pen League) in New York in 1920. This league was maintained by writers who were much influenced by Western works and philosophies like those of Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thomas Carlyle, and others. At the same time, the league writers influenced modern Arabic literature and introduced new narrative techniques and new genres like blank verse into poetry.[45]

Gibran is the most famous writer of this group, but Ameen Rihani (1876-1940) is mostly considered the one who had a great impact on Arabic and Arab American literatures. Rihani's most well-known works in English are his novel, *The Book of Khalid* (1911), the poetry collection *Myrtle and Myrrh* (1905), the play *Wajdah* (1909), and *The Chant of Mystics and Other Poems* (1921). These works signify the beginnings of Arab-American literary output.[46] His innovative novel *The Book of Khalid* is considered the first Arab-American novel. "Combining Western and Arabic traditions, *The Book of Khalid* draws on Arabic literary forms such as the *maqama* (episodic prose with intervals of poetry), while at the same time incorporating structural and thematic tenets from the Western Canon."[47] Rihani was kind of a

[42] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today" in Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (ed.) *ArabAmericas: Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. (Frankfurt and Madrid: Iberoamericana and Vervuert, 2006), pp. 124-5.
[43] Layla Al Maleh. "Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview", p. 5.

[44] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today", p. 124.
[45]Carol N. Fadda. "The United States" in Wail S. Hassan (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Tradition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 693.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

cultural ambassador. He tried to be a mediator between Arab and American contexts. According to Lisa Suhair Majaj, "[h]is conscious attempt to displace singular perspectives in *The Book of Khalid* provides an interesting precursor to later ethnic writers' attempts to construct hybrid identities."[48]

Arab-American autobiographies of the early wave which were characterized by nostalgia and idealization of America, were replaced by other types of narratives that celebrate a sense of pride about Arab heritage in the years between the 1960s and 1980s. It has been argued that the conflicts and wars[49] in the Middle East were one of several reasons underlying this. "These events and others produced a sense of urgency among many Arab Americans to connect with their heritage and claim their Arab identities in a United States that was increasingly hostile toward them."[50]

Arab-American writers find it of paramount necessity to address sensitive issues affecting the lives of Arab Americans because of mainstream stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims. Their literature veers toward challenging negative stereotypes and emphasise the circulating of images that falsify these stereotypes. Accordingly, Arab-American writers come to avoid engaging with serious self-criticism that address issues like gender, racism and homophobia.[51]

From the 1980s, a new current has started in the way Arab-American writers look at their role as cultural mediators in American society as well as commentators on their own originary culture. Home culture critique has been urgently required to draw the attention to the fact that the world is drastically changing and hence negotiation of Arab and Islamic identities has become necessary. Although their works have provoked much controversy, they continue to provide alternative cultural examples for their own communities and suggest new hybridity promoting attitudes towards American society.

In 1984, the first Arab American Poetry Reading organized at the Modern Language Association in the U.S. was by the Lebanese poet D. H. Melhem. That was an event to be coupled with the publication of Gregory Orfalea's and Sharif Elmusa's anthology *Grape*

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[48] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Two Worlds Emerging: Arab American Writing at the Crossroads," *Forkroads: A Journal of Ethnic American Literature*, Vol. 1, Issue 3, (1996) Forkroads Press, p. 69.

[49] Wars like the Six Day War in 1967, the Arab oil embargo in 1873, and the Lebanese Civil War in 1975-1990.

[50] Carol N. Fadda. "The United States", p. 695.

[51] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Two Worlds Emerging: Arab American Writing at the Crossroads," p. 77.

Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry in 1988; both promote the linkage of Arabic narrative traditions with the American literary canon. Well known poets like Samuel J. Hazo, Etel Adnan, Milton Hatoum and Naomi Shihab Nye have been role models in fostering integration in Arab-American communities[52]. From the beginning of the 1990s, a number of literary anthologies and journals were published all of which present works that try to bridge the divide between Arab and American cultures. Ferial Ghazoul ardently praised the innovative work of those Arab-American writers emphasising its transnational and syncretic quality. She states that what is great about the new type of Arab-American works of art is their

> acknowledgement of the past and the present and their orientation towards the future, determined to have a place of their own in the new world. Theirs is not a sense of nostalgia for the past and for the homeland, as is often witnessed in the writing of the Mahjar poets, nor is it the total rejection of the new culture while cocooning oneself in traditional values, as Arabs with a ghetto mentality have done. In opposition these new voices call for forging a conscience of the Arab stream in American culture, not only to preserve a static identity, but also to call on one's heritage to contribute to, and upgrade, the dynamic combination of cultural strands in the adopted country.[53]

Although the literary attempts of the Arab-American writers are deemed successful and reinforced the visibility of Arab-American identity, their negotiation of cultures contribute to the formation of split vision. "Like other hyphenated individuals, Arab Americans seek to integrate the different facets of their identities, experiences, and heritages, into a unified whole. But too often, there remains a schism between Arab and American east and west."[54] The mode of split vision is the lean towards one side of the hyphen or the other, a matter which takes the Arab American literary work in the direction of identity crises. Tackling this issue compels those writers to confront what Khalid Mattawa calls "our flawed cultural practices" like "the rampant misogyny and chauvinism that still define masculinity in our subculture, the forced marriages, and racism."[55] Lisa Suhair Majaj also has listed a number of issues that Arab-

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[52] Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (ed.*) ArabAmericas: Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. (Frankfurt and Madrid: Iberoamericana and Vervuert, 2006), p. 8.
[53]Ferial Ghazoul (2000): "Building Bridges, Joining Streams" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 481 (11-17 May), http://weekly.ahram.org.eg. , Quoted in Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (ed.) ArabAmericas: Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World, p. 9

[54] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today", p. 123.
[55] Khalid Mattawa. "Arab American Writing and the Challenge of Reinventing Tradition" in *Flyway: A Literary Review* 7.2-7.3, 2003), p. 16.

American writers must incorporate within their writing; she says "[o]ne task confronting Arab-American writers is that of exploring not just ethnic celebration and entry into white middle class America, but marginalization, poverty, and exclusion — not only in the broader American society but within Arab communities as well."[56] These issues are probed by the Arab-American writers in this study within the overall topic of 'homeland'.

2.2. The Arabic Renaissance (Al-Nahda)

This thesis attempts to analyse the issue of 'in-betweenness' represented through Arab characters who are torn between conservative/religious Eastern culture and a more liberal/modernized Western culture. Therefore, it is of principal necessity to explore the historical scene behind the modernization of the Arab world which started during the reign of the Ottoman empire. Arab scholars have labelled the activities of that era relating to modernization as the Arab Renaissance.

Al-Nahda[57] was a cultural movement started in the Arab world in the nineteenth century. However, its force and influence varies from one Arab region to another. Its impact depended on to the attitude of the people of that region to the past, that is, to the Arab and religious cultural heritage. Moreover, it also depended on the patterns of colonialism they dealt with in that time, like the type of Western ideas that came to them imported from the metropole.[58] The increased contact between Arabs and Europeans due to the colonial invasions can be considered a primary factor behind the *Nahda* movement. But the most important factor was the initiation of the "organized programs of student missions to Europe in order to learn about the culture and emulate its practices."[59]

After the defeat of the French Navy in the Battle of the Nile in 1798-1801[60], Muhammad Ali, an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army, filled the political vacuum and rose to power in Egypt. In an attempt to raise the level of education and catch the race of nations, the idea of the "missions" (*ba'that*) came to be implemented. Egyptian students were sent to Europe,

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[56] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today", p. 131.
[57] Al-Nahda is an Arabic word means "revival or renaissance".
[58] Roger Allen. "The Arabic Novel and History" in Wail S. Hassan (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 50.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Despite the defeat of the French Navy in 1801, the European invasions continued to occupy other Arab regions. France occupied Algeria in 1830. Great Britain reinforced their influence in the Arabian (or Persian) gulf by 1820, and established a colony in Aden in 1839. Later it occupied Egypt in 1882. See Wail S. Hassan (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 2.

mostly to France, to continue their studies in European languages and culture. When they returned, they were assigned the task of translating European scientific and literary works into Arabic.[61] In Lebanon, another acculturation project was taking place; American and European missionary schools were introduced in the 1820s. Thus, a "European cultural influence was beginning to be firmly established, leaving its mark on many of the most canonical travelogues, autobiographies, fiction, and all sorts of other texts of the period."[62]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of Anglophile and Francophile Egyptian intellectual elites were presiding over the literary and cultural establishments. Their ideas on modernization were not welcomed by the conservative religious authorities, nevertheless, they were influential in some ways. "Many of those intellectuals accepted the Orientalist thesis of the decline of Arab culture during the Ottoman period and the superiority of European civilization, and they believed that modernization required severing ties with the Arab past and following in the footsteps of Europe."[63]

Among the early thinkers who come to influence the mentality of the Arab and Middle Eastern intellectuals are Namik Kemal, Muhammed Abduh, and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. They found in European ideas a kind of cure for the intellectual and social dilemmas of the Arab world and a solution to a Turkish rule that had lasted for four centuries. They adopted those European ideas and transformed them into an Islamic parlance. The reform movement they led found a lot of advocates among the cultural and intellectual venues at the time. The reform of education was one of the most urgent issues that they discussed. They considered it the saving of the *umma* (nation) from its long endured ignorance.[64]

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1854 – 1902) is one of the reformists whose ideology focuses on "the nationalization and Arabization of Islam." He gives Islam an Arab identity and argues the superiority of Arab Muslims over non-Arab Muslims. His arguments are informed by the premise that Islam was initially originated in the Arab peninsula and spread to the other areas and places by Arab missionaries and conquerors. Thus, the Arab Muslim world deserves

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[61] Roger Allen. "The Arabic Novel and History", p. 50.

[62] Wail S. Hassan (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 2.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Joseph G. Rahme. "Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kawakibi's Reformist Ideology, Arab Pan-Islamism and the Internal Other" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1999) p. 159.

an Arab Caliph rather than a Turkish one. He ascribes the decline of the Islamic community to the Ottoman Turks.

According to Al-Kawakibi, vast knowledge is required in order to bring about an accurate solution for the dilemma of the *umma* . He identifies a number of reasons behind that decline; reasons that are mostly religious, political, and moral ones.[65] Al-Kawakibi also generally criticizes Muslims for what he considers to be their 'infatuation with the foreigners'. This infatuation comes from their belief in the perfection of everything Western. He considers that an internal decay in the body of the *umma*. He presumes that "It is the weakness of Muslims that leads them blindly to imitate European civilization."[66] In both of his major works, *Umm Al-Qura* (1898) and *Taba'i Al-Istibdad* (1900) he suggests some solutions which aim at the development of education and the enlightenment of thought.

Al-Kawakibi incorporates in his thought "two inclusive, discursive practices, both of which were appropriated from European thought and practice: the discourse of nationalism and that of Orientalness."[67] Arab nationalism started to be encouraged through a number of practices like the translation movement. It was initiated during the 1820s by the American Presbyterian Mission, producing practices like the revival of the Arabic language and literature and the missionary schools from which a good number of intellectuals graduated. Moreover, the idea of the nation as a territorial unit was also circulated through many venues in comparison with the ideology of Ottomanism in the mid-1850s as a unique ethnic community.[68]

Al-Kawakibi specifies the Arabs as the only qualified Muslims to lead a religious reform. He also argues that the institution of the Caliphate should go back to an Arab from the prophet's tribe. This idea signalled the emergence of an Arab-Islamic nationalism. Pan-Islamism will remain an ideal to inspire all Muslims but only under the rule of an Arab Caliph. He believes that the Arabs deserve this position because they are the founders of the Islamic religion and their language is still pure and unadulterated because they mingle but do not mix. Arabs, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, share the Arabic language and a common knowledge.

[65] According to him, the *umma* is suffering from the abandonment of religious values, belief in superstitions, illiteracy among Muslims, the belief in the incompatibility of religion with science, etc., Concerning the political causes, he included despotism, lack of the sense of responsibility, and the emphasis of politics on two issues: taxation and the military. Other causes are absence of freedom of speech, the lack of equality of rights, and the backward mentality of the Islamic rulers. See Abdul Rahman Al-Kawakibi, *Umm Al-Qura*, p. 317-25.

[66] Joseph G. Rahme, p. 167.

[67] Ibid., p. 172.

[68] Ibid., p. 172-73.

Arabs, in the early centuries of the Islamic rule, enjoyed civilized qualities that characterize contemporary European civilization, like equality in rights, democracy, the principle of consultation, and respect for international treaties.[69]

The second inclusive discursive practice which is part of Al-Kawakibi's thought is that of Orientalness. The Muslim reformers like Al-Afghani regarded the principle of Orientalness as an important tool to confront the European colonial penetration and to bestow a positive and spiritual identity on the inhabitants of Asia. So being Orientals helps to transcend the religious difference between them and Muslims in an Islamic community. Al-Kawakibi illustrates the virtues of Orientals when contrasted with those of Westerners. He states that the Westerner is a materialist, rude, ready to punish and take revenge as he has forgotten the refined principles and noble teachings of Oriental Christianity. He states that the Westerner is in love with wealth and has no value for human life if he is to gain from its death. For the Westerner, it is strength and wealth which are important and the main reason for his endeavour in gaining knowledge and glory.[70] These conflicting thoughts and opinions about the West resulted in ambivalent notions concerning how should an Arab or an Eastern person evaluate any relationship that might bind Western and Eastern people.

2.3.Modernization

Among the major Arab writers of the *Nahda* is the Lebanese writer Ahmed Faris Al-Shidyaq (1804-1887) who was the first to translate the Bible. He advocated the appropriation of modernization to Arabic language and literature. Thus many writers imitated European literary genres to produce historical novels like Jirji Zaydan (1861-1914) and the didactic novel like Farah Antun (1874-1922) and many others.[71] In the 1950s, Syro-Lebanese poet Yusuf al-Khal (1917-1987) returned to Beirut from New York to initiate the *Shi'r review* which resulted in a massive literary revolution; the poetry of significant and established European and American poets like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Walt Whitman come to be translated into Arabic to influence later a lot of Arab poets in matters of literary form and content.[72]

Taha Husayn (1889-1973), a prominent Egyptian intellectual figure argues in *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi Misr* (1938), (*The Future of Culture in Egypt),* that the Ottomans' policy was the

[69] Abdul Rahman Al-Kawakibi, *Umm Al-Quraa,* p. 359.
[70] Abdul Rahman Al-Kawakibi, *Taba'i al-Istibdad,* 185.
[71] Elias Khoury, "Literature and Immigration" in Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (ed.) *ArabAmericas: Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. (Frankfurt and Madrid: Iberoamericana and Vervuert, 2006), p. 102.
[72] Ibid., p. 103.

main reason behind the delay of the Arab renaissance until the nineteenth century.[73] In this case, Arab modernity has to catch up with its European counterpart. It should race with time to lessen the gap between the two regions. He claims that independence and freedom at home and abroad can be attained only if "we [are] educated like the European in order to feel as he feels, and to judge things as he judges them, then to do as he does and to conduct the affairs of life as he conducts them."[74]

In the 1930s and 1940s Anglophone Arab writing started to take a new direction. Arab students, who graduated from missionary and foreign schools in the Middle East, sought admittance into British universities and others wanted employment in Britain. They were educated within a colonialist system that influenced them when it came to the medium of their writing; they chose to write in English. They were also "fascinated by the English life-style reflected in their textbooks, reared in and formed by Western norms and values, they yearned to express themselves creatively in the language of the 'superior' Other and to internalize the 'Other' in every possible way."[75]

2.4.The Desire to be White

Arab immigration to the United States began in the late nineteenth century. This immigration can be classified into approximately three waves. The first wave starts from the 1880s to 1924. The early migrants were about one hundred thousand, and most of them were Christians from the Ottoman provinces of Syria, Mount Lebanon, and Palestine. They came to be registered as Syrians or Turks. At that time, it was hard to situate them within the mainstream US racial and national structures. "Although they maintained their cultural and social traditions within their immigrant homes, they sought to assimilate themselves and their children into the US racial structures of the period by successfully lobbying for white status."[76] The religious beliefs of the Lebanese were not to cause worries at that time. Immigrants did not try to use their religion as a means to promote their own culture. Muslim immigrants did not set out to establish religious missionaries in the US and they did not practice their religion in public. For Christians, they followed the rules imposed by the government when it comes to

[73] Taha Hussein, *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi Misr*, Hindawi Publishers, E-book, p. 38.
[74] Ibid., p. 50.
[75] Layla Al Maleh. "Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview" in Layla Al Maleh(ed) *Arab Voices in Diaspora*, p. 6.
[76] Carol N. Fadda. "The United States", p. 691.

celebrating some religious rituals like baptism and marriages.[77] They did not allow religious differences to stop their efforts to assimilate into the new environment. Nevertheless, despite their efforts, a number of legal cases were raised in the 1920s concerning the "whiteness" of Arab immigrants and concerning their right for American citizenship. This situation paved the way for anxiety about American identity which has become an important topic in Arab-American writing.[78]

The second wave of Arab immigration started by the end of the World War II and continued until before 1967, the year of the Six Day War between Israel and some Arab countries. The third wave started after that war and has continued up to the current time. Those later two waves of Arab immigrants continue to preserve the official white classification label, however, many of them were not interested in assimilation. Hence they were generally seen as non-white by the US mainstream. Most of those immigrants were those who escaped from different wars in the Arab world, "including the Palestine/ Israel conflict, the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), the first and second Gulf Wars, and Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and its war on Lebanon in 2006."[79] It has been observed continually throughout the history of Arabs in the US that the status of "whiteness" is solely honorary and it is rapidly invalidated after any political event in the Middle East as well as in the U.S.[80] This racialization makes Arab Americans' status similar to that of other groups of colour.

3. Jewish American Writing

This study also sheds light on the main issues that Jewish-American writers have grappled with since they started their journey on the American soil. As members of the Jewish diaspora, they bear the memories and family histories of exclusion and hatred expressed against them. A cruel past and the Holocaust usually features in their aesthetic portrayal of their old world and life before migration. Anti-Semitism has been always in the backdrop of their work as a reminder that all is not well in a world still dealing with matters of racial discrimination and xenophobia. Danger lurks everywhere causing much anxiety to the Jewish-American psyche. From here comes the necessity of providing a definition of a Jew. "Who is the Jew?", is a question that seems to be investigated by various writers of different ideological backgrounds.

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[77] Luis Fayad. "Lebanese Migration to the Americas" in Ottmar Ette and Friederike Pannewick (ed.) *ArabAmericas: Literary Entanglements of the American Hemisphere and the Arab World*. (Frankfurt and Madrid: Iberoamericana and Vervuert, 2006), p. 113.
[78] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today", p. 124-5.
[79] Carol N. Fadda. "The United States", p. 691-692.

[80] Lisa Suhair Majaj. "New Directions: Arab American Writing Today", p. 131.

The notion of "the authentic Jew" becomes a recurrent motif in Jewish-American literature which tries to approach it according to two points of view; one is calling for assimilation and the other is finding a cocoon within the borders of the community. Other writings try to bridge the gap between Jewish tradition and acculturation; they express another type of anxiety which is that of in-between borders. The establishment of Israel in the middle of the twentieth century initiates the rise of another verbal tension between Zionist conception of homeland and diasporic notion of existence. The question of "Who is the Jew?" starts to figure in this debate placing the Jew in a position of ethnic responsibility in which he/she has to choose either one of them in order to define oneself. Being a Jew and American at the same time, many writers express ambivalence and confusion concerning the two places: America or Israel? Which one is safer and better?

3.1. The Making of Jewish-American Identity

Jewish-American writing commences with the experience of migration. At the beginnings it was with Ashkenazi Jews who produced fiction characterized by rich Yiddish conventions of storytelling. They were writers like Sholom Aleichem (1859-1916), Mendele Mocher Sforim (1835-1917) and I. L. Peretz (1852- 1915). Their fiction is "primarily in Yiddish and drew upon the voices of European Jewry in a collective expression of Yiddishkeit—the distinctive ethos of a culture derived from the Yiddish-speaking Jews of eastern and central Europe—a culture ultimately threatened by the devastation of the Holocaust."[81] (45)

Yiddishkeit continued to preside over the topics tackled by immigrant Jewish writers from Europe during the years around the turn of the twentieth century. Writers like, Abraham Cahan (1860-1951), Anzia Yezierska (1880-1970), Mary Antin (1881-1949), Henry Roth (1906-95) and Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902-91) started to manifest new interest in American culture and the adoption of a new type of identity, a matter that was not very welcome at that point by common Jews in the US.[82] Amritjit Singh et. al. say that early Jewish American writing aims at representing the Jewish-American ambition to gain an American identity. "Protagonists are carefully groomed so as to appear acceptable in the eyes of an Anglo-Saxon Protestant norm, which is always, at least implicitly, present in the text."[83] Their fiction registers

[81] Victoria Aarons, "The Making of American Jewish Identities in Postwar American Fiction" Brauner & Stahler (eds.) p. 45.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Amritjit Singh et. al. (eds.) Memory, Narrative and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literature (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), p. 89.

conflicting dualities such as "poverty and upward mobility, religion and secularism, tradition and change, Americanization and foreignness, difference and assimilation."[84] Divided loyalties and selves result from these conflicts faced by those immigrant writers who chose to chronicle them vividly in their writing.

There are two dominant figures in that writing, the new man and the mediator. They are expressing the contradictory cultural roles the immigrant has to perform in the American environment. Amritjit Singh et. al say, "[a]s new man he reenacts the traditional part of the American Adam, is reborn in the crossing of the Atlantic, and comes to share in the American belief in opportunity for all—a belief that serves to stabilize the overall social status quo by the anti-revolutionary promise of individual ascent."[85]

Jewish-American fiction started to flourish in the second half of the twentieth century. Writers like Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth came to prominence in the American cultural scene and transformed it with a new type of Jewish literary expression that merged smoothly with the American literary canon. A large number of Jewish-American writers made their literary debuts in the period after World War II, and hence they put their stamp on a highly diverse and richly intellectual era in the United States. Those Jewish-American writers who wrote during the 1950s and 1960s utilized the United States as a 'centre stage', to use Victoria Aarons' words, on which a Jewish identity is created as relief from the horrors experienced by the European Jewry during the Holocaust years. Aarons adds that, "[t]hese writers redefined and refashioned an American Jewish identity and set the terms for American-Jewish writing well into the twenty-first century."[86]

Jewish-American fiction in the aforementioned era tackled the issue of Jewish and American identities in situations in which they intersect and cause great tensions. It is during this time that the notion of the authentic Jew comes to be discussed. Thus, this literature, though it is written within the United States, is dominated by Jewish cultural ethos and issues of Jewish identification. So this fiction continue to reflect themes of split identities, double worlds, confused loyalties, marginalization and loss of tradition. These issues are still of primary importance for contemporary Jewish-American writers.[87] The Jewish-American texts under study tackle these issues within the framework of 'in-between' two ideologies. One of them is

[84] Victoria Aarons, p. 46.
[85] Amritjit Singh et. al. (eds.) Memory, Narrative and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literature, p. 89-90.
[86] Victoria Aarons, p. 44.
[87] Ibid., p. 48.

the ideology of 'diaspora vs homeland' and the other is the ideology of 'modernity vs orthodoxy'. In the next section, I will shed light on the Jewish historical and cultural scene so that the Jewish 'in-between' condition is illuminated.

3.2. The Vision of Return: Israel and Exile in the Jewish imagination

Due to their long-term dispersion, Jews come of different backgrounds and milieus. As David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz describe them in their collection of essays entitled *Jewish Identity* (1993): "Jews now are seldom if ever just Jews. They hail, and virtually throughout their history have hailed, from different countries, speak different languages, occupy different class positions, and in some ways practice different religions—if they practice at all."[88] Yet, this situation is not favoured by many Jewish scholars. They insist that Jews should have a special identity that is closely related to their particular culture, otherwise they will have to face the peril of vanishing. In this case, they have come out with a number of criteria according to which they tend to identify the Jew. "There is some question about what or how much identification with a people's past one can deny, or how much of it one can be ignorant of and still claim belonging."[89] One of these criteria is the meaning of 'Israel' in a Jew's life; how does s/he locate it within the historical memory. Denying Israel or showing inability of one's attachment to it can signify the denial of Judaism.[90]

Israel is a recurring trope in Jewish-American writing; it is a symbolic imaginary space that a Jewish writer has to refer to throughout his/her literary career. As a contemporary political reality, whether one accepts it or not, Israel is directly connected with the life of Jews in the diaspora. Throughout the Jewish diaspora, one can trace an anti-Zionist concept of home in many Jewish writings. However, another stance tends towards a negative critique of Jews living in the diaspora. Thus many Jews in the world diaspora in general and many American Jews in particular can find themselves in a position where they cannot decide where home is exactly. It is a position 'in-between' two conflicting ideologies. One of them is the Zionist emphasis that Israel is the sole home for Jews whose duty is to inexorably quit their commitments in the diaspora and join the loyal Jewish team in Israel. The other one is that Israel is either not a legitimate state and hence Jews are not obliged to live in it, or that Israel can exist but Jews are still happy in the diaspora and they are free to choose where to live.

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[88] David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz (eds.), *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 2-3.

[89] Ibid., p. 7.

[90] Ibid.

Moreover, it can be maintained historically that Jews are not supposed to return to this modern state of Israel specifically. Erich S. Gruen argues that millions of ancient Jews have lived in foreign land for centuries and it is improbable that they have spent that life obsessed with the idea of returning to Jerusalem; a dream which cannot be realized easily. "Many of them lived hundreds, even thousands, of miles away from Jerusalem, in Memphis, or Babylon, or Susa, or Athens, or Rome. To imagine that they repeatedly lamented their fate and pinned their hopes on recovery of the homeland is quite preposterous."[91] Gruen concludes that

> The respect and awe paid to the Holy Land stood in full harmony with commitment to local community and allegiance to Gentile governance. Diaspora Jews did not bewail their fate and pine away for the homeland. Nor, by contrast, did they ignore the homeland and reckon the Book as surrogate for the Temple. .. Palestine mattered, and it mattered in a territorial sense, but not as a required residence. Gifts to the Temple and pilgrimages to Jerusalem announced simultaneously a devotion to the symbolic heart of Judaism and a singular pride in the accomplishments of the diaspora.[92]

In a similar vein, Howard Wettstein in "Coming to Terms with Exile," explores a Jewish identity in line with *galut* as a central pivot. He says that "[w]ith changes to circumstances like the coming of new generations, new social conditions, and movement from one diasporic location to another, a diasporic population may come to see virtue in diasporic life. And so 'diaspora'—as opposed to *galut*—may acquire a positive charge, as today it has for some."[93]

Influenced by the pro-Israel-as-home ideology, some diasporic communities of Jews presupposed Israel as a centre which is geographically located overseas. James Clifford warns of depending on the imagined home solely in order to derive a sense of belonging. He explains that: "If this center becomes associated with an actual 'national' territory—rather than with a reinvented 'tradition,' a 'book,' a portable eschatology—it may devalue what I called the lateral axes of diaspora." He also adds, "The centering of diasporas around an axis of origin and return overrides the specific local interactions … necessary for the maintenance of diasporic social forms."[94] Accordingly, the probability for establishing an excluded community is very high; this

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[91] Erich S. Gruen, "Diaspora and Homeland", Howard Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 20.
[92] Ibid., p. 36.
[93] Howard Wettstein, "Coming to Terms with Exile" Howard Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 47.
[94] James Clifford, "Diasporas", p. 322.

might not result in a flourishing diasporic life wherein citizens can identify with the host country. This issue has been of substantial concern for many Jewish American academics, rabbis and writers who have dedicated a lot of time to discussing the positive characteristics of the Jewish diaspora.

Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin assert that cultures continue to exist only through mixing. Cultures and identities are always in a state of flux. Because of that, diasporic Jewish culture has proven that it is no exception. It is impossible to claim that there is a natural association between Jewish people and a specific homeland and hence it is also impossible to claim that Jewish culture is naturally self-enclosed and exclusivist. They maintain that: "This critical force of this dissociation among people, language, culture, and land has been an enormous threat to cultural nativisms and intergrisms;"[95] a threat that eventually leads to anti-Semitism. In my thesis I shed light on this issue as it is constituted of key factors that play a prime role in the process of identification with host communities. The production of an ideology that promotes pure Jewish cultural essence and attempts to discredit diaspora seems to cause trouble when a Jew grapples with Jewish history and at the same time tries to lead a fruitful life in the US.

According to Wettstein, diaspora does not signify anything negative despite the fact that it might refer to an absence from some centre whether it is political, religious or cultural. Diaspora can be a positive force in the life of Jews.[96] Erich S. Gruen argues that Jews do not need a "territorial sanctuary or legitimation" because they are the people of the Book, i.e. their homeland is located in the text. Hence, diaspora is not a bad situation. On the contrary, it might help them spread the word of their text. Shusterman says that despite the fact that 'exile' or the *galut* is primarily imposed on the Jewish people, it has become the sign of its survival. By saying so, his idea correlates to other Jewish scholars who are probing the Jewish dilemma of identity. He states in that exile, or we can also say diaspora, the religious/national debate is left for the individual to decide on. So being a Jew has nothing to do with being a devout worshipper of the Jewish religion. In the diaspora, the Jew is free to practice the rituals or not.[97] Shusterman refuses to discredit the diaspora; he says,

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[95] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity" in *Critical Inquiry* 19 (summer 1993) , Univeristy of Chicago, p. 721.
[96] Howard Wettstein, p. 2.
[97] Shusterman, p. 298.

> in actual fact, through most of Jewish history the *golah*[98] is the rule rather than the abnormal exception. Moreover, its role has been clearly more than pragmatic survival, for it has contributed centrally to the spiritual substance of Judaism, as well as providing the ground for the Jewish regenerative myth of return. The *golah* cannot be dismissed as inauthentic, because it is precisely what helps form the notion of the authenticity of *aliyah* and life in Israel."[99]

The idea of the 'exiled Jew' is not valid in this modern technologically-oriented world. Sidra DeKoven Izrahi says that the figure of the Wandering Jew has been transformed within the universalized narrative of exile. It is "no longer the boundary figure, when boundaries shift so regularly; no longer the stranger, in the 'global village' where no one is at home; no longer the lone weary traveler, in a world in which everyone is a tourist."[100]

The Boyarins state that there is an ambivalence in Jewish tradition since biblical times to the present when it is assumed that the Jewish identity must have territorial basis. Jewish history does not lead to the conclusion that the "return" signifies Jewish possession of "the Land". Jonathan Boyarin argues against the Zionist national/ethnic absolutism, and asserts that Jews must create spaces in which they can interact and mingle with the "Other". He adds that, coexisting with those others cannot be threatening, instead it should be recognized as the normal condition of life.[101] Drawing on this argument, I examine the diasporic Jewish American dilemma concerning the Zionist interpretation of diasporic life as a *galut* (exile) and how this topic is approached by Jewish literary expression in the texts under study. I also investigate how hybridization serves to resolve this issue of '*galut* vs home'.

Before analyzing how the texts tackle this 'in-between' or 'liminal' issue, the concept of 'exile' needs to be explored first. Howard Westtstein states in his introduction to *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identities*, that the term exile is the best translation of *galut*, the traditional Hebrew term that informs the Jews' perennial condition. The first *galut* for the Jews was after the destruction of the first Temple in 587 B.C.E. after which the Babylonian exile took place;

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[98] Hebrew word for exile.
[99] Shusterman, p. 301.
[100] Sidra DeKoven Izrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2000) p. 8.

[101] Jonathan Boyarin, *Storm from Paradise: the politics of Jewish Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 129.

but that exile lasted only half a century. Another more important and effective exile for the Jews happened after the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E.[102] It is the quintessential exile that Jews are being supposed to grapple with now and ever since that time. Some Jewish commentary on diaspora is controversial. This ascribes exile condition to all diasporic modes of existence. The other type of commentary looks at exile as a situation unlike diaspora; it evokes atmospheres characterized by anguish, alienation and forced homelessness.

Howard Wettstein defines *galut* as "a religious, or almost religious, notion… One of its important resonances is a concomitant of involuntary removal from homeland: dislocation, a sense of being uprooted, being somehow in the wrong place." He adds that viewing "one's group as in *galut* is to suppose that what is in some sense the proper order has been interrupted. Perhaps the dispersed group has been punished, or perhaps the world is just the sort of place where awful things happen."[103] This conception is manifested in Roth's *The Counterlife* where this issue has an important role in driving the course of events and leads to a decision of Aliyah. The feeling of alienation and loss can control the psyche of a successful American Jew and make him live in an imagined *galut*. The *galut* mentality prevents identification with the host country. Wettstein says that Judaism of our time is "an attempt to pick up the pieces, to reconstruct religious and national life in the absence of their central foci." He adds that "the religion as bequeathed to us both by the rabbis of the Talmud and by subsequent developments—another fifteen hundred years of intermittent persecution, expulsion, and in our times, *shoah*—is nothing less than a religion of *galut*."[104] Roth's text also tackles this problematic and expresses a critique of the reproduction of self-pity and a sense of victimhood that is an impediment in the path of Jewish diaspora. It is also a reason that contributes to the dilemma of in-betweenness the Jewish cultural identity.

3.3. In-Between Enlightenment and Orthodoxy

Events in Israel usually influence the image of Jews in the diaspora. Most of the time that image is not a good one due to the fact that "those events involve a revival of Jewish fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is rightly a concern for all who support the cause of liberal

[102] Howard Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 1.

[103] Howard Wettstein, "Coming to Terms with Exile," Howard Wettstein (ed.), *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 47.
[104] Ibid., p. 49.

democracy, and the rise of fundamentalism naturally provokes a response (one that, unfortunately, does not always distinguish between fundamentalism and religion as such)."[105]

Hilary Putnam expresses her opinion about how the Jewish ancestors approached life. They understood the world within a quiet and fatal framework. She accuses them of having no practical goals nor being aware of how to achieve ones. That is why enlightenment came to be embraced as her Jewish fathers and mothers refused to succumb to quietism and fatalism, and found them as evasions. She adds, "[o]nce the Enlightenment began to seriously compete with rabbinic Judaism, Judaism began to splinter, however. The currently dominant *haredi* version of 'Orthodox' Judaism was as much a reaction to the Enlightenment as was Reform Judaism."[106] Rebecca Goldstein's text is concerned with this issue of enlightenment and how it problematizes identification with Jewishness for contemporary Jewish-Americans. Embracing enlightenment has been a necessity to transform the structures that configure the Jewish politics of gender. Nevertheless, younger generations who are already emancipated from old orthodox modes of acceptable female behaviour, express an inclination to go back to tradition as a means to affirm the Jewish identity. The modern life that the older generations liked and adopted turn out as unsatisfactory for the younger ones. Putnam states,

> But today even we who value enlightenment can see that there is more to enlightenment than purposive rationality… One good reason for not despising tradition is that after three or four centuries of "modern is better," we have reached a position in which we find that a knowledge of the tradition offers us not a straightjacket but a widening of our sense of what is possible.[107]

They find modernity much alienating and far away from Jewish traditions and culture. Many of them start "to seek out religious communities that hold the promise of personal meaning as well as of enriched and enduring family relations."[108] If parents and grandparents lost their faith and interest in Jewishness, moderately affiliated Jews of nowadays are refashioning tradition rather than discarding it. They are willing to deviate from the path of secularism and take the one of religious loyalty and tradition.

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[105] Hilary Putnam, "Judaism and Jewish Identity" David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz (eds.), *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 108.

[106] Ibid., p. 114.
[107] Ibid., p. 112.

[108] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) p. 8.

Modernity has imposed a big challenge to the notion of personal and collective Jewish self. "Emancipation—the opening of Western societies to Jewish participation on a formally equal footing, or the promise of that opening—meant the sudden or gradual end to many elements of the social segregation that undergirded Jewish tribalism."[109] Jewish communities which had once controlled the daily Jewish life for centuries are no longer authoritative and domineering. They have relinquished their power to transpiring state and national governments. Accordingly, Jews have started to dwell in Gentile towns and cities and mingle with new societies on different scales. Segregation from non-Jews is largely not preferred anymore by those who seek modernization. Civil rights and economic opportunities become more alluring than the Sabbath observance which many Jews abandoned in order to demolish the barrier between them and the Gentile societies. "Enlightenment, unlike Christianity before it, was not seen as an opposing religion to be resisted but as an achievement of human culture, a vehicle of truth and human dignity, which many Jews sought to make their own."[110] Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen say,

> The two parts of the Sinaitic covenant, faith and peoplehood, were no longer inseverable. One could be a Jew by religion but of German or French nationality; one could regard oneself as a part of the Jewish people and profess no religious faith. The various adjectives now modifying Jewish identity were routinely accompanied by hyphens linking the Jewish to the non-Jewish halves of individual identity.[111]

Anti-Semitism is a major factor that made some Jews unwilling to embrace modernity. They were still torn between the imperatives of integration and apartness. Before World War II, apartness was more of a dominant practice. Integration with American society was still to be achieved. Discrimination was common as was the case in Europe. "Jews were denied admission to elite colleges and country clubs. Anti-Semitic attitudes were widespread in the United States as the specter of Nazism hovered across the ocean, all too near."[112] After the war, social barriers were taken down and social acceptance became a norm. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism is not to be overlooked. Jews continued to have their fears. In his classic story "Eli the fanatic" Philip Roth

[109] Ibid., p. 30.

[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., p. 31.
[112] Ibid.

portrayed those fears of assimilated Jews who had just arrived in America during the 1950s.[113] So assimilation had not been a protection from anti-Semitism.

3.4. In-Between Assimilation and Anti-Semitism

In recent decades, the American Jewish community has been stunned by reports of increasing rates of intermarriage, and unrestrained assimilation. These issues are important when other discussions relating to Jewish identification and continuity start. Many scholars[114] and communal leaders have expressed anxiety about the Jewish future and thus they start to probe these issues in order to reinforce Jewish commitment and sustain the Jewish identity. The fear of Anti-Semitism and assimilation characterize the work of many Jewish scholars. Hannah Arendt also warns against forgetting about the historical situation of the Jew and reminds her readers that they cannot completely assimilate. She says:

> A man attacked as a Jew cannot defend himself as an Englishman or a Frenchman. The world can only conclude from this that he is simply not defending himself at all. This principle of the political struggle will perhaps now have been learned by those tens of thousands of French Jews who also feared the "Jewish war" and believed they had to defend themselves as Frenchmen, only to end up being held in special Jewish prison camps in Germany by their French fellow combatants.[115]

Arendt describes how Jews used to live among Gentiles in Europe. She points out that anti-Semitism does not spare those who excel socially and intellectually. She says, "[a]ssimilation, in the sense of acceptance by non-Jewish society, was granted them only as long as they were clearly distinguished exceptions from the Jewish masses even though they still shared the same restricted and humiliated political conditions".[116] This conception has been valid since the time following World War II until now. Many scholars draw on it and try to interpret the Jewish situation and matters of cultural or national identity. Danny ben-Moshe, in his "The New Anti-Semitism, Jewish Identity and the Question of Zionism", recognizes that the Holocaust is the most extreme form of anti-Semitism that created a locus for Israel in the imagination and identity of World Jewry. That genocide across Europe has made Zionists of

[113] Ibid., p. 33.
[114] See for example, Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew* (1997); Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew: Self, Family, and Community in America.* (2000).
[115] Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 47.

[116] Ibid., p. 77.

many Jews around the world and convinced them that they need a state of their own. A Jewish state as a secure place for Jews has become a must to prevent another mass pogrom.[117] In 2002 Professor Walter Reich, former director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum points out, the new wave of anti-Semitism is a sign of the necessity of the existence of the Jewish state. Reich sums up, "Jews will never have secure homes anywhere unless they also have a national home in Israel—a haven to which they can escape from wherever they are if the beast of anti-Semitism is ever again given the power to put its passions in murderous gear."[118]

In a similar vein, Alan M. Dershowitz, in his *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century,* expresses the same concern Arendt and Ben-Moshe have expressed. He describes the Jewish situation in America saying:

> [t]he good news is that American Jews — as individuals —have never been more secure, more accepted, more affluent, and less victimized by discrimination or anti-Semitism. The bad news is that American Jews — as a people — have never been in greater danger of disappearing through assimilation, intermarriage, and low birth rates.[119]

Some Jewish scholars come to recognize that the American celebrated individuality has led to the assimilation of many Jews in the US. They find that assimilation is one of the significant factors leading to identity dilemma for Jews and also to an inability to serve the Jewish cause against anti-Semitism. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen explain the reason behind the desire of assimilation. They argue that:

> The principal authority for contemporary American Jews, in the absence of compelling religious norms and communal loyalties, has become the sovereign self. Each person now performs the labor of fashioning his or her own self, pulling together elements from the various Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires

[117] Danny ben-Moshe, "The New Anti-Semitism, Jewish Identity and the Question of Zionism" in Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev (eds.) *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity* (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2010) p. 9.

[118] Quoted in Danny ben-Moshe, "The New Anti-Semitism, Jewish Identity and the Question of Zionism", p. 16.

[119] Alan M. Dershowitz, *The Vanishing American Jew: In Search of Jewish Identity for the Next Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997), p. 1.

> available, rather than stepping into an "inescapable framework" of identity (familial, communal, traditional) given at birth.[120]

The anxiety about Jewish identity has influenced many Jews and made them worry about Jewish markers in a secularly oriented society. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen point out that the Jews they interviewed "are dissatisfied with secular affiliations and are in search of personal spiritual meaning." They add that "[w]here previous generations abandoned ritual practice almost entirely, believing it outdated or superstitious, Jews today are returning to ritual observance and making it a major locus of personal meaning."[121] The third space in which this young generations live compel them to seek new paradigms according to which they identify themselves. "Personal meanings are sought by these Jews for new as well as for inherited observances. If such meanings are not fashioned or found, the practices in question are revised or discarded—or not undertaken in the first place."[122] Traditions as they are taught by parents cannot go without reformation for many younger generations of Jews. In Goldstein's text, I examine the resurgence of Orthodoxy or we can say the Jewish tradition as a means adopted by younger Jewish-American generations to solve the dilemma of 'in-betweenness'.

For many Jewish-American scholars, diaspora is not a favoured condition. Cynthia Ozick argues that crediting diaspora on the basis of a universalist mentality is a perverse criterion. She claims that Jewish intellectuals in the diaspora are not allowed to discuss Jewish issues or Jewish historical memory if they want to be part of the Western literary canon. She gives the right to Zionism in its endeavours to defame diasporic modes of existence and emphasize Jewish memory and home. She explains, "Israeli rejection of Diaspora becomes not a revulsion against the millennial victimization of the *galut* (exile) experience, but a revulsion against the victimized Jew himself—his preoccupations, his manners and mores, the very shape of his body."[123] For Ozick, when a Jewish-American writer like Philip Roth says that he sees himself as a writer who is a Jew but not a Jewish writer, his "words do not represent a credo; they speak for a doom."[124] Ozick admits that her opinion might reflect the pessimism of the

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[120]Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000) p. 2.

[121]Ibid., p. 8.

[122] Ibid., p. 3.

[123] Cynthia Ozick, *Art and Ardor*, (New York: Alfred A. Knope, 1983) p. 156.

[124] Ibid., p. 158.

ghetto mentality of the shtetl, however, she asserts that Jewish writers in the diaspora are not reflecting their Jewish culture, rather they are correlating with the Western culture. If a Jewish writer wants to stay Jewish, "as a writer, especially as a writer, he will have to acknowledge exile," because the American culture "is not the kind of literary or social culture he can be at home in."[125] In accordance with this conception, accepting diaspora life as a better condition for Jews means accepting to assimilate, a matter that leads to the loss of the Jewish identity. This fear and anxiety is expressed through the Jewish-American texts under study to reflect the 'in-between' status a Jew might experience. Mostly those texts imply that diaspora condition is seen as a good venue for creativity and a good locus for a successful multiculturalism.

4. Thesis Outline

In Chapter One, I discuss the dilemma of living between borders in Rabih Alameddine's novel *I, the Divine* (2001) focusing on disillusion with the home of origin, Lebanon, and the inferiority complex that it evokes. Infatuation with the host country, the US, is explored to illustrate how the migrant is drawn to colonial hegemonic stereotyping of the East and the West and how this orientation gives shape to his/her notions of identity and home. Conflicts in the Middle East and continual acts of violence are examined as they add to the inclination to leave home and seek refuge in more advanced and relatively stable countries. The trope of whiteness is also explored as it is significant to assimilation and acquisition of the 'American' status which finds its theoretical backdrop in Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry. This novel has been chosen because it tackles the theme of inferiority complex in the migrant protagonist which reflects anxiety concerning authenticity and a conception of the West as the symbol of modernity. That anxiety causes the 'in-between' dilemma.

In Chapter Two, another type of identity crisis is represented by the portrayal of practicing Muslim immigrants from Syria trying to manoeuvre their lives in a drastically different and increasingly hostile environment. Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) reflects this dilemma through the protagonist and her inability to identify with the host country which is the US and identify more with an ideal home constructed by her Islamic upbringing which is Syria as well as the rest of the Arab homeland. The delusion formulated by this imaginary ideal home contributes to the disillusion that occurs when actual experiences relating to power structures—strictly formulated by essentialist home culture—take place. The dilemma of the protagonist is dealt with through the lens of space theory, reflecting on culture,

[125] Ibid., p. 165.

religion, and gender which are destabilized by severe uncanny experiences. This protagonist is represented as a positive model given by Mohja Kahf to reflect on the importance of building bridges between identities. A third space is found through the 'authenticity' problematic. Sufism or universalism is adopted to bridge the gap between the two sides of the hyphenated identity. This novel is chosen because it reflects the superiority complex relating to a sense of belonging to the 'nation' or the '*umma'* rather than to the host country. This superiority complex is deconstructed when 'modernity' assets are tested to cause another type of 'in-between' dilemma.

