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Arabs Write Back in English(es):

A Study of Selected Contemporary Arab Anglophone Narratives

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Djouheur and father, Abdelkader. Since my early age, they have instilled in me a desire to learn and made sacrifices so I would have access to a high quality education. Without their support and guidance, I would not be where I am today. This work is also dedicated to my husband, Abdelkader. He has always believed in me and has offered reassurance throughout the process. I could not have accomplished as much as I have without his support and understanding. I also dedicate this accomplishment to my dear children Amira, Kaouther, and Mohamed; my brothers and sisters; and my in-laws. Last, but by no means the least, I dedicate this research work to the soul of Professor Belabbes Neddar (May he rest in peace).

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Abstract

The present thesis focuses on the thematic and discursive properties of four contemporary novels, written in English by Arab immigrant novelists, which are respectively *The Moor's Account* (2014) by Arab-American writer Laila Lalami, *The Return* (2016) by Arab-British novelist Hisham Matar, *The Lebs* (2018) by Arab-Australian author Michael Mohammed Ahmed and *Cockroach* (2008) by Arab-Canadian writer Rawi Hage. The attempt is to analyze these literary productions using a postcolonial approach. The study focalizes on how Arab writers write back to the West that has launched, in the aftermath of 9/11, an unprecedented anti-Muslim/Arab campaign. This xenophobic attitude that targets Muslims and