In Chapter Three, I attempt to examine the identity crisis relating to the location of home in the Jewish imagination. Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986) is a good example to explore the dilemma of the 'centre' and the historical *galut*. This dilemma is discussed according to the theory of diaspora that focuses on American Jewish experience in the US and how Jews react to matters of assimilation on the one hand and their sense of exile on the other hand. The chapter also investigates how the notion of 'return' is an essential part of the diasporic Jewish identity and how it is connected to a symbolic historical and Biblical Jewish homeland. This connection with a symbolic homeland comes to be problematized in modern time due to the establishment of Israel. Thus, the symbolic home changes into an actual one, yet one might ask to what extent it might be a real home. This question adds another dimension to the dilemma of identity for the American Jews when simple diasporic life is challenged by Zionist theories of exile and home. *The Counterlife* is chosen over other works by Roth because it utilizes Israel as part of its setting and also because it delineates the dilemma of 'in-betweenness' regarding the location of 'home' and 'culture'.

In Chapter Four, the identity crisis emerges in modern times when the new Jewish generations try to go back and embrace old Jewish traditions and even religiosity. This issue is tackled in contrast to older generations' rejections of Jewish culture as they consider it invalid and not to serve the cause of Jews anymore. Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* (1995) is chosen here as it focuses on the problem between generations and the misunderstanding between them as both have experienced different circumstances relating to life in an alien culture. The identity crisis within the home of origin is explained through the theory of exile and marginality when the Jew is confined in an excluded community. Solving this dilemma is approached through assimilation by the first generation. Modernity is found as a saviour and redemptive force to fight the past, however, this strategy to solve the identity dilemma is confronted by another crisis relating to assimilation and how it detaches the individual from his/her origins and thus

causes another dilemma of significance and meaning when it comes to one's own belonging. The orthodox Judaism resurgence in the US has resulted because of this dilemma of belonging and the return to old tradition serves as a kind of return to home and origin. The choice of this novel depends mostly on the variation of generations of migrants and their different attitudes towards traditions and the meaning of home. More specifically, it is related to the third generation's sense of 'in-betweenness' regarding authenticity and modernity and how they attempt to construct a bridge between past and present.

Throughout the exploration of the theme of 'in-betweenness' in the above mentioned novels, the thesis highlights the similarities between the two types of texts written by Arab-American and Jewish-American novelists. The two ethnicities presented by these texts are dealing with matters of identity crisis relating to authenticity and modernity. Both ethnicities are affected by the event of migration and the departure from home. The home of origin is always connected with the conception of the 'nation' and a confusion about that conception as the home of origin has already become an imagined home. Both ethnicities might experience a sense of inferiority when it comes to home traditions and culture and both ethnicities might experience a sense of superiority that in many cases leads to social exclusion. Both ethnicities ponder assimilation to avoid the sense of inferiority; and both ethnicities confront violence and hatred in host countries. Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism are important issues that compel them to rethink the option of assimilation as it might not serve their purposes. In short, the thesis investigates how these novels tackle the situation of 'in-between' authenticity and modernity and the effect of its consequences on the lives of migrant/diasporic Arabs and Jews.

CHAPTER ONE

Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine* and the Dilemma of 'In-Between' Borders

There were a number of political upheavals during the period from the mid-20th century onwards which were conducive of many social and cultural changes that have influenced everyday life in the Middle East. Events like the 1967 and the1973 Israeli-Arab Wars, as well as internal wars like the Lebanese Civil War which have been devastating for the Arabs' welfare in that area and have had negative aftermath concerning the social and economic stability. Those effects were reflected in the fiction written by those Arab writers who had migrated to the US. In their fiction, they portray an image of home fraught by conflicts where the individual is no longer safe and comfortable despite the fact that s/he is surrounded by his/her own people and connected to his original cultural tenets. Home is presented as an unhomely place that evokes fear and insecurity. Moreover, the infatuation with the technological and humanitarian advancements of the West has intensified the sense of inferiority for many Arab migrants and further complicates their conception of their home of origin. The force which gives way to nurture that inferior sense is the ambivalent image of the West that some Arabs have already formulated since the middle of the 19th century. Some Arab migrants find themselves in-between a home of origin of which they feel ashamed and a host home in which they do not fit.

This chapter focuses on Rabih Alameddine's novel, *I, The Divine*, and examines the socio-political components of living between borders for writers like the author and for his characters. He uses the technique of memoir writing to demonstrate the identity crisis his characters experience as a result of living in an in-between space, a liminal environment between two places, the home of origin and the host country. His narrative manipulates the motif of mimicry that informs the behaviours of his Arab as well as American characters. It explains the dilemma those characters are handling while attempting to find answers concerning who they are or to which space they really belong. Therefore, relying on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry and Sigmund Freud's theory of the 'uncanny', I argue that the novel presents distorted images of home that are formulated because of the problematic in-between position. Then the chapter shows how hybridity plays a role in the formation of transnational identities and assists in the reconciliation of the two halves of the hyphenated identity.

1. Rabih Alameddine: Where to Belong and Where to Fit?

Rabih Alameddine is a Lebanese-American writer, born in Amman, Jordan in 1959 to an upper-middle class family. He grew up between Kuwait and Lebanon. After the outbreak of the Civil War in Lebanon, he went to the United Kingdom and then migrated to the US when he was seventeen. Hence, From an early stage in his life, he has been exposed to different locations fraught with all their different cultures. Studying engineering in San Francisco University, he realized that it was not his favourite career. He excelled at maths but he was not interested in how cars work. He changed his focus into clinical psychology only to find out that he was not fit for such a domain. As he was interested in painting, he experimented in this field, but was most drawn to reading and writing.[126] Throughout his search for a certain domain to help him take up a profession later on, he was obviously searching for a personal space; it was a search for identity done in a host environment where everything seemed different and uncanny. This topic recurs frequently in his novels which are mostly populated with immigrants like himself searching for identity and home.

Accordingly, Alameddine's novels tackle the issue of border-crossing and the US as a possible regained paradise. The border constitutes many unanticipated challenges for migrants and dealing with them in the host country causes much anxiety and a severe sense of fragmentation. He is aware of the glamourous image of modern America and the attraction that it exerts on many people around the world as he himself has undergone its lure. He says, "I grew up infatuated with America. I had wanted to come for as long as I can remember…As a child my imaginary friends were all American."[127]

In his fiction, Alameddine is also preoccupied with matters of homeland and its predicaments. Though he started his journey outside Lebanon early in his life, the internal social, cultural and political affairs of Lebanon continue to permeate his plots and aesthetic production. For instance, the Lebanese Civil War had a huge impact on Alameddine's imagination and hence its horrors haunt his fiction and characters to register a dark phase of Lebanese political history and its effects on people. He says that the Civil War "permeates every corner of my life. I can't seem to write about anything else. The war taught me how to deal with

[126] Cynthia Crossen, "A New 'Arabian Nights' : A Novel of Life in the Middle East Relies on the Art of Storytelling". http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120916642423246209
[127] Kieron Devlin, "A Conversation with Rabih Alameddine", p. 1
http://newworldwriting.net/backissues/2002/leilani-devlin-alameddine.html

impermanence, how to sharpen my sense of the absurd, and how to function in a chaotic world."[128]

His debut novel entitled *Koolaids: The Art of War*, came out in 1998, and tackles topics like migration, homosexuality, epidemic and the Lebanese Civil War. The dilemma of the border is also evident in his characters' psychological struggle with matters of belonging. Samir, the protagonist, reflects on his dilemma of borders and the anxiety of living between them. He says, "In America I fit, but don't belong. In Lebanon, I belong, but don't fit." Again the problem with the home of origin is succinctly discussed within a framework of a father-son complex relationship. This 'home' factor finds similar expressions in Alameddine's other novels.

His second novel *I, the Divine*, (2001) tackles themes like identity crisis, fear of the 'Other', alienation, fragmentation and also the Civil War. Once again the attempt to fit in a new environment in the US is carried out but constantly interrupted by the recurrence of the past in the home of origin. The protagonist cannot free herself from the memory of a home which is uncompromising and unfair, a point of view that she formulated while living with her family in Lebanon during the time of the Civil War. Her attempt to detach herself completely from the home of origin fails. Kieron Devlin says, "Sarah tries to fit too many times and realizes perhaps that the search for individuality itself may be an illusion, she is nothing without family."[129] This opinion is accurate as the narrative emphasizes memory as a crucial factor in provoking anxiety in the emotional space between two places. Alameddine chooses the faux memoir as a medium to explore identity; he says:

> I wanted to have the same writer doing different chapters, struggling to find a voice. It allowed me to experiment with forms. The idea of inventing and reinventing oneself has always appealed to me. It enables the narrator to figure out which incidents and people were the primary determinants of who she is. Every writer does that when writing a memoir. It is important for setting the tone of the story. [130]

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., p.2

He believes that the form of the story determines its purpose, saying: "I chose Sarah's character and hence her narrative specifically as someone who does not complete projects. Yet she has an urgent need, a neurosis really, to make something of her life. Once I had that, the form seemed best for her character."[131]

His third novel *The Hakawati*, published in 2008, has gained him a good critical acclaim as it contains a number of interesting stories that captured the Western imagination. It is compared to the very famous *The Arabian Nights*. Cynthia Crossen says in her essay published in *The Wall Street Journal* that "Mr. Alameddine is an embellisher extraordinaire"[132], referring to his's phenomenal ability of manipulating folklore which adds more sublimity to his work. *The Hakawati* is recognized as a big book both literally and figuratively as it is a long novel of 513 pages and containing various stories from the Arabic culture and past. Those stories are told by the protagonist, Osama, whose name is chosen deliberately by Alameddine in order to lessen the heavy burden on those Arabs going by that name on the wake of 9/11 attacks. In an interview in 2008, he says that "Osama is a very common name. I did not want the name to become like Adolf. It's a nice name. The boys who were born 7 years ago — is it their fault their name is Osama?"[133] This issue is highly significant for Arab immigrants who suffer from the consequences of Islamophobia in the West. While he was grateful for *The Hakawati*'s positive reception, he was troubled about the remarks concerning its "exotic" characters. He realized that in the West, Arabs are the 'Other'[134]. It can be inferred that Alameddine's aim is to make the reader conceive of his characters as simply humans rather than different or exotic. This aspiration is difficult to attain in a world contesting over spaces; but it is not impossible especially in aesthetic works.

His fourth and fifth novels, *The Unnecessary Woman* (2014) and *The Angel of History* (2016) respectively, also deal with people who are different; people who cannot conform with the surrounding social sensibilities. As with Sarah in *I, The Divine*, the protagonist, Aliyaa in *The Unnecessary Woman* is leading a fragmentary life that is not in accordance with her current environment. Her complete translations of books are kept for herself without being published, thus they remain in the shadow just like her. The protagonist of *The Angel of History* is also

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Cynthia Crossen, "A New 'Arabian Nights' : A Novel of Life in the Middle East Relies on the Art of Storytelling". http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB120916642423246209
[133] Jonathan Curiel, "Alameddine" http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Alameddine-3217366.php
[134] Rabih Alameddine: "Right Now in the West, Arabs are the Other" http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/09/rabih-alameddine-interview-an-unnecessary-woman-national-book-award

presented as living in an era of tremendous political and social turmoil. Here we have another Arab American protagonist retelling his life moving between Yemen, Egypt, Lebanon, Sweden and San Francisco unnoticed by the Demogorgons of that turmoil. It is a philosophical novel where memory and oblivion determine the anxiety over identity. People in the shadow who go unnoticed are always of great interest for Alameddine.

1.1.*I, the Divine* (2001)

The study focuses on Alameddine's novel *I, The Divine* published in 2001. It tackles the theme of identity crisis with all its components of fragmentation, alienation, the search for 'home' and memory that complicate the in-between status the protagonist is grappling with. The narrative is put in the form of a faux memoir, that is, the protagonist is supposed to tell the reader her story. Her life story is told via fragments written all as 'first chapters' to her memoir. She keeps changing her mind about which chapter should initiate her beginning, but she never decides about it. Throughout her story we come to know the stories of her mother and fathers' lives, her siblings and friends' and also stories told by her grandfather to her when she is a child. Alameddine uses a technique of telling a story within a story to reflect on the identity formation of his characters and to add more to the fragmented state relating to the dilemma of the protagonist. Moreover, it gives more emphasis to the role of the family in Arab communities in a world dealing with modernization. Alameddine says in an interview with *The Los Angeles Times*, "I am fascinated about how families start, where they come from."[135] He adds that those stories are stories about his family, how he fits into his family and his friends and also stories about his culture whether in the US or in Lebanon. He says: "It is the meeting of these stories that define a person, relationship and who we are as people."[136]

The Lebanese Civil War preoccupies Alameddine and urges him to tackle it in most of his fiction. In this novel, the Civil War accords to the fragmentary condition and problematizes the sense of belonging. He says that "I am interested in the Civil War as a place of chaos where the normal is put aside. I personally believe that we become much more human in some ways when there is chaos because we can see the best within ourselves but also the worst."[137] Thus the war here in this context is a means to examine the self and criticize it together with all the factors that contribute to that conflict in order to reach a ground upon which the psychological catharsis is achieved.

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[135] Raed Rafei, "Babylon and Beyond: Observations from Iraq, Iran, Israel, The Arab World and beyond." http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2008/07/lebanon-a-write.html
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.

Alameddine recognizes himself as an outsider writer who writes from the perspective of someone who does not really fit in within the dominant culture. He was born into a family of Druze, a religious sect that relates to Islam but is distinct. So as a Lebanese he belongs to a minority living within a community of Muslims and Christians and as an American living in the US, he is an Arab. He is dwelling in a liminal, in-between space. About himself he says that he fits in the US where he does not belong and he belongs in Beirut where he does not fit.[138] His statement here resonates with John McLeod's explanation of the liminal space life. He says that most migrants are "living 'in-between' different nations, 'of, and not of' each place, feeling neither here nor there, unable to indulge in sentiments of belonging to either location, defined by others often in unflattering ways."[139] It can be deduced that according to Alameddine's statements and the narrative of *I, the Divine*, he aspires to arrive at a reconciliation between East and West. He wants to nullify the gap between the two cultures, especially for Arab Americans, so that the identity dilemma is resolved. Relations with the family in the homeland is one of the priorities in the path of that solution. He does not believe in solipsism, he says: "Relations to others are paramount, but this notion is difficult to state equivocally. I find that Western culture tends to overly prize independence, whereas in Arab culture, separation from family is taboo. Probably like Sarah, I view Western independence and individuality as a hypocritical illusion."[140] Throughout Sarah's self and family examination, the issue of belonging to the homeland manifests itself and connects firmly to the issue of finding a third space in the host country.

1.2. *I, The Divine* (2001) : Synopsis

Sarah Nour el-Din, the protagonist of Alameddine's *I, The Divine*, is the narrator of her own story. The novel is presented in the form of a memoir which is supposed to be written by the protagonist herself. As the reader leafs through the pages, s/he finds that all the chapters are intended to be 'chapter one'. So from the beginning, there seems to be a problem with the protagonist's psychological condition. She is unable to decide to which part of her story can be assigned the beginning of her narrative. This can reflect a status of fragmentation and loss the protagonist is trying hard to overcome.

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139 John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialsm* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010) p. 247.

140 Kieron Devlin, p. 4.

The story begins with Sarah telling us something about how she comes to have her name ‘Sarah’ and why. It is a namesake given to her by her grandfather, Hamoud, who is a simple man, as she tells us in the first of her first chapters. As a child, Sarah has a distorted image of her American mother, Janet. Sarah thinks that when she was little, she was odd and her mother is to blame for that. She believes that her mother ‘went astray’ when conceiving her. This visualization of the mother in Sarah’s childhood imagination is to be associated with the grandfather’s hatred towards Janet and his ardent endeavour and eventual success in getting her divorced from his son, Mustafa, and sending her back to the US.

When she is thirteen, Sarah starts to experience dislocation and estrangement. She is transferred to an all-boys school where she has to adapt to a new environment. Later on Sarah provides us with a vivid account of the Lebanese Civil War and how that war causes her the most appalling experiences in her life, one of which is the murder of her sister Rana at the hands of a mentally disturbed soldier. In addition to that, Sarah also experiences gang rape at the hands of three men in the midst of a world cursed by warring factions. Thus, Lebanon as a homeland comes to be seen through the lens of trauma and terror. As a result of that dreadful incident of rape, Sarah conceives a baby that she is forced to abort in secret for fear of upsetting her father’s concept of honour. Accordingly, with all the horrors of war and all her family’s strict code of conduct which is unfair for women, Sarah decides to identify with her American half and goes with the current of individualism, meanwhile rejecting her Arab roots and feeling ashamed of them.

Then Sarah tells us about her relationships with men and her migration to the US where she can identify with a homeland that is, from her vantage point, better and more advanced concerning human rights. Sarah gets married to a Lebanese Catholic Christian, Omer, and elopes with him to the US. After having her only son, Kamal, in New York, her husband Omer decides to go back to Lebanon, a matter that she refuses. Thus Sarah stays in the US and prefers it over her husband and son.

Newly divorced, Sarah rushes to marry a wealthy American Jew in the hope of adapting to the American lifestyle; however, she does not adapt to the Jewish lifestyle and the marriage does not prove a success. Then Sarah rushes to a relationship with a handsome art lover, David, and accepts his odd treatment of her in the hope of keeping the relationship and also of becoming an American woman. To her dismay, David turns out to be gay who cheats on his male lovers with other women.

From her first chapters, we learn that Sarah never has a stable life. She succeeds neither in her marriages nor in her relationships. Dejected all the time, she can focus neither on her art nor on her writing. She lacks the sense of centre according to which she can locate herself within her Arab community in Lebanon or within the American community in the US. Despite the difficulties that Sarah finds when she tries to accept her Arab half, the novel ends with a glimpse of hope that she has finally learned to appreciate her family and her home of origin.

2. *I, the Divine* and the Transnational Identity

A state of transnationalism has characterized the lives of many Arab Americans, particularly those who have dual citizenship and who divide their time between their home of origin and the US. The movement between these two places cultivates a critical standpoint about both places.[141] "The emphasis on the transnational aspect of Sarah's diaspora is meant to underscore her quizzical attitude toward Lebanon from her US-based perspective, as well as her simultaneous questioning of the USA as a permanent homefront."[142] The memoir that the protagonist writes is an attempt to piece together a shattered self. One of the components of that self is its sense of belonging to a certain home. Alameddine's protagonist deals with a dilemma concerning the cultural dimension of her sense of belonging to that home of origin. Stuart Hall explains cultural identity in two ways. He defines cultural identity according to "one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common."[143] In the light of this definition, the cultural identities indicate the common historical experiences and cultural codes which give a certain people steady and continuous structures of reference and meaning under the changing divisions and alterations of the actual lives.[144] Sarah Nour el-Din has a problem in this 'one true self' that she cannot maintain intact. She finds it hard to identify with the people with whom she shares that collective history. The historical experiences and the cultural codes in her home of origin cease to give her meaning for many situations and thus what is familiar and known to her becomes unfamiliar and meaningless.

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[141] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*" in Layla Al-Maleh (ed.) *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literatute* (Amsterdam – New York: Editions Radopi B. V., 2009), p. 165.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Second Edition. London & New York: Routledge , 2006, p. 435.

[144] Ibid.

Moving between borders can result in tremendous creolization of identities. However, Sarah's cultural identity is already influenced by Western tenets before moving to the US. Alameddine's narrative illustrates how an infatuation with Western civilization may occupy a good space in the imagination of many Arabs and how an ambivalent perception of women and life may be formulated as a result of that infatuation. As the protagonist moves between home and diaspora, she realizes that she lacks a positive image about her home of origin. She also lacks a sense of a solid past to support her cultural identity.

Accordingly, Sarah, unconsciously, is trying to construct her past through the process of writing it. She is exploring it in order to face her fears and discontent towards her home of origin so that she can reach reconciliation with it. Here, Sarah is reflecting many Arab American writers who choose to write about the past for a therapeutic purpose. As Evelyn Shakir indicates in her "'Imaginary Homelands' – Lebanese American Prose", recent Arab American writing tries to de-mythologize homeland and start critiquing it in a confessional type of representation in order to reconcile with it later after achieving a good catharsis.[145] At the point of writing her memoir, Sarah is aware of the identity dilemma that she has as she cannot identify fully with her American half. The American mainstream attitude towards the Arabs convinces her that the feeling of the uncanny is also haunting her while in the US no matter how she denies it.

Sarah needs to recover her past in order to secure her sense of self. Stuart Hall emphasizes the role of the past in asserting the individual's identity. He states that:

> Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.[146]

Similarly, Rumina Sethi believes that "identity formation involved imagination based on the existence of pre-conceived ideas." [147] The "Other" is always someone who is different. However this someone has already been imagined to be different. Imagination and discovery collaborate to distinguish the "self" from the "other".[148] For Sarah, the past is also problematic. It is also one of the reasons behind her fragmented self. The past that she recovers shows that

[145] Evelyn Shakir, " "Imaginary Homelands"—Lebanese American Prose", in AL-Jadid, Vol. 9, Nos. 42/43 Winter/Spring (2003)
[146] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", p. 435
[147] Rumina Sethi, "New Frontiers of Transcultural Space: Problematizing Identity and Nation" in Indian Literature, Vol. 49, No. 6 (230) (November-December 2005), Sahitya Akademi http:// www.jstor.org/stable/23346306, p. 139.
[148] Ibid.

she cannot distinguish herself from the "Other"; the Western "Other". From the way that she deals with her past in Lebanon, we can infer her rejection of Arab culture and the people representing it.

In a postcolonial world, reviving the past is an important exercise for previously colonized nations as well as for migrants who have found their host home in the metropole. To heal the rift in their cultural identity, they try to go back in memory, whether the collective or the personal one, so that they find pride and solid background upon which they can establish their whole self. Michael Dash says in his "Marvellous Realism: The Way out of Negritude" that turning to myths, legends and superstitions of the folk is a good way to establish the culture of survival. It is the response of the dominated people to their colonizers. The dominated people, relying on their own imagination, reorder their reality and hence go beyond the tangible and concrete to create new sensibilities which can help them in their harsh battle for survival. Their imagination plays an important role in their struggle against the difficulty of their condition.[149] They engage themselves with new perspectives of the past in order to destroy the myth of 'historylessness' and 'non-achievement' initiated by the colonizer.[150] Similarly, Sarah tries to put together those fragments from the past in order to reach a comprehensive self. She relies on her grandfather's stories of legendary heroes or caliphs in order to give credit to the Arab culture. Those attempts are unconsciously done for the sake of constructing a better image of the home of origin.

I, the Divine belongs to the new category of Arab-American literature that represents new exilic and diasporic Arab-American identities. As Carol Fadda-Conry notes: "Exemplifying the current ease in the movement of bodies and information across the globe, *I, the Divine* stresses a dynamic and complex diasporic relationship with the homeland."[151] Arab-American writers come to criticize the home of origin and to pinpoint its problems rather than relying on nostalgic sensibilities without having a responsibility for a future change in that home. Evelyn Shakir hails the new dimension that Alameddine adds to the portrayal of the homeland, "yoking it to a human drama from which many Lebanese [as well as other Arabs and

[149] Michael Dash, "Marvellous Realism: The Way out of Negritude" in Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Second Edition. London & New York: Routledge , 2006, p. 151.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 164.

Arab-Americans] would recoil."[152] *I, The Divine* updates and revises traditional portrayals of Arabs in the US. The homeland is not necessarily the centre of nostalgic yearning, rather it can be evaluated from "a removed transnational standpoint that furnishes the viewer with the space to pose probing cultural questions, thus reaching a higher level of self-understanding in the process."[153] The image of the homeland is depicted cynically in many Arab American works in order to criticize the violence and xenophobia that is fraught in some Arab countries.

3. An Unhomely Homeland: The Father Figure

The mimicry phenomenon has the capacity to explain another phenomenon which is that of 'home exile', with its components relating to hero worshipping and the desire to be white. The mimicry process drives the individual or the group to gaze at the West and regard it as a model to be followed. Hence, a liminal position is created where the gazer has to moderate his/her attraction to Western culture in order to satisfy the demands of his/her current cultural axioms. Many Arabs live figuratively in the in-between space inside their home of origin before they migrate westward. The imperial hegemonic cultural imperatives have constructed an image of the West that is invincible and highly advanced only to be consolidated by the current more powerful impact of globalization. Modernity comes to be linked to the Western achievements in the fields of natural sciences as well as in the humanities. Advancements in human rights and in democratic political systems in the 'first world' draw attention to the idea that modernity is a Western characteristic and thus 'third world' countries are backward and lazy, an Orientalist point of view that is generally disseminated in the Arab homeland. The more powerful is always more appealing even though the powerful party has distorted the image of the weaker party. Thus many Arabs have found in the West an example to be followed.

Edward Said's theory of Orientalism has shown how Western literary production formulates the image of the East as backward and weak, possessing a kind of culture which is sensual and violent with a history that is stagnant and shameful. During the years when the European Empires were trying to consolidate their powers to control their colonies around the world, that discourse was very necessary; it was part of the Western cultural dynamics of dominance.[154] It was urgent to convince the Western mentality of the legitimacy of the wars overseas. That Western discourse has achieved its goals but that is not all. It has also influenced

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[152] Evelyn Shakir, " "Imaginary Homelands"—Lebanese American Prose", in *AL-Jadid*, Vol. 9, Nos. 42/43 Winter/Spring (2003)
[153] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 164.
[154] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 7.

the Eastern frame of mind. It has not only produced a fixed identity for the East, but it has also affected a modality of weakness that many Easterners, subconsciously, ascribe to themselves.

Orientalist discourse is powerful because it is the result of the cultural hegemony of the West put to work in order to subjugate the Other. The relationship between East and West comes to be mediated through this discourse. It "operates in the service of the West's hegemony over the East primarily by producing the East discursively as the West's inferior 'Other', a maneuver which strengthens—indeed, even partially constructs — the West's self-image as a superior civilization."[155] It does this primarily by classifying the identities of East and West through a system of dichotomies symbolized in the regime of stereotype. The aim of this strategy is to emphasize a sense of difference between the European world and Asiatic one. Hence, the East is represented as "voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational and backward. By contrast, the West is represented as masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic and progressive."[156]

Homi Bhabha has another opinion about the rigid dichotomies of the Orientalist discourse. He argues that the relationship between the colonizer and colonized is more complex than the process of imperial identity production. That relationship is politically fraught and characterized by ambivalence. In "Of Mimicry and Man" (1984), he introduces one of the key concepts which is that of 'mimicry'. It is a tool of colonial control advocated by the metropolitan colonizer who obliges the colonized subject to internalize Western values and norms and adopt the colonizer's ways and life style. For Bhabha, mimicry is "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge."[157] It embodies "the 'epic' project of the civilizing mission to transform the colonized culture by making it copy or 'repeat' the colonizer's culture."[158] The Orientalist or the colonial discourse promises that the colonized will eventually reform and elevate themselves to a status close to the colonizing people, that is the Westerners. The altruistic imperial guidance will aid them in becoming better. Meanwhile, another element in this discourse still advocates the inferiority and the ontological difference of the colonized.

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[155] Bart Moore-Gilber. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London, New York: Verso, 2000), p. 39.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 85

[158] Bart Moore-Gilber, p. 120.

It is of no doubt that European imperial rule over the Arab territories lasted a long time during which the tendency of mimicry operated on different levels. The political level was very active in formulating an image of a superior West in order to advance the military and educational fields in the Arab world. Despite the fact that many Easterners started imitating the Westerners in a number of matters, they could not avoid an uncanny feeling that they are actually not Westerners and cannot be. That uncanny feeling instigates a sense of inferiority and hence consolidates a state of self-hatred that plays a significant role in the identity dilemma. In *I, the Divine*, we can see how the image of the superior West comes to be incorporated with the patriarchal cultural hegemony in the Arab world and how it causes many Arabs to occupy a liminal space while still living in their homeland. To escape that liminal space and exilic situation, migration to the West seems to be the solution.

The home of origin has acquired a distorted image in the imagination of many Arab emigrants due to a number of factors that Alameddine tackles in his novel. There is a severe critique of Arab tradition when it comes to issues of individuality presented to us from the vantage point of a progressive Arab American who tries to foreground the issue of women in the Middle East, as well as gender politics in general, and pinpoints the need for a change in perspective concerning human rights in a world rapidly transforming its norms and views. The "home" that Alameddine shows to us is not that piece of land that gives comfort and security to its people. Here we have a place that becomes strange and unfamiliar every day because of a father figure who is uncompromising and oppressive. This father figure can be represented by the social norms and traditions, political authorities as well as religious institutions.

Concerning social traditions, Alameddine focuses his narrative on the mechanism through which most Arab families function. The patriarchal order is an essential part in their cultural construction. Family ties in most Arab societies are very important and crucial to the formation of ideologies and to the development of personal and national identities. So the family ties have played a paramount role in Arab-American fiction as they occupy an effective role in Arab life. Arab-American writers deal with this issue in relation to the 'nation' and 'community'. The father figure is usually manipulated as a big reason behind the individual's desire for leaving home for another environment. Cyrine C. Hout, in her examination of this topic, studies Arab-American texts that demonstrate very domineering and intolerant fathers or very weak and indifferent ones. There is a tension in the father-son relationship that is difficult to resolve. Hout argues that "eventual alienation from the fatherland is proportional to

estrangement from the father (figure). This correlation complicates any traditional definitions of home versus exile."[159]

Throughout the novel, the sense of the uncanny recurs whenever the protagonist engages with Lebanon as her home country, or with her family as a smaller unit in the Lebanese community she used to deal with before moving to the US. The effect of the father figure is presiding over her life and reminds her that the power of the community is far more influential than that of the individual. Her grandfather, who teaches Sarah to identify herself with a Western woman when she is a child, ceases to be the sweet and gentle grandfather when Sarah discovers his misogyny and racism as an adult. Her father who seems a smart man and well educated, makes himself clear concerning adopting a number of beliefs that Sarah deems backward and invalid. Both grandfather and father are symbols of the 'father figure' or the 'patriarch' who makes Sarah feel the uncanny whenever she writes about home.

To explore the theme of estrangement and lack of security caused by the 'father figure' in *I, the Divine,* the study will rely on the concept of the uncanny especially on the aspect of 'the double' which can be detected in the personality of the protagonist, Sarah Nour el-Din. The technique of the 'uncanny' or the 'unheimlich' has its theoretical framework in an essay written by Freud in 1919 under the same title. The importance of this essay comes from its role in emphasizing ambivalence. Freud states that the German word 'unheimlich' is obviously the opposite of 'heimlich' which means "familiar", "native" or "belonging to the home"; therefore, that which is "uncanny" could signify the frightening just because it is unknown or unfamiliar.[160] He goes on to explain that not all new things are frightening , but rather what is new can become uncanny or fearful, if it is connected with "intellectual uncertainty". Therefore, the uncanny is the sphere in which one does not exactly know where one is. If the individual is well orientated in his/her environment, s/he is less liable to get the feeling of the uncanny concerning events or objects connected to that environment. Another meaning for the unheimlich that Freud proposed is that it is "that which is concealed and kept out of sight."

[159]Syrine C. Hout. "Of Fathers and Fatherland in the Post-1995 Lebanese Exilic Novel" *World Literature Today*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), p. 287.

[160] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", (eds.) Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Second Edition. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. , 2004, p. 418.

"Unheimlich" also signifies what "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light."[161]

After analyzing the German term 'unheimlich' and its different etymological roots, Freud concludes that it has an ambivalent signification; it simultaneously means "that of feeling at home, and that of feeling not at home."[162] Ferial J. Ghazoul says that "[t]he most interesting lesson that Freud teaches us in this long essay is how the repressed gets recognized as familiar/unfamiliar, and by extension the role of ambivalence in pinpointing the repressed."[163] Freud's analysis of Hoffman's story, *The Sandman*, shows that the reason behind the uncanny feeling is the recovery of the repressed.

We can see Sarah's ambivalence concerning the home of origin starts when she expresses her love and admiration for her grandfather who always encourages her to be extraordinary and clever like the "Divine Sarah", the Western actress. Then, later in the novel, she surprises the reader with the revelation that her grandfather is a liar. His misogyny and domestic violence is unthinkable for Sarah, so much so that she becomes confused about his teachings and his behaviour.

3.1.An Ambivalent Image of the West

3.1.1. Hero Worshipping

Heroism and hero worship is part of Arab culture as it is common to many cultures. There is always a need for a role model to be imitated and idolized when it comes to Arab tradition as well as religious teachings. *I, the Divine* portrays a special type of hero making that is problematic for Arab women as well as men. The Western cultural hegemony has had a remarkable impact on the Arab imagination that is apparent in the process of cultural production. Literary genres have been imported and movie topics come to be followed and copied, a matter which has indirectly influenced Arab culture and consolidated the image of a superior West in the mentality of many Arab people.

Hamoud, her grandfather, used to tell Sarah a lot of stories about heroism. But the main important story that he emphasizes and always repeats is the story of Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), a famous French celebrity. Sarah grows to be infatuated with Sarah Bernhardt. She starts to imagine herself as that European actress. She writes in her supposed memoir: "I had always

[161] Ibid.
[162] Ferial J. Ghazoul, "Iraqi Short Fiction: The Unhomely at Home and Abroad" *Journal of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 1, Iraqi Literature (2004), pp.1-24: Brill. http//www.jstor.org/stable/4183501, p. 2
[163] Ibid.

associated concerns about personal appearance with frivolity, and I had no role models to speak of. Who would want to look like Indira Gandhi or Golda Meir? In reality, the only true model of a successful woman was the Divine Sarah."[164] Imitating the appearance of Western actresses had become a trend by the midst of the 20th century. From Sarah's comment here, we can see that imitating forms dictated by Western cultural productions is far more appreciated than imitating modern political systems. Empowered women like Gandhi and Meir are not really favoured as models when it comes to Middle Eastern women upbringing. Sarah, as a child, loves to listen to her grandfather a lot. Sarah writes :

> "Her real name was Henriette-Rosine Bernard," he told me, "but she'll always be Sarah Bernhardt, the Divine Sarah, the greatest woman who ever lived. She broke every man's heart. When she was up on stage, the earth moved, the planets collided, and the audience fell in love. I was a little boy when I met her, not much older than you, but I knew I was in the presence of the greatest actress in the world. (Alameddine: 107)

Her grandfather has a great admiration for the Western woman. He idealizes this actress to the utmost. He wants his granddaughter to be like her in appearance and in personality. Sarah grows up to recognize herself as 'divine' as long as she follows the steps of Western women like that actress. She finds that such women are powerful and hence they remain successful. Her grandfather's infatuation with the actress influences Sarah to idealize her and recognize her as the model who reached happiness. He has lots of stories to tell little Sarah about his great actress:

> [H]er hair was red like fire, bright red, and her voice, oh my, her voice was the most beautiful in the world. When she spoke it was like singing. I was a young boy when I met her, and she an old woman, but I would have married her, if I could. I would have married her right there. But everybody wanted to marry her. Her red hair was almost like yours was when you were a baby. If we colored your hair now, you would look just like her. And she was a firecracker, just like you. (Alameddine: 107)

[164] Rabih Alameddine. *I , The Divine: A Novel I in First Chapters*. New York & London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001. , p. 81. All subsequent quotations to the novel will be to this edition.

Hamoud's advice shows lucidly how the West has turned into a magnet; everyone wants to join and be part of the glory. The emphasis on appearance and how baby Sarah's red hair resembles that of the actress is an allusion to the desire to be an actual copy of the powerful Western cultural counterparts. Sarah grows up believing that she is the 'divine Sarah'. The word 'Divine' succinctly reflects the supremacy of the West and the desire to be incarnated in its own image. Sarah thinks she can do anything she wants although an average female growing in Lebanon cannot be very liberal. No matter how the parents encourage their daughter, the pressures of the society will finally shape her dreams into only having a good married life. So she is aware that the story of Sarah Bernhardt has so great influence over her that she becomes oblivious to the pressures of the Lebanese society. The identification with the Western actress shows how Sarah longs to negate her Arab identity and attach herself to the Western lifestyle. She gradually conceived of herself as an outsider, as Susan Rubin Suleiman puts it, "one can be an outsider in one's own home town, as members of minority group know."[165] Sarah in this environment resembles a minority member within a prejudiced hegemonic dominant culture. This uncanny feeling intensifies the sense of inferiority for the protagonist. The uncanny sense here is Sarah's recognition of a critical position for women which is dissimilar to that of the Western woman.

Sarah's uncanny feeling grows when she realizes the injustice that a real Western white woman can receive at the hands of very traditional Arab men claiming the protection of parochial norms and community. She is disappointed by her grandfather who is so keen on denying her American mother any merit after he has forced his son to divorce her. While narrating that story of Bernhardt, Hamoud tries his best to make Sarah hate her own mother. He tells her about how immoral Sarah Bernhardt's mother is. He says, "[h]er mother sent her to live with a nurse in Brittany, in the northwest of France. Her mother was a bad woman. She didn't want Sarah around when she was seeing all those men… Her mother couldn't love her because she loved all those men." (410-11) This episode demonstrates the contradiction in the image of the West or Western women in the Arab collective consciousness. No matter how the West is advanced, their culture will remain a threat to the Eastern cultural wellbeing and religious structures.

In Alameddine's novel, the father figure is presented as the source of an inaccurate and

[165] Susan Rubin Suleiman. "Introduction" *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.) (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 3.

false discourse. When Sarah grows up a little, she starts to search for information about the "Divine Sarah". She finds out that most of the stories that her grandfather narrated about her are not correct. He lied about having met the actress and he lied concerning her being active until her death. Sarah got shocked. Those lies signify the desire to worship a powerful enemy and shine its image in order to emerge as an avatar to it. This false discourse is a reason behind the sense of exile that one feels at home, drawing on Suleiman's definition of exile which says that it is "a focal point for theoretical reflections about individual and cultural identity, which in turn are intimately bound up with problems of nationalism, racism, and war."[166] Thus, for Sarah, her cultural identity is disturbed and her national belonging also is disturbed because of that ambivalent discourse.

3.1.2. The Desire to Be White

The motif of the uncanny can be connected to the idea of the "double" which results from the technique of having two characters identical in terms of looks or mental processes. The two characters might think in the same way or share the same feelings, experiences or knowledge with the other. One of them identifies him/herself with the other and hence his/her self becomes confounded or the other self is substituted for his own. As a result of this doubling, similar situations come to recur repeatedly like some same face, same character feature, same name or same kind of fortune befalling in the course of events.[167] The motif of the double can be connected "with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death."[168] *I, the Divine* demonstrates this motif in the characterization triangle of Sarah Nour al-Din, her mother, Janet and the late French actress Sarah Bernhardt. In Sarah's mind, her mother and Bernhardt are one being standing for the Western world. Identifying with both of them gives Sarah a sense of superiority and security as well to fight an abject image of 'home'.

At an early age, Sarah identifies with Sarah Bernhardt .The similarity of the names here signifies a primary uncanny confusion for the protagonist. Sarah finds her image reflected in Bernhardt as both of them have bad mothers according to Hamoud's version of the story. She has inherited her white complexion from her American mother, so this adds to Sarah's sense of incarnation as a Western woman. Nevertheless, later on, Sarah discovers her grandfather's lies about the invincible glory of Bernhardt and at that point, the image of the West cracks in her

[166] Susan Rubin Suleiman, p. 2.
[167] Freud, p. 425
[168] Ibid.

consciousness. Moreover, it gives her a divided image of herself. The power that she derives from her colour seems to be an illusion; but she continues avoiding this realization. Sarah's condition here resonates with Nicholas Royle's notion of the uncanny which he describes as ghostly. It reflects what is strange, weird and mysterious. It implies feelings of uncertainty, concerning one's own reality and experience. Royle continues:

> The uncanny is the crisis of the proper : it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper…, a disturbance of the very idea of personal or private property including the properness of proper names, one's so-called 'own' name, but also the proper names of others, of places, institutions, and events. It is the crisis of the natural, touching upon everything that one might have thought was 'part of nature' : one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world.[169]

One that has this feeling of the uncanny starts to question his/her sense of personality. Sarah comes to doubt everything in her environment. Everything she learns while growing up in Lebanon turns out to be uncanny; she suspects anything characterized as Eastern. Nurturing this ambivalent image of herself as a white woman, she cannot see herself as an Arab woman as well.

The Doubling with the American mother is another source of self-assertion that Sarah relies on to fight her sense of inferiority. The 'double' usually stands in affiliation with another person. This affiliation happens when mental processes can be transferred from one person to the other. Therefore the one who shares feelings, experiences or knowledge with another person tends to identify his/her self with that person. The aspect of the double can be vividly seen in the protagonist Sarah's imitation of her mother, Janet.

The desire to be white is to display a more latent desire which is to be American. Sarah is trying to negate her Arab cultural identity and finds in the skin colour a means to achieve that. She is ashamed of her home of origin and tries to convince herself that she resembles her mother in her looks, hence she has the right to be American. Being an Arab or identifying with her home of origin intensifies her sense of inferiority. As Franz Fanon puts it in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) after examining the black-white relations in the Antilles society; he states that both the white and the black nurture narcissism which is motivated by the society in which both of them live. In that mixed society, the black man wants to be white and he is sealed in his

[169] Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.

blackness as the white who is sealed in his whiteness which gives him a sense of superiority over the blacks.[170] In this situation, the blacks want to prove to white men, by every means, that their thoughts are rich, and their intellect is of great and equal value.[171] Fanon says that the black "is full of rage because he feels small, he suffers from an inadequacy in all human communication, and all these factors chain him with an unbearable insularity."[172] In the case of Alameddine's protagonist, the situation that Fanon talks about can be applied to her. She also wants to be white but she is sealed in her Arab identity as long as she is living in an Arab homeland. She also wants to prove that she is a modern woman and has a refined intellect devoid of misogyny and religious parochialism. She identified backwardness with the Arab culture. Her sense of inferiority comes from that identification.

Fanon says that the black cannot be satisfied by his/her insularity. S/he wants a way out of his/her dilemma and that way always leads to the white world. The continuous preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man and the concern to be as powerful as the white man have become part of the structure of his/her ego.[173] This neurosis can be detected in Sarah Nour el-Din while she is writing her fragmented memoir registering how she is trying to imitate her mother's life style. She tries many jobs and occupations but she is unable to concentrate on one of them fully. She always changes her domain of interest in an attempt to be like her American mother. By imitating the mother, Sarah is not trying to copy the American success story, rather, her mimicry is only superficial. She needs to join the white world. A blind imitation of the mother, therefore, seems to her a good passport.

The infatuation with the superiority of the West and the resulting inferiority complex might lead to a psychic disintegration. The desire to be white is an unconscious one. It leads to neurosis. Fanon states that "[t]he neurotic structure of an individual is simply the elaboration, the formation, the eruption within the ego, of conflictual clusters arising in part out of the environment and in part out of the purely personal way in which that individual reacts to these influences."[174] If one is spellbound by the wish to be white, it is because s/he lives in a society that gives way to this inferiority complex; in a society that declares the superiority of one race. When s/he finds oneself facing difficulties, s/he will find oneself thrust into a neurotic

[170] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), p. 9

[171] Ibid., p. 10.
[172] Ibid., p. 50.
[173] Ibid., p. 51.
[174] Ibid., p. 81.

situation.[175] The superiority of the West here is implicitly acknowledged in Arab and/or Middle Eastern society, thus, whiteness itself is also favoured in that environment. The sense of an uncanny home recurs here to encourage Sarah to escape to another place: in this instance, the US, home of her mother.

Embodying the personality of the mother is part of the mimicry that Sarah undergoes. She wants to find a home in the US but she cannot. Had her mother remained alive and in good natural relation with her, she might have found rest and some sort of real belonging to the home of the mother. She is always in search of her mother. This search for the mother symbolizes also the search for a homeland. Sarah is a wanderer. She is in a constant search for the mother as well as for self and a homeland. Identifying herself with the mother signifies her desire to find meaning in her existence. Carol Fadda Conrey states that many of Sarah's difficulties are related to her problematic transnational identity, transnational here relating to Sarah's Arab and American parents. Conrey adds that Sarah "replicates her parents' illicit love affair by falling in love with a fellow engineering student, Omar Farouk, in the same place where her parents had met, the beach at the American University of Beirut."[176] She tries to follow her mother's steps in a context which is partially similar to those of her mother; she chooses a husband from another religion against her family's traditions.

Janet never recovers from the trauma of divorce. She meets Sarah when the latter moves to New York. Sarah tries her best to get closer to her mother but it is never easy to be in her presence. Sarah realizes that her mother never really forgives them all. Janet cannot develop a good relationship even with her grandson Kamal. She refuses to meet him when he grows older as if boys remind her of her catastrophic marriage. Sarah never mentions that her other sisters have connections with their mother. It is only Lamia, the psychopath, who writes a number of unsent letters to her mother in the hope of establishing a relation with her but it is a futile sort of action. Sarah writes about her relationship to Janet:

> She picks up the princess phone and dials her mother. The phone rings three times before the machine picks up. "Janet, it's Sarah. I've been trying to reach you. Did you get my last message? Call me soon, please." Her mother lives across the park but it feels like continents.(Alameddine: 273)

[175] Ibid., p. 100.
[176] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 172.

Though her mother is not so interested in maintaining a good relationship with her daughter, Sarah is dying for more closeness. She wrote about herself:

> Sarah is fascinated by her mother. Such beauty, such pathos; her life the stuff of novels. She had to leave Beirut and come to New York when Sarah was two. Now that they are living in the same town, Sarah cannot get enough of her mother. The feeling is not mutual. Janet can only take so much of Sarah.(Alameddine: 273)

Sarah imitates her mother when dealing with her son Kamal. She lives far away from him. She simply accepts that his father takes him to live in Lebanon where she does not like to live. Her connection with him is too little. Her family in Lebanon always remind her to practice her role as a mother but she rarely does. She realizes that she resembles her mother in looks and also life style. She writes "It isn't just the looks. I notice how my life ended up and realize I am my mother, even though I hardly knew her." (181)

At the same time, this imitation of the mother signifies her desire for self-extinction as she wants herself to dissolve into the self of the mother. The double figure can evoke strange feelings of animosity as well as affection in the character. Nicholas Royle states that "One may want one's double dead; but the death of the double will always also be the death of oneself."[177] Sarah does not wish for her mother's death, but the suicide of the mother makes Sarah ponder death in the same way. Sarah starts writing her memoir in order to keep away the idea of suicide and death as well as to immortalize herself and her experience. She writes to keep her name alive. She is writing to find essence and meaning. The death of the mother further complicates Sarah's problem of 'home'.

3.2.Gender Politics and the Image of 'Home'

Living in a postcolonial world characterized by globalization, a Western mode of thinking comes to prescribe the way in which non-Westerners perceive the meaning of 'modernity'. Arabs in the Middle East come out of hegemonic Western colonialist control to fall under the influence of a hegemonic world policy. Then they are exposed to a type of media shaped by Western ideologies. All this contributes to the ambivalent image of the West in the minds of Middle Easterners in general and Arabs in particular. Gender politics is also greatly affected by the influence of modernity.

[177] Royle, p. 190.

Samira Aghacy presumes that Lebanese fiction exposes challenges that give way to slippage between modernity and Westernness; that is, it shows that modernity is a Western project. She states, "although modernity is a phenomenon not limited to the West in Arab society, it is a fact that Western cultural norms such as attitudes to morality, sexuality, and women's liberation are seen by Lebanese writers as emanating from the West and as threatening to their cultural and religious sensibilities."[178] Aghacy also observes that other Lebanese writers manipulate modernity within a leftist paradigm. They "embrace modernity as a means of liberating society from oppressive customs and traditions, generally considered obstacles to progress and development."[179] So the attitude concerning modernity varies among Arabs. Some of them are skeptical, some reject and some embrace. However, seeing modernity as a threat can unite most Arab opinion as it is directly connected to basic ideologies about gender politics, religion and sexuality. Not all modern Western ideologies can be liberally applied to Arab societies.

In the middle of these two attitudes, Arab cultural identity must engage in a lot of negotiations out of which much self-critique emerges. Nevertheless, the tension between East and West is not an easy one. In many cases, it leads to expatriation as in the case of Sarah who chooses to leave the homeland which ceased to be the "shelter, stability, security and comfort" as John McLeod puts it, or the "location where we are welcome, where we are not at sea but have found safe harbour.[180]

Carol Fadda Conrey observes that the notions of home and national belonging come to be destabilized by the transnational movements;[181] which already happens in the protagonist's imagination before her actual movement to the US. In Alameddine's narrative, this notion of home is problematized because of the image of the father figure in the protagonist's consciousness which can also be seen in patriarchal social authority. For Sarah, her home of origin, Lebanon, is primarily a symbol of tyranny and unnatural entity. We can look at the relationship between grandfather and granddaughter as a metonym standing for the protagonist's relationship to Lebanon. Usually, in the literature of the Arab diaspora, the image

[178] Samira Aghacy, "Contemporary Lebanese Fiction: Modernization without Modernity" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Nov., 2006), p. 562.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., p. 242.
[181]Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 169.

of the grandmother is used to evoke nostalgia for the home of origin.[182] Here, the grandfather functions as an uncanny figure which problematizes the nostalgic feeling and causes confusion.

Sarah's "in-betweenness hinges on a physical and emotional transnationalism that suspends her between two countries yet equips her with the critical powers to assess each of the two cultures from a removed, more objective standpoint."[183] She opens her very first chapter by telling the reader about her origin and her grandfather who has named her. The grandfather stands for the rigid patriarchal orders and norm by which the majority of Arabs live and communicate. She describes herself from the beginning that she is an odd girl, never conforming like other girls or at least like her other sisters and only brother.

> I had always been a little odd, which people blamed on my mother, but she was not at fault. My sisters were normal. People could not blame my father. My half-sisters turned out to be more normal than normal. Except for being gay, my little brother was probably the most normal of us all. I was the strange one. (Alameddine: 8)

This strangeness that Sarah acknowledges is connected to her being exposed to dual types of social ideologies, the Arabic traditional one and the presumably Western modern one. Those two ideologies seem very incompatible on the pragmatic level. The first evidence for that is how an American woman is treated in a strictly traditional community. As a child, Sarah forms a distorted image of her mother. And that is all because of her grandfather's influence over her and his determination to cut all relations between Janet and her daughters. Sarah thinks that when she is little she is odd and her mother is to be blamed for that. She believes that her mother "went astray" when conceiving her. Her distorted image of the mother is caused by her grandfather's teachings. He hates the American white woman because she is different, even though she does her best to comply with the Lebanese or the Druze traditions. In the grandfather's eyes, after all, she is a Western woman. "The West is seen as menacing and threatening to one's identity, history, and traditions."[184]Sarah realizes this later, and thus she no longer trusts that tradition as she considers it dishonest. This adds to her distorted image of home in Sarah's comprehension of Lebanon.

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[182] Michelle Hartman. "Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine*: A Druze Novel as World Literature? in Nouri Gana (ed.) *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). P. 344.

[183] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 166.

[184] Samira Aghacy, p. 563.

She knows from childhood that her mother was divorced by her father when she was two years old, and because of that she and her two sisters become deprived of their mother. Her father remarries a younger Lebanese women only because her mother cannot give him a son. That is what she writes in the beginning of her 'memoir', or that is how Alameddine opens his novel. So the sense of estrangement from home starts when she is separated from her mother.

Fragmentation is a feature characterizing this model of a family life. The incompatibility of East and West results in broken familial ties. Arabs getting married to Western women mostly face a lot of difficulty to convince their families at home. Women in the West are seen "as a threat to the Arab man's values; she is a source of corruption, evil, and immorality." [185] The effect of the uncanny starts to appear from the beginning of the novel. Sarah at this stage starts to realize that her mother was treated unjustly by her father. She starts to sympathize with her and at the same time blames her father for the loss of the warm home. Carol Fadda Conrey says that the main reason for Sarah's early signs of rebellion comes from her father, Mustafa Nour el-Din's succumbing to family pressures by divorcing his American wife and marrying a young traditional Lebanese girl. This action affects Sarah and characterizes her life with fragmentation. Sarah's "rebellion is mainly against her family, her 'tribe', her community in Lebanon."[186] Throughout the novel, Sarah vindicates the situation of her mother stating that she has done her best to be a Druze housewife and mingled with the new society, but all her efforts are in vain.

Sarah's relationship with her father also signifies another configuration of a familial relationship as a metonym of the exilic state that encompasses a father-son or father-daughter relationship.[187] Shuttling between borders intensifies the generational tension between Sarah and her father and hence further convinces her of the difficulty of returning home. "By reconfiguring the familial relationship that is used to symbolize the complexities of homeland, exile and identity, Alameddine resists nostalgia for an idyllic Druze Lebanon, reimagining this for Sarah Nour al-Din through a feminist lens."[188] Instead of nostalgia there is fear from a home controlled by the father figure.

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[185] Ibid.

[186] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 173.

[187] Michelle Hartman. "Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine*: A Druze Novel as World Literature?", p. 344.

[188] Ibid.

East and West cannot meet when there is fear lurking inside the inhabitants of one world towards the other. Sarah condemns her father's reasons for divorcing her mother. She also blames it on Arab culture. Janet and Mustafa had three daughters who are too much for Mustafa's parents to bear. His father convinces him to divorce his American wife and get married to a Druze wife in order to have boys. Mustafa, as an educated man, should not adopt ideas that evince ignorance and backwardness such as having another wife in order to have a son. He confesses to Sarah that he divorced Janet, not because she had given him girls, rather because he had fallen out of love with her. He realizes that they are different, that after the glow of love diminished, nothing would keep him with an American woman. There are no traditional and cultural ties that can keep the relationship intact. Sarah explains the situation:

> This, I learned from my father: "I don't think any man ever loved a woman as much as I loved your mother. But it faded, eroded slowly. One day I woke up and I was not in love. There was nothing I could do. We did not have enough in common to have a comfortable life together, not like Saniya and I. Once the love was gone, your mother got on my nerves. With Saniya, I don't love her as much as I loved your mother, but she makes me happy. Your mother made me crazy." There you go. My father divorced my mother and sent her packing, not because she could not give him a son, not because she was a terrible mother to his girls, but because he fell out of love. (Alameddine: 65)

This divorce between Janet and Mustafa symbolizes the incompatibility between East and West when traditions are drawn into conflict. What Mustafa wants to say is that when the glow of love diminishes, the married couple will just fall back on their own cultural convictions, and an Eastern man of a traditional outlook cannot accept Westernness in his home. This is an ambivalent treatment, as Louay Safi puts it, while explaining how Europe is seen by Easterners and how they evaluate it. He says that Europe can be considered as "a source of inspiration and a model to be emulated and followed, on the one hand, and a source of threat and a foe to be feared and confronted on the other."[189] The Americanness/Westernness of Janet is the main reason behind her rejection by that community. This incapability of including the "Other" intensifies Sarah's sense of alienation within a conservative society like that. She writes about her father:

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[189] Louay Safi, *The Challenge of Modernity: The Quest for Authenticity in the Arab World* (New York: University Press of America, 1944), 129.

> I saw a principled man regretting his past actions and attempting to correct the course his young life had taken. I saw him cruelly divorce his blameless wife. For a few moments, he had taken a risk, stepping beyond the imaginary circle Lebanese men drew around themselves in colored chalk. He had married nontraditionally, an American woman, for love, the riskiest of all. He divorced for comfort, for tradition, for safety. (Alameddine: 193)

Women in such a traditional society are considered the guardians of tradition. No matter how life might change and modernity come to shape the Middle Eastern mentality, the status of women should remain as it is. Women are the "bearers of traditional values and home is the sphere in which identity is protected and continuity with the past is reassured."[190] Aghacy argues that an Arab woman can be a "mnemonic image in which modern man preserves the past to be able to cope with the disorienting problems generated by modernity."[191] Feminist politics are difficult to negotiate because any attempt towards a change in the status quo is generally seen as a threat to the peace of the Middle Eastern home. Educated men might marry uneducated girls not only to keep the sense of security and have his family pleased, but also to guarantee that this wife will not betray him one day which is generally an unrealistic conviction. Sarah realizes that in this community women are likely to be shaped by old-fashioned cultural views, she writes,

> I saw a debonair city man choose a mountain girl for a wife. I saw him pick an uneducated girl he could train, mold in time, sculpt as his Eliza. I saw a man from a titled family decide on a peasant for a wife, someone who would always look up to him, never challenge him, never threaten. I saw a man choose a girl for a wife. (Alameddine: 195)

In addition to the protagonist, Sarah Nour el-Din, Alameedine presents two other Sarahs; Sarah Bernhardt discussed earlier and the Druze Sarah, a figure from Druze history. The novel manifests how the Western woman is glorified on the surface level while an empowered Lebanese woman who played a significant role in Druze history is trivialized and concealed by the hegemonic patriarch figure. Michelle Hartman says that "[s]ymbolically, these two Sarahs represent the tension between but also the coexistence in the text of the global and local."[192]

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[190] Samira Aghacy, p. 563.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Michelle Hartman. "Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine*: A Druze Novel as World Literature?", p. 353.

Recognizing this issue makes Sarah see the gap between East and West when it comes to women's rights. Sarah's sisters find their grandfather a villain. They call him a misogynist. Amal, the eldest sister of Sarah tells her once that "He was a Machiavellian asshole, prejudiced as hell, xenophobic and bigoted. You just don't remember him well. With you, he was all kindness and warmth; with the rest of us, he was a manipulative bastard." (Alameddine: 385) She adds, "[h]e was a misogynist. He hated all us girls. He thought all women were whores. He beat Grandmother up on a regular basis. You were just too young to remember. In any case, what he did to our stepmother alone is enough." (Alameddine: 385)

Amal explains her grandfather's infatuation with Sarah Bernhardt as a belief in an illusion; the longing to have an extraordinary woman who is unattainable. She said that "[h]e loved the myth, the unattainable myth of what a woman is." (386) He idealizes her as a Westerner. Hamoud, as a symbol of the Arab patriarchal mentality, adores powerful Western women. He looks at them as a model. But mostly, Arabs do not allow their women to imitate "Other" women. They believe Arab women should always conform with the traditions. In her analysis, Aghacy alludes to the fact that "Arab men accept a Western woman's behaviour but do not tolerate it when it comes to Arab women."[193] Deep inside, Sarah realizes that her grandfather's infatuation with the actress is not based on genuine admiration of her excellence, but is a superficial star-struck condition that has nothing to do with individuality and women issues. And hence she adds this to her reasons behind rejecting Lebanon as a home. The ambivalence that she finds in her grandfather's attitude about the West has disillusioned her.

Amal insists that her grandfather is a misogynist as he never mentions the story of the Druze Sarah who does a great act of heroism. The Druze Sarah is a prominent figure from Druze history. She was a leader of a congregation sent to reconfirm the vows of the believers to the Caliph. She achieved the task and came back victorious. Sarah's grandfather "manipulated history to make Sarah believe that the Druze were descended from the Prince of Believers, and not from a woman."[194] He never mentions anything about the Druze Sarah because he never believes that an Arab woman can be ascribed with heroism. Amal says:

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[193] Samira Aghacy, p. 563.

[194] Cristina Garrigos. "The Dynamics of Intercultural Dislocation: Hybridity in Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine*" in Layla Al-Maleh (ed.) *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literatute*. (Amsterdam – New York: Editions Radopi B. V., 2009), p. 194.

> "Sarah [the Druze] was the reason we are here. We are the direct descendants of the people she converted. Don't you find it strange that he [their grandfather] would not mention her? He preferred to fill your head with stories of the Divine Sarah, but not the Druze Sarah." (Alameddine: 388)

Further reason behind Sarah's disillusion about home are her disagreement with her father's convictions and beliefs. She considers them old fashioned and outside history. She describes her father:

> He was anachronistic, a traditional man in a rapidly changing culture. Yet he valiantly attempted to hold off the inevitable moral and cultural collapse, as he called it. While the country's mores adjusted and mutated, he still held the belief that a man's reputation is all he has. He still believed in honor in a society which now honored criminals and marauders (Alameddine: 179)

She no longer believes in what her family believes in. Now Sarah considers her father's statements to be outdated:

> One statement stuck in my mind. "A boy's sexuality is like a plastic tablecloth," he said. "If a carafe of wine is spilled on it, you can easily wipe it off. A girl's sexuality, on the other hand, is like fine linen, much more valuable. If a carafe of wine is spilled on it, it will never come off. You can wash it and wash it, but it will never be the same. (Alameddine: 180)

Many Arab women have suffered a lot because of the honour concept deeply rooted in the Middle Easterner's psyche. Steven Salaita states that Mustafa combines virginity with cleanliness and believes that a woman can be stained, while a man is basically immune to dishonour. This viewpoint severely confines women's activities and assigns the kind of sexuality they might choose for their lives if they want to live a normal life.[195] Nothing can compensate for the loss of 'honour' which is directly connected to the female body according to Sarah's community. Loss of 'honour' is highly contributing to the death penalty; that is the reason behind so many honour crimes still committed in the Middle East. Sarah notices how hypocritical such beliefs are in a society which idealizes the West but at the same time refuses to negotiate women's rights in many situations. To use R. Radhakrishnan's words, many Arabs are drawn to "two regions or spaces, internalizing Western epistemological modes at the outer

[195] Steven Salaita , *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide*. Syracue University Press, 2011, p. 51.

or purely pragmatic level, and at the inner level maintaining a traditional identity."[196]

4. Violence and the Image of 'Home'

Another factor which contributes to the sense of inferiority about home is the violence resulting from disputes over beliefs. Alameddine's *I, The Divine*, as well as some of his other works situate him within a group of Lebanese American writers who are preoccupied by the effects of war and violence on the formulation of the image of home in the migrant's consciousness. The political crisis which emerged in the Lebanese Civil War (1975- 1991) has rendered a good number of Lebanese writers, who have partly or fully witnessed it, traumatized, haunted with fears and repressed desires. Writing about Lebanon, they tackle themes of exile, homecoming, journey, exclusion, marginality, whiteness and the exotic. In their literature, a sense of estrangement hovers over the course of events and the feeling of the uncanny stigmatizes their characters. "What differentiates this new group of writers from their immediate predecessors is their preoccupation not only with the war itself as a human tragedy, but also with the complex relationship between life in exile and survival in the fatherland during the war years."[197] Writing about the after-effects of trauma following the war gave them the opportunity to present fierce critiques of self, family, and nation in order to fight that uncanny feeling about the homeland.

To use Avtar Brah's words, 'home' "can simultaneously be a place of safety and terror."[198] When life itself is at a stake, when the safety of the body is threatened, home loses its cocoon quality. Susan Stanford Friedman states, "[t]he affective body—the body that feels—can be the site of pleasure but also of pain; the place of resistance but also of mutilation and abjection."[199] Violence against the body renders the sense of the uncanny horrific enough to drive one away from home. In Fadia Souyoufi's study, she focuses on the manifestations of the uncanny to reflect on the defamiliarization of the ordinary and the theme of estrangement from one's homeland in the world of the novel. She exposes the "metamorphosis of the familiar and homely into the monstrous and the strange; of the human into the dehumanized and the sacred

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[196] R. Radhakrishnan, "Nationality, Gender and the Narrative of Identity," *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Andrew Parker, et. al. (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 85.
[197] Syrine C. Hout. "Of Fathers and Fatherland in the Post-1995 Lebanese Exilic Novel", p. 285.

[198] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 207.

[199] Susan Stanford Friedman. "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora" *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall, 2004), University of Tulsa, p. 190.

into the profane."[200] She suggests that the uncanny reflects a psychic status and how one suffers when s/he cannot reach an understanding of the environment s/he is facing and dealing with. The Civil War plays a significant role in disturbing any familiar image of home and transforms it into a horrific one. Thus a traumatic experience commences.

From the fragments that Sarah writes as first chapters, we come to know that when she was sixteen, she is gang raped in Lebanon, an experience which causes her to conceive a baby and consequently is forced to abort in secret. The rape incident intensifies her fear of the father figure represented by the society. What makes her psychological and physical suffering intense is that she has to endure it alone for she knows that her family will not really support her in this traumatic situation. She relives this emotional crisis twenty years after it occurs while she is in the US, following her abandonment by her lover David. Her trauma becomes more acute when she realizes that her choice of the US as a substitute home instead of Lebanon is not helping her to overcome the calamities of the past. Nevertheless, again she connects between the incident of rape and Lebanon as a 'home'.

After such traumatic events, exhaustive processing of that event happens both on a narrative and a cognitive level for the victim. The cultural environment during that period is crucial for the survivor.[201] For Sarah, discussing her rape with her conservative father is unthinkable. She is only able to confide in her friend Dina who helps her throughout that ordeal. Her inability to talk about her traumatic experience adds to the anguish she feels later. It also augments her sense of inferiority as well as her sense of shame about home. The home of origin ceases to give her the feeling of security.

While in the US, fireworks used in some celebrations usually remind Sarah of bombardments, snipers, "the smell of cordite, of garbage, urine, and decaying flesh." (39) She makes a lot of effort to avoid these memories. These images of dirt are demonstrative of the deep scar in her psyche connected with the trauma of war. "Multiple factors (mis)shape her personality, but the stain of rape proves toughest to remove."[202] While celebrating the new millennium in Lebanon, her family asks her to come back and live among them. But the very

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[200] Fadia Suyoufie. "The Uncanny in Ahlam Mustaghanmi's "Abir Sarir"". *Journal of Arabic Literature*. Vol. 36, No. 1 (2005), pp. 28-49. http:// www.jstor.org/stable/4183528 Accessed 14-09-2015 11:33 UTC. , p. 28-29.

[201] Rivka Tuval-Mashiach et. al., "Coping with Trauma: Narrative and Cognitive Perspectives", *Psychiatry* 67.3 (Fall 2004), p. 290.

[202] Cyrine Hout. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 81.

idea of coming back reminds her of the rape experience which makes the perspective improbable to achieve.

Sarah develops that sense of absurdity relating to home, as she witnesses the Civil War in Lebanon and undergoes the experience of losing one of her half-sisters because of it. This feeling is consolidated by recognizing Arab culture and Arab life style as backward. Some researchers have investigated the Arab economic crisis which definitely led to interior unrest such as civil wars. Abbas J. Ali rightly argues that "Arab management thought is fragmented and suffers from direction and identity problems."[203] He points out that "Arab scholars fail to predict the severity of the economic pressures faced by the Arab regimes; their foreign debt crisis; their urgent need for cash flow, and their international and external obligations and expectations."[204] He adds that they were not original in their management theories as they always depend on and imitate the Western theorists. The majority of Arabs start to believe in the inadequacy of their political regimes. The failure of many political systems affects the image of 'home' and convinces a lot of people that living in their countries will cause them to suffer. Sarah resigns herself to the belief that Lebanon has been always connected with misery and war. She describes the time of the civil war saying:

> I do not know if all happy families resemble each other as I do not know any content families. In Lebanon during the war, however, all unhappy families were not unhappy in their own way. They suffered because at least one family member was killed. It did not matter why a family was unhappy before; death became the overpowering reason. (Alameddine: 93)

She associates home with absurd death. Because of the Civil War, her family loses Rana, her half-sister. Rana is only sixteen when she is shot by a young psychopathic soldier who happens to have admired her and asked for her hand. She refuses his request and he decides to shoot her before he takes his own life. The death of her sister in that way embitters Sarah and deepens her rejection of home. She blames the death of her sister on the triviality of the cause of the Civil War in Lebanon.

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[203] Ali, Abbas J. "Cultural Discontinuity and Arab Management Thought" in *International Studies of Management & Organization*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Management and Its Environment in the Arab World (Fall, 1995), Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40397307 Accessed: 15-10-2015 13:26 UTC, p. 7

[204] Ibid.

In her entries, she recounts many events leading up to Rana's murder in an attempt to find a rational answer for it; Sarah fails to find one. Her family's refusal to discuss the matter compounds this failure[205] They think that if they avoid talking about it, it will just disappear. Cyrine Hout says that Sarah's family's attitude about this crisis resembles "Lebanon's self-induced post-traumatic amnesia, whose suppression of painful facts precludes long-term reconciliation."[206]

These traumatic events can influence the citizen's sense of belonging negatively and create an exilic sensibility. The home of origin becomes an imagined exile for those who witness terror and violence in it. Rosemary M. George argues that gender/sexuality politics are factors determining the subject's ideology of 'home'. Hence, s/he perceives of the home-country as the "intersection of private and public and of individual and communal that is manifest in imagining a space as home."[207] Thus, traumatic events that face individuals on the personal level must direct the flow according to which their concept of 'home' is formulated. Syrine C. Hout points out that being "at home" is associated with freedom, a sense of belonging, and personal dignity, irrespective of where these are found and enjoyed. By contrast, exile is a state of cognitive and emotional dissonance, wherever it is experienced."[208] Thus, Sarah chooses exile in another country for herself rather than staying in her homeland and feeling exiled. Being away from home signifies finding another home in which one feels more secure and respected. Protection of the body renders the substitute home urgently required. Hout also states that "[f]eeling 'at home' is determined less by a spatial reality and more by an emotional one that stretches beyond the definitional confines of one's nation as homeland"[209] The absurdity of death that the war brings about has emotionally drained many of the Lebanese at the time and left them completely bereft. Therefore, like many of the Arabs whose lives were surrounded by death and desertion, Sarah, lonely and unhappy, sets out in search of a home.[210]

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[205] Cyrine Hout. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*., p. 81.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Rosemary Marangoly George. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*. (Berekley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 11.

[208] Syrine C. Hout. "Of Fathers and Fatherland in the Post-1995 Lebanese Exilic Novel" p. 287.

[209]Syrine C. Hout, "Memory, Home and Exile in Contemporary Anglophone Lebanese Fiction," in *Critique* 46.3 (2005), p. 226.

[210]Cristina Garrigos. "The Dynamics of Intercultural Dislocation: Hybridity in Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine*", p. 196.

5. The Escape to the Haven: America and the Transnational situation

Sarah is fascinated with American culture and the American lifestyle. She draws comparisons between America and Lebanon in a number of aspects. Even if she sees an American family enjoying time together she starts making comparisons between them and her family.

> Dad driving, Mom in the passenger seat, four kids in the back, the eldest no more than ten, the youngest no less than four, all singing at the top of their lungs, in discordant harmony, with the radio blaring, a song called "I Believe I Can Fly." As I watched them I was uplifted at first, but a feeling of envy overcame me. Our family never sang, (Alameddine: 191)

Such comparisons are not unfamiliar among young Middle Easterners and other young people around the world in terms of being dazzled by the American life style. Blagovest Sendov, President of the Bulgarian academy of science, in a *Washington Post* interview (5 January 1992) said that it is generally believed that the American is an ideal Man. Americans are honest and immune from social ills like stealing and lying. In America, everyone gets a job except those who are lazy.[211] This is also the effect of stereotyping and presentation of the Westerner as a better human being. Sarah regards America as the land of individualism and Lebanon as the land of conformism. She says, "I always tried to walk a path unbeaten by others, to touch the untouched. I moved from the land of conformism to the land of individualism... I moved from Lebanon to the United States." (Alameddine: 324)

She accuses Arabs of being hypocritical as they refuse to confront facts that contradict their beliefs; facts like homosexuality within their families. They keep silent about it as if it never exists. They believe that if they ignore it, it will not persist. Dina Ballout, Sarah's best friend, is an open lesbian who migrates to the US during the Lebanese Civil War and directly adjusts to life there. Her family back in Lebanon never ask her about her partner Margot and they always accuse Sarah of corrupting her. They never accept the fact their daughter is simply not heterosexual. Ramzi, Sarah's half-brother, is also homosexual and also migrates to the US to find a better situation there. The same position is taken by his family. By representing the

[211] Quoted in Eleanor Smollett, "America the Beautiful: Made in Bulgaria" *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2783169 Accessed: 15-10-2015 13:29 UTC, p. 9.

Lebanese as intolerant and homophobic, Alameddine wants to criticize the inability to build human relationships with a different "Other". This critique in the narrative does not exclude the rest of Arab countries, rather it alludes to the homophobia and bigotry that are still implicitly and explicitly practiced in the Middle East.

5.1. The Effect of the Border

This ideal image of America comes to be disturbed with the accumulation of experiences in the host country. Lack of knowledge about America and American mainstream culture can contribute to the anxiety and estrangement endured by migrants who have already nurtured the notion of 'the American dream'. Identifying with one side of the hyphenated identity can operate what I call 'the effect of the border'. A sense of the uncanny emerges to draw the attention of the migrant to the other half of the identity which is ignored. This happens when some cultural tenets in the host country, thought to be well known, manifest themselves in a different manner. Thus, what used to be familiar becomes strange. The migrant is haunted by unheimlich images and sometimes draws an analogy between them and those in his/her home of origin.

The concept of the 'unheimlich' has been used to interpret mysteries in stories of the fantasy genre. Maria M. Tatar, in her "The House of Fiction: Toward a Definition of the Uncanny", discusses a number of works of art like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House*. She explores the houses in those works to see how they are haunted and to reach an understanding of the uncanny effects which arise from such settings. Those works manipulate the supernatural elements to convey the uncanny effect. She tries to answer the question, "What,…, makes a house *unheimlich* or haunted? It is precisely on the border area between the familiar and the strange— at the point where *heimlich* and *unheimlich* merge in meaning to suggest the sinister or treacherous—that we must search for the matrix of those effects that are called uncanny."[212] She concludes that those supernatural powers disappear once knowledge about long hidden secrets is revealed. In other words, the uncanny is suddenly lifted when the repressed memories come to manifest themselves and hence the house will finally turn out to be a safe and homely place.[213] So one can project the effect of the uncanny in novels that

[212] Tatar, Maria M. "The House of Fiction: Toward a definition of the Uncanny" *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (spring, 1981) http:// www.jstor.org/stable/1770438 , p. 171.

[213] Ibid., p. 182.

adopt realistic narration and postcolonial novels in order to reflect the theme of estrangement in a world about which the characters know very little. Knowledge about one's own home may remove the effect of the uncanny and solve the identity crisis.

Pramod K. Nayar, in his study of the novel *The Hungry Tide*, argues that the politics of possession/dispossession can work effectively through a postcolonial uncanny.[214] He states that "home implies stability, security and freedom from fear."[215] He says "'home' is a sensate condition, and the uncanny, being a matter of perception, is different for different people."[216] He adds, "The sight of a particular place or event invokes uncanny dread because the perceiver hesitates to classify, define and identify the ambiguity in the place or event."[217] Ghosh's novel appropriates the "condition" of the uncanny in order to speak of dispossession and of those who lose their sense of home. The dispossessed seeks a new home that resembles – doubles – the search for familiarity is an uncanny doubling – their old home." The land is unpredictable and hence evoking uncertainty for the perceiver.[218]

The postcolonial uncanny is a result of the issue of knowledge and power. A site and knowledge which are not adequate will surely result in the feeling of the uncanny.[219] In his conclusion, Nayar states that

> What makes the space canny, a marginally secure home, is knowledge which is acquired through native intervention. The indigenous canny turn out to be the solution to a world increasingly indifferent to refugees, poverty and suffering…[T]he land is an environment that demands not gazing but participating, not 'touristy' observation but native inhabiting.[220]

In Nayar's study again we see the emphasis on the connection between people who belong to different cultures in order to avoid the uncanny feeling for both of them. So from Sarah's portrayal of the US, we can understand her failure to fit fully in that new environment because

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[214] Pramod K. Nayar, "The Postcolonial Uncanny: The Politics of dispossession in Amitav Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide"" *College Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Fall 2010), pp.88-119. The John Hopkins University Press. URL: http://www.jstor.org.stable/27917766 accessed: 14-09-2015 11:37 UTC. , p. 89.

[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., p. 92.
[219] Ibid., p. 97.
[220] Ibid., p. 116.

of her inability to establish effective relationships with people there as well as because of her ignorance about cultural realities in the host country.

Lack of knowledge about the host culture leads to the uncanny feeling. Concerning relationships, Sarah is not successful. Her relationships with different men show her inability to mingle with any sort of culture those men come from. The US is not an open book for her. She lacks knowledge about its culture and people. Over there, she rushes into another marriage with an American Jew who is rich. Sarah does not mention much about her second marriage except that Joe, her second ex-husband is a nice man who cares for her. But again there seems to be a certain problem going on that ultimately results in the end of the marriage. Again there is some cultural misunderstanding that Sarah cannot explain fully in her "memoir". In a party thrown by Joe, Sarah comments on Charlene, Joe's second wife, stating that she is a good match for him.

> Charlene was happy. Joe was not, or so it seemed to me, in spite of the fact that he had finally gotten exactly what he thought he wanted from a wife: she gave him an adorable boy, she did everything in their home including laundry, and most important, she did not embarrass him. (30)

Though Joe is not happy, as Sarah observes, Charlene gives him all that he wants from a wife. We can understand that while Sarah is still married to Joe, she is not willing to give him a son and she is not willing to be the obedient wife who never annoys or embarrasses her husband. She cannot belong to Joe's life as she cannot belong to that of Omer, the Lebanese. Though Joe is American, he is a traditional Jewish man. Joe's adherence to his people's tradition reminds her of her father who divorces her American mother only because she cannot give him a son. Charlene here reminds Sarah of her mother as being a caring and loving wife who is ready to give her husband everything. The only difference is that Charlene has given Joe a son while her mother could not. Sarah realizes that many Arab men prefer to preserve the cultural norms and stay conformist to please their community rather than preserve the family; for them, the community comes before the family. But some of their American counterparts are not different when it comes to patriarchal convictions; they also prefer the tradition over love and family. Many communities in America are not conforming with the American mainstream culture. For Sarah, all this seems familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. She does not expect to find patriarchal traditions in the US similar to those she escapes from in her home of origin. Exposed to them, Sarah becomes confused; security seems to be threatened once again. This experience of the second marriage arouses an uncanny feeling that makes her lose balance.

After the second divorce, she attempts to change her choice of men. She chooses an American who is far from tradition and norms. “I realized when it came to men, I did not pick the beautiful or the correct. I picked the wrong one. I chose David.” (26) She is mistaken again concerning American men. In the beginning, she is fascinated with the kind of man David has been. She looks at him as a mature man who is unlike all the men she has known in the past. Sarah fallaciously thinks that she is adapting to the American lifestyle; she prefers to live with David for a few hours twice a week in her apartment in San Francisco. She does not question him why he never stays over-night with her. She does not care if he is unwilling to take her out or to introduce her to his friends. She decides to embrace the new way of living without questioning or making comparisons. She takes it for granted that the American life was perfectly better compared to that lived by Arabs in the Middle East. She goes on having a love affair with David for four years, during which time he has been falling out of love with her. Taking matters on the surface level, she cannot diagnose why the relationship does not succeed. The uncanny feeling recurs to confuse her about what is the valid way to live an American life. What she thinks is the right way is only an imitation without deep knowledge about the host culture.

In her confusion, she starts to blame her failure on her Arab origin. She describes herself in her memoir as a special person who should be accepted by David. She presumes that David must know all about the Arab personality and understand it.

> What would you do if your lover was embarrassed by you? I want to make sure you don’t think I’m an embarrassment. .. Supposedly, I also had mood swings, but I don’t see it as such a big deal. I can be happy one minute and angry the next. So what? I know a lot of people like that. My whole family is like that. Hell, we’re Lebanese. I think that was also a problem. I wasn’t just a foreigner, but an Arab. He says I attack him viciously, which is not true. Okay, so I did say he was emotionally constipated, but that wasn’t an attack, that was stating a fact. (Alameddine: 166)

Her distorted image of being an Arab recurs throughout her time in the US and it characterizes her relationships with people. She gives herself the right to be happy and angry in the same situation simply because she is Lebanese. She thinks that it is normal for Arabs to behave in this way and it should be obvious to David. She is confused concerning being Arab and being American. When she is not doing well in her relationship, she recognizes that it must be her

Arab part which is responsible for any disturbance or disorder.

Though Sarah prefers to stay in the US, she is aware that Arabs there are invisible. This feeling intensifies the sense of inferiority. She tells herself that "In New York, she can disappear. What is the purpose of a city if not to grant the greatest of gifts, anonymity? Beirut offered no refuge from unwavering gazes, no respite from pernicious tongues." She gets used to loneliness and invisibility. Before the 9/11 attacks, Arab-Americans were not recognized by the American consciousness. They are officially removed from American political discourse and representation as well as from popular culture.[221] Gradually Sarah acquires knowledge about the American environment and she starts to deconstruct her previous infatuation with it. She writes:

> The myth of the rugged individualist is integral to the American psyche. Most Americans, native and naturalized, consider themselves admirers, or at least indulgent, of individualists. I was no exception. It was only recently that I had begun to recognize the hypocrisy. (Alameddine: 325)

Although Sarah does not go further to explain why she recognizes American mainstream culture as hypocritical too, she makes it clear that she is not fully satisfied with her life in the US. She discovers that individualism is not so flourishing in America either.

The image of the father figure recurs to evoke again the sense of the uncanny and homelessness. That image, deeply buried in her subconscious, drains Sarah of her self-confidence. Apparently, she does not show that weakness in her relationship but it shows itself in her criticism of Lebanon and the culture of the Arab world. Her fear of male partners comes to be provoked every time "when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed."[222] Those male partners always remind her of her father. According to her, her father destroyed a great romance with her mother only to please his family. So for Sarah, being a female is a stigmatization she cannot bear. Surrendering to her womanly needs,

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[221] Elia, Nada. "Islamophobia and the 'Privileging' of Arab American Women Author(s)" *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Feminist Perspectives on Peace and War: Before and after 9/11 (Fall, 2006), Published by: Johns Hopkins University Press Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40071188 Accessed: 15-10-2015 13:29 UTC, p. 156.

[222] Lydenberg, Robin. "Freud's Uncanny Narratives". *PMLA*, Vol. 112, No. 5 (Oct., 1997), Modern Language Association. Http://www.jstor.org/stable/463484 Accessed 20-09-2015 09:37., p. 1073.

one of which is being a loving mother, is a threat to her. Sarah neither continues with a Lebanese man nor with American ones. With Omer, it is the fear of going back to an unhomely home which ends her relationship with him; with the other two, it is the lack of knowledge about their background. Sarah's suffering has mostly resulted from her identity confusion. Her in-between position, straddling two cultures, causes her anxiety.

While she describes herself as having a ball in New York which means she is truly happy, in another first chapter of hers, she complains that after Omer and their son have gone to Beirut, she is left alone in "an unforgiving city". She realizes that she is alone. Earlier she states that she has friends in New York, but after Omer has left she finds herself completely alone without friends and family. She states "I had no one in America except for my best friend, Dina, who lived in Boston. I visited her often out of loneliness, continuing even after I remarried." So she comes to feel her estrangement from the moment she cuts her relationship with her home of origin, in this case Beirut, when Omer, the Lebanese, has left.

In the US, Sarah cannot evade the sense of loneliness and estrangement which can be equated to her sense of inferiority and shame of home. Edward Said refers to migrants, refugees and diaspora people as exiles. For him, exiles usually experience that sense of sadness that cannot be evaded as a result of being far away from home. Said says in his "The Mind of Winter" that "[e]xile is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home. The essential sadness of the break can never be surmounted."[223] He goes on to say that there are stories about exile as a condition which bestows heroic and triumphant status on a person's life. However, there are not more than stories which can help the exile to overcome the devastating sorrow of estrangement and his/her sense of loss.[224] So these feelings of loss of home compete with the feelings of shame of home that also result in the 'unheimlich' effect. Naturally Sarah wants to assert her nationality and confirm her belonging to Lebanon but those horrors and inconveniences that she has witnessed at home and which are reserved in her unconsciousness prevent her, in the interim, from that assertion of Arab cultural identity.

Exile is primarily a discontinuous state of being. "Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, and their past. They generally do not have armies or states, though they are often in

[223] Edward Said , "The Mind of Winter" in Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Second Edition. London & New York: Routledge , 2006, p. 439.

[224] Ibid.

search of these institutions."[225] Said suggests that exiles can reconstitute their broken lives in narrative form by deciding to see themselves as part of a victorious ideology or a restored people. They should congregate their broken history into a new whole.[226] Sarah realizes her need to piece together her past in the home of origin in order to fix her state of anxiety. The effect of the border life compels her to make her own narrative through which she can find a solution.

Unlike most people who are aware of one culture and one home, exiles are exposed to at least two. They have a plurality of vision. "For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment." Therefore the new and the old environments are lucid, realistic, and existing together at the same time.[227] Edward Said states "Exile is never the state of being satisfied, placid, or secure….Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal; but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew."[228] This 'unsettling force' Said talks about is the effect of the border that drives the migrant towards the third space; towards a space where s/he can attain the sense of belonging to both environments.

The following extract explains how Sarah feels estrangement while she walks in the streets in New York. She feels lonely and not belonging to that place. Walking there can only burden her soul more and intensifies her feeling of being lost. The reader cannot grasp Sarah's desires and is as confused as her. She is incapable of returning to Lebanon because it also does not represent to her the home she must go back to. It is a confusing situation but she pays a price in order to stay away from Lebanon. leaveing behind her family and her son enables her to keep the privileges that living in the US gives her.

> She[229] feels alone, experiences the solitude of a strange city where no one looks you straight in the eye. She does not feel part of this cool world, free for the first time. But at what price? … She walks the morose streets, circular peregrinations that leave her soul troubled. Lost afternoons. Yet she cannot go back there. She does not feel part of that world either. She never did. The family she abandoned is there… There

[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid., p. 442.
[228] Ibid.
[229] The protagonist is supposed to change her writing style in each first chapter she writes. In one chapter she uses the first person narrator. In another chapter she uses the third person narrator. This can reflect her psychological unrest and anxiety.

> will always be there. (Alameddine: 138)

Knowledge about the host country plays a beneficial role in the reconciliation of the two halves of the identity hyphen. Nostalgia is a factor that we cannot overlook in this matter too. While Sarah endeavours to acknowledge her American half and deny the Arabic one, she experiences ambivalence concerning her identity and recognizes that under her American appearance there is an Arab soul. The voice of an Arab singer can evoke such emotional memories about home that reduce her to tears.

> I hated Umm Kalthoum . I wanted to identify with only my American half. I wanted to be special. I could not envision how to be Lebanese and keep any sense of individuality. Lebanese culture was all consuming. Only recently have I begun to realize that like my city, my American patina covers an Arab soul. These days I avoid Umm Kalthoum, but not because I hate her. I avoid her because every time I hear that Egyptian bitch, I cry hysterically. (Alameddine: 327)

The voice of the singer and her songs evoke natural feelings of nostalgia towards Sarah's home of origin. For her, that home is distorted now and represents an abhorrent image in her mind. She hates the songs of the singer because they make her suffer from strange hate-love feelings towards Lebanon which Sarah finds painful. Yet, she also cannot escape from that feeling.

Kristen Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherford in their "Fossil and Psyche" state that the fulfillment of the psyche is an unending errand. They believe that one should stop investing in a single identity which they refer to as a latent totalitarian type of identity. Instead, one should be involved in a necessary dialogue with the past and future because identity is part of an infinite movement. One must participate in the substantial and particular challenges of a wider community in which s/he lives. One should participate in the sophisticated creativity involved in life between contrasting spaces.[230] Sarah, throughout her psychological struggle in the US, learns that rejecting the home of origin is unrealistic as long as she is unable to detach herself completely from nostalgic feelings. Identifying with the US alone is also unrealistic as long as she is realizing common social shortcomings about which she has no idea beforehand. She realizes that she needs both places without belonging in either.

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[230] Kristen Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherford, "Fossil and Psyche" in Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Second Edition. London & New York: Routledge , 2006, p. 142.

Cristina Garrigos argues that *I, the Divine* provides "a cosmopolitan and post-ethnic perspective that privileges an anti-essentialist attitude, rejecting a fiction of authenticity and cultural purity to embrace instead hybridity and cross-pollination."[231] Sarah learns to recognize herself as not really belonging to the US and simultaneously not belonging to Lebanon. She is "leading a transnational lifestyle through jet travel, emails, and phone calls to Lebanon."[232] She acquires mobility and a flexible mindset which enables her to be a transnational diasporic subject shuttling between the Lebanese and American cultures, feeling displaced in both places.[233] Sarah writes, "Can there be any here? No. She understands there. Whenever she is in Beirut, home is New York. Whenever she is in New York, home is Beirut. Home is never where she is, but where she is not." (Alameddine: 13)

The writing process of her fictional memoir starts as an escape from her anxious self, reflecting constant endeavour to find a solution to an Eastern/Arab identity defined for her by the Lebanese culture and an assimilation to an American culture that she has for a long time identified with. Writing the self helps Sarah to realize her attachment to both identifications, but before that she learns to reconcile with her home of origin:

> I had tried to write my memoir by telling an imaginary reader to listen to my story. Come learn about me, I said. I have a great story to tell you because I have led an interesting life. Come meet me. But how can I expect readers to know who I am if I do not tell them about my family, my friends, the relationships in my life? … I have to explain how the individual participated in the larger organism, to show how I fit into this larger whole. So instead of telling the reader come meet me, I have to say something else.
>
> Come meet my family. Come meet my friends.
>
> Come here I say. Come meet my pride. (Alameddine: 308)

Cyrine Hout states that "[h]ome, far from denoting a fixed geographical location, is understood in relational terms. It is not the place to be, but the one to long for because of not being

[231] Cristina Garrigos. "The Dynamics of Intercultural Dislocation: Hybridity in Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*", p. 188-9.

[232] Cyrine Hout. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*, p. 83.

[233] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters*" p. 165.

there."[234] The effect of the border life unconsciously initiates the nostalgic sense. This sense is not only stimulated by memory of the home of origin but also by new memories of the host home. Therefore, nostalgia is felt for both places even though, the sense of belonging is conceived as disturbed. In this situation the sense of belonging is complicated. It takes two dimensions, one complying with the home of origin, the other with the host home. Sarah's condition leads to the formation of "a new 'diasporic home' characterized by a transnationalism that does not necessitate choosing either here or there … but instead facilitates transitions between the two and enables a character like Sarah to simultaneously connect with and be connected to both worlds."[235]

The title, *I, the Divine*, signifies self-delusion. The narrative provides a remarkable illustration of how Arabs can be infatuated with the West due to the influence of the imperial control over the Arab countries during the first half of the twentieth century, and before that due to the cultural influence carried out by many intellectuals who had been sent to Europe to pursue their studies. As a result of the infatuation with the West, a distorted image of home has been gradually formulated to lead to a sense of inferiority concerning origins for many Arabs. Meanwhile, a bright but inaccurate image of the West is also perceived to lead to an uncanny experience when an Arab migrates to Western countries, in this case, the US. These distorted images of both East and West contribute to crisis of identity whenever Western and Eastern sensibilities come to an arena of conflict.

In the narrative, the home of origin is connected with gender politics which are unfair for women generally and especially for those who are progressive. So the family ties come to be interrogated and shown as hypocritical and not genuine. The home country itself is criticized and accused of being backward and far from modernity. Wars and inner conflicts render home to be unheimlich, that is, unhomely. It became a wasteland in which life and death can be fused together. Rabih Alameddine, in his portrayal of the Arab community through the eyes of Sarah, tries to shed light on bigotry, old fashioned traditions, homophobic attitudes, intolerant behaviours that are common in Arab countries. While doing so, he does not idealize the West. He shows advantages and disadvantages in both locations.

The movement across multiple geographical locations, like Beirut, New York, and San

[234]Cyrine Hout. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction: Home Matters in the Diaspora*, p. 84.

[235] Carol Fadda-Conrey. "Transnational Diaspora and the Search for Home in Rabih Alameddine's I, The Divine: A Novel in First Chapters", p. 176.

Francisco, makes the borders between East and West highly fluid and permeable, and the concepts of national belonging and citizenship liable to reformulation. The status of transnationalism gives way to the articulations of in-between identities for some Arab-Americans. Thus, the crisis of identity finds a solution through the border effect which compels the Arab migrant in the West to look into his/her past and learns to reconcile with the home of origin in order to establish the third space[236] in the host country.

[236] The Third Space is that atmosphere in which a migrant can start integration with the host country after experiencing hybridization. Third Space of enunciation is the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference. Homi K. Bhabha states that it "is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew." He adds that : "It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this "Third Space," we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves." See Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin, Routledge, New York 2006, p. 155–157.

CHAPTER TWO

In-Between Spaces and Identity in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

In her debut novel, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, published in 2006, Mohja Kahf presents the issue of identity crisis for Arab-American Muslim women. This issue is linked directly to the situation of liminality that is experienced by this group. Coming from a religious background becomes challenging when the immigrant woman is confronted with cultural influences that emerge from the host country. As a result, inner conflict commences.

The novel was published after 9/11 and therefore can be read as part of an emerging field of Post- 9/11 fiction or writing focused on representations of Arabs and/or Muslims in the 'West'. Arab Americans come to be under the search lights of the American mainstream media and suddenly their culture and religion turn to be important for scrutiny. Stigmatization of terrorism and shame become parallel to Muslims and Arabs in general and this attitude affects the lives of Arab Americans in the US and causes a crisis when it comes to identity and matters of belonging. The novel tries to treat this issue from a feminist point of view and focuses specifically on the dilemma of Arab-American Muslim women who struggle for a multicultural identity in order to succeed in the host country but not to assimilate. The time setting of the story spans from the late seventies of the 20th century until after the 9/11 attacks. Thus, it reflects the historical background of the Arabs' relation with the West, especially the US.

The narrative presented by Kahf negotiates the US mainstream culture in relation to Arab Americans. It focuses on the Orientalization of Arabs and how that strategy affects the lives of Arab Americans and hence the formation of their identity. Moreover, it problematizes Arab-American Muslim culture in relation to broad American society; exclusionary practices on the part of the Arab Muslim community in the US results in more stereotyping by the US mainstream media and also feeds into violence by being perpetrated on both parties. In addition, Kahf sheds light on internal gender issues that the Muslim community in the US refuses to negotiate and thus she manifests her criticism of that attitude by presenting the gender issue within a paradigm of resistance. In short, she challenges the well-established structures of power of both parties and celebrates multiculturalism as a good solution for the problem of identity crisis.

Drawing on the theory of women space put forward by Fatima Mernissi and Steven

Salaita's theory of 'Americanness' in anti-Arab/Muslim America, I argue that Arab-American Muslim women, as indicated by Kahf, confront challenges on two levels: the level of their community and the level of the American society. They struggle between two antagonistic spaces. The chapter examines how the sense of superiority in the Arab-American community intensifies the exclusionary practices which has a negative effect on their life in the host country. It also examines how this sense projects a limitation on the female body which eventually results in more stereotypical interpretations by the mainstream culture and media. Moreover, it sheds light on the issue of marginalization of the Arab Americans due to the politics in the Middle East, and how this marginalization also affects the lives of Arab-American Muslim women. Through the trope of the veil we can see how women suffer physical and verbal violence and how this problematizes their sense of belonging. They try to find a space of their own and hence they form a new identity that conforms with the mores of the host country as well as the culture of their community.

1. Mohja Kahf and the Feminist Call

Mohja Kahf is a Syrian-American novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic and an associate professor of comparative literature and a faculty member at the King Fahd centre at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. As a young child, her family moved from Syria to the United States. In the US, she experienced the different types of issues that face any Arab immigrant due to political tensions between the United States and the Arab world. Towards these issues, she directs her body of work and focuses mostly on matters of women.

Her first book tackling the topic of women is an academic study entitled, *Western Representations of Muslim Women: From Termagant to Odalisque* (1999). In this book she focuses on how Arab women are presented in Western literature surveying the period ranging from the Middle Ages until the Victorian Age. Thus, she expresses an interest in the stereotypes created by Western authors who model Arab women as sex slaves desperate for a saviour. Kahf, later in her work, endeavours to shatter that image which tends to figure every now and then in the mainstream US media. She is interested in representing a modern type of Arab Muslim woman living in the US and draws on the Middle Eastern social and religious past. In presenting a counter to stereotypical portrayals of Arab women, she challenges dominant US tropes and gives agency to female characters who are commonly represented as either passive, evil, highly sexed or ineffectual. "Her first book of poetry, *E-mails from Shahrazad*, was a

finalist for the 2004 Paterson Poetry Prize."[237] In this collection she sheds light on aspects of being an Arab-American immigrant dealing with a contemporary American context. Rebecca Layton notes that Kahf's poems "speak about gender, religion, and ethnicity in the United States with an unusual degree of humor and candor, at once illuminating her experience to those outside her culture while also speaking directly to an Arab-American community."[238] Khaled Mattawa points out that "[a]s she addresses a largely Western audience, she presents portraits of seemingly intolerable Muslims and through them challenges the contemporary diversity discourse to make room for them."[239] In her new collection of poems entitled, *Hagar Poems* (2016), Kahf again focuses on women's issues while bringing in Biblical and Quranic characters, namely, Hagar and Sarah, and reflecting on the dilemmas facing women. Dr. Amina Wadud writes in her foreword to the collection that: "Herein are women as mothers and caretakers, rebels and fighters, fully frivolous and ripe, riding on a motorcycle. Here they honor each sublime configuration of what exists between them and because of them."[240] So one of Kahf's literary habits is to manipulate the past for the sake of the present. She summons history in order to modernize it and put it in the service of her feminist agency. Moreover, she mostly tries to reconcile East and West in her literature. Wisam Kh. Abdul-Jabbar points out when commenting on Kahf's poetry, "most of the speakers in these poems do not see foreignness through the eyes of the beholder, which could be quite dismissive and alienating and, therefore, invoke resistance. The speakers tend to joyfully acknowledge their foreign status and constantly accept it."[241]

As an Arab Muslim woman, Kahf confronts issues within her Muslim community that render the situation of Muslim Arab Americans critical while they try to handle a number of predicaments as immigrants in the US. She pinpoints cases in which Muslim women suffer and gives examples from Arab World history to challenge the traditional image of women that her community tries to conserve and maintain in order to evade and dismiss the "American girl" image that their daughters confront in their daily life in the US. In her recent article, "Human Rights First", she states, "[w]e need to critique ourselves and the larger forces at play simultaneously, not being co-opted by either struggle into blindness toward the other struggle.

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[237] Rebecca Layton, *Arab-American and Muslim Writers* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2010), p.101.

[238] Ibid., 102.

[239] Khaled Mattawa, "Writing Islam in Contemporary American Poetry: On Mohja Kahf, Daniel Moore, and Agha Shahid Ali" *PMLA*, Vol. 123, No. 5, Special Topic : Comparative Racialization (Oct., 2008), p. 1591.

[240] Mohja Kahf, *Hager Poems*, (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2016), p. vii.

[241] Wisam Kh Abdul-Jabbar, "The Question of Foreignness in Mohja Kahf's E-Mails from Schehrazad" in *Arab Studies Quarterly*, www.plutojournals.com/asq/ p. 244.

That's dual critique, or really multiple critique, or what Edward Said called being 'contrapuntal.'"[242] So she emphasizes that she is there to say 'no' to any party that belittles the human's freedom and places tethers on it. She recognizes it as her duty to feel motivated to criticize her community as well as American society for the sake of the triumph of human rights. Lisa Suhair Majaj labels Kahf as: "A dynamic, feisty writer who insists on critiquing as well as celebrating her own cultural contexts, whether Muslim, Arab or American."[243]

Within the Muslim community, Kahf challenges all types of patriarchal facets of power and presents it as a paradigm adopted in the Arab Muslim community in the US. In addition, she also challenges the same patriarchy in American society in its dealing with Muslim women, specifically with women wearing hijab. As for dealing with the issue of patriarchy in her community, she contributed to the Online magazine *Muslim Wakeup*! and was responsible for a section called "Sex and the Umma", subtitled "Column on sex and Islam."[244] Her columns address a mostly Muslim readership. Though they are targeting women specifically, she also aimed to change the mentality of Muslim men as well. Lisa Suhair Majaj states that: "As a Muslim-American feminist, Kahf rejects all attempts, whether western or eastern, to appropriate the female body for male agendas."[245] Therefore, she focused on certain aspects in Islamic law that treat women as secondary to men and gave counter arguments. Martina Noskova states that Kahf's "short witty stories challenge old Muslim stereotypes such as wedding day practices, denying women sexual desires or advocating male dominance."[246] Through her stories, Kahf encourages her readers to deconstruct old paradigms of religious rites and construct new modernized ones. Layla Al-Maleh comments that Kahf

> seems to be putting across a message that seeks to offer an alternative image of Islam: namely, a more progressive, liberal, and permissive one. Islam is not a 'shame culture', she seems to be saying. Sexuality has always been openly discussed, preached, and practiced in the healthiest of ways. Muslims cannot and

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[242] Mohja Kahf, "Human Rights First", *Democracy Journal*, No. 42 (Fall 2016), p. 7. http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/42/human-rights-first/

[243] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Arab-American Literature: Origin and Developments" in *American Studies Journal*, No. 52 (2008): p. 9, : http://www.asjournal.org/52-2008/arab-american-literature-origins-and-developments/

[244] Martina Noskova, ""Sex and the Umma": Sex and Religion Lived in Mohja Kahf's Columns" *Theory and Practice in English Studies* 4 (2005) p. 115.

http://www.phil.muni.cz/plonedata/wkaa/Offprints%20THEPES%204/TPES%204%20(115-119)%20Noskova.pdf

[245] Majaj, Arab-American Literature: Origin and Developments", p. 9.

[246] Noskova, 115.

> should not try to escape from a literary past animated by incredible vivid and humorous sexuality."[247]

Her columns were one of the main reasons why *The Muslim Wakeup*! website was hacked into in December 2004. The orthodox hackers demanded that "no more perverts [are] allowed to speak about Islam like Mohja Kahf and her warm fluid fantasies."[248]

While trying to comment on the status of Arab Americans in the US, Kahf often transfers her readers, through her fictional settings, to the Arab world to comment on the problems that prevail there, whether they are social or political problems. As mentioned earlier, she has revived successful figures from Arab history in order to give examples of a better Arab homeland than that which is so often distorted by 'the war on terror' discourse adopted by the mainstream US media. For example in one of her essays, entitled "Huda Sha'rawi's 'Mudhakkirati': The Memoirs of the First Lady of Arab Modernity", Kahf is keen on resurrecting an image of a brilliant woman from the past of the Middle East to reflect on the courage of Eastern women and their activism during a time wherein women were supposed to be submissive to the will of the family and society; that example is Huda Sha'rawi. A famous figure from Egypt (1879-1947), she belonged to a well-to-do conservative family, nevertheless, she was able to continue her study and become one of the leading feminist figures in the Arab world. She realized the role that women should play at a moment when every effort was needed to elevate human rights and particularly the rights of women. Like Kahf's protagonist in the novel under study, Sha'rawi obtained a divorce when her marriage proved unrewarding. Kahf analyses Sha'rawi's memoir and recognizes the moments when Sha'rawi experiences an identity transformation. She says, "[s]oon after this discovery of the 'I' (ana), the narrative voice clearly emerges as that of a public figure, not a private woman in search of an individual identity."[249] Kahf adds: "Sha'rawi discovers that she wants to be her own autonomous self and Egypt demands independence; the ancient regimes of the world totter and a new pace of flux begins and it is bewildering, polyphonic, and exhilarating."[250] Therefore the new Arab woman should have a part in this changing world. Kahf emphasizes Sha'rawi's agency when she comments on her in the following lines:

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[247]Layla Al-Maleh, "Anglophone Arab Literature" Layla Al-Maleh (ed.) *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literatute*. (Amsterdam - New York: Editions Radopi B. V., 2009), p. 30-31.

[248] Noskova, 117.

[249] Mohja Kahf, "Huda Sha'rawi's 'Mudhakkirati': The memoirs of the First Lady of Arab Modernity" *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 1998), p. 66, Pluto Journals, Accessed: 26-10-2016 08:39 UTC. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41858235

[250] Ibid.

> Huda Sha'rawi took the podium and the pen and put her hand into history, into culture, into language. Shaqiqa , sayida , ra' isa[251]: She was one of the makers of the modern Egyptian nation-state. She was the mother and benefactress of many (but not all) Arab feminisms of conflicting faces. Some claim her loudly and refuse to let anybody else have her, violating her example of ladylike generosity. Some who owe her the most refuse to recognize her among their foremothers. This woman's life and contribution, not only to the Egyptian nation-state but to the culture of the entire Arab World, and from there to the Muslim world, are complex, contradictory, pioneering, and invaluable.[252]

The tone of this voice reflects how Kahf endeavours to show the merits of feminist agency in the Middle East, a matter that she reflects also in her novel, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, represented in the figure of Teta, the grandmother. Teta chooses to have a job, falls in love with a man from a different ethnic group and marries him despite the refusal of her family. This representation offers a counter image of non-conformist Arab women, who does not fit the stereotype of a slavish or ignorant figure. Teta is portrayed as a reader and a fan of art which suggests she is culturally sophisticated. This status that many Arab women enjoy is mostly ignored by Western reviewers and feminists.[253]

Kahf also expresses her view concerning the political status that people in the Middle East are forced to accept and how this condition is reflected in the literary and artistic output produced by some Arab writers.[254] In her essay "The Silences of Contemporary Syrian Literature", she discusses how Syrian writers are monitored by the government and how their writing is either devoid of political issues or they tackle politics symbolically with an atmosphere of violence presiding over their narratives. Kahf gives us a historical overview of how censorship policies followed by the Ottomans and the French Mandate in Syria had offended and harassed writers. That practice was followed by the military rule which came

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[251] These are Arabic words and translate as follows respectively: "Sister, lady, boss."
[252] Ibid., 80.
[253] Kahf reflects her position concerning American feminists's attitude about Arab women in her essay "The Pity Committee and the Careful Reader" which is referred to later in this study.
[254] Kahf's interest in the political conditions in the Arab world is apparent in her body of work. In her novel under study, she expresses her awareness about the violation of human rights carried out by dictatorships both in Iraq and Syria.

afterwards and as a result it "tightened state control of cultural institutions."[255] The ruling Ba'th party increases the censorship powers and the state starts to "control newspapers, books, broadcasting, advertising, and visual arts - in other words, all forms of expression and announcements before publication."[256] Kahf expresses her concern that writers under dictatorship are unable to write about massacres and violation of human rights. She refers to the remarkable silence concerning the massacre of Aleppo (1981) which, if it indicates anything, then it indicates how brutal the regime is. In her novel, Kahf focuses on this issue when the protagonist visits Syria and discusses protest against violation of human rights with her family members. Kahf seems to include the critique of the Arab World politics within the targets of her feminist vocation as it is connected directly to the issue of human rights, which influences the issues of women directly. Through the theme of feminist agency, Kahf wants to reflect on the responsibility of the diasporic Arab Muslim feminist to raise awareness of the issue of human rights in the Middle East. This kind of agency informs the multicultural identity that Kahf is highlighting in her novel. It can be inferred from Kahf's novel that denial of the issue of human rights in the Middle East or keeping silent about it will not help in resisting Islamophobic violence against Muslims in the diaspora. Avoiding self-critique concerning the home of origin will enhance the sense of superiority of some immigrants and lead to more exclusionary practices against the host society.

1.1.*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006): Synopsis

Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* depicts a female bildungsroman set in Indianapolis, in the US. Khadra Shamy, the protagonist of the novel, originally from Syria, settles in Indiana with her family who are committed Muslim Brotherhood members who try to lead an active life to help their fellow Muslims in America to perfect their practice of Islam. "Through her protagonist, Kahf explores the complications and contradictions of identity at a number of different levels, asking what it means to be Muslim, a Muslim feminist, an Arab, a Hoosier, and an American."[257] Each of these identities comes to be negotiated while the

[255] Mohja Kahf, "The Silences of Contemporary Syrian Literature". *World Literature Today*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), p. 227, Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, Accessed: 26-10-2016 08:37 UTC. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40156522

[256] Ibid.

[257] Purnima Bose, "The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf by Mohja Kahf: Review." *Indiana Magazine of History*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (MARCH 2009), p. 90, Indiana University Department of History; Trustees of Indiana University, Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27792956, Accessed: 31-10-2016 11:23 UTC

protagonist is in search for a space to speak, work and live within her community and within American society.

The story chronicles the life of a Syrian immigrant Khadra Shamy and her challenges within her Muslim community and American society. As a child and an adolescent, Khadra is much influenced by the binary discourse of Muslims/Americans taught by her parents and her community. This phase of her life is characterized by her dark-coloured scarf when she is totally identifying herself with the imaginary Islamic *umma* and refusing any cultural practice that can be deemed as American. In this phase, she considers assimilation as a betrayal of one's own religion and ethnicity.

Growing into adulthood, Khadra reveals leadership ambitions within her Muslim community which has expressed suspicions and rejection of some of her endeavours. Shocked and disillusioned, she starts to reconsider many of her beliefs and reevaluates her feminist position. This phase of her life is characterized by her colourful scarf which reflects the beginning of change in her convictions. Her marriage with a Middle Eastern Kuwaiti student who tries to control her behaviour and thoughts shatters all her ideals concerning traditional Islamic teaching and instigates her rebellion against family and community. She initiates a divorce and aborts her pregnancy.

Khadra decides to visit Syria, her home of origin, and starts a phase in which she takes off the scarf and stops practicing Islam, in an attempt to discover her own beliefs and form her own self. On the Mount of Qasyoon, a mountain in Syria, she meets a poet, an imaginary character with whom she has long conversations about existence, nature, love, homeland and the Divine. Teta, the grandmother, positively influences her through her bold character and her reassuring stories of past events in which she proved a courageous woman. Khadra learns that Arab Muslim women can be reliable and influential though they still struggle to gain their rights in a conservative society. She also learns that despite the fact that xenophobia is a characteristic of the Middle East, yet, tolerance and coexistence can be also found between ethnic groups, majority and minority cultures and between religions. She learns to embrace the home of origin without denying the ills still working in its background and also she learns to appreciate her Americanness and feel grateful to America as the place she lives in and in which her feminist agency is encouraged. The tangerine scarf of the title of the novel refers to Khadra's new version of Islamic faith that has Sufi orientation. Her veil is no longer an orthodox one. It lays on her head as a symbol of attachment to her religion and Arabic culture; but it is not tightened

as before. Her caressing scarf on her head shows her love of it as well as her ability to accept those who are not subscribing to it. Khadra goes back to America with a new mentality and new attitude towards the American society. She is now ready to occupy a hybrid third space without impediments.

2. Challenges within the Arab-American Muslim Community: Limiting the Space

The Arab-American Muslim community depicted by Kahf reflects to the reader an important issue which is that of exclusion practiced by that community particularly against anything relating to American culture. That exclusion plays a part in the identity formation and crisis that the protagonist experiences throughout the narrative. Kahf tries to expose the impediments that hinder the development of hybridity. Through the life style of the Arab-American Muslim family in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, she highlights the reasons behind Arab-American Muslims who choose to exclude Americans from their social circles.

For the child and adolescent Khadra, home is always overseas. Her home is the Arab homeland and her people are the Arabs and Muslims living there. Her sense of belonging is never to the American nation, but rather to the Islamic *Umma*. So she constantly identifies herself with an imaginary land outside the US. She perceives of this land as an ideal place in which Islam is faithfully practiced by all. The longing for one's own homeland nurtures the notion of its being an ideal sort of paradise. The excluded community in which Khadra lives gives life to that notion too. This Islamic *umma* has become her home. "The nation too is home… The nation is family, the imagined community of Us against Them."[258]

The creation of an imaginary homeland is normally done by diasporic people. A place of fixed location and identity lives on in the imagination. Janet Zandy writes that home is "an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of 'otherness," where there is, at last, a community."[259] Friedman points out, "Being away from home engenders fictionalizing memories of the past and dreams of the future."[260] This can be associated with Khadra's condition before she experiences the discrimination against women in her community. Homeland seems like a utopia when it is compared to the US hostile environment. James

[258] Susan Stanford Friedman. "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora" *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall, 2004), p. 193.

[259] Janet Zandy, *Calling Home: Working-Class Women's Writing* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), p. 1.

[260] Susan Stanford Friedman, "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora", p. 195.

Clifford says, "Association with another nation, region, continent, or world historical force (such as Islam) gives added weight to claims against an oppressive national hegemony."[261] So the imagined home inspires power in diasporic subjects. It keeps the dream of return vivid and the notion of uniting with one's own people at hand in case xenophobic actions intensify.

The diasporic community might evoke a stronger sense of difference. This sense of difference connects the diasporic subject to a people "outside the time/space of host nation".[262] Clifford adds, "Diaspora cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering /desiring another place."[263] In a similar vein, Rosemary M. George suggests, "the basic organizing principle around which the notion of the 'home' is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference. Homes and home-countries are exclusive."[264]

Talal Asad writes that the Islamic *umma* "is ideologically not 'a society' onto which state, economy, and religion can be mapped. It is neither limited nor sovereign…. It can and eventually should embrace all of humanity."[265] Khadra imagines it as "a transnational community, not one bounded to ethnicity, or tied to culture, or even secular time. It is not sovereign, given that there is no governance and no official hierarchy."[266] Khadra's vision of the transnational Muslim community is devoid of any intension to "divide and exclude along national, ethnic, cultural, racial, and gendered lines."[267]

"Growing overseas was what enabled her to see that she was irrevocably American, in some way she couldn't pin down. Yet even now, she never thinks of herself as American, not really. When she says 'Americans,' 'Americans do this or think that,' she means someone else"[268] The ambivalence she feels about her 'Americanness' reveals the number of problems she experiences in the US concerning authenticity, race, and acculturation.

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[261] James Clifford, "Diasporas" p. 311.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*. (Berekley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 2.

[265] Talal Asad, p. 197.
[266] Danielle Haque, p. 825.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Mohja Kahf, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2007) p. 391. All subsequent quotations will be to this edition.

As mentioned earlier, identifying with the homeland overseas and inability to maintain a sense of belonging to the host home can be related to a number of reasons. The first and foremost reason for Arab-American Muslims excluding Americans is the feeling of the superiority of Islamic culture over the West. Samina Yasmeen, in her analysis of the same issue within Australian societies of Muslims, argues:

> the act of exclusion starts with the very act of individuals or communities of defining their identity and, in the process, distinguishing and differentiating themselves from others. This results in the identification and creation of boundaries that separate people and communities from those not identified as part of 'me' or 'us'. Such differentiation per se is not negative. However, it becomes problematic when the difference is coupled with a sense of superiority or power and disregard for others and/or when the interaction with the 'other' is negative and unpleasant.[269]

In the light of this notion, we can see that the Muslim community in the novel is trying to consolidate its integration and work together to support Muslim immigrants. This is apparent in the work of the Dawah Center which is an organization established by Muslims for Islamic activism and charity. Its community is characterized by different ethnicities, however, it is following one type of Islam which is referred to in the novel as "the moderate" one. This moderate type is represented through the Shamys, the family of the protagonist. Abbasali Borhan says that Islam is used by the Shamys "as a defensive mechanism against the new culture than a possibility to reach a better understanding of both the self and the other. In other words, Islam here is mostly used as a means to an end which is strengthening of sameness and demonization of otherness."[270] From the beginning of the narrative, we start to see the signs of laying boundaries between the Shamy children and the Americans by their parents. The word 'Americans' is mostly used with a negative connotation in order to invoke a sense of pride in the children that they are and should be different from the Americans because they are better and superior.

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[269] Samina Yasmeen. "The Dynamics of Exclusion/Inclusion: Australia as a Case Study", Samina Yasmeen and Nina Markovic (eds) *Muslim Citizens in the West: Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion*. (Dorchester: Henry Ling Limited, 2014), pp.15-16.

[270] Abbasali Borhan, "Resistance and Uncanny Moments of In-Betweenness in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf"* , *Journal of Alternative Perspective in the Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (2016), pp. 8.

As a child, Khadra, the protagonist, is greatly influenced by what her mother, father and Muslim friends tell her about the place they live in and the people they deal with, that is, the Americans. She grows up to feel the difference between Muslims and Americans, hence she is aware of the us/them dichotomy her family maintains. She recalls what her mother is doing throughout her day:

> Her mother always run the laundry twice in the Fallen Timbers basement laundry room with the coin machines. Because what if the person who used the washer before you had a dog? You never knew with Americans. Pee, poop, vomit, dog spit, and beer were impurities. Americans didn't care about impurities…How Americans tolerate living in such filth is beyond me, her mother said. (Kahf: 4)

The mother's teaching intensifies the us/them dichotomy that the children recognize directly. The words used are all connected with unpleasant things. Moreover, most of the teaching has religious basis. Keeping a dog is generally unacceptable in Muslim culture. To put it in this kind of discourse, the mother connects it with uncleanliness and impurities. Thus, Americans are the ones who are connected with impurities. In another situation, pork is connected with dirtiness and illness. "Pig meat was filthy. It had bugs in it. Khadra's father said. That's why God made it *haram*, her mother said. If you ate pig, bugs would grow inside your stomach and eat your guts out. Always ask if there is pig in something before you eat anything from *kuffar*[271] hands." (Kahf: 13)

Apart from the religiously based child education, cultural and patriarchal hegemonic discourse is used in order to maintain the superiority of the Arabic culture and at the same time to limit the space which they as immigrants should occupy. Kahf depicts a scene in which again the notion of cleanliness verses dirtiness recurs to reflect that resembling Americans means one becomes dirty. In this scene, the children, Khadra and her younger brother Eyad, have spent time away from home. Their father finally finds them covered with mud, a matter which makes their mother furious. She takes them to the bath shouting and sobbing all the time "Do you think we are Americans? Do you think we have no limits? Do you think we leave our children wandering in the streets?" (Kahf: 66) Then she keeps reminding them: " 'We are not Americans!' She sobbed, her face twisted in grief. 'We are not Americans!'" (Kahf: 67) Being away from home means being away from the monitoring disciplinary power of the parents. This also means non-conformity, which also means dirtiness.

[271] Arabic word for "infidel".

Kahf makes it clear how some Arab Americans in this novel think about Americans: "Generally speaking, Americans cussed, smoke, and drank, and the Shamys had it on good authority that a fair number of them used drugs. Americans dated and fornicated and committed adultery. They had broken families and lots of divorces." (Kahf: 68) These are part of the long lists of differences between Americans and Muslims that the Shamys emphasize and always use to convince their children that the Americans have a lot of moral problems that Islam can cure.

The sense of superiority is more emphasized when it comes to women's issues. Kahf also makes this clear in her narrative and in how she presents the life of her protagonist, Khadra. The novel depicts how some Arab diasporic communities are remaking their Arab 'culture' in the US. They assign to themselves this duty to maintain the sense of superiority. Nadine Naber states in "Decolonizing Culture" that throughout her childhood, "culture was a tool, an abstract, ephemeral notion of what we do and what we believe, of who belongs and who does not. Culture was the way that my parents exercised their control over me and my siblings."[272] She proceeds saying that her parents' generation invented the royal 'we' to teach their children that Arabs do not dance, club, or dress in a liberal way as Americans. Disobeying the parents meant disobeying one's own people. So they are successful in making their children share a common knowledge that America means the trash culture. It is "degenerate, morally bankrupt, and sexually depraved."[273] While the Arabs' culture represents responsibility, marriage and family evaluation and close relationships.[274] As an adolescent, Khadra understands this teaching fully and acts accordingly. She even cuts connections with friends who do not conform with this style. Arab girls who follow the American girl style are frowned upon by the majority of the Arab community she lives in. Hanifa, Khadra's childhood friend, chooses to be liberal at the age of sixteen, departing from the Islamic dress code and having a boyfriend. This new set of mind is enough to make her seem dead in the eyes of that community. Khadra's mother forbids her daughter to mention Hanifa's name at home. Samina Yasmeen recognizes such an attitude as a "failure to appreciate the experiences of the 'other'"[275] and hence exclusion occurs. She adds that:

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[272] Nadine Naber, "Decolonizing Culture: Beyond Orientalist and Anti-Orientalist Feminism", in Rabab Abdulhadi, et al. (eds) *Arab and Arab American Feminisims : Gender, Violence and Belonging*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 79.

[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Samina Yasmeen. "The Dynamics of Exclusion/Inclusion: Australia as a Case Study", p. 18.

> this tendency is reflected in the assumed superiority of Islam over the West: applying the same tools as some in the majority community, they categorise the West as the 'other' and impute characteristics that are different from and, therefore, inferior to the Muslim belief system. These views impact on and reinforce the tendency to form networks within the ethnic and/or religious communities.[276]

Similarly, Adis Duderija states that belonging to an immigrant religious minority influences the way Muslims living in the West construct their sense of identity. He also agrees that religion becomes a determining factor in the formation of that identity. He argues that:

> In this context it is important to note that the erection of socio-religious boundaries between Self and the Other can be generated by means of particular markers, such as physical appearances (including dress), shared belief/s, particular interpretations of sacred texts and history all of which can act as powerful loci of differentiation between the new immigrant religious minority Self and the Other (Broader Society).[277]

Kahf's narrative evokes the same view concerning the making or reproduction of the Arab culture in an American environment. Abbasali Borhan points out that according to "this totalizing view, all Americans are homogenized into a fixed number of disagreeable stereotypes and the differences between cultures are essentialized at the expense of commonalities, hence functioning as a means of constructing an agreeable image for 'us,' being good and pure, as the opposite pole to 'them,' being filthy and impure."[278] This attitude contributes to the dilemma of identity that the protagonist experiences later on in her life. The novel gives good attention to the patriarchal influence on the type of Islam received from the traditional Muslims. Kahf recognizes the contradiction between the essence of Islam and its application by Muslims and how this application should be rejected by a positive role model like her protagonist, Khadra.

Throughout the text, there is a hidden fear of women lurking behind the smiling face of gender equality that the traditional Muslims claim calling for in their activism. There is a space

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[276] Ibid., p. 28.

[277] Adis Duderija. "Neo-traditional Salafis in the West: Agents of (Self)-Exclusion" in Samina Yasmeen and Nina Markovic (eds*). Muslim Citizens in the West: Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion*, (Dorchester: Henry Ling Limited, 2014), p. 126.

[278] Abbasali Borhan, "Resistance and Uncanny Moments of In-Betweenness in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*", p. 9.

designed for women within that community and hence women should not leave. Fatima Mernissi states in her essay "The Meaning of Spatial Boundaries", that:

> Muslim Sexuality is territorial: its regulatory mechanisms consist primarily in a strict allocation of space to each sex and an elaborate ritual for resolving the contradictions arising from the inevitable intersections of spaces. Apart from the ritualized trespasses of women into public spaces (which are by definition, male spaces), there are no accepted patterns for interactions between unrelated men and women. Such interactions violate the spatial rules that are the pillars of the Muslim sexual order.[279]

She adds that "Any transgression of the boundaries is a danger to the social order because it is an attack on the acknowledged allocation of power."[280] These spaces come to be shown when Khadra starts to seek recognition from her community due to her hard work in the service of the call of the Dawah Center. As she starts to ask for appreciation, she is accused of being proud and seeking the riches of the world. She notices that her charge is not avoided by her fellow male activists and here the early rebellious attitude starts to appear. Her participation in the memorization of the chapter of "Mary" from Quran reflects how eager she is to mingle in the cause of the Dawah Center but when they tell her that she cannot participate in the contest because she is a woman, that makes her disillusioned. Kahf's choice of the chapter of "Mary" specifically reflects that religion itself has given credit to women by choosing Mary, the mother of Jesus, to perform a hard task, while the traditional Muslim community in the novel exclude women and associate their bodies and their voices with something that arouses sexual desire and thus should be covered. Khadra's memorization does not upgrade her to participate in the competition and hence she is not allowed to enter men-only-zones.

Fatima Mernissi classifies the Muslim society in general into two universes. This classification can also apply to the Muslims portrayed by Kahf in this novel. Mernissi says:

> Strict space boundaries divide Muslim society into two subuniverses: the universe of men (the umma, the world religion and power) and the universe of women, the domestic world of sexuality and family. The spatial division according to sex reflects the division between those who hold authority and those

[279] Fatima Mernissi, "The Meaning of Spatial Boundaries", in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2010), p. 489.

[280] Ibid.

> who do not, those who hold spiritual powers and those who do not. The division is based on the physical separation of the umma (the public sphere) from the domestic universe.[281]

It is very evident in the novel how these two subuniverses are maintained. Though the community portrayed by Kahf encourages women's activism, in practice they discourage it. One of Khadra's interests is to recite Quran in public meetings. She manages to attract attention as her *tajweed*[282] is very good. The Campus Muslim Council (CMC) starts to object on her recitation in the opening of the events they organize. Her brother Eyad explains to her:

> It's not that a woman's voice is *awrah* normally…It's just- well, you have to admit, Khadra, your voice when you're reading Quran with all the *tajweed* stuff is pretty awesome. I heard some of the guys talking about it. Talking about you. It's almost like, if some girl's singing in a sultry voice. You wouldn't want to do that, would you? And I don't want to be put in that position with guys listening to my sister and getting, well, almost turned on. Do you want me to have to be in such an uncomfortable position? (Kahf: 204)

Certainly Khadra does not want to cause her brother any embarrassment but at the same time she starts to see that there is sexism in the ideology of the CMC members. She could not accept this treatment and finds it completely unfair to be excluded from certain activities for this reason. She recognizes that women who inhabit this domestic universe are subordinate to men who enjoy their freedom of participation in the public sphere. This attitude of her brother intensifies her confusion concerning the religion and culture and the space they give to her as a female. It starts to confuse her sense of belonging to the group.

Kahf explores this issue more when she takes the reader into another space and territory which is that of a real and internationally recognized Muslim country, Saudi Arabia. The subject of the space occupied by women becomes more complicated as Kahf takes us to the source where this 'woman space ideology' comes from. A woman in a male place is not tolerated at all. Kahf reflects this honestly to imply that segregation of women is an important issue that can influence one negatively, especially those visitors from other cultures who happen to deal with this issue in Saudi Arabia and hence understand Islam as a religion segregating against

[281] Ibid., p. 490.
[282] Special artistic recitation of Quran

women[283]. Fatima Mernissi refers here to the traditional Islamic attitude about women: "A woman is always trespassing in a male space because she is, by definition, a foe. A woman has no right to use male spaces. If she enters them, she is upsetting the male's order and his peace of mind. She is actually committing an act of aggression against him merely by being present where she should not be."[284] This view can be seen in Khadra's visit to Saudi Arabia with her family. She is excited to see the Middle East especially the country where the Prophet of Islam came from. She expects that all will be perfect there because it is the place where the spring of religion flows naturally. She is totally unaware of the spaces that men and women occupy there and how to abide by them. The first unpleasant incident that happens to Khadra in Saudi Arabia is that early one morning she wants to pray the *fajr* (the morning prayer) and she goes out of the house heading for the mosque which is near the house. Soon she is arrested and brought back home by the police. They explain to her host " 'We found her trying to get into the mosque.' They said it as if she was a vagrant or something." (Kahf: 166) The treatment of the policemen negatively affects her. Women are not allowed to pray in mosques in Saudi Arabia; it is a matter which is contradictory to Islamic teaching. She argues with her parents about the issue: "What about the Prophet saying 'You must never prevent the female servants of God from attending the houses of God?' I told the *mattawwa* (The policemen) that hadith (saying) and he laughed—he laughed at me, and said 'listen to this woman quoting scriptures at us!'" (Kahf: 168) Khadra now experiences a big contradiction in religious theory and practice that she has not experienced in the US in that manner. The policemen talk to her in a tone that makes her feel as if she is a bad woman and at any point they might charge her with a vice crime. "None of them believed her or listened to her. Like she was a joke, like what she said didn't even matter." (Kahf: 168) After that incident, the only feeling that overwhelms her is anger. This incident in the novel informs the opinion of Sarah Graham-Brown who states: "Segregation of space and control over the visibility of women were forms of patriarchal control which emphasized the need to channel and contain women's sexual power."[285] Fatima Mernissi believes that the restrictions imposed on women in the Middle East are not based on the assumption that women are biologically inferior. Rather they are based on that which assumes that women are powerful and dangerous. She states: "All sexual institutions (polygamy, repudiation, sexual segregation,

[283] In her body of work, Kahf tries to differentiate between Islam as a religion and the Islamic cultural tradition.
[284] Fatima Mernissi, "The Meaning of Spatial Boundaries", p. 494.
[285] Sarah Graham-Brown, "The Seen, the Unseen, and the Imagined: Private and Public Lives" in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2010), p. 503.

etc) can be perceived as a strategy for containing their power."[286] Kahf's narrative seems to reflect Mernissi's view through the portrayal of the policemen who treat Khadra as a kind of criminal. This severe maintenance of separate spaces in Saudi Arabia is totally different from maintaining spaces between the sexes in the US by the Muslim community. Nevertheless, it is presented here to reflect that segregating spaces of sexes is not a trivial issue for Arab Americans and feminists do struggle against this mindset as Kahf does in her novel. This incident in Saudi Arabia comes to disturb the image of the *umma* in Khadra's imagination. The 'ideal' home of origin seems not up to her expectations. And by comparison with the US, the latter proves better and more flexible with women's rights and space.

Khadra's rebellion against the restrictions imposed on her body by her community starts to manifest fully after her marriage and pregnancy. She gets married to a Kuwaiti university student, Juma, who comes to the US to get a degree in engineering. After marriage Khadra realizes that her personality and her body are being negotiated and her behaviour is monitored by the husband who gives himself the full right to do so. He even uses the same discourse used by her brother Eyad when he advises her concerning covetousness and love of the world's riches. In the same way, Juma disapproves of Khadra's activism in the university and accuses her of being covetous and selfish. He becomes puzzled by Khadra's behaviour. "She was an Arab girl, familiar with Arab customs. He hadn't expected her to be doing things that would embarrass him. If he'd wanted to have to explain every limit of proper behavior, he'd have married an American." (Kahf: 227-8) He tries in every way to convince Khadra to give up her bike. So he warns her that some Arab might see her riding it which is an improper situation for him. Then he uses a verse from Quran to encourage her to give it up. Then he becomes more aggressive in his words "'You look ridiculous,' he told her flatly. 'It's idiotic, riding a bicycle in hijab. You look totally stupid and clumsy and clownlike.'" (Kahf: 228) Finally he forbids her to ride the bike saying that as a husband he has the right to forbid her. This restriction on the female body is another marker used to differentiate Arab Americans from Americans. Nevertheless, it makes Khadra disappointed and indignant. Kahf treats this issue with a critical approach, reflecting female suffering, nevertheless, an attitude is needed to show resistance. Khadra reacts against these practices adopted by her community. In fact, the narrative makes it clear that it is the duty of the protagonist to react against those practices in order to be a healthy

[286] Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female dynamics in Muslim Society* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), p.19.

Arab-American citizen, that is, to be able to mingle with the environment she lives in and be productive and active within a hybrid space.

3. Orientalism: America Excluding Arab Americans

3.1. The Veil

Kahf, through the characters of the Shamys, shows how the members of the Muslim Brotherhood formulate their style of life. Being Syrians and having migrated in the 1970s, they have already acquired the objectives of the Brotherhood movement and abided by them even after their migration to the US. Fadwa El Guindi refers to the style of dress in the beginning of the movement in Egypt. The female dress can be described by "full-length gallabiyyas (jilbab in standard Arabic), loose-fining to conceal body contours, in solid austere colors made out of opaque fabric…[They] refrain from body and dress decoration or colors that draw attention to their bodies."[287] This same style is adopted by the Muslim community that Kahf portrays. Khadra in the beginning of wearing the hijab, is so keen on making it look so traditional. All her colors are dark, a matter which reflects how strictly she follows rules connected with the religion she receives from her domestic environment. Again her commitment to this code of dress makes the college woman a trustworthy Muslim agent; "the more 'serious' her public behavior, and the more knowledgeable she is in Islamic sources, the higher she was on the scale of activist leadership among women. She would lead discussions, for example, in mosques and in women students' lounges between lectures."[288] Khadra wants to follow this path of activism, and thus her hijab turns out to be dark and bears more of a political connotation than a religious or spiritual one. El Guindi describes the Brotherhood women in the Middle East saying: "By dressing this way in public these young women conveyed their vision of Islamic ideals by becoming exemplary contemporary models. Encoded in the dress style is an affirmation of an Islamic identity and morality and a rejection of Western materialism, consumerism, commercialism and values."[289] This spirit migrated with many of the Brotherhood members to the US. This can be seen in the emphasis of the Shamys on separating themselves from American society because they consider themselves more Godly and more spiritual. The veil is considered so important when it comes to matters of spirituality and differentiation from the US society.

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[287] Fadwa El Guindi, "Veiling Resistance" in Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2010), p. 590.
[288] Ibid., p. 591.
[289] Ibid.

Wearing the veil by Muslim women within the US society is not without challenges if one considers the political situation that Arab Muslims face due to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. Meyda Yegenoglu states, "Surely, the veiled woman is already other-ed in her own culture, gender-ed in and by a particular form of dressing, but she is other to the Western subject in a way that differs from her position relative to the dominant male subjects of her culture."[290] In a similar vein, Samaa Abdurraqib points out that, "In immigration, the salient and symbolic otherness of the veil is translated into a Muslim ethnicity or religious identity, as opposed to national/racial/other identity. This otherness keeps veiled immigrant Muslim women in a liminal position in the society to which they migrate."[291]

The novel depicts violent scenes suffered by Khadra. As a little girl, she suffers a beating at the hands of Brian Lott, who used to annoy her whenever he had a chance. " 'Stop it! Stop! You leave me alone, Brian Lott!' She scrambled to her feet. The back of her head was still ridged from where he'd knocked her against the brick of the apartment wall last time.'" (Kahf: 4) This incident which is placed at the beginning of the novel indicates that Khadra is very much affected by the feeling of discrimination. Moreover, she has the desire to defy even if she loses her fight. She wants to use the same violence which is inflicted on her against her enemy who is calling her a raghead. Another incident of bigotry happens in school, when two boys harass Khadra calling her names: "Look, raghead's got hair under that piece a shit," (Kahf: 124) Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad says that the harassment limits women's freedom and deprives them of their anonymity. Public catcalls of "I hate you," "Go home," "America is for Americans," and "Death to Muslims" have a devastating effect. Many women stay at home to avoid public defamation.[292] These harassments happen regularly and they are results of the anti-Arab racist discourse of the public policy. Meyda Yegenoglu argues that:

> the case or tropology of the 'veil' is not simply a signifier of a cultural habit or identity that can be liked or disliked, be good or bad, but 'in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the other' for a subject, i.e., for the European subject

[290] Meyda Yegenoglu, "Veiled Fantasies: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism" Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2010), p. 544.
[291] Samaa Abdurraqib, "Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature" *MELUS*, Vol. 31, No. 4, *Arab American Literature* (Winter, 2006), p. 57.
[292] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad "The Post-9/11 "Hijab" as Icon" *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 68, No. 3, Muslim Integration in the United States and France (Fall, 2007), p. 263, Published by: Oxford University Press. Accessed: 01-06-2016 20:53 UTC. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20453163

> in our case, it signifies the production of an 'extereority', a 'target or threat', which makes possible for that subject to 'postulate a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base. This enables him to produce himself, vis-à-vis another while simultaneously erasing the very process of this production.[293]

To build on this argument here, the veil can be seen as a threat in the eyes of Americans who hold reductive notions of hijab. Samaa Abdurraqib says, "The veil thus becomes the visual repository for the Muslim identity that is being preserved, and veiling shifts from being construed as somewhat normal behavior into an action that proclaims identity and (sometimes) allegiances."[294] She adds that "the veil serves as an erected boundary that solidifies distance and difference."[295] The Muslim community depicted by Kahf in this novel is politically active and supports the Arabs in the Middle East. This community advocates for Arabs and Muslims against the Israeli practices as well as the secular governments in the Middle East. This identification and support causes them troubles represented by the formulation of an us/them narrative invading the US mainstream media. Hence Arabs in the US come to be labeled as either the good or the bad—good if they assimilate, and bad if not. A hegemonic gaze comes to be adopted by the general American opinion against Arabs as it depicts them as the homogenous Other.

For Middle Eastern societies, veiling is part of their culture. For many people, unveiling seem to be an intrusive aspect of Western culture, yet they choose unveiling as a sign of embracing modernity. Some others consider unveiling a kind of rebellion against traditions. Aijaz Ahmed states that, "Western colonizers effectively defined the terms of subsequent debates about women and the veil so that it became charged with issues of culture and nationalism and locked into an opposition between 'western' and 'indigenous' or 'authentic' values."[296] The attitude towards unveiling of the Brotherhood in the Middle East can be ascribed to a reaction against the Western culture which influenced the Arab societies during the colonization era. Going back to veiling is encouraged as it is an attitude denoting prejudice to one's own culture and country that can be called "nativism". Accordingly, the veil becomes a significant symbol of resistance and rejection of foreign values. "The notion of returning to or holding on to an 'original' Islam and an 'authentic' indigenous culture is itself, then, a response

[293] Meyda Yegenoglu, "Veiled Fantasies: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism", p. 544.
[294] Samaa Abdurraqib, "Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature", p. 59.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Quoted in Katayoun Zarei Toossi, "The Conundrum of the Veil and Mohja Kahf's Literary Representations of Hijab" in Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies., p. 645.

to the discourses of colonialism and the colonial attempt to undermine Islam and Arab culture and replace them with Western practices and beliefs".[297] Thus the concept of the veil must acquire a political connotation for the Arab Americans depicted by Kahf. During Khadra's visit to Syria, which is under the rule of the Ba'th party, she becomes aware of the terror inflicted on Syrian women who wear the hijab in certain cities in Syria which are known as resistant to the regime. Aunt Razanne explains to Khadra:

> "On September 28, 1982, during the height of the troubles in Syria, president Assad's brother Rifat dropped a thousand girl paratroopers over Damascus, with a guy backup soldier behind each one. They blocked off a section of the city. Within it, they grabbed any woman who was wearing hijab…You could strip off your hijab and jilbab, or get a gun to your head." (Kahf: 281)

In the Middle East, the Islamic Brotherhood revived the cultural marker of hijab, but their political endeavours made the hijab issue look threatening for some political regimes. Women suffered the most because of the politicization of Islam in the Middle East and from there all the way to the US. For Kahf, in both cases the woman body is manipulated for male agendas.

In the US as well as in other Western countries, Islamophobia is the result of the propaganda of "the war on terror" and it is the reason behind the re-Islamization phenomena. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad says that Islamophobia "has become an important factor in the re-Islamization of Muslim youth. Faced with a growing American public acceptance of the diatribe against Islam and Muslims, some young American-born Muslim women appear to have appropriated a century old view of the hijab as a symbol of solidarity and resistance to efforts to eradicate the religion of Islam."[298] The hijab becomes a signifier of an identity that challenges the Western dehumanization of Islam which connects the hijab "with Islamic militancy, extremism, jihadism, and oppression of women."[299]

Exclusionary forms of US citizenship compelled many Arabs or Muslims to either assimilate easily and reject any identification with their original cultures or religion or exclude themselves and practice their own style of life without mingling with the dominant society in which they live. Kahf wants to destabilize those exclusionary narratives of the US citizenship

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[297] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 237.
[298] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad "The Post-9/11 'Hijab' as Icon", p. 253-4.
[299] Ibid., p. 255.

and hence promotes a new complex knowledge of Minoritarian American identities and how they are retaining transnational affiliations together with their American cultural identities.

3.2. Violence

Violence is another factor that adds to the strategy followed by Americans who are biased against the Arab world to exclude Arab Americans. This is a significant issue tackled by Kahf to shed light on the violations of human rights and to warn that it threatens not only lives but also aborts projects aiming at hybrid communities. The violence towards this minority in America becomes very probable after political issues that emerge in the Middle East. If this is going to lead to anything, it must lead Arab Americans to add another reason to be cautious when dealing with the dominant society. Steven Salaita in "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and After 9/11" states that "American support for Israel has long enraged Arab Americans (and others) thereby providing Arab Americans with a tangible rallying cry and political purpose."[300] Furthering the gap between Arab Americans and the society in which they live is the invention of the Patriotic Act after the event of 9/11. Imperative patriotism demands "that dissent in matters of governance and foreign affairs is unpatriotic and therefore unsavory… Imperative patriotism manifests itself most explicitly during wartime or domestic unrest."[301] So ethnic nationalist movements in America stoke fear and suspicions among Americans concerning the Arab or Muslim. "To dissent against the imagined mores of America is to forfeit identification as American."[302] These sentiments play a great role in the creation of a xenophobic culture which results in physical attacks on Arab Americans and on those who are perceived to be or might be mistaken for Arabs like south Asians, central Asians and Hispanics.

Mervat F. Hatem in "The Political and Cultural Representations of Arabs, Arab Americans and Arab American Feminisms after September 11, 2001", argues against the 'USA Patriot' saying that "the massive random imprisonment of Arab Americans and American Muslims, and their maltreatment in captivity provided other examples of the increasing

[300] Steven Salaita, "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and After 9/11" *College Literature*. Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 2005) p. 150, John Hopkins University Press, Accessed: 15-10-2015 , 13:28 UTC. URL, http:// www.jstor.org/stable/25115271

[301] Ibid., p. 154.
[302] Ibid., p. 155.

violations of the civil rights of these groups."[303] This issue certainly results in more fear of the Other between the Arab-American community and the dominant American society. She adds that: "The U.S. definitions of its enemies within and without have also been national. They have reinforced the national bonds that tie Arab-American communities in the United States with their Arab counterparts in the Middle East and opposed them to the United States and its national agendas."[304]

Physical violence within this topic is touched upon by Kahf. She gives the reader a good example of violence against Muslims in the US through the character Zuhura and her savage murder at the hands of bigots. She is a black Muslim feminist and activist. She is active both at the Dawah Center as well as at the university. She is a successful activist in the Campus Muslim Council. She becomes the Dean's student and lobbies the university administration to recognize Muslim holidays and moreover she organizes speaking events to support Muslims around the world who suffer from maltreatment and persecution. She also writes for the Indiana University (IU) paper and it happens that she supports the dissent in Iran during the Islamic revolution there, a matter which does not please the American majority in the Campus. Despite the fact that the Shah is a tyrant, he is supported by the American public as the revolution against him is an Islamic one. Muslim Iranians who are rallying against the Shah are frowned upon in the US. All those who work in the Dawah Center support the rise of an Islamic state in the Middle East and they believe that it is the hope for every God-fearing Muslim. In an Islamic state "there would be no corruption or bribes; the rich would help the poor; and all would have work and food and live cleanly because an Islamic state would provide the solution for every social ill." (Kahf: 63) That is the mindset of the Muslims of the Dawah Center which Zuhura, the smart and ardent Muslim woman, supports and works for.

As readers, we do not know why Zuhura is killed. It may be on account of her being black or being a Muslim or probably both, but no matter what is the reason, the criminals are never found. She dies early in the novel but her shadow remains present throughout the story especially in the mind of Khadra as a reminder of the injustice and oppression that her community suffers from. The death of Zuhura is devastating not only for her family but also for the whole of the community. Khadra herself is frustrated at her graveside. She thinks of herself

[303] Mervet F. Hatem, "The Political and Cultural Representations of Arabs, Arab Americans and Arab American Feminisms after September 11, 2001" in Rabab Abdulhadi, et al. (eds) *Arab and Arab American Feminisims: Gender, Violence and Belonging*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 12.

[304] Ibid., p. 14.

"Maybe she belonged in a place where she would not get shoved and called "raghead" every other day in the school hallway." (Kahf: 97) She is disillusioned by the fact that those assailants are always successful in getting away with it. They are never discovered or punished. The same goes for Zuhura's murderers.

The first suspect in this crime is Luqman, Zuhura's husband who is arrested and interrogated as to whether his wife has been cheating on him, and because of that he has likely been driven to kill her. "*The Indianapolis star* reported on him being a suspect: *Murder Possible Honor Killing – Middle Eastern Connection*, they said, with a sidebar on 'The Oppression of Women in Islam.'" (Kahf: 97) Luqman is not found guilty but he is deported anyway because of some technical visa issue. This issue is important for Kahf who wrote an essay in which she accuses the American mainstream media of focusing on Islam as violating the rights of women whenever there is a chance for that.

Kahf admits that "Real Muslim sexism, like Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, secular, and other sexisms, exists. Real Muslim women have victimizing experiences"[305] But she does not approve of some diasporic feminists' stories which participate in the demonization of the whole Muslim world or at least one Muslim country. She believes that 'escapee stories' align with the US foreign policy. She states in her essay:

> The victim-escapee stereotype appears to every level of culture, pop to high. It is hegemonic, which means it is not seen as a stereotype but as The Truth: that Islam is exceptionally, uniquely, inherently evil to women seems to be one of the received truths of our era axiomatic. It knows no bounds: left- and right-wingers, feminists and nonfeminists, religious and secular folk in the global Western conversation subscribe to it.[306]

Self-orientalizing Muslims believe that this discourse has to be true as long as it is backed by an overwhelming evidence. Kahf doubts this evidence and argues that this discourse is problematic because it is biased and inaccurate. She says "The Pity Committee thrives in imperialist context,

[305] Mohja Kahf, "The Pity Committee and the Careful Reader: How Not to Buy Stereotypes About Muslim Women" in Rabab Abdulhadi, et al. (eds) *Arab and Arab American Feminisims : Gender, Violence and Belonging*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 112.
[306] Ibid.

so it is riding high today with the U.S. occupying Iraq and waging war in Afghanistan, its story becoming dearer to its subscribers by the hour."[307]

On the other hand, Kahf also does not approve of those 'Muslim Apologists' who she calls the 'Defensive Brigade' because they have a counter discourse that one can find in mosque newsletters and conservative-press offerings which spread among the Muslim communities in the US. "This camp's knee-jerk defensive discourse on Muslim women demonizes anyone attempting to change the status quo, more important, utterly fails to address the real issues of sexism in Muslim societies."[308] She believes that what is most harmed in this war between the two discourses is the cause of gender justice.

3.3. Stereotyping

The exclusion of Arab Muslims from American society can be seen through a number of paradigms. Stereotyping is one of them. Anti-Arab racism has become a feature in the mainstream cultural productions. Stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists or representations of Islamic fundamentalism as the root of all evil become the dominant topics. The Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East has immensely influenced the Orientalist discourse and resulted in more harsh stereotyping because of which many Arab Americans suffer verbal and physical violence.

> The only Muslims on television were Arab oil-sheiks, who were supposedly bad because they made America have an energy crisis…And President Carter pleaded with Americans to use less gas. Nasty Arab sheiks appeared on Charlie's Angels, forcing the shy angel, Kelly, to bellydance. (Kahf: 83)

Whenever there is an Arab political issue arising in the Middle East that conflicts with US interests, the Shamys and the Arab community become a target for harassment. This harassment signifies that there is an assumption that all Muslims share a unifying belief and political stand.[309]

Marginalization of Arabs and Muslims is also evident in Kahf's exploration of the modern American society in her novel. Khadra criticizes the marginalization of Arabs and

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[307] Ibid.
[308] Ibid., p. 113.
[309] Steven Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide* (Syracue University Press, 2011), p. 34.

Muslims in the mainstream media. She realizes that there is a kind of dehumanization of her community. In times when Muslims suffer in different places in the world, the news only foregrounds the tragedies and misfortunes of Americans.

> Somalis were in the grip of famine. There was fighting in Western Sahara. Afghans filled refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan. Patani Muslims were being persecuted in their Buddist-dominated country. Life in Lebanon was a hell of shelling and death. None of this was an important part of the news in America. Whereas the minute details of the lives of the American men held hostage, and the tears and hopes of their mothers, fathers, grandparents, and second cousins in Kissamee made news every day. Only they were human, had faces, had mothers. (Kahf: 122)

Many Arab Americans who had joined the National Organization for Women (NOW), were waiting for a real commitment from the organization to the suffering of Arab women during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. However, Arab Americans were disappointed as NOW's leadership was unwilling to condemn the war. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad writes, "They could not understand why the death of over twenty thousand Lebanese and Palestinians, including women and children, were of no concern to the American feminists. Did they not think that Arabs and Muslim women were human? Or did they not hear their cry of agony?"[310]

In another situation in the novel, the education system is criticised when Khadra is silenced whenever she tackles the Arab-Israeli issue in her essays. She always gets a D when she tries to discuss this topic; her teacher's attitude only reflects the same stand of the general American foreign policy which is biased towards Israel. Zeina Zattari in her article "In the Belly of the Beast" describes the silencing of Arab Americans by the hegemonic American mainstream narratives as neocolonial, imperial and paternal. She confirms the dehumanization of Arabs and she condemns it as hypocritical. She states that: "We cannot expect freedom of speech to cover our speech; it covers only the speech of our offenders. While we are denied access to a platform to speak about discrimination against Arabs and Muslims, racist discourses against us are deemed 'sacred' by FOX News and a variety of media outlets."[311] This silencing and dehumanizing attitude noted by Kahf adds to the frustration of the initiation of a dialogue

[310] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad "The Post-9/11 "Hijab" as Icon", p. 264.
[311] Zeina Zaatari, "In the Belly of the Beast: Struggling for Nonviolent Belonging" in Rabab Abdulhadi, et al. (eds) *Arab and Arab American Feminisims : Gender, Violence and Belonging*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 61.

between cultures. Her narrative seems to voice a warning that without this dialogue, crisis will persist between the East and the West. This crisis finds its manifestation in the dilemma of identity suffered by the protagonist.

Throughout the 1970s, the Arabs became a scapegoat for America's economic crises after the oil embargo in 1973. The Iranian hostage crisis at the end of the decade strained Iranian-US relations. As a result, open hostility started to be seen towards Arab Americans as well as those from the Middle East. During the 1980s, the Reagan administration led a campaign against international terrorism which led to the military assault on Libya and full support for the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and other territories.[312] Kahf tackles this issue in her novel by projecting it on the lives of the Shamys and their community. Kahf explains how the hostage issue affected the lives of Arab Americans:

> This made America hopping mad. America was mad at Khadra personally, the Shamy family, and all the other Muslims of Indianapolis. Simmonsville residents who didn't know the Shah of Iran from Joe Schmoe yelled "Long live the Shah!" as their Muslim neighbours got out of their cars and went into the blue house on New Harmony Drive. Vandalism of the Dawah center with soap and white spray paint was something the police couldn't seem to stop; they only came and took pictures every time it happened. (Kahf: 119)

Arab Americans reacted to this issue indifferently as they feel that this serves the Americans right and it is a natural result due to America's oppressive foreign policy towards the Third World. Khadra's father's reaction to this item of news on TV explains how does he feel "A taste of their own medicine," Wajdy said. "They make everyone else in the world suffer while they live like lords. They create terror in other people's countries while they live in safety and luxury. Let them see how it is to have to worry." (Kahf: 118) This feeling increases the inclination of this community to exclude themselves from the society around them. They turn inwardly and work for themselves to feel safe and fulfilled. This is manifested in the novel through Khadra's community and family. Her parents are involved in the Dawah Center's work which they

[312] Abraham, Nabeel. "Arab-American Marginality: Mythos and Praxis" *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 2/3, ARAB AMERICANS: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE, p. 18 (Spring/Summer 1989) Pluto Journals, Accessed: 09-06-2015 11:44 UTC, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41859056

consider a *Jihad* (noble strife)[313]. They help Muslims to know Islam better and practice it. They help in building mosques and help suffering Muslims in other countries. This community becomes even more of a closed society. Khadra realizes that this attitude from her community is intensified by the political situation and events which deeply affect Muslims and Arabs in general in America.

The US national identity is not a unilateral one that can be given a simplistic kind of patriotism. Steven Salaita confirms in his *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide* that Arabs in America are of different backgrounds and they belong to different political ideologies. He states that "To reduce Arab Americans to political symbols by lionizing them as radicals or portraying them generically as terrorists in campaign advertisements is therefore careless and irresponsible."[314] Denying the Arab identity or any ethnic identity that the American has does not help in developing a stable and healthy American individual. Racial stereotyping and discriminatory profiling will make the individual adhere more to his ethnic cultural identity but this time in an extreme manner. Sarup says, "[h]arsh sanctions are taken against migrants who, feeling threatened, often emphasize their cultural identity as a way of self-protection"[315] Similarly, Samina Yasmeen says that "minority-majority relations in any community are guided by processes of relative exclusion and inclusion of the minority vis-à-vis the mainstream society."[316] Therefore, lessening the gap between minorities and the majority promotes a safer social environment. However, for Khadra, as a female character, the ethnic cultural identity is also not satisfactory and she realizes that she is not keen on adhering to it. She finds it necessary to build bridges between identities but she reaches a point when she cannot cope with the pressures of both parties, namely, her Muslim community as well as the American one.

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[313] Part of Islamic beliefs. The literal meaning of *Jihad* is 'struggle' or 'effort', and Muslims use the word Jihad to describe three different kinds of struggle: the first one is to live out the Muslim faith as well as possible; the second is the struggle to build a good Muslim society; and the third one is the struggle to defend Islam with force if necessary.

[314] Steven Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide* (Syracue University Press, 2011), p. 1.
[315] Sarup, "Home and Identity", in Bammer, (ed.), *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, p. 103.
[316] Samina Yasmeen. "Introduction: Muslim Citizens in the West: Promoting Social Inclusion" in Samina Yasmeen and Nina Markovic (eds). *Muslim Citizens in the West: Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion*. (Dorchester: Henry Ling Limited, 2014), p. 3.

4. Agency and Identity: Finding One's Own Space

The second generation's identity struggles are different from those of their parents. They are trying to find their own space to mingle with the culture they are dealing with, and in the same time staying in accordance with the culture of their parents. The novel reflects the conflict between first- and second- generation immigrants. R. RadhaKrishnan points out: "The tensions between the old and new homes create the problem of divided allegiances that the two generations experience differently. The very organicity of the family and community, displaced by travel and relocation, must be renegotiated and redefined."[317] There is a phenomenon of historical rupture between generations. The two generations have different experiences. The older generation can no longer invoke religion in order to create an authoritarian mode that can solve diasporic problems. The younger generation also cannot totally forget about their ethnic and cultural origins. RadhaKrishnan adds: "It is vital that the two generations emphasize and desire to understand and appreciate patterns of experience not their own."[318]

Kahf discusses the role of the Muslim feminist who refuses to accept ready-made frames that her family and community want her to adopt. When it comes to the image of woman, Kahf represents in her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* the modern Arab Muslim woman who refuses to overlook contradictions and transforms into an active humanitarian agent in her community. She recognizes the importance of the notion of transcendence that a number of feminists explain and call for in their writings; feminists like, Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, the forerunners in this field. For instance, Kahf comes near de Beauvoir's rejection of the state of happiness that women might reach at the expense of being inactive or without personal goals in life. Simone de Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex* (1949) that "those who are condemned to stagnation are often pronounced happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest."[319] She continues that "Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties."[320] Kahf's novel suggests that still in some Arab communities men are engaged with projects to achieve transcendence while women are expected to be at home reproducing children and raising good Muslims. This can be seen through the portrayal of Wajdy and his wife Ibtihaj, Khadra's parents, who reflect

[317] R. RadhaKrishnan, *Diasporic Mediation: Between Home and Location* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) p. 206.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley. (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 28.

[320] Ibid.

this model perfectly as Wajdy is always engaged with the world outside while Ibtihaj is proud to be only a mother. She is a typical traditional Middle Eastern woman. She tells a friend once that she has a college degree like her husband, but she prefers to stay at home and take care of the children. Her husband adds that her most important work is to make more Muslims, "Good-quality Muslims." (Kahf: 21) The novel criticizes the Muslim woman who accepts the position of a passive mother in a community which needs true active agents to rally against stereotyping in a positive way. The image of Ibtihaj consolidates the anti-Arab racism rhetoric and reflects a model which is very traditional and out-of-date.

De Beauvoir regards the status of immanence as inhuman; it reduces the person into something base. She says,

> Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the 'en soi' – the brutish life of subjection to given conditions— and of liberty into constraint and contingence. This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consent to it; if it is inflicted upon him, it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is an absolute evil. Every individual concerned to justify his existence feels that his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen projects.[321]

Khadra experiences this feeling of frustration when she becomes pregnant at a time which is not suitable for her. She feels that she needs to decide for her life at that critical moment and not to consent to the will of her husband and her family who oppose her having an abortion. For her, it is a moment of identity assertion. Her real personality is trying to find a way out while her community demands a specific femininity act from her. She is forced to tell her father that she is not another copy of his own mother and she will not be one. This attitude is considered defiant and improper because it departs from the conservative image of Arab Muslim femininity. She wants to continue her study and her projects without interruptions as a result of being a mother; she needs that transcendence at this critical historical moment in the life of the Arab Muslim community in America and hence the status of 'happiness' is not a happy one for her. De Beauvoir asserts that however strong the women are, the bondage of reproduction is a handicap if they want to deal with a hostile world. Pregnancy and childbirth lessen their ability for work

[321] Ibid., p. 29.

and make them at times completely dependent upon men.[322] Khadra here refuses to be inactive at that critical moment in her life.

Virginia Woolf in her long essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) argues that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction"[323]. She discusses why women writers in the past were less successful than men. Similarly to de Beauvoir, she considers child-bearing as one of the reasons. She adds to it the lack of a personal space. Kahf also emphasizes this issue in her novel and presents it through the absence of a belief in individuality of children. There is always an emphasis on the spirit of the *umma* (the nation) while there is no development of the personality of the individual to be independent. There is a limited space in which the child can express his/her own desires in the Arab community presented to us by Kahf. For instance, for Khadra, even deciding about her university courses is not without obstacles. Her father interferes and decides 'the best' for her. After her divorce, she chooses to live away from her family in order to create a space for herself in which she can experience productivity without interference. Desiring a space of her own is a typical Western attitude that influences Khadra unconsciously but finally she adopts it openly and finds it necessary for her development and creativity. Living in the host country empowers her to change the codes of Muslim femininity and formulate it according to her purposes. This new attitude of hers has its final inspiration from a trip to Syria she decides to take after her divorce.

The visit to Syria gives a way to Khadra to discover the home of origin by herself and evaluate its culture from scratch. In the new context, she stops practicing Islam; she stops praying and takes off her veil. She tries to learn gradually and observe the people around her. In this process, she manages to link herself with the past and criticize the present, an experience which leads her to complete self-transformation. The character of Teta, the grandmother, functions as a tool to challenge the stereotypical Arab woman image. She helps Khadra to have a better view of the past, which is different from that narrated by her parents. "The past Teta introduces to Khadra is not a black-and-white picture, however, it makes room for the recognition of the shadow as part of us and runs counter to the dominant images replicated in Orientalist discourses."[324]

Teta's character represents an anti-Orientalist Arab woman. She tells Khadra that she is like many Arab women in her time when she refuses to be satisfied with herself being a wife

[322] Ibid, p. 94.
[323] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Penguin Books, 1945), p. 6.
[324] Abbasali Borhan, p. 15.

stationed at home. She seeks to have a job and finally works as a "telephone operator" for a communications center. Moreover, she falls in love with an immigrant man from Palestine. When her parents refuse the idea of their marriage because the lover is a homeless man who belongs to a different ethnic group, she elopes with him to Haifa, his homeland,— a bold action to be considered in a conservative society. Khadra realizes that xenophobia is not specific to Americans; even Arabs in her "ideal homeland" are still having it when they deal with the "other". So Khadra comes to know about xenophobia in the Middle East, even though coexistence and tolerance are also some characteristics of that area's societies.

As Teta mentions her very close friend named Iman, who was a Jewish Arab girl, Khadra is astonished to know that friendship can be seen between Muslims and Jews. Teta also takes her to one of the oldest Jewish places of worship, a synagogue, for a visit where she also introduces her to one of her Jewish friends who is a rabbi. On a tablet inside the building, an inscription is written in three languages 'Hebrew, Arabic, and French. "The multiplicity of languages and religions in Damascus testifies to the peaceful life of people of different religions together in Syria's past."[325] Khadra realizes that she always looks at Jews as the people who can never be part of *her* people, but it seems that the land and the past represented by Teta have another story to tell. "Khadra finds an alternative lens through which she reengages with the religions and homeland she had imagined between memory and amnesia."[326] In her last days in Syria, she buys a beautiful silk tangerine fabric. The tangerine colour is Teta's favourite one. This lively colour "is a token of Khadra's newly found religiosity." She divides the fabric into two halves and makes two scarves for both herself and Teta. "The tangerine scarf shared with Teta symbolizes the protagonist's reconnection with her heritage and religion."[327] Katayoun Zarei Toossi says that, "the tangerine scarf represents the protagonist's individual way of dealing with the push and pull of the binarist ideological discourses that validate or disqualify her because of what covers her hair. She refuses to adopt an either/or approach in clinging to the veil in an orthodox manner or taking it off—even though she decides to take off her veil for a while."[328]

As Khadra matures, she finds her life in America has added a lot to her ability to understand the religious community and the value of individualism derived from US culture.

[325] Ibid., p. 16.
[326] Toossi, p. 651.
[327] Toossi, p. 651.
[328] Ibid.

She comes to believe that Islam can coexist with the United States secular environment if exclusionary practices are eliminated. Danielle Haque states:

> Khadra's impulse is to universalize the umma, to include Muslims that her mother would exclude, thus for her the Islamic sense of community inhabits a particular form of a potentially more expansive (though not limitless) inclusiveness. Secularism provides a context in which the transnational, inclusive umma Khadra experiences could thrive (and which a fundamentalist context would cripple). Her vision of the umma is informed by her perception of universal religion and secularism.[329]

The novel highlights a culture of suspicion and paranoia which depends on religious and ethnic markers to determine the American from the Un-American. The us/them binary still pervades the national discussions in America since 1967 until after 9/11 attacks. Arab Americans' religious and cultural affiliations with the Middle East have become antithetical to the US values and affected their position within the constructions of the US national belonging. Kahf in this novel tries to show how this political aspect can affect the life of the Arab-American Muslim woman and influence her identity formation and eventually leads to a dilemma concerning how to interpret home and nationality.

Through the examination of how Arab Americans exclude American cultural markers and how the American mainstream works to exclude Arab Americans depending on cultural and religious bases, the novel presents a feminist role model through the characterization of the protagonist to reveal Kahf's conviction that such a model is really needed if a third space is desired for the humanist communication between the Arab Americans as a minority and the American society as a majority. As a woman, the protagonist needs to delineate a new image for herself within her community as well as within the American society in order to succeed and develop as a human being first and then as a woman.

[329] Danielle Haque, p. 823.

CHAPTER THREE

In-Between Diaspora and Homeland in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife*

In Philip Roth's novel *The Counterlife* (1986), the reader encounters a problem of identification that relates to ethnicity and nationality. As is common with Roth, his novels are populated with American Jews who are dealing with matters of authenticity; authenticity and Jewishness is a theme usually tackled by intellectual Jews and Roth is no exception concerning this. His characters cope with the concept of exile according to the historical construction of their Jewish identity. Assimilation is always seen as a serious predicament that troubles their authenticity and causes a problem in their social interactions with their fellow Jewish community as well as with the American society at large. In this novel we find the aforementioned issues manipulated within the framework of diasporic anxiety about Israel as a symbolic or actual homeland for Jews and Europe as original homeland for them before the diasporic experience. Both Israel and England are imagined homelands for the characters.

This chapter investigates the impact of Israel as the Jewish state on the mentality of American Jews and its relation to their collective consciousness that consists of the wish of 'return'. It also relates to the problem of insecurity whether in the host country as well as Israel being at war with Arabs. It also investigates how Europe exists in the subconscious of Jewish Americans as depicted by Roth and how it relates directly to matters of anti-Semitism and hence to the identity crisis. It also relates to the wish of 'return'. It sheds light on how the American Jew appreciates his/her life in America and connects that with the problem of assimilation as a reason for identity crisis.

Drawing on the theory of Jewish diaspora and homeland, I argue that the 'return' prospect is part of the ethnic identity crisis suffered by the characters portrayed by Roth to reflect on the aspect of the Jewish-American dilemma of 'in-Betweenness'. The diasporic situation of assimilation is presented as a state of abnormality that some American Jews are trying to overcome by nurturing the myth of 'return' in their imagination.

1. Philip Roth and the Dilemma of Writing Home and Diaspora Jews

Philip Roth was born in Newark, New Jersey which he describes as "an industrial port city of 150,000, mostly white and working class and, during the thirties and forties, still very

much the provinces."[330] He lived in a lower-middle-class Jewish neighbourhood in Newark until he was seventeen when he moved to rural Pennsylvania to enter college there. At that age, he wanted to discover "America". He described himself as still under the sway of the popular sense of the ordinary American life and "under the sway of the populist rhetoric that had risen out of the Depression and had been transformed by the patriotic fervour or World War II into the popular national myth about the 'vastness' of the 'land,' the 'rich diversity' of the 'people.'[331] He realized that he would not discover that 'America' in New York or Harvard. That is why he chose "an ordinary college in a pretty little town in a beautiful farming valley in central Pennsylvania."[332] Then he graduated from the University of Chicago where he was appointed to teach.

In 1958, his first book of collected stories, *Goodbye, Columbus* was accepted for publication; a good event for Roth that instigated him to quit his job and move to Manhattan. He spent a quite unhappy six months there for he never liked the literary scene or the publishing world. He moved between a number of places including Rome, London, Iowa City, Princeton and New York before he took up residence in the countryside.

Having lived in different places, Roth became more acquainted with the situation of the Jew in different locations. He is a writer who is concerned with the predicaments of Jews but at the same time he recognizes himself as an American writer. Despite his explorations in Jewish thoughts and problems, he treats all that within an American environment. But Roth has his own style and perspective which has not been very acceptable for many Jews. A lot of his work received harsh Jewish criticism and throughout his life he was occasionally charged with the worst practice that a Jew might be stigmatised with: anti-Semitism.

In his *Reading Myself and Others* (1975), Roth says that through his work and also his life, he never tries to detach himself from the world which he belongs to. He states that "[t]he affinities that I continue to feel toward the forces that first shaped me, having withstood to the degree that they have the assault of imagination and the test of sustained psychoanalysis,… would seem by now to be here to stay."[333] About being a Jew, Roth says that he considers

[330] Alan Finkielkraut. "The Ghosts of Roth" in George J. Searles (ed.) *Conversation with Philip Roth.* (London: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), p. 125.
[331] Alan Finkielkraut. "The Ghosts of Roth" p. 126.
[332] Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 105.
[333] Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 9.

himself lucky to be born a Jew. He adds, "It's a complicated, interesting, morally demanding, and very singular experience, and I like that. I find myself in the historic predicament of being Jewish, with all its implications."[334]

Roth has been a controversial writer according to many commentators. Some of them find him excellent in manipulating the Jewish situation, and others accuse him of 'self-hatred'. They find his characters, especially those who are writers to be a close depiction of himself. His characters "face the dilemma of choosing between two antithetical styles of personality and narrative expression: that of the polished, high-minded, restrained, and responsible intellectual, whom he calls 'the nice Jewish boy' and that of the brash, crude, and rebellious iconoclast, whom he dubs 'the Jew boy'."[335] In a similar vein, Debra Shostak says that "since his invention of Nathan Zuckerman, Roth has encouraged readers to interpret the narrating voice of his fiction as a self-revealing 'I,' a Roth surrogate who, by the time of *Deception* and *Operation Shylock*, is no longer a surrogate but is "Roth" himself."[336]

Roth is similar in his approach to many of his Jewish literary contemporaries. "He is wrestling metaphorically with the lessons of Jewish history and the issues besetting the Jewish people today, especially as these issues are embodied by the horrors of the Holocaust and in the hopes engendered by the beleaguered State of Israel."[337] Roth is trying to answer the question of what it means to be a Jew throughout the warring ideologies of the twentieth century as well as the twenty-first. His works reflect "Jewishness as a problem, as a burden, as a source of strength, and, always, as a source of laughter. The laughter is generated by attempts to deny one's Jewishness, by attempts to affirm it, and even by attempts to elect Jewishness."[338] Whatever might be the case, Roth chooses to be satiric despite all the anti-Semitic accusations. His criticism of the weaknesses and shortcomings of a Jewish community can be taken as offensive but its intention is to reform. Roth says about the traditional process of defining a Jew:

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[334] Ibid, p. 17-18.
[335] Peter Cooper, *Philip Roth*, quoted in Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel (eds.) *Turning Up the Flame: Philip Roth's Later Novels* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 25.
[336] Debra Shostak, "Philip Roth's Fiction of Self Exposure" in Halio and Siegel, p. 31.

[337] Ben Siegel, "Introduction: Reading Philip Roth: Facts and Fancy, Fiction and Autobiography—A Brief Overview" in Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel, p. 26.

[338] Elaine B. Safer, *Mocking the Age: the Later Novels of Philip Roth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 3.

> I had simultaneously been surrounded from birth with a *definition* of the Jew of such stunning emotional and historical proportions that I couldn't but be enveloped by it, contrary though it was to my own experience. This was the definition of the Jew as sufferer, the Jew as an object of ridicule, disgust, scorn, contempt, derision, of every heinous form of persecution and brutality, including murder. If the definition was not supported by my own experience, it surely was by the experience of my grandparents and their forbears, and by the experience of our European contemporaries.[339]

Accordingly, Roth, motivated by a desire to change that definition or the distorted image, prefers to adopt the satirical style and be harsh in his critique of his own community. *Goodbye Columbus* (1959), *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), as well as the postmodern works that tackled the invention of the character of Nathan Zuckerman are all comic and satiric. It is not only some literary critics who were not happy with these works but even some rabbis have expressed their indignation in essays they wrote in newspapers or speeches they gave in synagogues. Asher Z. Milbauer and Donald G. Watson, in their interview with Roth for their book *Reading Philip Roth* (1985), have related an example of how some Jewish commentators used to receive his work. In an Israeli newspaper, a Jewish scholar in mysticism Gershom Scholem published an attack on *Portnoy's Complaint.* He states that it is "the Jews who would pay the price for the impertinence of that novel". Roth replies that time has proved that Scholem was wrong because "more than fifteen years had passed since the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint* and not a single Jew had paid for the book anything other than few dollars it cost in the bookstore." A professor who is a friend of Roth replied, "Not yet, … the Gentiles will make use of it when the time is right."[340]

Roth expresses his understanding concerning the position of his Jewish critics. In an interview, Alain Finlielkraut asks him about what makes writing about Jews so problematic. To this question, Roth says,

> What makes it problematical is that Jews who register strong objections to what they see as damaging fictional portrayals of Jews are not necessarily philistine or

[339] Alain Finlielkraut, "Interview with *Le Nouvel Observateur*" in Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 107.

[340] Asher Z. Milbauer and Donald G. Watson, "Interview on Zuckerman" in Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 153.

> paranoid… They don't want books that will give comfort to anti-Semites or confirm anti-Semitic stereotypes. They don't want books that will wound the feelings of Jews already victimized, if not by anti-Semitic persecution in one form or another, by the distaste for Jews still endemic in pockets of our society. They don't want books that offend Jewish self-esteem and that do little, if anything, to increase the prestige of Jews in the non-Jewish world.[341]

Thus, despite the fact that he can give some excuse to his critics, at the same time he does not believe that keeping silent about follies and weaknesses would be of any help in the endeavour to reform the situation of Jews in the diaspora. No matter how much he hates anti-Semitism, "however enraged I may be when faced with the slightest real manifestation of it, however much I might wish to console its victims, my job in a work of fiction is not to offer consolation to Jewish sufferers or to mount an attack upon their persecutors or to make the Jewish case to the undecided."[342] His job is to point out the problems and comment on them. He believes that if there is a barrier between prejudice and persecution which is about to collapse as happened in Germany under the Nazis, then we need to strengthen it. Not by making Jews invisible or by putting on a good face, but by presenting "the intricacies and impossibilities of Jewish lives." He adds that "[t]he solution is not to convince people to like Jews so as not to want to kill them; it is to let them know that they cannot kill them even if they despise them."[343] In *The Counterlife*, we can see how Roth expresses his loathing of anti-Semitism and how he manipulates it within the paradigm of assimilation. His treatment of this theme explains his willingness to give credit to diasporic life but with a confirmation of one's own Jewishness.

In *American Pastoral* (1997), *I Married a Communist* (1998), *The Human Stain* (2000), and *The Dying Animal* (2001), Roth's tone becomes darker and constitutes features of socio-political concerns. The humour that he relies on turns more solemn and grave with connotations of the absurd and the tragic. His later work reflects more exploration of universal issues.[344]

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[341] Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 108-109.

[342] Ibid., p. 109.

[343] Philip Roth, "Writing About Jews" in Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 106-207.

[344] Elaine B. Safer, *Mocking the Age: the Later Novels of Philip Roth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 2.

Roth's novel, *The Plot Against America* (2004) manifests a different treatment of history by fictionalizing it through the years from 1940 till 1942. "The novel dramatizes the "farcical edge of suffering" for American Jews during the presidency of the fascist Charles Lindbergh[345], who wins the election over Franklin Delano Roosvelt in 1940."[346] During the 1930s and 1940s, Lindbergh was a popular American political and social figure. He was well known for his isolationism and by his racist attitude toward Jews. His speeches, diaries and letters reflected his being a white supremacist. Roth chooses this personality to create his fictional world in this novel "where I wanted America's Jews to feel the pressure of a genuine widespread anti-Semitic threat not merely at the personal level but as a pervasive, insidious, native menace capable of emerging anywhere."[347]

The aim behind *The Plot Against America* is to show that America is different. Anti-Semitism there will not contribute to another Holocaust. Because in that time, i. e. during the 1930s and 1940s, when the hatred of Jews was being stated publically, in America it never mounted to such atrocities that previously prevailed in Europe. Roth says, "[a]t the moment when it should have happened, when there were many of the seeds for its happening, when it well might have happened, it did not happen. And the Jews here have become all they became *because* it did not happen."[348] He asserts that this novel is never been intended to warn Jews that danger is coming, but rather it is an exploration of possibilities in the past. It is only a historical presumption.[349] Thus, Roth does not condemn diaspora life at all. His works try to lessen the anxiety of American Jews who give themselves to the Zionist propaganda of diaspora defamation.

1.1.***The Counterlife* (1986)**

The 'pastoral' is a theme that can be detected in Roth's *The Counterlife* in which Zuckerman tries to define "the idea of pastoral as the *dream* of a unified, unconflicted world where each person is free to be himself."[350] Yet that dream is shattered every time. In each

[345] Charles Augustus Lindbergh (1902 – 1974) an American aviator, author, inventor, military officer, explorer, and environmental activist.

[346] Elaine B. Safer, *Mocking the Age: the Later Novels of Philip Roth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 3.

[347] Philip Roth, "My Uchronia" in Philip Roth *Why Write: Collected Nonfiction* 1960-2013 (New York: Library Classics of the United States, Inc., 2017) p. 339.
[348] Ibid., p. 342.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Bonnie Lyons, "Philip Roth's American Tragedies" in Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel, p. 127.

chapter we encounter a type of a solution to some predicament that a Jew might face in the diaspora and in each chapter we see this solution fails. Roth's rejection of this pastoral dream "is based on the painful truth that it 'cannot admit contradiction or conflict' and is therefore no more than a dream of the return to the womb and a flight from history."[351] Similarly, Andrew Gordon states that any pastoral must contain an element of utopian desires. He explains the contradictory chapters of *The Counterlife* as referring to Roth's struggle "against the persistent appeal of pastoral fantasies of innocence."[352] He infers that Roth has severely critiqued the myths of Zionism, and Christendom, (namely, Aliyah to Israel as well as assimilation) and considered them as dreams of utopia. Gordon states that Roth "rejects all these as fantasies of innocence, retreats to the womb."[353]

In *The Counterlife*, Roth refers to pastoralism as a "beautiful state of innocent prehistory"[354] which if one forgets about European history, s/he can perceive of "a mythic United States as a tabula rasa where individuals are able to reinvent themselves endlessly." Roth's later work represents the United States as a factual historical locus, an 'anti-pastoral' arena in which Roth's characters are influenced by history.[355] Being outside those historical forces is a dream or a myth that can be entertained by the diasporans but never really attained.

The Counterlife's mode of narration changes from realism to postmodernism. Roth's playful plot and the metafiction he used "comes into direct contrast with the 'deadly seriousness' of such issues as the meaning of the Jewish self, the importance of Israel in each Jew's struggle for identity, and the connection between the self and the imagined or counterself."[356] Roth is presenting a fantasy of possible events rather than events that really happened within a realistic mode. Nevertheless, his narration reflects a realistic account of place, time and relationships. Readers might find themselves disoriented by the fantasy-realism mode of storytelling. The comic and the tragic are characterizing that mode. Thus, this type of story manipulation is suitable for tackling the dilemma of the migrant/diasporic Jew while in-

[351] Ibid.
[352] Andrew Gordon "The Critique of Utopia in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* and *American Pastoral*" in Jay L. Halio and Ben Siegel, p. 151.

[353] Ibid., p. 152.
[354] Philip Roth, *The Counterlife*, (London: Vintage and Penguin Random House, 2016) p. 323. All subsequent quotations will be to this edition.
[355] Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 184.

[356] Elaine B. Safer, p. 24.

between the Zionist dream of the homeland and the exile/diaspora life. Nathan Zuckerman, the protagonist, is trying to envision both situations by projecting a certain life in each chapter of his novel. He explores life in the diaspora as well as that of the supposed 'homeland' in Israel. He seems to question the validity of each type of life and the possibility of success/failure if one adopts any one of them. Therefore, this fantasy-realism mode of storytelling facilitates this interrogation and makes it comprehensive when details of the issues are scrutinized.

The Counterlife (1986), and *Operation Shylock* (1993) are usually regarded as 'Israel-centered novels'. They are classified "as 'experimental' novels that destabilize the American diasporic experience in relation to a national centre." Roth mischievously describes *Operation Shylock* as a 'nonfictional treatment' rather than a 'Zuckerman sequel to *The Counterlife'*.[357] Bryan Cheyette points out that the diaspora which is depicted by Roth has been seen as

> a tension between the location of 'the real' in the state of Israel and the 'diasporic lure of the imagination' where narrative is unbounded. In this reading, Roth is trapped in an endless dialectic between Zion and exile, mimesis and fiction, with his doubleness always excessive and therefore never quite reduced to a centre/periphery model of diaspora. Roth, at his most risk-taking, refuses such conventional dualities, as can be seen at the end of *The Counterlife* when he defines Nathan's predicament as being 'a Jew among Gentiles and a Gentile among Jews' (Roth 1986: 324) At its most disconcerting, his diasporism is disruptive rather than dialectical.[358]

The diaspora situation presented in *The Counterlife* is a confused one. The types of lives that the work talks about are being imagined by many Jewish Americans; migration to Israel as well as assimilation and forgetting about the Jewish past of anti-Semitism. Neither type flourishes according to the plot of the novel. The environment of Israel does not reflect a space where one can be safe and progressing. Bigotry, violence and hatred seem to suffocate the places visited by Zuckerman, the protagonist. Roth mentions in an interview his opinion of Israel as a place to live in. He says that Jewish Americans should not stop directing criticism against themselves because Israel has become invincible. On the contrary, they should practice self-censorship as they become aware of "Israel as an openly discordant, divisive society with conflicting political goals and a self-questioning conscience, a Jewish society that makes no effort to conceal its

[357] Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History*, p. 166.
[358] Ibid.

imperfections from itself and that couldn't conceal them from the world if it wanted to."[359] In an interview conducted by Roth with the Israeli novelist and Holocaust survivor, Aharon Appelfeld, in 1988, the latter says, that

> Israel is full of drama from morning to night, and there are people who are overcome by that drama to the point of inebriation. The frenetic activity isn't only the result of pressure from the outside. Jewish restlessness contributes its part. Everything is buzzing here and dense. There is a lot of talk, the controversies rage. The Jewish shtetl has not disappeared.[360]

Roth does not approve of the position of some Israeli or Zionist scholars concerning the diaspora and their 'exile' label that they have given to it. He also criticises the Israeli publicity saying that "certainly one effect of unashamed Israeli self-divulging has been to lead American Jews to associate a whole spectrum of behavior with which they themselves may have preferred not to be publicly identified, with people perceived as nothing if *not* Jews."[361]

The critic Harold Bloom has included nine Roth novels in his *The Western Canon* (1994) a matter that indicates that Roth's work cannot be judged as a Jewish property only. It has its own influence on the American life in general as well. In 2001, *Time* magazine selected Roth as 'America's Best Novelist' and in 2005, six novels by Roth were selected by many prominent writers, critics and editors to be included in the *New York Times* list of best publications in the field of American fiction in the past 25 years. In 2011 and at a ceremony at the White House, President Obama handed Roth a National Humanities Medal for distinguished contribution to American Letters.[362] About America he says,

> America allows me the greatest possible freedom to practice my vocation. America has the only literary audience that I can ever imagine taking any sustained pleasure in my fiction. America is the place I know best in the world. It's the *only* place I know in the world. My consciousness and my language were shaped by America.[363]

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[359] Asher Z. Milbauer and Donald G. Watson, "Interview on Zuckerman" in Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 154.

[360] Philip Roth, "Aharon Appelfeld" in Philip Roth *Why Write: Collected Nonfiction 1960-2013*, p. 210.
[361] Asher Z. Milbauer and Donald G. Watson, "Interview on Zuckerman", p. 154.
[362] Bryan Cheyette, *Diasporas of the Mind: Jewish and Postcolonial Writing and the Nightmare of History*, p. 162.

[363] Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (London: Vintage, 2016) p. 110.

1.2.Synopsis

The novel comprises five chapters. Each chapter presents a variation of the 'in-between' situation that American Jews might find themselves in. The text tackles the cultural identity dilemma resulting from an ambivalence and confusion closely connected to the conceptualization of Israel and the notion of exile which are significant for Zionist propaganda. Nathan Zuckerman, an American Jew and a writer, finds himself torn between different positions, each promises to give a solution to the dilemma of identity; he has to choose one of them. The return to a 'homeland' is confined now to the *Aliyah* to Israel, that every Jew should consider if s/he is an authentic Jew according to many Israeli and Zionist scholars. Assimilation is the other solution which is also embraced by many Jews. In each abode, Roth finds a problematization for the Jewish identity. Therefore, the dilemma cannot be resolved by either of them.

Chapter One, "Basel", opens with an extract from the diary of a Jewish novelist Nathan Zuckerman. Nathan talks about his brother, Henry Zuckerman, a married man with three children and a well-to-do suburban dentist. His life can be considered successful according to the American standards of success as he is leading a thriving career and has an assimilated Jewish family. Despite the apparent happiness that Henry might enjoy, he is having an affair with his assistant Wendy. However, he has developed a serious heart condition, and the medication he takes for that has rendered him impotent. Consequently, he could not maintain his affair with Wendy. He decides to go through a life-threatening operation. Nathan tries to convince him that this decision is risky and reckless but the latter insists that he has no choice but to do it. Later on, Henry dies at the operation table. At the funeral, his wife Carol delivers eulogy in which she claims that Henry has decided to take the operation for her sake. Nathan cannot believe her declaration and he is perplexed by his brother's wish to risk his life in order to maintain his middle-class existence with all its obligations.

Chapter Two, "Judea", changes the course of events into another direction. Henry survives the operation. But he suffers from depression afterwards. He starts to consider the life he is leading in the US, i.e. the diasporic condition he is grappling with everyday in his mind. Suddenly and without hesitation, Henry leaves everything and migrates to and live in a West Bank settlement. Confused by his conduct, Carol, his wife, sends Nathan to Israel to persuade him to return to his family. In Israel, Nathan comes across a variety of Jews with different perspectives about homeland and diaspora. Henry and other Israelis at his settlement accuse Nathan of betraying his fellow Jews. Nathan meets the settlement's charismatic leader, Mr.

Lippman who makes it clear that violence and power are the only way a Jew can follow to confront the Gentile world and to avoid another Holocaust. Lippman seems to be a father-like figure whose ideology is much respected in that Israeli community. Nathan cannot find himself at ease there and certainly he is not convinced by the violent approach to express Jewishness.

Chapter Three, "Aloft", presents a situation Nathan has to face while traveling from Israel to London by plane where he encounters Jimmy, an imagined character who symbolizes the confused condition that Nathan is dealing with. Jimmy confides to Nathan his notion of forgetting which he intends to confront all Jews with as a solution for their problems. This chapter reflects the inner conflict of an American Jew who ponders detachment from the Jewish past and learning how to forget about anti-Semitism and the violence practiced against Jews in previous times. He is eager to discard a subconscious fear that plagues his life and ready to begin from scratch. Yet, the feeling of guilt towards all those who perished in those pogroms does not allow him to move on. Jimmy, who has smuggled a gun and a grenade onto the plane, is finally discovered and arrested by the security officials. They also arrest Nathan, whom they suspect to be Jimmy's accomplice. Nathan feels humiliated by the interrogation in which he is accused of treason as he is not supporting the cause of Israel in his writing and actions.

Chapter Four, "Gloucestershire", represents another counterlife in the novel. In this part, Nathan turns out to be the ill brother with a heart condition instead of Henry. Nathan is doing well with the medication in the beginning. However, he finds himself getting attracted gradually to Maria, an English expatriate who lives upstairs with her daughter and diplomat husband. They start an affair and consequently Nathan decides to have an operation. Maria pleads with him not to take such a risky step for her. Nathan is determined to do it anyway. He explains to her that this operation will help him achieve his dream to settle down as a family man, by marrying Maria, adopting her daughter, and moving to the United Kingdom. Sadly enough, he does not survive the operation.

Chapter five, "Christendom", presents a new counterlife. Here we find Nathan and Maria have become a married couple. Nathan's dream of being a family man comes true. He and Maria move to England. Once he meets her family, he realizes that Maria's mother and sister are anti-Semites. Maria's sister argues with him about his intentions behind marrying a young and non-Jewish woman like Maria. Nathan starts to feel worried about the future of their marriage. Moreover, he comes to be confronted with another anti-Semitic situation while he and Maria are having dinner at a restaurant in London. Then, Nathan expresses his indignation concerning the intolerance he has witnessed in England and specifically in Maria's family

members. Maria becomes annoyed by his complaint and accuses him of being oversensitive. The novel ends with Nathan's and Maria's broken marriage.

2. In-Between Geographical places

Roth's *The Counterlife* depicts American Jews in an abnormal diasporic situation. Nathan Zuckerman is the narrator of the story and in the same time he can be considered as Roth's mouthpiece[364]. He is not only the narrator but also is supposed to be the story's writer. The novel is told in the form of fragments that tell the stories of Nathan and his brother Henry. The meta-fiction is used to reflect on the main issue of the novel which is that of identity dilemma. We as readers are confronted with troubled selves that are torn between places and wandering across three continents attempting to find a normal, legitimate and secure place where the self can be in accordance with the environment.

The three continents are Asia where Israel is located; Europe where Switzerland and England serve as a stimulus to reflect on the tragic history of anti-Semitism; and America where American Jews attempt to find security, yet nevertheless live an unfulfilled life. The characters experience an unsatisfied subjectivity condition as Roth shows us through the course of his novel. The diasporic condition that he depicts is problematic. It demands resolution but Roth leaves the situation without a remedy. The novel tries to illustrate the models of cultural identity that the diasporic situation generates for American Jews. It provides a conceptualization of the type of identity, difference and belongingness that the American Jew grapples with while he/she lives in America. Cultural identity is ideally composed of a number of elements like "essential unity, primordial oneness, indivisibility and sameness."[365] The American Jewish identity has to work with these elements while adapting to the relations of power and difference in the host country.

Stuart Hall states: "Essentially, it is assumed that cultural identity is fixed by birth, part of nature, imprinted through kinship and lineage in the genes, constitutive of our innermost selves. It is impermeable to something as 'worldly', secular and superficial as temporarily moving one's place of residence".[366] He adds that people might be forced to migrate due to numerous reasons stemming from the legacies of empire and hence they are dispersed, yet "each

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[364] A number of scholars consider Nathan Zucherman as the representative of Roth. Sanford Pinsker in his review of Roth's *The Facts*, states that Zuckerman is Roth's muse and mouthpiece. See "The Odyssey of a Writer: Rethinking Philip Roth", *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (Fall 1989): pp. 231-233. ; Ruth Franklin also considers Zuckerman as Roth's mouthpiece in her article, "Permanent Grouping", published in October 8, 2007, in *The New Republic magazine*, https://newrepublic.com/article/64062/permanent-groping

[365] Stuart Hall, "Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad" in *Small Axe* 6, September 1999, p. 3

[366] Ibid.

dissemination carries with it the promise of the redemptive return."[367] In the case of Jews, the dispersal is deeply connected with history and with Biblical beliefs.

William Safran states that the concept of diaspora can be applied to expatriate minority communities. Those community members might share certain features which he delineates as:

> 1)they or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral', or foreign regions; 2)they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4)they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.[368]

The word 'diaspora' was first derived from the modern history of the Jewish people, "whose fate in Holocaust — one of the few world-historical events comparable in barbarity to that of modern slavery — is well known"[369]. Similarly, William Safran states, that "the Diaspora had a very specific meaning: the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion."[370] The event of the Holocaust plays a role in the dispersal of the Jews in the 20th century, thus its trauma has had a great effect on the collective consciousness of Jews despite the fact that they differ in their individual response to it. This horrific dispersal intensifies the existence of Jewish history in the Jewish imagination and revives the metaphor of the 'return' to

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[367] Ibid.
[368] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring, 1991, p. 84.
[369] Hall, p. 4.
[370] Safran, p. 84.

the 'Promised Land'[371]. The Promised Land mostly signifies freedom, hope and redemption in the collective imagination of Jews. Stuart Hall states, "In this metaphor, history — which is open to freedom because it is contingent — is represented as teleological and redemptive: circling back to the restoration of its originary moment, healing all rupture, repairing every violent breach through this return."[372] He adds that:

> It is, of course, a closed conception of 'tribe', diaspora and homeland. To have a cultural identity in this sense is to be primordially in touch with an unchanging essential core, which is timeless, binding future and present to past in an unbroken line. This umbilical cord is what we call 'tradition', the test of which is its truth to its origins, its self-presence to itself, its 'authenticity'. It is of course, a myth — with all the real power that our governing myths carry to shape our 'imaginaries', influence our actions, give meaning to our lives and make sense of our history.[373]

In the light of this explanation of the diasporic situation, the trope of 'return' sounds essential for the formation of the diasporic Jewish identity. The 'return' prospect is anchored within a long line of tradition and history. Avoiding this 'return' requires the Jew to be secular or not conforming to traditional beliefs. A Jew might choose to forget about the prospect of 'return' or any sort of obligations relating to his/her Jewish origin; instead, he/she might embrace assimilation like many other diasporans. Otherwise, it keeps recurring in the diasporic imagination. Migrating to America can signify a second birth for the immigrant, especially in the beginning of his/her migration experience, however, "this 'second birth' …creates deeply ambivalent attitudes towards issues of identity and place, as if donning the attire, language and other more or less subtle cultural accoutrements of place definitively shape personhood."[374] Victoria Aaron states that "Literature by and about Jewish immigrants reveals a deep ambivalence towards America, this 'new world', itself a place of extremes: prosperity and

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[371] The 'Promised Land' or 'The Land of Milk and Honey' is the land which, according to the Torah is promised and subsequently given by God to Abraham and his descendants. This Land is supposed to encompass the territory from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates river in Mesopotamia. (See Exodus 23:31) Zionism ardently depends on the concept of the 'Promised Land' to argue for what it claims to be the right of Jews to establish their 'national homeland' on that specific land mentioned in the Torah.

[372] Hall, p. 4.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Victoria Aarons. "The Making of American Jewish Identities in Postwar American Fiction" in David Brauner and Axel Stahler. *The Edinburgh Companion to Modern Jewish Fiction*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) p. 46.

poverty, mobility and stagnation, promise and disenchantment. Such uncertainty is often articulated by literal and metaphorical references to collisions of disparate worlds."[375] This description of the 'New World' applies to the situation portrayed by Roth in *The Counterlife*. In this novel, we find a search for a place in which the self can find rest. The 'return' is always there in the characters' minds though in some moments during the narrative they tend to deny it. They are confused about where is the legitimate place to which they belong; should this 'return' be to Israel or to Europe? Is America after all a better place? These are questions implicitly embodied within the narrative and Roth is determined not to answer them. He leaves the reader confused as the situation that he depicts is really confusing.

According to Roth, fiction is a ground where a multidimensional type of dialogue manifests itself to reflect one person in different shoes. "The writer talks to himself, through a diverse population of fictive avatars, in order to pry out the many selves he inhabits and embraces and thus to sketch out a host of counterlives."[376] His dialogical method shows very clearly his interest in self-critique. His early work, *Portnoy's Complaint*, best known for its notoriety, "became an icon of cultural transgression in the early 1970s for its graphic description of polymorphous sex."[377]

This multidimensional dialogue is evident in *The Counterlife* (1986), in which the chapters keep confusing the reader about who is who. The reader wanders who is exactly impotent? Is it Nathan Zuckerman or his brother, Henry? Is it Henry who dies or Nathan? Is it Henry who travels to Israel to establish a new authentic Jewish life, or it is Nathan who desires to do so? Maria is another enigma with whom we should grapple. Who of the brothers is involved with her actually? "The significant countertextual effect here is that the reader is not directed toward a "real" story that renders the other versions secondary fantasies."[378]

With the development of Roth's work in fiction-making, Nathan Zuckerman starts to appear in a number of his novels. Some critics recognize him as Roth's alter-ego[379]. He appears in *My Life as a Man* as Peter Tarnopol's alter-ego, then in the *Zuckerman Bound* (1985)

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[375] Ibid.
[376] Debra Shostak, *Philip Roth— Countertexts, Counterlives*. (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004) p. 3.
[377] Ibid., p. 4.
[378] Ibid., p. 6.
[379] Critics like John Mullan recognized Nathan Zuckerman as Roth's alter ego in his essay entitled *Knowing Me, Knowing You*, published in *The Guardian* in 2004. Josh Rubin's *The Wandering Jew* also refers to Zuckerman as an alter ego for Roth. Harlan Coben uses the same term in his review *The Ghost Writer by Philip Roth, A Book of a Lifetime*, published in 2014 in *The Independent*.

series[380] and in *The Counterlife*, as Roth's alter-ego. In Roth's autobiography, *The Facts*, he takes the role of a commentator.[381]

In this type of world, that is, America, Roth represents the experience of Jews in the diaspora as 'abnormal'; specifically, Jews who choose to assimilate completely. So the 'diasporic abnormality' which is severely criticized by some Jewish scholars is closely connected to the problem of assimilation. The two main characters, Nathan and Henry, live a typical successful life in America apparently. In the first chapter, Henry is a successful dentist, with a wife and three children. Yet, he also has a mistress who works as his assistant in his clinic. The inner conflict begins when Henry starts to take medication to treat some heart disease issues. The medication causes Henry sexual impotence, a condition which spoils his relationship with his mistress. Henry spends a lot of time trying to find a solution to this problem and he is ready to do anything to regain his sexual potency. He decides to have an open heart operation which finally ends his life.

Throughout Henry's life in this chapter we find no reference to anything relating to his Jewish origin or identity. He is only a Jew in a genealogical sense, but not Jewish in the ethnic or religious senses. He is a pleasure-seeking kind of a person. Thus he risks his life to regain that pleasurable life. The portrayal of Henry as an impotent man signifies weakness on the symbolic level. The heart disease signifies an inner crisis that can relate to his ethnic identity. He seems an assimilated Jew with no higher aims for his fellow Jews in America or in the world in general. Timothy Parish comments about Roth's characters:

> if Roth's Jews are "American" in the way that they conceive the fluidity of their cultural identity, they are also "American" in their insistence that without a prior ethnic cultural identity with which to invent themselves they would have no identity at all. Roth's novels can be read as a search to locate some essential or authentic Jewish self and as an attempt to discover, or create, a self that need not be bound by any social or cultural constraints.[382]

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[380] A collection of four novels. They are the trilogy of *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), and the epilogue, *The Prague Orgy* (1985). The American Trilogy is also considered Zuckerman books. They are *The Amercian Pastoral* (1997), *I married a Communist* (1998), and *The Human Stain* (2000).

[381] Shostak, p. 10.

[382] Timothy Parrish, "Roth and Ethnic Identity" *The Cambridge Companion to Philip Roth*, Timothy Parrish (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 130.

Therefore, choosing to discard his ethnicity, Henry is not portrayed as having a fulfilled life in America. He is neither presented as an American nor as a Jew. He is characterized as a man who is leading a double life, unhappy at home, confused about his identity and choices in life. Roth does not let him survive the operation in the first chapter where he dies on the operation table. His life has no importance as it has not connected with Jewish continuity. He is indifferent and uncaring about Jewish history and suffering. Parrish states that :"Roth writes not so much to define himself either as a Jew or as an American but to locate the point at which one's self and the history that makes one's self possible intersect. Without a sense of his own Jewishness, Roth would have no obvious context out of which to write."[383] Henry in the chapter entitled "Basel" is disconnected from his Jewishness; he has no history to connect to. That is why Henry dies in the first chapter. But what if the situation was different for Henry? What if he had that burden inside him buried deep inside his subconscious? His death can be interpreted as symbolic rather than actual. The title of the chapter, "Basel" is an important signifier in the Jewish imagination. Basel is a city in Switzerland where the inaugural congress of the Zionist organization was held in 1897. Throughout the chapter, Henry recalls his relationship with a European lady, Maria, with whom he planned to elope to Basel where they finally can be together and hence can be happy. This inclination to escape can refer to Henry's desire to "return" to the "womb" which is represented here by Basel, the place where the concept of Israel as a homeland was first conceived. Romantic happiness in Basel can refer to the desire of resting in the imagined 'Homeland'.

In the second chapter of the novel, entitled "Judea", a fragment chapter which is supposed to be written by Nathan Zuckerman, Henry is alive again. He survives the open heart operation. However, he abandons his family, his mistress—for the sake of whom he decides to do the operation in the first place—and also his profitable job in America. He 'returns' to Israel. Roth uses the trope of 'return' to suggest that the 'return' to Israel is an archetype in the Jewish consciousness. The kind of life that Henry adopts in Israel is the kind of life that many Jews ponder about while they still live in the US.

3. America: Assimilated or Authentic Jewishness

One of the major problems facing American Jews of this time is "how to discover an identity that is *authentic*, both in the general sense of genuineness and in the existential sense of

[383] Ibid., p. 131.

a subjectivity that is not the construction of the other"[384] Neil Lazarus states "[d]espite the high level of anti-Semitism in Europe in the last half a century, the biggest threat to Jewry, and the biggest challenge to Jewish identity, is not anti-Semitism but assimilation."[385] Grasping Zionism becomes a means to fight against assimilation. Historian David Cesarani states that Zionism is 'an anti-assimilationist ideology, a way of affirming Jewish identity in a modern, viable form. In this sense, Zionism was a vehicle for Jewish ethnicity before ethnicity had been invented."[386]

It can be assumed that America achieves some modification on the personality of the Jew; it provides a space for the Jew to negotiate his/her identity freely. In doing so, it can effect the 'National Home' of the early Zionist dream. However, it can do that through emphasizing two elements of that dream, that are acculturation and normality.[387] Amos Elon pointed out that early Zionists advocated the need for 'assimilation on a collective basis'. They advised that Jews should become like all other peoples. According to them, assimilation does not mean that one 'ceased to be oneself'. When the Jew assimilates, s/he remains 'authentic'. Therefore, 'acculturation' is a good term to describe the Jewish diasporic condition that they call for. Jews should not relinquish their 'historical or ethnic identity', rather, they should just cast aside the 'religious identity'. Assimilation means, says Elon, to "exchange the absolute uniqueness of 'a people that dwelleth alone' for the more relative or 'normal' difference that existed between Frenchmen and Germans, or between Italians and Danes"[388]

Thus, 'normality' has become an important concept that Jews are advised to embrace in order to adapt to the new requirements of the modern age. Jewish people should be expected to become a more 'normal' people.[389] Only then, can they "enjoy the benefits of a national identity without the disruption, harassment, and persecution that had marked their lives in exile. And at the same time, they would know and appreciate themselves as Jews." [390] Normality in this context can be explained by terms like hybridity; to be 'normal', diasporan or migrant Jews should find a third space in the host country in order to engage with the mainstream as well as

[384] Shostak, p. 110.
[385] Neil Lazarus, "The Jewish Addiction" Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev (eds.) *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity* (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2010) p. 26.

[386] David Ceasarani, "One hundred Years of Zionism in England" *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Israel and Jewish-Christian Dialogue (Spring 92) p. 43.
[387] Jeffrey Robin-Dorsky, "Philip Roth and American Jewish Identity: The Question of Authenticity" Harold Bloom (ed), Bloom's *Modern Critical Views: Philip Roth* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003) p. 208.
[388] Amos Elon, "Israel and the End of Zionism." *New York Review of Books*, 19 December 1996, p. 28.
[389] Ibid, p. 28.
[390] Robin-Dorsky, p. 208.

their own cultural traditions. Communities with exclusive tendencies or assimilation ones are not valid anymore; they are comprehended to prevent the Jewish creativity and prosperity in the diaspora.

In the light of this view, the text has shown what it means to be an 'abnormal' Jew in the diaspora. Depiction of the assimilated American Jews in chapter one, entitled 'Basel', reflects a critique of a trivial and shallow mentality that approves of assimilation. There is nothing positive about the characters portrayed except Nathan's father and his grandparents. Roth shows them as hard-working people who had a vision and desire to be 'normal'. But the other characters seem to be unfavourable and unfit. The first of these characters is his brother Henry.

In this chapter, the reader engages with Henry's problem of sexual impotency and heart disease. Roth wants to emphasize the 'abnormality' of the diasporic condition by showing Henry's reactions as illogical. He blames his wife, Carol, for his impotency:

> It was she. He was sure of it. It was having to stay with her and be responsible to the children that had done it. Had he left Carol and their three kids to begin a new life in Switzerland, he would never have fallen ill. Stress, the doctors told him, was a major factor in heart disease, and giving up Maria was the unendurable stress that had brought it on him…It was the consequence of failing to find the ruthlessness to take what he wanted instead of capitulating to what he should do.[391] (Roth: 15)

Henry thinks that the disease is the result of being a dutiful father, husband and son. He desires to escape with his beloved Maria—a Swiss patient with whom he had a passionate affair ten years before the narrative starts— to Switzerland. Not doing so, he thinks, has been catastrophic for him. The very idea of escape which Henry ponders can illuminate his inner nonconformity. Nathan describes Henry as the best son and father. He never displeases his parents and always does his duties. He maintains his image of the 'normal' and 'conformist' on the surface level, but he yearns for another reality. He is married to a Jew, but he dreams of a passionate affair

[391] Philip Roth, *The Counterlife* (London: Vintage and Penguin Random House, 2016) p. 15. All subsequent quotations will be to this edition.

with a 'shiksa'[392] with whom he can escape to another place, in this case, Switzerland. The condition of 'normality' then is a fake one. It is pretended rather than genuine.

The three women that Henry is supposed to engage with— his wife Carol who is a Jew; his beloved Maria who is Swiss; and Wendy, his American clinic assistant— show his dilemma concerning places. Carol can symbolize his Jewishness that he neglects while he is in America. Maria can symbolize his dream of escape to Switzerland or to Europe, and Wendy symbolizes the purposeless assimilated life Henry is leading in America.

Nathan Zuckerman, the narrator and the supposed writer of the narrative, considers himself a nonconformist. He is always trying to choose his own way of life rather than accepting his parents' choices for him. His brother Henry is the opposite. He is the good son all the time. Nathan says "I, in their lore, am the reckless, freewheeling impulsive, to me they've assigned the role of family id, and he is the exemplary brother" (Roth: 19) So for Nathan to depict his brother in this situation shows that even a Jew who is striving to be correct all the time in fact suffers from pressures that causes him/her disease. The escape to Europe or the return to Israel are always there in the background of his/her imagination. The disease here can refer to his dilemma of being in-between Israel and diaspora and the anxiety stemming from it.

In America, Henry's life was detracted into Wendy's mouth. The image of the mouth is emphasized to assert the trivial, unhealthy life that Henry leads. The confusion that Henry suffers from is in fact a condition plaguing Nathan. At one point in the narrative, Nathan recognizes Wendy as very important for Henry to help him endure his life's pressures. He thinks, "Wendy is his freedom and his manhood." (Roth: 19) He could not give good advice to his brother. He did not satirize Henry's intentions and reasons for having the operation. He tells Henry:

> Contrary to what you thought, I was never so disdainful of the restrictions under which you flourished and the boundaries you observed as you were of the excessive liberties you imagined me taking. You confided in me because you believed I would understand Wendy's mouth—and you were right. It went way beyond the juicy pleasure. It was your drop of theatrical existence, your disorder, your escapade, your risk, your little daily insurrection against all your

[392] A non-Jewish woman.

> overwhelming virtues—debauching Wendy for twenty minutes a day, then home at night for the temporal satisfaction of ordinary family life. (Roth: 21)

In addition to Henry's impotency depicted by Roth, we have also Nathan's inability to think logically and give good advice to his brother. "The last thing Henry must have imagined was that Nathan would sit there and accept with a straight face, as justification for such a dangerous operation," (Roth: 34) Nathan as a writer tells us that he has satirized such 'maniac-making lust' in his book *Carnovsky*, yet, when time comes to give advice about it, he is unable to give it because he is also confused about what makes a normal life in America. Henry "had driven over from Jersey to confess to the mocking author the ridiculous absurdity of his dilemma, and instead he had been indulged by a solicitous brother who was unable any longer to give either advice or offense." (Roth: 34)

Henry's funeral is depicted by Nathan in a way that shows the 'abnormal' types of Jews that he finds annoying to him. He makes it clear that everything about this funeral is a fake. Appearances are emphasized more than real sadness. "Carol's mother went off with the girls to help Ellen settle for a second time on which of her good dresses was right to wear, Leslie returned to his room to buff his new boots again" (Roth: 23). Even the eulogy that Carol recites to commemorate Henry, is full of lies as she says that her husband insisted on having the operation in order to keep the intimacy of their relationship. Truth is lost; nothing is genuine there in that atmosphere.

Roth presents some characters in Henry's funeral. Through these characters, he satirizes once more the assimilated Jew's life in America. He asserts the artificiality that is connected with America and the life of Jews there. The elderly men that Nathan meets there are Shimmy Kirsch and Herbert Grossman. Shimmy Kirsch

> designated years ago by Nathan's father as the brother-in-law Neanderthal, and arguably the family's stupidest relative. But as he was the wealthiest in the family as well, one had to wonder if Shimmy's stupidity wasn't something of an asset; watching him one wondered if in fact the passion to live and the strength to prevail might not be, at their core, *quite stupid*." (Roth: 41)

For Nathan, this character embodies the traits of 'the life of Riley' that Henry denounces later on. He is described as a man who is only concerned about material gain. Nathan sets him in

comparison with his father who was ready to give up his life in order make his family survive in America. “For Zuckerman’s father, the responsible chiropodist, life had been a dogged climb up from the abyss of his immigrant father’s poverty, and not merely so as to improve his personal lot but eventually to rescue everyone as the family messiah.” (Roth: 41)

Therefore, it is clear that Roth’s narrative does not fully endorse the opinion that Jews in the diaspora are totally lost. Nathan still glorifies those who feel responsible for their fellow American Jews. Nevertheless, he finds them rare and not very effective as those who resemble Shimmy are many and one can find them among every group. Nathan classifies them as self-centred:

> Shimmy had never seen any need to so assiduously cleanse his behind. Not that he wishes necessarily to debase himself. All his steadfastness has gone into being what he’d been born and brought up to be—Shimmy Kirsch. No questions, no excuses, none of this who-am-I, what-am-I, where-am-I crap, not a grain of self mistrust or the slightest impulse toward spiritual distinction; rather, like so many of his generation out of Newark’s old Jewish slums, a man who breathed the spirit of opposition while remaining completely in accord with the ways and means of the earth (Roth: 41).

Among the groups that Roth criticizes are his Jewish critics, the ones who are so harsh on him when they review his books. Nathan, as Roth’s alter-ego, describes those critics as copies of ‘Shimmy’, who is self-centred and stupid.

> Back when Nathan had first fallen in love with the alphabet and was spelling his way to stardom at school, these Shimmys had already begun to make him uncertain as to whether the real oddball wasn’t going to be him, particularly when he heard of the notoriously unbrainy ways in which they successfully beat back their competitors. Unlike the admirable father who had taken the night-school path to professional dignity, these drearily banal and conventional Shimmys displayed all the ruthlessness of the renegade, their teeth ripping a chunk out of life’s raw rump, then dragging that around with them everywhere, all else paling in significance beside the bleeding flesh between their jaws. They had absolutely no wisdom; wholly self-saturated, entirely self-oblivious, they had nothing to go on but the most elemental manhood, yet on that alone they came pretty damn far (Roth: 42).

This depiction reflects how the spirit of competition has rendered those 'Shimmys' into animal-like creatures. "Their lack of all nuance or doubt, of an ordinary mortal's sense of futility or despair, made it tempting sometimes to consider them inhuman." (Roth: 42)

The other types of American Jews that Roth describes are those who are pessimistic and melancholic; diseased and helpless. The other relative of the family, Herbert Grossman, Zuckerman portrays as a melancholic man. Grossman says

> Everyone worries about Israel,…but you know what I worry about? Right here. America. Something terrible is happening right here. I feel it like in Poland in 1935. No. not anti-Semitism. That will come anyway. No. it's the crime, the lawlessness, people afraid…The young people are full of despair. The drugs are only despair. Nobody wants to feel that good if they aren't in deep despair (Roth: 44).

This image of the Jew reflects the image of the man in the Talmudic hat, that is, "the Jew who is weak, silenced, a dispossessed victim". A solution has been found to cure this passive image. Debra Shostak argues that the new Israeli Jew should be a model for the Jew in the Diaspora. As never before, "the new Jew whom the American Jew sees in the mirror must negotiate an identity in relation to the power that comes from self-determination. If consciousness of the Holocaust infuses the specter of Jewish victimization within the position of the American Jew, consciousness of Israel provides the contrary potential for force and position in the world." [393] According to Shostak, 'Israel' provides a sense of security for the American Jew. Roth tries to experiment on this idea when later in the novel he presents Israeli characters who are empowered only because they live in Israel. He seems to contradict this idea when he expresses his doubts concerning that empowerment. Still, Roth does not provide a solution for the weak and desperate type of American Jew.

The theme of death is manipulated again when Roth presents another successful American Jew. The fatal atmosphere that surrounds that community is foregrounded when Barry Shuskin explains to Nathan about the possibility of the return to life after death by the process of cryonics. "They have figured out how to freeze now without damage to the cells. Suspended animation. You don't die, you're put on hold, hopefully for a couple of hundreds of

[393] Shostak, p. 129-130.

years. Until science has solved the problem of thawing out. It's possible to be frozen, suspended, and then revitalized, all the broken parts repaired or replaced, and you're as good if not better than new" (Roth: 47). Again the idea of self-centeredness can explain the sense of anxiety about existence in this context. The American Jews portrayed here are concerned about 'living' so much. Reflecting on Shuskin's point of view, Nathan says, "*Is* that the future, once the freezer has replaced the grave? (Roth: 48). This refers to his doubt about the validity of assimilated Jewish life in the diaspora as he represents his characters in America as invalid and impotent. All of them lack power in every sense.

Through this depiction of the American Jews that Nathan gives, we can see how disappointed he is by that community. He focuses on the dark side of each one of them. This can reflect how the idea of 'exile' plays a role in shaping his ideas about the Jews and himself as they are far away from 'home'—in this context, this 'home' is Israel, or better to say, 'Judea' as Nathan has supposedly entitled the second chapter. The historical Judea or the modern state of Israel has been emphasized by Zionist scholars; it plays a role in initiating a confusion in the Jew's attitude to the notion of home. Thus, the novel suggests that the life of some Jews in the Diaspora is an abnormal one as it provides an enticing space for assimilation. However, it also poses a question concerning a possible migration to Israel. In case of finding a solution to the problem of assimilation, would Israel provide a remedy?

4. Israel: Symbolic and Actual Homeland

The concept of 'Exile' or 'Jews are in exile' has been introduced in the Jewish history since the collapse of the two Israelite kingdoms at the hands of the Assyrians in the 8th century, BCE. The northern kingdom Samaria came under the siege of the Assyrian king Shalamneser V in 724 BCE, and it fell to Sargon II in 722/721 BCE. Consequently, inhabitants of Samaria were deported to Assyria. The kingdom of Judea was also defeated in 701 BCE and also was evacuated from its population which was taken as exile to Nineveh. The Babylonian exile followed in 587 BCE. Jews rose to power again but it did not last due to new internal political conflicts. Then, the last destruction of the Temple came in 70 A.D., by which the Jews' era of having kingdoms of their own came to an end. Since that time onwards, many Jews recognised themselves as exiles who are waiting to return to some sort of a homeland[394]. Howard Wettstein says that "'Diaspora' is relatively new English word and has no traditional Hebrew equivalent. It seems closely related to the more traditional concept, *galut*, exile. Indeed, they

[394] James M. Scott, Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christain Conceptions (Leiden, New York, Koln: Brill, 1997) p. 1.

might seem to be expressions for the same idea."[395] He adds that *Galut* is a religious notion and "a pervasive theme—perhaps even the dominant motif—in Jewish history."[396] He states that *galut* resonates with "involuntary removal from homeland: dislocation, a sense of being uprooted, being somehow in the wrong place. To view one's group as in *galut* is to suppose that what is in some sense the proper order has been interrupted."[397] This traumatic history can be a reason behind this lingering sense of exile that many diasporic Jews around the world might feel.

Thus, the concept of exile is an important part of the Jewish system of ideas. It is an essential component of the Jewish cultural identity. Ben Halpern writes that, "'Exile' is the inalienably Jewish idea, the most intimate creation of the Jewish people, the symbol in which our whole historic experience is sublimated and summed up." Then he connects 'exile' with Jewish history. He states, "No other people had the Jewish experience of millennial Exile. All the meaning 'Exile' has flows straight from Jewish history, and it gives our history, our being, and our identity as a people its meaning. Live under the sign of Exile — your life as a Jew is in an ever-present tension. Cut the idea out — and you cut out memory, identification, and drive, substituting a dull adjustment."[398] Accordingly, we can assume that 'exile' lurks in the diasporic Jewish subconscious. So the dream of 'return' to a 'homeland' is also there. 'Exile' cannot be ended when the Jew is provided with a safe and secure place to live in. The return to the 'Promised Land' is a dream of redemption and hope to put an end to exile for many diasporic Jews. Nathan ponders an alternative choice to discard the problematic in-between diaspora-homeland condition; he suggests the 'return' to Judea, the symbolic Jewish homeland. But, as Judea is a historic Jewish kingdom and does not exist anymore, Israel has become the actual new homeland that the majority of world Jewry recognize as their sanctuary in case anti-Semitism gathers momentum once again for another Holocaust.

Israel as a Jewish state has an effect on the factors that shape the Jewish identity. To some extent, it is a lively place in the imagination where all the wanderings come to an end. Toby Greene and Yossi Shain point out,

> In this context, Israel defines not only Jewish life within its borders but also the lives of diaspora Jews more than ever. Israel is both an engine driving Jewish

[395] Howard Wettstein, "Coming to Terms with Exile" in *Diasporas and Exile: Varieties if Jewish Identities,* Howard Wettstein (ed.)(Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), p. 47.
[396] Ibid., p. 48.
[397] Ibid., p. 47.
[398] Ben Helpern, *The American Jews: A Zionist Analysis* (New York: Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1956) p. 100.

> identity and interconnectedness, and a source of division and even discomfort about the boundaries of Jewish belonging, the essence and morality of kinship ties, and the very meaning of Jewishness and Judaism.[399]

In a similar vein and in their introduction to their collection of essays, Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev state that it is obvious to anyone that "Israel is a central figure in Diaspora Jewish life," because if one were in any part of the world and checked any Jewish newspaper or a calendar of Jewish communal events, or gone through the list of organizations supported by Jewish community centres, one will definitely see the impact of Israel on these cultural venues.[400] "Israel-related activity in Diaspora Jewish life is manifest in several quantifiable ways, such as Israel visits, *aliyah*, donations, educational programmes, lobbying initiatives or letters to the editor complaining of media bias."[401]

For the diasporic Jews whose Judaism is not of importance, Israel is still a symbol of power and belonging. Greene and Shain argue in their study on British Jews' attitude about Israel that Israel gives a sense of self assurance and identity for British Jews who feel Jewish but lack religiosity. Zionism for them does not mean settling in Israel. However, solidarity with Israel is a reason for communal pride and affirmation of ethnicity. Raising money for Israeli causes and visiting Israel every now and then become a main part of their Jewish activities.[402] David Cesarani states that Israel has become an ideological weapon to determine "who is an authentic or acceptable Jew".[403] Many Zionist and Jewish scholars advocate the status of Israel as a homeland and claim that an authentic Jew is the one who supports Israel.[404]

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[399] Toby Greene and Yossi Shain. "The Israelization of British Jewry: Balancing Between Home and Homeland" *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2016, Vol. 18 (4) p. 849.

[400] Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev, "Introduction: World Jewry, Identity and Israel" in Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev (eds.) *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity* (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2010) p. 1.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid., p. 853.

[403] David Cesarani, p. 45.

[404] Neil Lazarus is an expert in Middle East politics and public diplomacy. He is a supporter of *Aliyah*. Other scholars like David Mittelberg, Alan Hoffman, Danny Ben-Moshe and others have their concerns about Jews in diaspora and recommend that a connection with Israel should be maintained by Jews in order to avoid different hazards. Check Danny Ben-Moshe and Zohar Segev (eds.) *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity*. Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2010.

In the beginning of the second chapter, entitled "Judea", Roth presents the notion of 'return' to the 'homeland'. Nathan tries to ascribe the desire of return to his own brother, Henry. So, we see Henry, having relinquished his American life with all its aspects, makes Aliyah[405] to Israel. Nathan, the writer, gives a whole chapter to talk about the 'return' of Henry and the reasons behind it. He entitles the chapter, 'Judea', the name of the Jewish kingdom in ancient Palestine.[406]

Nathan recounts his meeting with his friend Shuki Elchanan's father in Israel in 1960, twenty years before the setting time of the novel. Shuki's father is a welder who "emigrated to mandate Palestine from Odessa in 1920, when the Soviet revolution was proving to be more hostile to Jews than its Russian-Jewish supporters had foreseen." (Roth: 55) Nathan describes him: "He was not strong, but his hands were strong—his hands were the center of him, the truly exceptional thing in his whole appearance." (Roth: 55) This description of Shuki's father's 'hands' reflects Nathan's admiration for those who work to build the country they choose to live in, whether it is Israel or America. Nathan says about Shuki's father, "In fact, it wasn't at all difficult to think of him as an Israeli counterpart to my own father, who was then still practicing chiropody in New Jersey. Despite the difference in professional status, they would have got on well, I thought." (Roth: 55) The emphasis that Nathan gives to 'hands' in this chapter, can be contrasted to the emphasis he gives to 'mouths' in the previous chapter. However, this respect to 'hands' in Israel comes to be confused later because as the chapter unfolds its course; the 'hands' change into violent ones. Ambivalence is one of the characteristics of the novel as a whole. Nathan states something and then he contradicts it through his behaviour or through his dialogues with the other characters. His interlocutors seem to win the debate or they simply are the last ones to talk or suddenly Nathan stops the conversation and refuses to answer. So it seems that Nathan himself is confused and is trying to negotiate his Jewishness in order to discover his true self.

The concept of Aliyah is much emphasized as an important component of Jewish identity. Roth, through Shuki's father, tries to reflect on how an Israeli Jew would think of Judea or Israel. When Shuki's father asks Nathan if he intends to stay in Israel and Nathan

[405] *Aliyah* means migrating to Israel.
[406] Judea is "the southernmost of the three traditional divisions of ancient Palestine; the other two were Galilee in the north and Samaria in the centre. No clearly marked boundary divided Judea from Samaria, but the town of Beersheba was traditionally the southernmost limit." *Encyclopedia Britannica.*

replies that he would go back to America next week, the former advises him that he should stay. "With one of those extraordinary hands of his he lifted me by the arm and steered me over to a window of the dining room that looked out across modern Jerusalem to the old walled city. 'See that tree? He said. 'That's a Jewish tree. See that bird? That's a Jewish bird. See up there? A Jewish cloud. There is no country for a Jew but here.'"(Roth: 56) Roth, through Nathan, seems oblivious to this idea of the Jewishness of the land and the importance of making Aliyah. Roth, like some Jewish thinkers, asserts the importance of Israel as a centre for Jewish peoplehood but he does not think that all Jews should go to Israel to end their exile status. For Jonathan Sacks, Israel is important for the Jewish people spiritually and physically, however, it is not part of their duty to move to it. For him the exile of Jews has ended with the establishment of Israel, but still, "only in Israel can Jews live Judaism in anything other than an edited edition"[407] This ideology seems to penetrate throughout the course of the novel and causes confusion in the reader's perception of Roth's position. This by itself refers to the confusion of the characters about Israel as a centre and about their Judaism as being normal only if they live in that centre.

In Israel, as Roth shows, a comparison is drawn between America and Israel. Shuki's father says to Nathan: "We are living in a Jewish theatre and you are living in a Jewish museum!" (Roth: 56) The idea of 'hands' versus 'mouth' is discussed by the Israelis that Nathan meets with, a matter which foregrounds the importance of Aliyah and raises it to the level of every Jew's duty. Nathan makes it clear that he cannot side with the notion of Aliyah. But Henry, his counter self, will show the opposite later. Nathan, says:

> To be the Jew that I was, I told Shuki's father, which was neither more nor less than the Jew I wished to be, I didn't need to live in a Jewish nation any more than he, from what I understood, felt obliged to pray in a synagogue three times a day. My landscape wasn't the Negev wilderness, or the Galilean hills, or the coastal plain of ancient Philistia; it was industrial, immigrant America—Newark where I'd been raised, Chicago where I'd been educated, and New York where I was living in a basement apartment on a Lower East Side street among poor Ukrainians and Puerto Ricans. My sacred text wasn't the Bible but novels translated from Russian, German, and French into the language in which I was beginning to write and publish my own fiction—not the semantic range of

[407] Jonathan Sacks, *Future Tense: A Vision for Jews and Judaism in the Global Culture*, (London, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 2009) , p. 136.

> classical Hebrew but the jumpy beat of American English was what excited me. (Roth: 57)

It seems that Nathan does not really support the Jewish State and he does not believe in the reasons behind its existence. He seems to refuse the Israelization of his Jewishness. "Progressive and secular Jews, meanwhile— who have long wrestled with the boundaries of religion and their affinity to their ethnic kin — tend to be more uncertain as to how much affinity with Israel can assist in preserving Jewishness and how much it is discordant with their liberalism."[408] This attitude is clear in Nathan's thoughts and positions. He says:

> I was the American born grandson of simple Galician tradesmen who, at the end of the last century, had on their own reached the same prophetic conclusion as Theodor Herzl—that there was no future for them in Christian Europe, that they couldn't go on being themselves there without inciting to violence ominous forces against which they hadn't the slightest means of defense. But instead of struggling to save the Jewish people from destruction by founding a homeland in the remote corner of the Ottoman Empire that had once been biblical Palestine, they simply set out to save their own Jewish skin. Insomuch as Zionism meant taking upon oneself, rather than leaving to others, responsibility for one's survival as a Jew, this was their brand of Zionism. (Roth: 57)

Nathan feels that he will be far more secure as a Jew in his homeland, which is America rather than Israel. Here we also can see ambivalence in his position concerning America. It contrasts with the previous portrayal of the American Jewry. Nathan seems to defend himself against his inner ardent urge to search for a legitimate home. He praises America saying:

> the fact of it was that I could not think of any historical society that had achieved the level of tolerance institutionalized in America or that had placed pluralism smack at the center of its publicly advertised dream of itself. I could not hope that Yacov Elchanan's solution to the problem of Jewish survival and independence turned out to be no less successful than the unpolitical, unideological "family Zionism" enacted by my immigrant grandparents in coming, at the turn of the century, to America, a country that did not have at its center the idea of exclusion." (Roth: 58)

[408] Greene and Shain, p. 859.

Nathan suggests that Aliyah is sought by Henry as a means of therapy. However, he needs a new experience to take him out of the sense of alienation that he finds in America. He needs an end to the sense of 'exile'. Thus, his decision of Aliyah is not to be avoided. Nathan tries to deny that the transformation of Henry has anything to do with a preexistent idea of 'return'. He says:

> Until his trip to Israel eight months after the bypass surgery, my brother, Henry, had never shown any interest at all in the country's existence or in its possible meaning for him as a Jewish homeland, and even that visit arose from neither an awakening of Jewish consciousness nor out of curiosity about the archeological traces of Jewish history but strictly as a therapeutic measure. (Roth: 61)

The emphasis on Israel as a successful experience and a secure home is entertained by scholars like Robin-Dorsky who argues: "Not only has the Jewish state achieved distinction politically, socially, and artistically, but it also holds a revered place in the American Jewish imagination, still signifying qualities of transcendent meaning: abiding hope, continued affirmation, promised redemption, unmitigated triumph."[409] Then, he adds that Jewish life in Israel is fuller and richer in comparison with life in America. He says, "The majority of Jews lived good lives in America, but were they discernibly and palpably *Jewish* lives."[410] This mindset is explored by Roth and it is evident in Henry's reaction when he visits Israel with some friends. The first trip is done for fun. However it instigates his decision to make Aliyah. When he finds himself in a Jewish environment, he becomes able for the first time to find a true meaning of his existence; as if he discovers a match for his inner self, or we can say, as if he finally finds out who he is.

While in Israel, outside a school, Henry listens to students learning Hebrew. He explains to Nathan:

> And when I heard them, there was a surge inside me, a realization—at the root of my life, the very root of it, *I was them*. I always *had* been them. Children chanting away in Hebrew, I couldn't understand a word of it, couldn't recognize

[409] Robin-Dorsky, p. 207.
[410] Ibid.

> a single sound, and yet I was listening as though something I didn't even know I'd been searching for was suddenly reaching out for me. (Roth: 64)

So the image of Israel presented here asserts that the character has confusion about his life in America or in the diaspora. He internalizes that it is not a full life. The Jew in Israel is a good Jew, an authentic real Jew, and not otherwise. Much of this ideology comes from Theodor Herzl's ideas which he embodies in his book *The Jewish State* (1917) in which he refers to a new type of Jew who is "brought up differently: in freedom, for freedom"[411] He believes that once the Jews stop being persecuted and alienated, they will have a transcended life. Herzl does not specify Israel as the only place for a Jew to live a transcended life. But the very fact of the establishment of Israel has combined the place with the dream.

Therefore, many Jews in the diaspora are influenced by this transcended life which is supposed to be an active Jewish-conscious life. Robin-Dorsky states that "Identity in this respect, involves something one feels …and one does, not something one has…It consists of an exploration of origins, an engagement with the present, and a willingness to ask difficult questions about our professions and purposes for the future." He adds that it is an identity that "seeks legitimacy, …, through commitment to the values, aspirations, and meanings embodied in Jewish history."[412] So once Henry starts to engage with the land and history, his transformation starts too. He says:

> And that's when I began to realize that of all that I am, I am nothing, I have never been *anything*, the way that I am this Jew. I didn't know this, had no idea of it, all of my life I was swimming *against* it—then sitting and listening to those kids outside that cheder window, suddenly it *belonged* to me. Everything else *was* superficial, everything else *was* burned away. Can you understand? I may not be expressing it right, but actually don't care how it sounds to you or to anyone. I am not *just* a Jew, I'm not *also* a Jew—*I'm as Jew as deep as those Jews*. Everything else is nothing. (Roth: 65)

Henry's position here reflects the inner conflict that an American Jew might have when it comes to his national identity. When he finds himself in Israel, the only thing he can feel is his Jewishness. He forgets about being an American because suddenly he realizes that it is Israel and not America which is his real authentic home. He comes suddenly under the influence of

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[411] Theodor Herzl, *The Jews' State*, Trans. Henk Overberg (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1997) p. 179.
[412] Robin-Dorsky, p. 211.

his Israeli Jewish friends and mingles very well with the Israeli society. His speeches are reflecting an ideology of racism and bigotry justified by claims of self-protection and defence. Henry's life in Israel is a projection done by Nathan to understand how life might be for an American Jew who decides to make Aliyah. In the next section, I will investigate how the text is probing that racist ideology through actual Israeli life experienced by Nathan. His actions and reaction while dealing with Israelis show another problematic that can face a Jew making Aliyah to Israel. The sense of belonging that Henry talks about when he is there comes to be disturbed by Nathan when he starts to critically evaluate the situation there.

4.1. The American Jew and the Dilemma of Israel

Israel has an important and confusing role in the contemporary Jewish imagination as it is the place that Jews can claim to be their pre-diasporic home. Debra Shostak states, "Israel poses an identity crisis for the diaspora Jew because of its ancient symbolic power as the Jewish 'home,' a locale that makes meaningful by antithesis the peregrination of the Wandering Jew".[413] Israel becomes an important component of Jewish identity, especially after 1967,[414] as the Six Day War represents the confirmation of Israel's power in the Middle East. Visiting Israel is not only connected with those who are religiously committed. It has become a phenomenon and an evidence of loyalty to the Jewish ethnic cause. Stephen Sharot's explanation of the Jewish identity in Israel helps us see how the nation of Jews can be attached to it. He says:

> Jewish identity in Israel, like Jewish identity elsewhere, is an ethnic identity. It is an identity with a people that meets the criteria of most recent definitions of an ethnic group. These criteria are distinctive cultural and symbolic characteristics (in the Jewish case the major element is religion) and a sense of kinship and community, the 'we' feeling that relates to a belief in a common ancestry and group history. This ethnic identity is a national identity in the sense that the relationship of the group to a particular territory, a homeland, is also emphasized.[415]

[413] Shostak, p. 109.
[414] Stephen Sharot, *Comparative Perspectives on Judaisms and Jewish Identities* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011) p. 164.
[415] Ibid., p. 183.

In the light of this explanation, we can see how Nathan presents the Israelis in Israel and how they react to the Americans and America in general. They frown upon those Jews who decide to take America as their permanent home. During Nathan's meeting with those Israelis the atmosphere is antagonistic. Their discussion is more of a duel in which Nathan is the culprit. Most of the Israelis that Roth presents cannot think any Jew could live a good life or authentic Jewish life outside Israel. For them, a Jew is primordially connected to his homeland.

Students in Henry's school ask Nathan if he knows Hebrew, and then ask him if he is a Zionist. To both questions his answer is a negation. "I never had enough Hebrew, Yiddish, or anti-Semitism to make me a Zionist when I was young." (Roth: 105) He explains that "things" did not lead him back to Israel after he had visited it twenty years earlier. He says, "Israel wasn't at the center of my thoughts, no." (Roth: 105) Nathan's answers perplex the students. Then they start to explicitly accuse him of being a traitor to the cause of the Jewish people. Jewishness in Israel has been constructed to have fixed features. It has become a paradigm which is difficult to negotiate. It has been essentialized, a matter which makes Roth unwilling to embrace the manner in which it is prescribed in Israel.

However, Roth seems to problematize this issue. Nathan is writing his own anxiety. Is he after all guilty? He is unsure about the authenticity of his Jewishness in the way he is embracing it. One of the boys acts like an interrogating self of Nathan. His questions reflect how Nathan might have questioned himself. This interrogation shows the troubled self and the sense of anxiety which haunts Nathan about Israel as a homeland and his duty towards it. The boy asks, "How can a Jew,…make a single visit to the homeland of his people, and then never, not in twenty years—" To which Nathan replies trying to justify his attitude, "It's easy. I'm not the only one." Then the voice of the boy comes back, "And it's of no concern to you that the whole world would as soon see this country obliterated." (Roth:106) The boy becomes more aggressive in his questioning, "Who would shed a tear?... Certainly not a Jew who in twenty years, despite the persistent danger to the Jewish people—" (Roth: 106) Then he goes on to accuse the Diaspora Jew of being a real fanatic:

> Excuse me! What is fanatical? To put egoism before Zionism is what is fanatical! To put personal gain and personal pleasure before the survival of the Jewish people. *Who* is fanatical! The Diaspora Jew! All the evidence that the goyim give him and give him that the survival of the Jew couldn't matter to them less, and the diaspora Jew believes they are friends. Believes that in their country

> he is safe and secure—an equal! What is fanatical is the Jew who never learns. The Jew oblivious to the Jewish state and the Jewish land and the survival of the Jewish people! That is the fanatic—fanatically ignorant, fanatically self-deluded, fanatically full of shame! (Roth: 106)

These accusations delineate the image of American Jews in the eyes of Israelis. At the same time they explain much of the identity crisis that any American Jew might experience and Roth articulates it throughout his meta-fiction.

The problem of assimilation and intermarriage, which Roth presents through the Jewish characters in Chapter One and also through Nathan's four marriages with Gentile women, is discussed with regret in Israel while Nathan engages in difficult debates with Henry's Israeli acquaintances. This problem is considered a danger that lurks and always threatens the extinction of the Jews performed by Jews themselves. Ronit, the school teacher, says to Nathan, "assimilation and intermarriage…in America are bringing about a second Holocaust—truly, a spiritual Holocaust is taking place there, and it is as deadly as any threat posed by the Arabs to the state of Israel." (Roth: 107) Assimilation is placed in an analogy with the Holocaust of the past. The memory of the Holocaust lives actively in the subconscious of the Israelis portrayed by Roth and hence the fear of another one cannot be obliterated. She continues, "What Hitler could not achieve in Auschwitz, American Jews are doing to themselves in the bedroom. Sixty five percent of American Jewish college students marry non-Jews—*sixty five percent* lost forever to the Jewish people. First there was the hard extermination, now there is the soft extermination." (Roth: 107)

On the one hand, Nathan finds these predicaments valid and a good justification for a Jew to make Aliyah. On the other hand, he seems skeptical concerning this 'authentic' life that a Jew might live in Israel. For Nathan, civil rights are not really maintained there. He cannot find equality among the Israeli citizens. For him, America is a better choice when it comes to social equality. Roth makes this clear through Nathan's Israeli counterpart, Shuki Elchanan. This character criticizes objectively the Israeli double policy towards its citizens. Stephen Sharot argues that:

> Among Israeli Jews the Israeli identity has both a civic component and an ethnic-national component. The civic component relates to the legal definition, rights and obligations of all citizens, Jews and non-Jews, of the Israeli state, a legal geographic unit. However, when Israeli Jews emphasize their Israeli identity, the

> ethnic-national component is normally the most prominent in their consciousness. When they think of the term *Israeli*, more than half of Israeli Jews do not include Arabs, and the fundamental distinction made between Jews and Arabs at the level of national identity is reflected in the use of different terms when referring to the plurality of non-Jewish and Jewish ethnic groups in Israeli society.[416]

Roth presents a counter voice to Lippman's Zionist perspective[417]. It is that of Nathan's friend Shuki Elchanan. Shuki, an Israeli journalist, expresses a moderate position concerning the West Bank when he suggests leaving it to the Arabs; he even expresses his disapproval of Lippman's ideology which he deems as violent and bigoted. Shuki is the first one to give us information about Lippman and warns us that he is to be feared. He is a dangerous man. "Well, that's wonderful. Lippman drives into Hebron with his pistol and tells the Arabs in the market how the Jews and Arabs can live happily side by side as long as the Jews are on top." (Roth: 83) Nathan focuses on violent aspects in both Israelis and Arabs, a matter which kills his desire to stay in Israel. They cause him fear and a constant sense of danger. Shuki says,

> Every Jewish dilemma there ever was is encapsulated in this country. In Israel it's enough to live—you don't have to do anything else and you go to bed exhausted. Have you ever noticed that Jews shout? …Here everything is black and white, everybody is shouting, and everybody is always right. Here the extremes are too great for a country so small. (Roth: 68)

Roth's depiction of violence in Israel problematizes the concept of Aliyah and shows Israel as an insecure place in which crime can have a legitimate explanation; one might use violence to justify his/her fear of a possible threat or danger coming from the other ethnic groups. In an Israeli environment, conflicts between Arabs and Jews are very common. The character of Mordacai Lippman exemplifies the tendency of revenge that Israeli extremists might adopt. Lippman's racist ideology can never have acceptance from Shuki. He accuses Lippman of manoeuvring the past to serve his ends. He says about him that,

> His racket is to play upon Jewish insecurity—he says to the Jews, 'I have the solution to our problem of fear.' Of course there's a long history of these people.

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[416] Sharot, p. 183.

[417] Andrew Furman, "A New 'Other' Emerges in American Jewish Literature: Philip Roth's Israel Fiction" in Harold Bloom (ed), *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Philip Roth* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003) p. 151.

> Mordecai Lippman does not come from nowhere. In every Jewish community there was always such a person….So in every community there is a butcher,…He marches off at night with the other butcher and when he comes back there are a hundred goyim you don't ever have to worry about again. There was even a name for him: the *shlayger*. The Whipper. (Roth: 80)

Andrew Furman comments, "The Jew, represented by Lippman, emerges as the aggressor of the Middle East: the Jew wields a pistol, invades the peaceful Arab realm of a Hebron market, and anxiously hopes for violence."[418] Jacqueline Rose gives an account of her interview with some European Jews who migrated to Israel shortly before she met them. They assert to her that since their arrival in Israel, the situation has been deteriorating. Nevertheless, they felt that they are invincible.[419] It is obvious that most Israelis do not expect to live in total peace in that state but they accept this situation as their inevitable destiny. Rose points out that "[a]ccording to messianic legend, Israel… will have to bear its share of suffering in the final cataclysm. Redemption will not be realized without ruin and dread. For the vision to hold, there must be slaying and being slain."[420] Thus, by presenting the other dark side of Israel, Roth finds it difficult to recognize his feelings towards this archetypal homeland. Nathan now is unsure how to evaluate this place and how to establish a connection to it. He is far from feeling tempted to choose it as a place for residence. His opinion about it resembles the description given by David Theo Goldberg and Michael Krausz in their introduction to their collection of essay entitled *Jewish Identity* (1993). They say:

> Israel may be imagined at once as the haven to which many could flee from the cruel hand of power, as the hand that assumed and cultivated power, and as the fierce expression of power over others. Those once excluded now exclude, those imposed upon impose themselves. These sets of political condition are assumed, and they become constitutively integral to contemporary Jewish identity in the filial identification with Israel. It is an identity to be resisted only by unapologetically recalling the central place of wandering in the Jewish imagination.[421]

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[418] Furman, p. 152.
[419] Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 6.
[420] Ibid.
[421] David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz (eds.), *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 12.

So identification with Israel has its own challenges if one decides to choose to live there. Intolerance and racism are accepted as normal means of defence and continuity. The situation itself forces one to be cautious to some extent. Richard Shusterman finds the promise of Aliyah to be delusory as it proves to be problematic to the secular Jewish identity.[422] He speaks of his experience in Israel after he moved there. He states that "[w]hen I first arrived, it was only my homeland in a very dubious and mythic sense."[423] But as he experienced living there for several years, he changed his mind about the whole notion of Aliyah. He says, "[i]t has not really resolved my problem of being a secular American Jew; it has only circumvented it by allowing Jewishness to be expressed through Israeliness." He adds, "*aliyah* has made it much more difficult to see myself as an American Jew and to relate to that Jewish community, since the American Jewish experience is inevitably perceived by my Israeli eyes as superficial, alienated, and inauthentic."[424] This condition casts doubt on the Jewish identity for Jews in the diaspora who visit Israel. It problematizes that identification and a comparison between Israel and diaspora come to be initiated.

The other perspective concerning the diaspora for Jews is that it is a better condition than residence in Israel. While Nathan is trying to test the 'normality' of the Jewish identity and how to attain it, his friend Shuki thinks that to be "normal" the Jew has to be alienated from Israel. Assimilation in the Diaspora is the only condition that grants normality to the Jew.[425] This is another ambivalent moment in the narrative. Shuki believes that the very notion of 'return' and 'homeland' are abnormal.

> "You, of all people," he tells Nathan, "are the only normal Jew, living in London with an English gentile wife and thinking you won't even bother to circumcise your son. You, who say, I live in this time, I live in this world, and out of that I form my life. This, you understand, was supposed to be the place where to become a normal Jew was the goal. Instead we have become the Jewish obsessional prison par excellence! Instead it has become the breeding ground for every brand of madness that Jewish genius can devise! (Roth: 81)

Roth criticizes the struggle against the defamation of Jews in the US because it necessitates the emergence of a Jewish self-consciousness which is not suitable for this time and place where

[422] Richard Shusterman, "Next Year in Jerusalem" in David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz (eds.), *Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), p. 292.
[423] Ibid., p. 294.
[424] Ibid., p. 297.
[425] Shostak, p. 132.

the idea of persecution of Jews is so different from that in the past. He believes that the tragedy of the Holocaust has taught some harsh Jewish critics nothing but to assume the role of the victim all the time in a country where they do not have to do that if they choose to be free from the burden of memory. Playing the victim is pathetic for Roth, who considers such behaviour to be an insult to the dead. He comments, "Imagine: sitting in New York in the 1960's and piously summoning up the "six million" to justify one's own timidity."[426]

At the same time, anti-Semitism is always regarded as a predicament for Roth. He makes it clear that the issue of Judaeophobia is contributing to the problem of identity and causes confusion in the relationship between Jews and non-Jews. In one of the lives that Nathan portrays in *The Counterlife*, he and his would-be-wife Maria are having dinner in a hotel restaurant where Nathan notices a woman complaining about his presence in that place. She finds him repellent to the extent that he makes her feel that the atmosphere there is stinky. Nathan gets angry and goes to the lady to confront her, "You are most objectionable, madam, grotesquely objectionable, and if you continue shouting about the stink [the stink of his Jewishness wafting over to her from where he is seated with Maria on a nearby banquette], I am going to request that the management have you expelled." (Roth: 356) Another incident that makes Nathan feel disturbed about living in Europe or getting married to a Gentile woman is that his would-be in-laws are not happy about the marriage union between them and a Jewish family. Maria's mother and sister are not embarrassed to expose their distaste for Jews and their suspicions concerning that matrimony. Nathan becomes annoyed by that hidden and open hatred and in a moment he realizes his need to assert his Jewishness. He tells Maria that

> England's made a Jew of me in only eight weeks, which, on reflection, might be the least painful method. A Jew without Jews, without Judaism, without Zionism, without Jewishness, without a temple or an army or even a pistol, a Jew clearly without a home, just the object itself, like a glass or an apple." (Roth: 357)

At the end of *The Counterlife* Nathan discusses with his pregnant wife the issue of their child's circumcision according to the Jewish tradition if it was a boy. He tells her that circumcision "confirms that there is an us, and an us that isn't solely him and me." He reflects his awareness that observing the tradition is necessary for maintaining the sense of belonging to

[426] Philip Roth, "Writing About Jews" in Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others*, p. 208.

a group, in this case, the Jewish people. Cultural integration is seen by some Jewish scholars as a means of self-defence in case Jews come under perilous circumstance. It has been shown throughout history that "integration with the dominant culture is always superficial and never rules out the possibility of future attacks." In this case, assimilation only induces a false sense of security if we consider the fate of many German Jews during Hitler's regime. Cultural unity can contribute to social structures which can be utilized if need be.[427] Cultures always support personal identity. Adults can only understand themselves in relation to the cultural milieus in which they grow up. "Though one's place in a culture accounts only partially for personal identity, its contribution is substantial. Accordingly, it can be argued that cultures ought to be preserved, for they help to make people intelligible to themselves."[428] Nathan's realization at the end is informed by this conception though we can never confirm what is his position specifically. He keeps taking us from one life to another and in each one of them, he problematizes a pastoral dream which might shape that life. The pastoral dream that is relating to Israel and a perfect Jewish life there is questioned and almost ridiculed. A pastoral life in the US or Europe in which a Jew embraces assimilation comes to be satirized once the issue of anti-Semitism emerges with all its historical power. These pastoral lives are deconstructed by Roth and presented in a plain manner.

To sum up, the novel underlines the dilemma of in-betweenness through the form of ambivalence. Roth's imagination as a writer constructs a world in which his American-Jewish characters are confused and uncertain concerning their belonging to America or to Israel and how to reconcile the two sides of their identity. The diasporic condition in America is problematized through a satirical depiction of the American Jews' behaviour and aspirations which have no consideration of their Jewishness. Moreover, the image of Israel as a homeland for Jews or a possible haven for them, just in case another Holocaust comes to threaten their existence, is also problematized once the dark and dangerous side of it is explored. When we finally discover that Henry's Aliyah is only the product of Nathan's imagination as he is the supposed writer of the story, and Henry never left America for Israel, we come to realize that the text does not make it clear if Aliyah is a good choice for American Jews. In addition to this, the death of Nathan in America at the end is a symbolic one. Thus, the text also reflects uncertainty concerning the choice of America with the prospect of assimilation. The dilemma of

[427] Diana Teitjens Meyers, "Cultural Diveristy: Rights, Goals, and Competing Values" in David Theo Goldberg & Michael Krausz, p. 19-20.

[428] Ibid., p. 20.

in-betweenness is not solved and the identity crisis does not reach an acceptable compromise. For Roth, this issue continues and the American Jews have a lot of work to carry out in order to solve it. Nevertheless, the text gives credit to migrant Jews who settle in the US and contribute to its progress in different fields provided that they do not assimilate. They work hard to achieve a better life for themselves and their families and in the same time they find in the host country a home to which they must be grateful and loyal. Meanwhile, they do not forget their Jewishness and they try to keep a balance between the two sides of their identity. In this way, diaspora life for a Jew is acceptable because it can be recognized as creative and productive.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel*, In-Between Past and Present

Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* represents another type of lacuna that is experienced by immigrants. Here we have the dilemma of being in-between old Jewish traditions and modernity in the American scene. The characters try to cope with questions of identity in a strict and traditional Jewish environment where there is much silenced anger from the part of the intellectual, or women, or we can also say, the Other in their attempt to answer the question "who am I?" These characters, though they belong to that strict environment, occupy a space in the periphery.

The novel brings about a contrast between places, some of which represent the old tradition and others represent modernity. Hence, the characters are caught between these two worlds; one of them stands for obligation and duty and the other stands for freedom and progress. Being in that situation raises questions that this chapter tries to answer; questions like, is the state of marginality confined to immigrants or is it experienced also by the people who belong to the mainstream culture? Moreover, is the concept of Jewish exile terminated in a modern society or is it alive in the Jewish imagination? If it is alive, how can it operate within modern American society? Why would Jews living in the US prefer to embrace Jewish tradition while enjoying the benefits of modernity? Does modernity play a role in the assimilation of Jews and the annihilation of memory?

The idea of embracing Jewish tradition in America is a sign of a desire to construct a Jewish home in the host country without having the concept of exile to interfere with this home-making. However, embracing tradition is a means to put an end to the identity crisis and also get rid of the sense of exile.

Drawing on the concept of exile, I argue that exile is a state of anguish that can be felt by intellectual and liberal-oriented Jews within a traditional Jewish environment, a matter which causes identity crisis as to where should one belong. This state of exile can lead to assimilation when there is an opportunity of immigration to a world of modernity.

Yet, the situation is not the same for younger generations of immigrants. Therefore, on the examination of the theory of exile and homecoming, I argue that it is possible to make a home in the third space that can resemble the one in the home of origin and hence, diaspora can propagate an authentic Jewish life rather than being in a state of stagnation and betrayal. The

idea of homecoming is still powerful and can fiercely compete with modernity. Goldstein's novel tries to fix the gap between the past and the present.

1. Rebecca Goldstein: In-Between Jewish Tradition and Modernity

Rebecca Goldstein, a Jewish American novelist and PhD holder in philosophy from Princeton University was primarily brought up as an Orthodox Jewish and received her education as a child in a Hebrew School. She was born in 1950 in New York to European immigrants. "Her father was a cantor who had emigrated to the United States from Poland, and whose sweetness of nature and dedication to both traditional Judaism and to cantorial music had an enormous impact on Goldstein's life and work."[429] Despite her strictly Jewish-oriented background, Goldstein's critical thinking instigated her to question the divine justice done to Lot's wife, a story well known to her community as a story in Genesis. According to the biblical story, during Sodom's annihilation, Lot's wife looks back at the city, an action which was sinful enough to bring about her death. Her punishment was for her to be altered into a pillar of salt, a matter that made Goldstein perplexed because she considered Lot's wife's action as normal as she was a mother who only wanted to check on her daughters, if they are following behind or not. Goldstein says, "I was born into this Orthodox Jewish family where girls were not supposed to be heard, so the fact I am such a noisy person who gets heard so much is surprising. I had this set of questions that mattered to me and all I was doing was trying to find ways of thinking them out and doing justice to them."[430]

Goldstein was warned by her school teachers to avoid philosophy and secular education; they regarded them as corrosive and damaging to one's own faith. However, she was attracted to philosophy and much to the dismay of her teachers, she preferred Socrates over religion. Her work seems to be preoccupied by the tension between orthodox Judaism and secular feminism. She explores these issues through a number of her protagonists. Her debut novel, *The Mind-Body Problem* (1983) represents a hostile depiction of orthodox Jewish life. In her subsequent stories and novels, she has depicted traditional Jewish environments with subtlety and meanwhile her feminist perceptions penetrate the plots of her narratives. "To explore Goldstein's dynamic treatment of the tension between feminism and orthodox Judaism is to

[429] Sylvia Barack Fishman. "Rebecca Goldstein (1950-)" Ann R. Shapiro, et al (eds.) *Jewish American Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical and Critical Sourcebook* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 80.
[430] Julian Baggini, "The Books interview: Rebecca Goldstein", in *The Critics*, newstatesman.com/books.

gain a glimpse of one Jewish American woman's ongoing struggle to reconcile through her fiction two essential, but often conflictive elements of her identity." [431]

There are a number of parallels between Goldstein's work and her life. "Like the brainy and attractive heroine of her first novel, *The Mind-Body Problem* (1983), Goldstein studied philosophy at Bernard and received a Ph.D. from Princeton."[432] In *The Mind-Body Problem* (1983), Renee, the protagonist, is trying to cope with two worlds. "She grew up orthodox but discarded observance while studying philosophy at Bernard; hence she can make sense of orthodox Lakewood as well as goyish Princeton; although she is not at home in either world."[433] Renee negotiates this rift in her ethos, a matter which can also tell about Goldstein's early artistic vision.

Andrew Furman says "Regardless of the arguable autobiographical content of the novel, Goldstein does implicitly espouse the anti-Orthodox views of her protagonist, for she constructs no persuasive voices to counterbalance Renee's decidedly antagonistic view of Orthodox life, nor does she challenge Renee's perspective through other narrative devices (e.g., irony or humor)."[434] Ann P. Ronell says that "Goldstein's works are frequently tales of divided selves and stories of women who strive to achieve self-fulfillment. In the process, her female protagonists face a variety of obstacles and often have to turn inward for inspiration. In these cases, their Jewishness is both an asset and a liability that does not escape Goldstein's creative scrutiny."[435]

Her second novel, *The Late Summer Passion of a Woman of Mind* (1989) tackles the issue of a cerebral philosophy professor who gets involved in a passionate affair with a student against her intellectual judgment. Again in this narrative she challenges the orthodox Jewish teachings which do not approve of a human's passions that violate its moral code of conduct.

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[431] Andrew Furman, *Contemporary Jewish American Writers and the Multicultural Dilemma*, p. 83.
[432] Sandee Brawarsky, "Rebecca Goldstein: Mining Intellectual Dilemmas." in *Publisher's Weekly*, (23 Oct. 1995) p. 48.

[433] Susanne Klingenstein, "Visits to Germany in Recent Jewish-American Writing" *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (Autumn 1993), p. 554. Accessed: 22-06-2019 12:56 UTC, Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1208686

[434] Furman, p. 88
[435] Anna P. Ronell, "Rebecca Goldstein: Tension and Ambivalence" in E. Avery. *Modern Jewish Women Writers in America*. (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2007), p. 153.

Goldstein usually explores such issues in her fiction because she is aware of the tendency of her community to avoid taboo issues and try to hide them as the case in any orthodox community.

In *The Dark Sister* (1991) her third novel, Goldstein creates a highly intelligent Jewish woman who must suppress aspects of her inner self to get by in America. Broadly speaking, then, her oeuvre reveals her pervasive interest in "women of tremendous vitality in settings in which they are not allowed to express themselves."[436] She focuses on women in critical situations where they are divided between different factions. Moreover, "Goldstein's artistic output since her debut collection also betrays a pronounced concern over the cultural dissolution of Judaism as she ventures ever more subtle evocations of traditional Jewish characters and environments."[437]

The stories collected in *Strange Attractors* (1993) were written over a ten-year period after the publication of *The Mind-Body Problem*. They manifest a bit of a change in Goldstein's approach towards Jewish traditional life. In *Strange Attractors*, she presents various types of voices, namely, Jewish voices trying to negotiate with the Jewish traditions, and female voices trying to negotiate for modernity and liberation. In those stories Goldstein engages Jewish milieus, in order to explore "the fate of Judaism in a post-Holocaust America rife with competing influences."[438] Goldstein continues to talk about intellectual women who are engaged with situations trying to answer philosophical and moral questions.[439]

Thus we can see the development in Goldstein's solicitudes with the passage of time. "Mindel Gittel" and "Rabbinical Eyes", stories in *Strange Attractors*, show Goldstein's growing concern over Jewish continuity. In "Mindel Gittel" Goldstein delineates the rapid assimilation of the Zweigel family and of American Jews throughout the narrator's memory as he befriended the Zweigels before the beginning of the events of the story. "Mindel Gittel" is above all, "a lamentation on intergenerational rupture and cultural loss."[440]

"Mindel Gittel" and "Rabbinical Eyes" describe the intergenerational rifts that trouble her characters and the breach in Jewish continuity. Hereby, Goldstein drifts away from her earlier narrative perspective in *The Mind-Body Problem*. In "Rabbinical Eyes" we find a great nostalgia for the Jewish world that the characters left behind; the narrator focused on the time

[436] Quoted in Barawarsky, p. 48.
[437] Furman, p. 90.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Brawarsky: 48)
[440] Furman, p. 92.

she spent with her father trying to learn the Talmud. Therefore we can say that there is an emphasis on the Jewish tradition as a key solution to avoid assimilation. The orthodoxy that Goldstein rejects in the beginning of her career, she comes to borrow from its cultural side in order to provide a kind of solution to her troubled characters who seem to be overwhelmed by the current trend of assimilation.

The main characters in *Mazel*, the novel under study, figure in two short stories published in *Strange Attractors* prior to the publication of *Mazel*. Those characters are Sasha, a former star of Warsaw's Yiddish theatre; her daughter Chloe, a classics professor; and Chole's daughter, Phoebe, a mathematics professor. The short stories are "The Geometry of Soap Bubbles and Impossible Love" and "Strange Attractors," the title story. In these stories, Goldstein examines how the Jewish identity is fluctuating in America through the women she portrays.[441] She succinctly illustrates the split between the generations as the third-person narrator of "The Geometry of Soap Bubbles and Impossible Love" reflects, "Chloe and Phoebe don't speak Yiddish, Sasha and Phoebe don't speak ancient Greek, and Sasha and Chloe don't speak mathematics" (Goldstein: 178).

In *Mazel*, Goldstein reintroduces those three characters and investigates their relationships showing how the contrasting cultural influences formulate their Jewish identities. "In each woman—flamboyant Sasha, who once starred in Warsaw's Yiddish theatre; scholarly Chloe, who teaches classics at Columbia; and brilliant, unworldly, Princeton mathematics professor Phoebe, who specializes in the Geometry of soap bubbles—New York-born author admits there's a piece of herself."[442] That rift between the generations is experienced by many Jews in America. In *Mazel*, the author condenses concerns represented in her earlier literary output. Those concerns are the marginal location of the intellectual inside his home of origin; diaspora and anti-Semitism; nomadic style of life; assimilation and the resurgence of orthodoxy. In this novel, the three women from three generations experience all these issues and try to grapple with them in order to find a solution to their identity dilemma. Goldstein recognizes the lacuna between "the universalist-secularist and the particularist-Judaic dichotomy"[443] It has become a central theme in her entire corpus.

[441] Furman, p. 93.
[442] Brawarsky, p. 48.
[443] Anna P. Ronell, p. 153.

1.1. Goldstein's *Mazel*: In-Between Past and Present: Synopsis

Indeed, the briefest of plot summaries of this complex novel clarifies the ways in which Jewish wanderlust and a multiplicity of homes is at the heart of Goldstein's *Mazel*. The story is set in Jewish pasts and presents, the shtetls and cities of Eastern Europe as well as the Eastern seaboard of America. Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* focuses on Sasha, a former star of the Yiddish theater who strives to understand how her brilliant mathematician granddaughter, Phoebe, has made her home in the insular modern Orthodox community of Lipton, New Jersey. The novel starts with Phoebe's wedding in which members of the Jewish community of Lipton gathers to illustrate how the Jewish tradition is being kept especially when it comes to marriage ceremonies. In this scene, Sasha, the grandmother cannot get herself excited by the event, so she goes back in her memories to her past in the shtetl.

Sasha reflects on the shtetl of Shluftchev as a closed Jewish community where she had lived with her family. They were three daughters and two sons. Her mother, Leiba, is presented as hard working to provide her family with a comfortable home. Leiba used to bake at a very late hour at night on a regular basis while Sorel, later known as Sasha, would watch her mother and sing along with her. Throughout that daily ritual, Sorel learns much about their tradition and code of conduct that the Jews in that community accept and welcome.

The shtetl where Sorel was born is the place which could not nurture the imagination of her brilliant sister Fraydel who is a symbol of the desperate intellectual. Fraydel has her own world that she aspires to attain, but the strict rules of her community work as obstacles that hinder her achievement of her goals. Eventually, because of a lot of pressures on her, she succumbs to her despair and takes her life.

Sorel moves to Warsaw and has the chance to work in a theatre. While she has her admission test, she uses Fraydel's Gothic story "The Bridegroom" which becomes a hit play throughout Eastern Europe in the years just prior to World War II and the Shoah and secures a good job for Sorel, who becomes well known as Sasha.

Through mazel (Yiddish for luck), Sasha and her husband, Maurice, are the only members of the theater troupe to make it out of Europe when Nazi Germany invades Poland. After a brief sojourn in Israel, Sasha establishes her home in New York among artists and radicals. Maurice on the other hand, can only embrace nomadic wandering. Chloe, Sasha's daughter who is considered a second generation of immigrants, embraces a secular life in America. She never concerns herself with Judaism or the Jewish tradition, unlike her own

daughter, Phoebe, whose brilliant restlessness parallels that of Fraydel's. She finds "a quite brilliant solution to the problem of being Phoebe" (*Mazel*: 336) in Orthodox Judaism, her husband Jason, and the Lipton community. Sasha could not understand Phoebe's desire to embrace Judaism and considers it a kind of return to the Shtetl life, that is, it is a step backward and a breakaway from modernity.

After telling all the past events, the narrative takes us back to the present and Phoebe's wedding, where the remaining matrimonial traditions are maintained to finalize the marriage. Sasha, still bored and not willing to participate in the dance is eventually influenced by her fellow Jewish celebrators and decides to join the group. After some time, Phoebe gives birth to a baby boy to end the novel with a sign of Jewish continuity achieved.

2. Places and Homes

Mazel, which won the National Jewish Book Award and the 1995 Edward Lewis Wallant Award for the year's best work of Jewish American fiction, might be seen as a culmination of Goldstein's most pressing artistic concerns.[444] The feminist arguments of her first novel recur here in this novel, however, her depiction of the orthodox Jewish life is more nuanced and presented as part of an old style of life and at the same time a tool to fight the apparition of assimilation in modern America. Moreover, she dramatizes the female experience within the orthodox Jewish tradition through three generations. She connects between these two issues and the issue of home making for the Jewish wanderer represented by Sasha and her husband Maurice, and for the American-born Jews represented by Chloe and Phoebe. More specifically, *Mazel* represents how orthodox Judaism is received in three representative Jewish milieus of the twentieth century: the Galician shtetl of Shluftchev before WWII, the cosmopolitan Warsaw, again before WWII, and the modern Orthodox Jewish suburb of Lipton, New Jersey of the late 20th century.[445]

In setting her insight on the European diaspora, Goldstein joins in a common trend in Jewish American Fiction. Ruth Wisse predicted this tendency in Jewish fiction in her 1976 essay "American Jewish Writing, Act II." Wisse speculates that writers who believe that their Judaism is a serious matter would have to tackle Jewish identity issues outside the US as

[444] Furman, p. 93
[445] Ibid., p. 94.

well.[446] Goldstein's *Mazel* affirms Wisse's observations when her characters appear in the European shtetl, to explore the problematic issue of female Jewish identity before Goldstein takes them to another place where she can discuss the resurgence of orthodox Judaism in an American suburb. This movement between places sheds light on the identity dilemma before and after the dispersal.

Mazel presents to us multiple meanings for 'home'. Home can be made in any place. It is not necessarily the place where one is born or a place idealized in one's own mind and culture. bell hooks explains her idea of 'home' saying that:

> indeed the very meaning of "home" changes with experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting.[447]

'Home' can be a space for resistance where one is at war with his/her fellow occupants. This war can be seen in the issue of being with the conservative right or with the leftists. Goldstein presents this topic through her feminist characters who struggle to make a home within a hostile environment. Without this home, one's own identity and self-recognition is at stake. Language here is of great importance to express resistance. "[T]he oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves, to reconcile, to reunite, to renew. Our words are not without meaning, they are an action, a resistance. Language is also a place of struggle."[448] Thus we find Goldstein using a text-within-text technique in order to call for a counterbalance in the European Jewish community so that it would adopt a more flexible attitude about life and acculturation with other communities. *Mazel* seems to reject secluded communities that confine themselves to specific space and time and refuse change.

In *Mazel*, we again come across the issue of "return". Goldstein represents the vitality of diasporic homes without idealizing them. Those homes are not antithetical to the Zionist

[446] Ruth Wisse, "American Jewish Writing, Act II", *Commentary*, June (1976): 41.
[447] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, (Turnaround, London 1991), p. 148.
[448] Ibid., p. 146.

project. “Neither historic Palestine nor Eastern Europe is naturalized as a predetermined, unitary Jewish home. Rather, *Mazel* imagines multiple Jewish centres and privileges the process of making a home through migration and domesticity.”[449] So the ‘return’ concept is problematized here and presented as a matter of personal choice and preference because one’s own home might be another one’s exile.

Goldstein identifies herself with her character Chloe, the classicist in *Mazel*; she “could much more easily imagine ancient Athens than the shtetl”[450] when she started writing the novel. Goldstein’s father was born in a Polish shtetl, nevertheless she rarely tackles his youth in her works. For her, her family’s history started in America just like the situation of many immigrant families.[451] But she realizes that there is some ring in the chain missing. To be able to understand the present we need to go back to the past. The Jewish continuity becomes an important issue that many writers manifest their concern about. Goldstein decides to go back in time to relate the drawbacks of the Jewish strict tradition which cannot be followed in a modern world by those who are of secular mind set. Meanwhile, she realizes the desire of the third generation of young American Jews to embrace the tradition that their parents might have rejected. *Mazel* seems to warn Jews like Phoebe in America of going too far in their commitment to the tradition because if they do, they might face the same destiny as the Polish shtetl. Self-exclusion leads to oblivion and destruction. Goldstein states that she observes “shtetl-like communities” in America, like High Land Park. “One day, as she was walking around her community of young modern orthodox families, “it dawned on me that Phoebe belonged here.” Accordingly, she decided that Phoebe should live out the sociological dictum that the third generation seeks to return to its roots, stepping back into the world her grandmother Sasha fled a half century earlier.”[452] By presenting Phoebe in this way, she seems to give a model of a good Jewish mindset that aspires to hybridize well with the American environment without being assimilated.

2.1. The Shtetl: A Haunting Past

The idea of “exile and wandering” underline the plot of the story. “Homecoming” is always an important trope in the Jewish literary imagination. The notion of “the Jew in exile” has not lost hold of the majority of Jews especially those who witness anti-Semitic actions here

[449] Helene Meyers. “On Homelands and Home-making Rebecca Goldstein’s Mazel” in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.33, No. 3 (spring 2010), pp. 131-141, Indiana University Press, p. 134.
[450] Brawarsky, p. 48.
[451] Ibid.
[452] Ibid.

and there. *Mazel* deals with the issue of "exile" and attempts to provide a solution to it. Goldstein takes her characters to Europe and puts them in the Polish shtetl of Shluftchev, a place where her major characters do not feel at home though they were born there. Shluftchev, the shtetl, is set in a comparison with Warsaw later, the glamourous modern city. Both places symbolize the old and the new; they stand for the old Jewish traditions and the secular modernity which cause an identity dilemma for Goldstein's characters.

The portrayal of 1920s Shluftchev, Sasha's Galician Shtetl, "suggests convincingly why Sasha embraces at her first opportunity the 'enlightened' secular city of Warsaw and, later, New York."[453] Throughout the tragic story of Sasha's sister, Fraydel, Goldstein scrutinizes the plight of the intellectual woman amidst the old ways of traditions. *Mazel* shows that the old world is a prison and eventual death trap for the Jewish intellectual. Fraydel is a symbol standing for that intellectual. She is represented as a woman in order to emphasize the notion of vulnerability and weakness in the face of a fundamental old-fashioned type of society. "Fraydel possesses a hunger for books and a creative imagination, qualities that her insular Shtetl does not extol even in men, much less women."[454] Not all books are welcome in this environment. Books evoke fear and uncertainty:

> one must beware of books, even if they are beautiful—especially if they're beautiful—resisting the pull of the pagan fascination…. Only Fraydel, somehow, didn't seem to know this. Any book on which she could get her hands had the power to absorb her entirely…The words she drank from the page seemed, more than the food at which she barely nibbled on her plate, to give her the little nourishment sustaining her. (Goldstein: 68)

Nachum, the father, compares Fraydel to an ostrich, "a bird that's been given wings but will never fly" (*Mazel*: 128). It can be inferred from his opinion that she has been given the talents which can make her excel, however, she cannot achieve any excellence because she is a female. A woman's body is shown as the enemy which will beat the soul of the genius and ultimately render her into a dead weight. Fraydel's imagination configures the existence of the Jewish woman in the shtetl as one of death-in-life. *The Birdegroom*, the feminist Gothic tale that she

[453] Furman, p. 94.
[454] Ibid., p. 95.

composes, features a marriage ceremony which finally leads to a macabre dance of death; that story foreshadows Fraydel's suicide after her betrothal event and its aftermath.[455]

Fraydel always has this desire to flee the shtetl which arouses in her an uncanny feeling and instigates her to search for a new home. In the shtetl she always feels in exile; she never seems to belong there though she could not really escape with the gypsies as she plans to do so. Fraydel is torn between two statuses; being an insider as well as an outsider at the same time. Trinh-T. Minh-Ha says, "The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa)."[456] Fraydel, being an avid reader, comes to explore the outside world through her books. Her imagination is ignited and set free to construct a countless number of worlds. In the meantime she is confined to the excluded community in Shluftchev. As in Minh-Ha's description of such situations, "[s]he necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording." [457] However, she knows that she is different, yet she is not a foreigner. "Not quite the Same, not quite the Other, she stands in that undermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out."[458]

Fraydel is portrayed as having the spirit of the Romantic wanderer, but she is chained. The Romantic presentation of this character and her actions reflects the intellectual and identity dilemma of the progressive Jew within an old fashioned Orthodox community. Fraydel, though she is sixteen, looks like a child, a wayward and stubborn child in fact. She talks normally with her family, yet she invents a language of her own that cannot be understood by others. She tells Gothic and fantastic stories about far away places and worlds. The characters that populate Fraydel's stories are rebels or desperate Romantics. Sorel, or Sasha later, feels terrified at night because of stories told by Fraydel:

> Outside, the night was inky black, perilous with the unclean creatures Fraydel told her about in whispered stories, stories that took off with a wild life of their own, until even Fraydel herself was struck dumb with terror, the tears streaming down her pale cheeks, and her big, dark eyes gaping at whatever sight it was she saw. In her sleep she murmured, words that Sorel could never understand. (Goldstein: 50)

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[455] Meyers, p. 135
[456] Trinh T. Minh-ha, "No Master Territories", *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, et al (eds.) (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006) p. 198.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid.

For Fraydel, there is a rift between her and her own community that makes her feel belonging to other places other than Shluftchev. There is a state of discontinuity that Fraydel feels all the time. Even her mother Leiba tries to reconcile her with whatever she is in dispute with. Leiba beseeches her, "'I don't understand you, Fraydel.' … 'Is it anger that makes you do these things? And if you are angry, then, please, I am begging you to tell me: why are you so angry?'" (Goldstein: 58)

The freedom of the pagan world proves tempting for Fraydel who nearly runs off with the gypsies when their temporary stay in Shluftchev comes to an end. She is fascinated by their world of magic, wonder and colors. She finds herself more at home with them than her family. She told Sorel, "Tonight the Gypsies leave." … "I'm leaving with them." (Goldstein:118)

Fraydel does not leave with the Gypsies. The reason is not stated in the novel, however, it is probably related to some feeling of guilt towards her family, specifically her mother. Instead of leaving with the Gypsies, Fraydel has a fearful fit of frenzy.

> Sorel heard a noise, frightening, that was coming from the back of the house…Sorel crept toward the curtain.
>
> There stood Fraydel—*was* it Fraydel? —choking—on laughter, on weeping, who could tell?
>
> Fraydel's head was whipped from side to side with the brutal force that burst from gaping her mouth, so deforming her features that she hardly seemed to be Fraydel. (Goldstein: 124)

The Gothic element here suggests the difference and alienation that Fraydel feels towards her environment. The escape that she attempts is symbolic of her desire to break away from that place. Fraydel's sheer individuality will doom her in the pious shtetl, where, as Sasha reflects, "the girls were all supposed to be pressed out from the same cookie cutter, anything extra trimmed away" (Goldstein: 18) Fraydel cannot conform to Shluftchev's rigid codes of conduct, based on roughly equal doses of halakha (Jewish law) and local custom. The people in the shtetl recognize her difference and stigmatize her as a mad girl. The children shun her and annoy her with the Yiddish chant, "Fraydel, Fraydel, da meshuggena maydel!" (Fraydel, Fraydel, the crazy girl!) (Goldstein: 56)

Then comes the trope of marriage and home making as a solution for the problem of wandering and unconformity. Leiba tries to arrange a marriage for Fraydel to a "presentable," though crippled bridegroom. Leiba believes that "[w]hen Fraydel had, God willing, a husband and children of her own, then she would be bound through her heart to the ordinary and simple" (Goldstein:128). Fraydel predictably cannot embrace the rewards of domesticity laid out before her and demonstrates as much when she violates the rules of the Sabbath by picking and carrying flowers. As Sasha observes at the time, Fraydel, flowers in hand, adopts the libidinous codes of the pagan realm: "Fraydel wasn't walking like Fraydel either, not like any Jewish girl or woman walked. She was barefoot—where were her shoes? —and was rolling her hips in the loose and easy motions of the Gypsy women" (Goldstein:148). Fraydel's failed attempt of marriage suggests the impossibility of any reconciliation between her and Judaism or Jewish culture. *Mazel* provides a model of a Jew who is an exile within his/her own community. The existence of a person like Fraydel in that closed community is a foreshadowing of tremendous transformations later on. Closed communities cannot remain closed forever. Hybridization will finally take place.

Writers like Cynthia Ozick, a novelist as well as a critic, has always been critical of Jewish oblivion to matters of Judaism and Jewishness. She accuses Jewish writers of following pagan ways while presenting their themes and hence they are imitating the ways followed by writers who belong to the Western literary canon. Goldstein here is relying on paganism to reflect on a Jew who is different and not conforming. Like her sympathy with Baruch Spinoza, a seventeenth century Jewish philosopher, Goldstein sympathises also with Jewish feminists and Jewish radical thinkers and symbolizes them in Fraydel who, in defying her family's tradition, is recognized as mad. Fraydel's intellectual problem instigates her to wander but she knows that wandering is not allowed for her. The Shtetl will not tolerate her paganism. Her nonconformity drives her fiancée's family to call the wedding off. Fraydel, recognizing her futile and fatal situation, sews rocks into the bottom of her skirt and drowns herself.

Shluftchev as a secluded place is also presented as a locus where time is defied by the people who want to stop its effects and keep their culture immune of any possibility of hybridization. However, time is more powerful that such intentions. Doreen Massey says, "what is specific about a place, its identity, is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and

co-presence produce."[459] Yet, Shluftchev seems to reproduce itself through the rigidity of its norms. It is shown as a closed place that rejects intruding ideas, let alone different people from Gentile communities. Its Jewish community does not have relations with the peasants who live on the outskirts of Shluftchev and hence they have constructed a space similar to a nutshell where they stay away from the rest of the world.

The representation of Shluftchev draws from Massey's notion about the identity of a place. She says,

> the identities of places are inevitably unfixed. They are unfixed in part precisely because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing. They are also unfixed because of the continual production of further social effects through the very juxtaposition of those social relations… the past was no more static than is the present. Places cannot 'really' be characterized by the recourse to some essential, internalized moment.[460]

Mazel presents a model of what Massey presents but in a way that shows a place resisting change. Here we have a place whose people try their best to impose a fixed identity on it by keeping away from any possible prospect of change, like mingling with other ethnic groups or negotiating new ideas or codes of behaviour. Social relationships and ties with the outside world are very minor. The Jewish community in Shluftchev shuns even the Gypsies who come to their territories only for a short period of time. "The Jews of Shluftchev, too, were suspicious of the lawless tribe temporarily in their midst, whose ways seemed to bespeak an uncleanliness of soul that was a calculated affront to God's Word." (Goldstein: 100) The role of Fraydel here is to question her people's tradition and try to visit the Gypsies to quench her curiosity about this different people who comes to live in Shluftchev for a temporary period of time. The new activities that the Gypsies manifest dazzle her and drive her to imitate some gypsy women later.

The past and the present cannot be fixed or static. It even seems that the past influences the present repeatedly. The community at this moment still believes in superstitions which in some cases they influence the course of life they choose for themselves and their children. This can be inferred from the story of Fraydel's father, Nachum Sonnenberg, when his stepmother sees in a dream or in a reverie his own mother who is dead. The dead mother, whose name is

[459] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p. 168-9.
[460] Ibid., p. 169.

Fraydel, shows the stepmother, whose name is also Fraydel, how she wants her son to be educated and what kind of future she decides for him. The dead women led the living into a surrealistic path which ends with a kind of a wedding ceremony in which her son Nachum is surrounded by seven rabbis, "[a]nd there, deep in prayer beneath the canopy, stood her stepson Nachum, dressed in the simple shroudlike robe in which Jewish boys are married…At Nachum's side, on a beautifully carved throne of silver, rested the holy scroll of the Law, arraying like a bride in gleaming white satin embroidered in gold, and engulfed in a bride's own aura of radiance." (Goldstein: 92) After that dream-like event, Nachum's future is decided. He has to spend his life as a scholar devoting his life to the service of the Jewish Law. So people from beyond the grave talk to the living and tell them what to do and how to live. The past influences the present tremendously. The past cannot be fixed because communities use to look back to it and try to learn from mistakes. In this dream, the past appears to teach the lesson of knowledge. In a modern world, embracing knowledge seems to be the only way for a community to continue and thrive. Seeking knowledge is not compatible with exclusionary. Thus, exclusionary communities are not destined to succeed.

Massey criticizes secluded communities and claims that their stability and identity are not of a true nature. She says:

> the identity of place is in part constructed out of positive interrelations with elsewhere. This is in contrast to many readings of place as home, where there is imagined to be the security of a (false, as we have seen) stability and an apparently reassuring boundedness. Such understandings of the identity of places require them to be enclosures, to have boundaries and— therefore and most importantly— to establish their identity through negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries."[461]

Massey's critique here can be applied to Shluftchev as the people choose to live in seclusion. Their effort to keep that seclusion does not make them safe against the hazards of the outside world. In addition, that seclusion does not prevent their new generation from being influenced by the flow of time which brings change with its course. Political and cultural transformations are inevitable. No place can escape them. It seems that *Mazel* tries to hold the Jews responsible to some extent for their plight throughout history, being always a target for repeated pogroms. The story of Shluftchev and the tragedy of Fraydel tend to condemn social seclusion and deem

[461] Ibid.

it as backward state of being. Though later on, we will also see that Goldstein does not forget to register historical events which happened prior to the WWII when Jews started to leave Germany for Poland because of the increasing anti-Semitic actions against the Jews there. This problem has been recognized by Jewish writers and upon its reality they proposed and encouraged Jewish assimilation into the mainstream communities they live in. This matter is also not supported by the narratives given in *Mazel* as it is going to be explained later.

2.2. Warsaw: Embracement of Enlightenment

Enlightenment has become a new resort. Its tides become irresistible. The multicultural environment is a locus where many Jews opt to occupy in order to flourish and develop. The desire to be part of the Other's world has acquired momentum especially after WWII when many cultural tenets took new shapes, not only for Jews, but for all ethnic groups including the dominant ones in Europe and America.

A Romantic interest appears here in the trope of the city versus the countryside; yet the purpose is not to demonize the city and show it as the place of evil. Contrarily, the city is used as a symbol of openness and enlightenment. Elizabeth Wilson discusses how the big city has invoked in many a feeling of fear. The city is a place of disorder, complexity and chaos for many people. For other people it is the place where dreams come true. Wilson recognizes that women seem to be more attracted to city life than men.

> Most of the male modernist literary figures of the early twentieth century drew…a threatening picture of the modern metropolis… modernist women writers such as Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson responded with joy and affirmation. In Mrs. Dallaway, Virginia Woolf exulted in the vitality of a summer's morning in London, in the 'swing, tramp and tread; in the bellow and uproar… in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead'.[462]

The representation of Warsaw in *Mazel* seems to reflect the inapplicability of the old traditions in a modern world. This representation conforms with Doreen Massey's statement, "we are living in a period (the precise dating is usually quite vague) of immense spatial upheaval, that this is an era of a new and powerful globalization, of instantaneous worldwide communication,

[462] Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, The Control of Disorder, and Women*, (London: Virago, 1991) p.

of the break-up of what were once local coherencies, of a new and violent phase of 'time-space compression'."[463]

Warsaw provides Sasha with the pagan opportunities that are impossible to attain by her sister Fraydel in "sleepy" Shluftchev. In this cosmopolitan city, Sasha learns many languages like Polish, Russian, German, and English. Her generation seems so eager to mingle with the mainstream culture of Warsaw and respond fully to the very common assimilatory urgings of the time. "All across the former Pale were Jewish parents having their Jewish hearts broken, as sons and daughters broke away from the old ways, made a blind run for the light." (Goldstein: 201) Sasha appears to depart from the pious, rustic world of the shtetl forever once she comes to set her foot in the glamourous city. She seizes the first opportunity for her to become an actress though the world of theatre is never acknowledged by her Jewish community that she is raised in. For her father, Nachum, theatre is the legacy of Hellenistic corruption; he believes that "a Jewish play was a paradox by itself" (Goldstein: 180). Sasha is so excited that finally she can abstain from this old-fashioned frame of mind.

Moreover, the theatre offers Sasha and her Jewish cohorts in the Bilbul Art Theatre a communicative power within mainstream Warsaw society—an opportunity to partake of and contribute to mainstream culture. Whereas Sasha's parents' generation struggled to maintain a pious existence despite material hardship, more heady possibilities preoccupy Sasha's generation:

> How could there be time enough to touch it all, absorb it all, and then —yes— contribute something of one's own? A piece of the melody, an equation, a theory, a canvas— something of one's own that will make a difference. It doesn't have to be big, though all the better if it is. But *something* to show that one is there, *there*, inhabiting the text itself, no longer stranded in the despair of those despicably narrow margins. (Goldstein: 202)

To Sasha's generation, Jewish piety (or rather Judaism itself) seems a hopeless anachronism in Warsaw, the seat of high European culture. As Sasha's friend Jascha Saunders reflects, "there was no reason to keep oneself separate and cut off any longer. The world at large, or at least enough of it, had freed itself from the steel-trap dogmas and pieties of the past, so that there was room at last to enter" (Goldstein: 222). In Jascha's eyes, those Jews intent on clinging to the

[463] Massey, p. 157.

particularity of the Jewish experience and to the collective destiny of Jews everywhere (the Yiddishists, Bundists, and Zionists, most conspicuously) were "stalled halfway on their path to clear thinking, overcome by the centuries-weighted pull from the past" (Goldstein: 222).

Sasha's generation want to forget the past. Andrew Furman points out that the aspiring composer, Jascha claims Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms as his mentors and feels only a remote affinity for Abraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Sasha, no doubt, would express roughly the same detachment from her matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.[464] Sasha's and Jascha's passionate embrace of a mainstream rather than a Jewish cultural heritage evokes the sentiments of Philip Roth's familiar protagonist, Nathan Zuckerman in *The Counterlife*.

Goldstein tries to suggest that the world of Yiddishkeit, is never a singular one. It always represented diversity and inclusion. She contrasts the shtetl community in Galicia with the urban and urbane world of the Yiddish theatre in Warsaw to show the latter's multicultural tendencies. Sasha travels with her theatre colleagues to Vilna, "the 'Jerusalem of Europe'…legendary for its scholars, whether yeshiva students or committed secularists" (Goldstein: 303). "Goldstein represents the world of Yiddishkeit[465] as always already a multicultural space, and the cohabitation of 'yeshiva students' and 'committed secularists' in Vilna suggests a legacy of religious diversity."[466] Thus, modernity is a kind of a solution to the problem of the Jew in contemporary times. *Mazel* seems to reflect that multiculturalism has become the mark of the modern world; had it been neglected, Jews would have had to pay dearly and stay confined in communities cut off from the rest of the world.

2.3.Israel as Home

Mazel represents Israel as a place where one can get refuge, however, it is never a place for residence and security. It does not celebrate Israel as the place in which 'exile' will come to an end. The protagonist does not find in Israel a fulfilment of the traditional dream. "What can it mean for Jews to come home, impelled by their tradition, if what they find and build there falls short of the fulfilment stored up in every traditional promise of return?"[467] Sasha could not stay there because she realizes that the society she will deal with is being formulated according to

[464] Furman, p. 97.
[465] The Jewish way of life, its customs and practices.
[466] Meyers, p. 135.
[467] Arnold M. Eisen. *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. xii.

essential orthodox Jewish traditions which confiscated her freedom in the European shtetl. For her, Israel is another type of exile. It is a place where the past presides over people and modernity will not have the upper hand.

Homecoming in *Mazel* seems to be the arrival in any place in the world to start a fruitful and peaceful life there. The Zionist propaganda which calls for the Jews in the world to go back to the Holy Land and express a sense of nationality in Israel is problematized here. American Jews like Sasha ponder the idea of exile and search for a common understanding to their ambivalent relation to the centre.[468] "What does exile mean if the majority of the Jewish people have freely chosen it over life inside the land? Today as always Jews grasp their continuing homelessness primarily in terms of homecoming, and their land in terms of exile."[469]

The Jewish tradition has prevented Jews "from calling their new nation among the nations by the simple (but for Jews messianic) word *home*."[470] The Zionist debates concerning the meaning of exile and homecoming were influential among Jews in the diaspora. It usually provokes debate as to which one is better and safer, Israel or the Jewish diaspora. "Israelis…are fond of arguing that exile remains exile, for all that it now goes by the honorific diaspora. American Jewry like previous *galut* communities is either doomed to destruction or barren of creativity or both."[471] *Mazel* is trying to find a valid analogy between this supposition and the actual situation of Jews in America.

Goldstein's novel is much influenced by modernity and therefore it challenges the traditional threatening of Jews who refuse to comply with the Zionist ideology. Arnold M. Eisen states some common Israeli opinion; he says: "The fate of American Jews will be the same— a sentence which seems to follow as inexorably as biblical Justice from the crime that they have committed in failing to act upon or even recognize the fact of their homelessness at the very moment of Jewish homecoming. America is not 'different,' it is exile. Only Israel can be home."[472]

Many American Jews reject this claim. "They invoke traditional sources in order to remind Israelis that homecoming has always meant far more than physical return to the land of Israel. And they offer a reading of Jewish history and contemporary Jewish experience that

[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid.

effectively denies the centrality of the land in Jewish life, past or present."[473] Goldstein makes it clear in *Mazel* that Israel is not a centre for all Jews. Israel as a nation is not shown as a place for homemaking. Usually in *Mazel*, when there is home to be made, there is a man and a woman occupying it. In Israel, Sasha is alone without Maurice who could not make it to Israel when the Nazis invade Vilna. She spends three years there waiting for him until she loses hope. Sasha and her then baby Chloe remain in a Kibbutz. This type of living signifies a temporary status. Arnold M. Eisen states that:

> The traditional concept of exile is inapplicable to contemporary American realities, they insist. Nor can Israel be called home. The pretensions in this regard heard regularly in Jerusalem should be attributed to the obvious insecurities of Israeli life, the country's desperate need for immigrants, and the understandable effort to legitimate a homecoming called severely into question by the refusal of most diaspora Jews to join it. America is far from exile, rather as much a home as Jews could hope for. Israel is a home in different sense—but it is not Home.[474]

The Holocaust as a violent reminder in Jewish history can always question the reliability of diasporic life. The Zionist argument uses it as a hard evidence to prove that diaspora is exile. However, as Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi has noted, "the Holocaust may have turned the European exile from a place in which Home was imagined to a 'real home' that can only be recalled from somewhere else and reconstructed from its shards; retrospectively, that is, the destruction seems to have territorialized exile as a lost home."[475] Michael Galchinsky has identified a pattern of presenting the Old World, this "lost home," as a homeland sentimentalized as a quaint and timeless place of Jewish wholeness, a seamless Yiddishkeit."[476] *Mazel* does not sentimentalize Eastern Europe as a monolithic, prefabricated Jewish homeland by using fragments of a Yiddish folktale to interweave narratives of Old Worlds and New. Rather, it relies on tradition and history in order to reflect that memory is essential to Jews in the diaspora. The Holocaust should not be forgotten as well as the Yiddish folktales, but life should change in order to cope with the time-changes. Home should be recreated rather than resurrected from the past.

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[473] Ibid.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination*. (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000. Print), p. 17.
[476] Michael Galchinsky, "Scattered Seeds: A Dialogue of Diasporas." *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism.* (eds.) David Biale, et al. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998), p. 201.

Despite the fact that the narrative does not show Israel as a permanent home, it reflects that Israel is a haven in case Jewish life comes to be at stake. *Mazel* warns against assimilation and forgetfulness. Goldstein seems to give way for assimilationists to express their opinion about modernity and homeland. It seems also that there is a slight divide between modernity and assimilation which the narrative tries to clarify. Rejecting Israel altogether is also not serving Jews in modern times. In the café Pripetshok of Jewish Warsaw, Goldstein presents the debate of whether Israel is "the Jewish homeland." When the "rabid Zionist Zev Ben-Something-or-Other" explains his national ideology, the rabid assimilationist Jascha expresses his own:

> Homeland? He had turned the word contemptuously back on the odious little firebrand. I suppose by this you mean some wilderness on the other side of the globe, on which I have never laid eyes, and which I don't even know how to picture, but which, from its description, even by those who profess themselves its eternal lovers, can promise me *nothing*. And yet, if I am to believe the arguments of people like you, it is that place, and not here in the Europe of my birth, and of my father's birth, and of my father's father's father's birth, that I am to think of as my authentic homeland. (Goldstein: 224)

Jascha believes that Jewish difference is the product of anti-Semitism, and he foreshadows that "in a few generations, three or four at the most, nobody will even remember who was a sandalwearer and who wasn't" (Goldstein: 269). The novel seems to side with the Jewish specificity and does not approve of Jascha's wholesale dismissal of Zionism. With the Nazi invasion of Poland and Vilna, the genocidal armies capture all Jews there including Jascha, who thought he would be Polish at the wrong moment of history. Sasha escapes occupied Vilna and finds refuge in Israel with the help of Zev Ben-Zion who provides her with an exit visa. In sharp contrast to the Boyarins' view of Zionism as a "subversion of Jewish culture,"[477] *Mazel* gives Jewish nationalism its due as a preserver of Jewish life and Jewish difference. Yet Sasha resides in Palestine only temporarily because of "the harshness of the life there for which she hadn't the ideals to make it tolerable" (Goldstein: 340).

3. American Modernity and the Return to Jewish Tradition

Rebecca Goldstein has written a book on Baruch Spinoza in which she tells also her own experience at school with her Orthodox Jewish teacher and how she tried to censure Spinoza's

[477] Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity." *Critical Inquiry* 19, No. 4 (Summer 1993): 693-725. Accessed: 19/04/2017 19:03, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343903

work and criticize him as a person only because he broke away from his people's traditions and chose a path of his own. The title of the book is *Betraying Spinoza: the Renegade Jew who Gave us Modernity* (2006). We can see that the title reflects that Jews are just like other ethnic groups in Europe, they must have come under the influence of modernity in the advent of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, modernity was frowned upon by the majority of Jews at that time. When Spinoza started to talk about his beliefs, he faced a difficult situation. He was excommunicated from the Jewish congregation.

Despite the initial rejection of his beliefs, Spinoza's work has been able to influence many Jews concerning what he considered as the invalidity of many traditional Jewish concepts, including the holiness of Jerusalem and the eventual return to it when the Messiah finally comes. Spinoza considered Jerusalem as an ordinary piece of land and the return to it is not significant, and it would not enrich the lives of Jews whether on the spiritual level or the material one.

The demystification of the land undertaken by Spinoza and his universalization of "Jerusalem," led the Jews to think of their present and future existence in a political manner. Accordingly, Jewish ambitions changed from the future return to Zion through the help of God into the active search for opportunities in Europe through medium of political action. Spinoza paved the way for such action. He pushed Jewish political energies into another locus away from the Land[478]. "The task for Jewish religious thought, as a result, became the imagination of Judaism compatible with Emancipation in lands where the Jews resided. Those countries would soon not be called *galut* at all—but rather *diaspora*."[479]

Principal nineteenth-century Jewish thinkers also advocated this new trend in minimizing the substance of Eretz[480] Israel, as well as the new scope of Jewish political and religious outlook. They conceived of Jerusalem as a symbol with no real religious power. The concept of return to Jerusalem transformed into "the notion of a Jewish 'mission unto the nations' which could be fulfilled only if the Jews dwelled among those nations—that is to say, in exile."[481] Yet, Jerusalem is not to be lost forever from the Jewish imagination. It will remain the centre of their spirituality and unity to which they all should pay homage. Despite the fact that Jews are dispersed geographically, they had:

[478] Paradoxically, their teachings influenced Zionists to focus on the land later on.
[479] Eisen, p. 64.
[480] Hebrew for 'land'
[481] Eisen, p. 64.

> maintained a relation with the spiritual center wherever it was. No nation has ever felt as keenly the excitement going on in the spiritual nerve center as have the Jews. Every spiritual sensation spread rapidly from the center to the extreme periphery of the national organism.[482]

In the US, some American Jews maintain this attitude of Jerusalem as the spiritual or the national Jewish centre without the obligation of the actual return. Others consider the notion of Israel or Jerusalem as belonging to an invalid past. Some Jewish immigrants find in America an emancipation from rigid ways of thinking and non-flexible old traditions. The individual has emerged as the focal point of any political action; the individual has become more important than the group. Martha A. Ackelsberg states that: "The dominant perspective on personhood and identity in the United States is an individualistic one: that we 'are' who we are, independent of our specific communal associations, and that we ought to be evaluated and treated according to our 'individual merit' rather than our 'communal' status."[483] This individualist perspective constructs much social policy and highly influences mainstream debates.

With the advent of the Enlightenment, nation and culture started to be differentiated and hence, Jews started to recognize themselves as "A Jew at home and a man abroad". Elaine M. Kauvar points out that in America the process of assimilation resulted in a decrease in the sense of particularism and encouraged an inclination to embrace universalism. When Jews arrived in this country, the first thing they wanted to achieve was to be Americans rapidly. Therefore, their plunge into the American culture was done wholeheartedly.[484]

Accordingly, Jews come to be committed to an open society and cultural pluralism. Respecting diversity signifies another problem for American Jews. "Americanization" has always been connected to "pluralism" as well as assimilation which is the conflation of minority culture into the mainstream one. "To be Americanized, to achieve full participation in the United States, once demanded complete acceptance of America's ideas, values, and mores. It required assimilation."[485]

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[482] Ibid., p. 68.
[483] Martha A. Ackelsberg, "Identity Politics, Political Identities: Thoughts Toward a Multicultural Politics", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1996): p. 87.
[484]Elaine M. Kauvar "Introduction: Some Reflections on Contemporary American Jewish Culture" in *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Special Issue: in *Contemporary American Jewish Literature* (Autumn, 1993) University of Wisconsin Press, p. 338.
[485] Ibid., p. 339.

Embracing assimilation has become a phenomenon among American Jews particularly after World War II. American ways of life can be seen anywhere, up till now. Studies show a high increase in intermarriages, "the single most sensitive indicator of the stability of the Jewish community."[486] Thus, American Jewry's feeble liaison with the Jewish community around the world and with the concept of Jewish continuity has become so much common and evident.[487]

To some extent, the third generation of American Jews show an opposite stance. While the second generation embraced Americanism and feared being accused of particularism, the third has welcomed theology once again. The third generation of American Jews start to indulge in tradition in a shaky or a delicate manner.[488]

Although Goldstein sets out to explore its earlier decline, the resurgence of orthodoxy in America seems to be the novel's predominant theme. Through Phoebe's return to tradition, Goldstein explores the dynamics that makes the individual Jew change his stance from an alienated Jew from his identity and Jewish community to a stance that affirms that identity and its connection with the past. "The question of identity begins with a focus on the ties to one's family, to the people and to the historical, cultural, and religious dimensions of the life of that people."[489]

There is much debate about the authentic Jewish life and how it is to be attained. Many Jewish writers tackle this issue because it really touches the life of every Jew in this modern time in which human rights are always violated and abused. Assimilation has come to be frowned upon by some Jewish intellectuals like Cynthia Ozick who takes the responsibility upon herself to be a Jewish writer though she also understands how challenging this attitude might be. As a woman, she always warns her community about abusing women because that behaviour will result in more rejection of Judaism by Jews themselves. As a critic and author, she never falters in raising awareness in her Jewish community that degrading women is not serving the cause of Jews in the diaspora. The status of women should be elevated in terms of human rights, otherwise Jewish culture will be in a crisis.[490] She says: "What happens is that the

[486] Arthur Hertzber, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter*, (Colombia University Press, 1989), p. 383.
[487] Kauvar, p. 341.
[488] Ibid., p. 338.
[489] Michael Oppenheim, "Eliezer Schweid: A Philosophy of Return", *Judaism*. Winter86, Vol. 35 Issue 1, p. 67.

[490] Victor Strandberg, *Greek Mind/Jewish Soul: The Conflicted Art of Cynthia Ozi*ck. (Madison, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), p. 15.

general culture, along with the object of its debasement is also debased. If you laugh at women, you play Beethoven in vain."[491]

We can see Ozick's warning manifesting itself in Goldstein's *Mazel* in the behaviour of Sasha who displays a desire to disconnect from the past. Lipton as place that holds a Jewish community only reminds her of negative circumstances that she faced when she was little in her traditional shtetl. Andrew Furman states that: "Right down to its foul-smelling brook, Lipton reminds her of Shluftchev and its stinking puddle, of all that was provincial and sordid about her childhood shtetl. Even more significantly, Lipton upholds and perpetuates Shluftchev's rigid Jewish codes of conduct, which proved too much for Fraydel to bear."[492]

Sasha could not understand Phoebe's decision to reside in Lipton: "I can't understand it…. I had always taken for granted a certain level of enlightenment. What kind of fiendish mind could have dreamt up such a thing as Lipton. Suburbia isn't bad enough" (Goldstein: 324). For Sasha, Lipton is a place where patriarchal limits are imposed on women's bodies. It is not different from Schluftchev, though it is in America. The "reshtetlization of America" (Goldstein: 354) as she describes it, reflects her fear of orthodox resurgence. "Her use of the term 'enlightenment' signals that she regards Lipton as a form of Jewish regression, a return to the days prior to Haskalah[493] and before the emancipation of Jews/women."[494]

Victor Strandberg criticizes the tradition; he says, "Like other religious traditions which have tried to keep their heritage pure over millennia—one thinks of the Roman Catholic Church and of Isalm—Orthodox Judaism has maintained some undeniable practices of male supremacy."[495] For example, synagogue worship can be done by an assembly that comprise no fewer than ten bar mitzvahed males. The number of women is not important. "During Jewish worship, men only occupy the sanctuary, while women stay apart in a sort of gallery for spectators."[496] In *Mazel* we see a number of situations that show women as occupying a lesser status than that of men.

Sasha cannot fathom why her contemporary, educated granddaughter would subject herself to the indignities of Orthodox Jewish life. "You are an educated woman!", she berates Phoebe. "A professor! Why would you want to start up all over again with those *old ways*?"

[491] Quoted in Strandberg, p. 15.
[492] Furman, p. 97.
[493] Hebrew for "Enlightenment".
[494] Meyers, p. 138.
[495] Strandberg, p. 15.
[496] Ibid.

(Goldstein: 338) When friends of Phoebe's in-laws press Sasha to share her impression of their town, she peppers her response with the most provocative dramatic pauses she can muster: "Lipton, New Jersey … is Shluftchev …with a designer's label." (Goldstein: 333) Through Sasha's attitude towards Lipton, we can see her generation fears of Judaism or Jewish tradition which has become incompatible with the modern world from their own point of view.

However, assimilation is also not a favoured attitude of many Jewish intellectuals as well as Israeli ones who have impact on American Jews particularly and Jews in Diaspora generally. Eliezer Schweid is one of the Jewish Philosophers who rejects assimilation and puts the blame on modernity for the dilemma of loneliness and alienation that a good number of Jews suffer from. He believes that the problem lies in the individualistic vantage point that modernity calls for to the extent that one might be detached from his/her origins in order to enjoy its merits.

Schweid rejects the individualistic approach of existential thinkers and adopts a communitarian one. Hence he is able to identify the origin of loneliness and the desire to attain meaning among secular Jews. He states that the disintegration of relationships that used to tie the individual to his/her family, community and nation is the main cause of the sense of alienation and loneliness. He recognizes this disintegration as contradictory to human nature.[497]

Human beings are social creatures and they are connected to their fellows by a sense of belonging which obliges them to be responsible for those fellows in cases of national crisis or welfare. "Consequently, human beings are not wholly sovereign and independent but enmeshed essentially with others, starting with current members of the social frameworks to which they belong. They need these others to complete themselves, their identity and their sense of meaning and purpose."[498]

Sasha's assimilatory endeavours start once she immigrates to the US: "[u]ltimately, Sasha makes her home among the Yiddishists in New York, later, among Colombia student radicals whose ardent dialogue… reminded Sasha, just a little, of the Café Pripetshok" (Goldstein: 347) Sasha successfully makes a home in America: "even as a newcomer she'd had no patience to listen to the self-described exiles, the Yiddish writers and actors who used to gather in those days at the Café Royale on fourteenth street in order to kvetch, one more sour

[497] Ari Ackerman, "Eliezer Schweid on the Religious Dimension of Secular Jewish Renewal" *Modern Judaism*, Published by Oxford University Press, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May 2010), p. 211.

[498] Ibid.

than the next. *This* was exile? From what? From *Poland*?" (Goldstein: 7) It is obvious how Sasha wants to detach herself from a place that seems backward to her. She cannot understand other Yiddishists' homesickness and feels perplexed by their feelings. The desire to assimilate into the New York mainstream culture is evident in Sasha's behaviour.

Helene Meyers argues that Sasha's understanding of those self-described exiles and her response to New York delineate that diaspora and exile should not be confused as one thing. The apparently tough boundaries between diaspora and homeland can be so permeable or even nonexistence for some people like Sasha who considers herself as "somehow or other… a born New Yorker" (Goldstein: 7).[499] Nevertheless, occupying the third space and being diasporic is not very comfortable if it is done according to Sasha's model as it is represented in *Mazel*. As Schweid puts it, the individual has to be connected to the past in order to envision a good future. Sasha's ability to mix with her new American community is a good sign of tolerance that modernity also encourages, but her detachment from her Jewish community and her denial of Judaism as a culture is what makes Jewish commentators disapprove of diasporic life and label it as inauthentic.

Assimilation has its consequences in the Diaspora. Andrew Furman states that "an unprecedented number of young Jewish Americans, raised largely ignorant of Judaism, have become part of the *baal t'shuva* (returnee) Phenomenon."[500] Goldstein here, by presenting Phoebe's religious ardor, comes out with a new attitude towards Judaism. In this situation she is presenting the third generation of immigrants' cultural interests and how they respond to the contemporary Zionist debates concerning Diaspora and homeland.

Phoebe cannot see herself as detached as her mother Chloe and her grandmother Sasha. Goldstein's choice of Phoebe as the typical returnee in her novel instead of Chloe is that Phoebe who is the one born in America without a father like Maurice coming basically from a pre-World War II Warsaw. For Phoebe there is no connection whatsoever with any Jewish heritage. Chloe is also brought up as an assimilated Jew but at least she is exposed to some past narrations of events and culture. For Phoebe, it is total oblivion concerning her origins. Schweid considers humans as historical beings that are firmly attached to a cultural tradition which participates in shaping their identity. Therefore, the "the individual human existence does not start from itself anew but is situated in a larger historical context. There is a historical given that

[499] Meyers, p. 137.
[500] Furman, p. 98.

precedes each human existence."[501] In this case, the experiment to free oneself from the past and deny "the historical-cultural dimension of human existence" is a futile endeavour. Human beings should recognize themselves as living "within a temporal continuity that stretches back into the past and extends to the future."[502] Schweid's notion of the human as a historical being can be applied to Phoebe, who decides to return to traditional Judaism.

For Goldstein, one third space is never enough in order to explore Jewish difference which is produced throughout modern history. The question of a Jewish homeland is radically envisioned through Phoebe's life in the Modern Orthodox community of Lipton, New Jersey, "the very first place in which Phoebe feels quite entirely at home." (Goldstein: 8) For Phoebe, the return to traditional Judaism is like the return to an actual home. The community that she chooses to live among and deal with for the rest of her life is the community which will provide her with that connection to the past as well as provide her with continuity into the future. This community makes her feel that she can share her destiny with a group that she finally defines as her people.

According to Schweid, if the individual Jew wants to establish a relationship of wholeness, continuity, and creativity with the Jewish past and present, he/she must maintain some important aspects of the Jewish religious life. "If a whole Jewish life is the goal, then a powerful religious foundation for it is inescapable."[503] Schweid also affirms "that an authentic Jewish life necessitates a positive relationship to Judaism as a religious tradition."[504] Goldstein seems to give us such a model through Phoebe, yet, we do not see Phoebe sacrificing any of her privileges as a woman living in modern America. Although she makes her home in this modern orthodox Lipton, she does not confine herself there. Lipton is also the place from which she sets out to successfully communicate with "the altogether different world, the genteel, the posh, the Waspy world of Princeton" (Goldstein: 5). All Sasha's fears for Phoebe are incorrectly conceived. Later on in Phoebe's marriage ceremony, we can see that there is a multicultural atmosphere presiding over the place. The husband, Jason, seems to be an intellectual and egalitarian partner. Lipton, where Phoebe can feel at home in the world, is sometimes referred to as the Jerusalem of New Jersey. This reference can suggest that Jerusalem can be constructed anywhere the Jew wants. Religion is used here as a tool to get into Jewish culture and learn more about the meaning of being a Jew. Helene Meyers states that "a Jewish woman question

[501] Ackerman, p. 211.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Oppenheim, p. 67.
[504] Ibid.

determines this other Jerusalem's status as a real home. Rather than replace Zionism with Diaspora or vice versa, Goldstein's fiction keeps these terms in productive play with one another and with a feminist politics of home."[505] She does so in order to reflect what is happening on the diaspora-homeland debate without totally rejecting or embracing either side of them.

Toward the end of the novel, Phoebe's traditional Jewish wedding ceremony is described to both guests and readers: "the chuppa, the booklet explained, symbolizes the new home that the couple will create together" (Goldstein: 352). Thus Goldstein's question concerning the possibility of Jewish home-making is answered when the wedding follows the cultural Jewish tradition. It is a traditional wedding to which many Gentiles are invited. Meyers points out that "the names of Phoebe's mathematician bridesmaids, Cindy Chan and Shanti Chervu, suggest that the making of homes that embody Jewish particularism is not a self-imposed form of ghettoization; rather, such homes can find room for multiculturalism and for other ethnic subjects who have diasporic/homeland debates of their own."[506]

Despite the fact that in *Mazel* we have a celebration of diasporic homes, diasporic wandering is not dehistoricized or idealized. Meyers states that "Maurice, Sasha's husband, is the nomad of *Mazel*. His wandering ways are not theoretical exercise but rather survival strategies in response to attempted genocide."[507]

> Maurice had taken the long route out of Vilna. After he had finally persuaded Sasha, using every form of entreaty his inventive mind could offer, to leave the occupied city on Zev Ben-Zion's visa, he had travelled more deeply into Russia, spending long months in prison when he had been caught with false identification papers. He had thought he would rot there, but a Jewish jailer had finally bribed the right people and Maurice had made his way eventually to Japan, and then, by steamer, to Calcutta via Shanghai. From India, he had taken a ferry via the Suez Canal, where he had been shelled by German guns. The plan had been for Sasha and Maurice to reunite in Palestine, but Maurice was three years too late, and Sasha was gone. (Goldstein: 326)

[505] Meyers, p. 138.
[506] Ibid., p. 139.
[507] Ibid., p. 138.

Neither America nor any place else served Maurice's familial needs. The home that Sasha makes in the US is not attainable by him. Maurice suffers from his desire to find a place similar to his pre-war Warsaw. He could not settle down in New York after he was reunited with Sasha. He chooses life in the margins instead. Murray Baumgarten suggests that marginality can become a resource for people like Maurice.[508] Meyers similarly argues that Maurice's desire to adopt "nomadic ways" is not only to experience "the endless variety of human lives to be found on this planet" (Goldstein: 328) "but also to escape the horrors of history and memory."[509] "Staying put for too long brought out the sadness. He'd leave, always for someplace cold" (Goldstein: 327). The life that Maurice adopts in the US reflects that *Mazel* also manifests the painful consequences of the scattering events which have been faced by Jews.

The notion of authenticity are not connected to Israel or to Judaism. Rather they are more connected to multicultural and inclusive style of life where the Jew is connected to his/her past as well as to his/her present. Sasha's Riverside apartment is a Jewish home as long as Sasha is still keeping the past as a guide to live a better present life. Phoebe's home in Lipton is also authentic as long as Phoebe manifests this hybrid identity with which she can mingle easily with both the Jewish and the American communities. Therefore homes are not necessarily connected with land masses. A renewed relationship to the Jewish family, culture, community, history, and sacred sources does not require the complete abandonment of modern secular patterns of behaviour and thinking. There is no opposition between Judaism and modernity in this environment.

bell hooks, in *Yearning*, emphasises the idea that "our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting"[510], The protagonist never forgets the shtetl. The shtetl as a place here is not only a location that reminds her of good times with her family in the past. It is also the place that represents the Jewish tradition which she finds so inhumane. Goldstein seems to differentiate between nostalgia which is the longing for something to return as it used to be, and remembering which helps to elucidate and renovate the present. Remembering the past here serves to shed light on the points in Jewish tradition that do not correlate with the requirements of the modern world and do not answer its demands. By remembering, there is an acknowledgment of the dilemmas that Jewish orthodoxy produces for feminists or human rights activists. The symbolic death in the shtetl presented by the narrative signifies the culmination of

[508] Murray Baumgarten, "Dancing at Two Weddings: Mazel Between Exile and Diaspora" in *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewsih Identities*, (ed.) Howard Wettstein,(Berkeley : (U of California P, 2002), p. 84.
[509] Meyers, p. 138.
[510] bell hooks, p. 148.

the fear that the progressive Jew might have when there is a sign of orthodoxy resurgence in environments characterized by modernity like the US.

With the aid of living in a modern environment, Jewish homes become those that protect the bodies and minds of Jewish women rather than sacrificing them for orthodox traditions. In *Mazel*, New York or New Jersey are sites suitable for constructing successful Jewish homes whether they are religious or secular. "Of late, the traditional hierarchy of homeland over diaspora has been too simply reversed. Such a reversal has functioned not only to acknowledge the creativity of diaspora consciousness but also to express a growing theoretical suspicion of and aversion to nation-states and identity politics."[511]

Thus, in *Mazel*, the debate of the lacuna position between orthodox Jewish tradition and modernity functions to highlight the Jewish lurking fears of forgetting the past and at the same time warn against social exclusion and women abuse. Moreover, this debate discourages assimilation and emphasises Jewish continuity as well as inclusive thinking and behaviour to dismiss religious and theoretical fundamentalism.

[511] Meyers, p. 140.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have discussed the theme of 'in-betweenness' and its concomitant identity dilemma as it is represented in selected Arab-American and Jewish-American literary productions. This theme is approached through the perspective of cultural identity and how it is influenced by various social, religious, ethnic and historical factors relating to migrant and diaspora conditions in the United States. Throughout my case studies, I have investigated how the postcolonial reality of the world has come to formulate the personal and collective identity of Arabs and Jews before and after migration. Modernity and modernization are considered major factors that shape the outlook of individuals before the chance of migration emerges. Orthodoxy and strict traditions turn unfavourable and invalid for many people. Thus, with the impact of modernization in the Arab countries as well as in Europe, Arabs and Jews start to deal with challenges that are connected with their cultural identity and gender politics of their own communities. This impact has resulted in a change in the way intellectuals and mass media venues tackle these issues. The cultural reaction among Arabs and Jews show a transformation concerning their received norms and traditions. This acculturation status contributes to the liminal status that Homi K. Bhabha defines in his landmark, *The Location of Culture* (2004).

This 'in-between' condition can be classified into four categories that are closely related to the theme of East vs West, or we can also say the theme of European hegemony and its effect on Arabs during and after the colonial era as well as on Jews as an ethnic group in Europe. Before migration, modernization plays a role in constructing a new image for the West in the Arabs' and Jews' imaginations and leads to a kind of inferiority complex for many members from both ethnicities. The infatuation about the West and the inferiority complex sometimes become part of the reasons for migration. Nevertheless, other members from the aforementioned ethnicities come under other types of pressure after migration. The image of home comes to be formulated in a manner that places the individual in a liminal space wherein s/he cannot decide where home is. The home of origin is sometimes seen as an exile in comparison with an advanced and civilized West. In this case, the migrant might nurture an inferiority complex towards his/her origin and culture. Assimilation is regarded as a means to discard the remnants of the past and claim new identity in accordance with the host home. At other times, the home of origin is seen as an ideal place where all dreams can be realized and all feelings of loss, fear and alienation come to an end. In this case, the migrant might have a superiority complex to consider oneself and one's community as far better than the people in the host country. In both cases there are challenges that lead to the liminal space where one has to engage with the home

culture as well as the mainstream culture in the host country. The cultural identity has to be affected by that engagement and come to be negotiated and hybridized.

The image of home can be emphasized in different contrastive ways by scholars and religious authoritative figures as in the case of Israel and its debatable status as the sole home for Jews. Some scholars and writers support this position and advise the world Jewry to migrate to Israel as it is their final haven to protect them from a possible act of anti-Semitism. Other scholars contradict this frame of mind and insist that diaspora is a better condition for Jews as it provides them with a better space for creativity and agency. These two ideologies can place the migrant/diasporic Jew in a liminal space where one does not know what to choose—Israel or diaspora. The cultural identity here is also affected by these two debates. Here, assimilation is seen as a problematic condition that might situate a Jew in jeopardy for anti-Semitism is not a phenomenon from the past. It is still practiced here and there and it affects and disturbs Jews in the diaspora and make the prospect of migrating to Israel more favourable. All these factors accumulate to place the cultural identity in an 'in-between' space where it should be negotiated and reformulated.

Modernity and orthodoxy is another situation wherein Jews have to deal with memory and the present time. The past and the old traditions come to be questioned and seen as invalid in a world trying to enhance human rights and confine religious and social authority and renegotiate identity politics across a vast spectrum of minorities and gender issues. Assimilation is also embraced as a quick action to discard with the Jewish orthodox tradition by the first and second generations of migrants. However, the third generation recognizes a dilemma in their sense of belonging and inability to identify with the American half of their hyphenated identity. A 'return' to Jewish tradition comes to be required and a Jewish community comes to be needed in order for a sense of belonging to be established.

All the works that I have dealt with have aesthetically represented the migrant/diasporic experience of liminality which involves the suffering from exile and dislocation and the longing for stability and establishment of a new life. At the same time, the texts problematize assimilation and illuminate its negative sides for both Arabs and Jews. They also problematize Islamophobia and anti-Semitism which always tend to stereotype Arabs and Jews and put a label on them—in most cases that label reads 'bad', 'greedy', 'fanatic', 'terrorist', 'murderer', etc. All the texts that have been discussed in my study illustrate migrant and diasporic figures

with their identities subject to various effects that reformulate them according to the new requirements of the new host home.

In chapter one, I have examined the challenging question of shuttling between borders and its connection with cultural identity in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine* (2001). In this text, the dilemma of identity is manifested through the inferiority complex that the protagonist nurtures due to the Western cultural impact coming from the mass media as well as from the general outlook of people concerning West and East and what each one of them signifies. The theory of mimicry and the theory of the uncanny are used to reflect the anxiety of the protagonist concerning her cultural identity and her home of origin. The chasm that she finds when it comes to gender issues and the restrictions imposed by the society on her body causes a liminal space that she decides to fight through her migration to the US. However, the liminal space persists even after the migration. A huge difference comes to be recognized between the two cultures that prevents the protagonist from finding creativity in the liminal space. A distorted image of home is already created because of the violence brought about by the war as well as by the status of women which is difficult to negotiate. The narrative focuses on the home of origin as an unhomely place. So one can conclude that the liminal space problematizes the image of home on the one hand; but it also helps the protagonist to recognize important social and political predicaments that the society needs to resolve. Rabih Alameddine, in his portrayal of the of the Arab community, tries to shed light on racism, bigotry, gender inequality, and homophobic attitudes that his home of origin suffers from. The liminal space helps one to see uncanny situations in both locations, that is, in the home of origin as well as in the host country. The transnational movement between the borders operates the border effect of the 'uncanny' and thus contributes to the process of reconciling with the past of the home of origin and establish a third space where one can reconcile the two halves of his/her hyphenated identity.

Chapter two has offered an exploration of the 'in-between' dilemma of a Muslim Arab girl who already has a superiority complex concerning her Arab identity and feels that her culture is the chosen one while American culture is degraded and cheap. This theme is tackled in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) which tells the story of Khadra, the Syrian girl who migrates to the US with her family because of the religious persecution practiced in her home of origin against them. Belonging to the Muslim brotherhood organization makes the Shamy family a target for the political regime from which they had to flee and seek refuge in the US. The sense of superiority that the protagonist has as well as all

her family members encourages them to live in exclusion. They choose to exclude themselves from American society, a matter that initiates a liminal space for Khadra in which she has to deal with the traditional Muslim culture within her community and the mainstream American culture which is hostile to Arabs and Muslims. The liminal space here is occupied with an ideal image of the home of origin in the imagination of the protagonist. It is an image that exists only in the mind of the protagonist and it starts to shatter with her first visits to Arab countries before she visits Syria after a long time since the migration. Once again, the liminal space opens the way for a critique of the traditional Muslim culture in relation to gender politics. Moreover, it also paves the way for a critique of the American culture in relation to Islamophobia and the demonization of Arabs. Kahf puts this critique within a paradigm of resistance which enables the protagonist to find a third space where she can find a modern and updated form of Islam to practice in the US and also find an American culture to which she belongs. So the text rejects Orientalization carried out by the American mainstream media and invites new interpretations of women's status in Islam. The text does that through a liminal construction dealt with by the protagonist.

In chapter three, I move to the discussion of the liminal space in Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* (1986) and how it can be aesthetically presented in Jewish-American writing. The protagonist Nathan Zuckerman is occupying a liminal space where he tries to find where home is. He grapples with two ideologies that contrast with each other. One of them emphasizes migration to Israel and the other emphasizes a diasporic mode of life. Roth examines these ideologies and probes their problems in a number of parallel lives portrayed in *The Counterlife*. The liminality can be seen within a framework of two concepts of Jewishness. One of them is 'the authentic Jew' which is mostly ascribed to Jews who keep traditions and the other is the 'abnormality', a trait ascribed to Jews who assimilate while living in the diaspora. The text attempts to show the 'in-between' situation of the protagonist and other Jewish characters while they deal with 'return to Israel' prospect as a part of the anxiety of their ethnic identity. The concept of 'return' is closely connected to the subconscious fear of anti-Semitism which is always a possibility for Jews living in the diaspora. Too much sense of security in the US is dangerous for Jews according to the ideology that encourages migration to Israel. Hatred of Jews is not a story from the past. It is always there lurking; it constantly arises especially when there is a conflict between Israel and the Arab world. The text underlines the dilemma of 'in-betweenness' against a background of ambivalence. The characters are confused concerning their sense of belonging and their notion of home. Assimilation is satirized in the text to reflect

a condemnation of some Jews' rejection of Jewishness. The concept of Israel as a haven is also problematized and put to the test by the protagonist who observes the amount of violence practiced in there and wonders if this place is truly secure. Therefore, the text illustrates that the liminal space helps to diagnose problems that threaten human rights and encourage a third space where one can observe tradition as well as lead an American life in the diaspora.

In chapter four, I have engaged in a critical analysis of a literary representation of the dilemma of Jewish 'in-betweenness' when it comes to Orthodox traditions and modernity in Rebecca Goldstein's *Mazel* (1995). Jewish communities that choose exclusion are symbolized by the image of the shtetl in the text. The life in that European shtetl is dull and stagnant. Traditions are kept without consideration to the cultural changes brought about by modernity. The protagonist grows to recognize her situation there as that of an exile. She experiences alienation while she is living with her own community. Her struggles with her identity starts from that shtetl mode of existence where one is confined to strict gender politics. So the liminal space is created for the protagonist in that limited community which refuses to mingle with the outside world. Assimilation is also seen as a solution after the migration to the US, however, it is problematized when their descendants express alienation and a sense of loss because of leading that assimilated style of life. Traditions emerge as a necessity and a means to keep the Jewish continuity and fight the loss of identity. A 'return' to Orthodoxy is not recognized as a return to old and backward Jewish reality, rather it is seen as a practice that preserves Jewishness and helps in constructing a third space where a hybrid identity is formed.

According to what has been presented, this thesis suggests that the Arab-American and Jewish-American authors whose works have been analyzed here, share similar interests and concerns about gender politics and the image of home. Their fiction explores the dilemma of 'in-betweenness' and how migrants and diasporic subjects grapple with their cultural identity transformations vis-à-vis social and religious challenges. The texts articulate a certain knowledge or experience undergone by the authors themselves; being migrants or diasporans plays a role in their identity reformation on a background of socio-cultural conflicts between their own ethnic communities and the American society—between their own homeland culture and the mainstream culture of the host country. Their protagonists are all struggling to reach a third space where they can find a solution for their problems with their home of origin if that is the case or with the host country.

The importance of this study stems from the fact that these texts represent both ethnic groups, i.e. Arabs and Jews, who have dealt with the issue of authenticity and modernity before and after migration. This issue is significant because it has become compelling since the beginning of the 20th century. The first half of that century witnessed the colonialization of the Middle East and North Africa and thus the concept of modernity with all its connotations came to spread among colonized people. Hereafter, the question of authenticity vs modernity emerged to instigate numerous debates that have religious and cultural dimensions. Similarly, in the 20th century, Jews in Europe were also under political pressures and life-threatening situations that forced them to ponder the question of authenticity and modernity. Cultural changes that have influenced these places played a role in bringing crises like cultural identity dilemmas. Migration to the US has intensified the sense of 'in-between' authenticity and modernity. These texts draw the attention to the importance of embracing both. They also delineate the anxiety that emerges if one denies that 'in-between' situation.

One of the factors that lead this study to be carried out is the limited number of studies that focus on Arab-American and Jewish-American literatures together. In this field, we already have studies that investigate American literature that focuses on Jewish and Arab images and conflicts like that of Asma Al-Naser's dissertation entitled *Beyond Redemption: Postwar America and the Question of Palestine* (2013) which argues that the 1967 war plays the role of a catalyst that constitutively paired the Holocaust with the Israeli army in the United States to show the Middle East as a suitable place to fight anti-Semitism. Another example is Samar Hameed H. Al-Jahdali's thesis entitled *Venturing into a Vanishing Space: Representations of Palestine in Jewish-American and Arab Novels* (2014) which also tackles the literary representation of Palestine by Jewish-American and Arab-American novelists within the emergent geopolitics of settler colonialism. It illustrates how postcolonial theory proves necessary to explain the cultural and political specificities of the Palestinian situation as a fictional representation as well as a knowable history. The thesis argues that the case of Palestine problematizes the settler colonial paradigm.

Other studies that can continue from this thesis are those which research in Arab-American and Jewish-American texts that deal with the concept of nationality, gender issues and the image of woman's body, anti-Semitism/Islamophobia, Tradition and homosexuality, assimilation vs subconscious connection to the home of origin, and other contemporary issues. They can also research in Arabic literature relating to Palestinian issues of migration and displacement to be compared to Jewish literature tackling themes of migration from their

original countries to Israel. Moreover, they can investigate Arabic literature that represents the Arab in Israel to be compared with Middle Eastern Jewish literature that tackles the image of Mizrahi Jews in Israel.

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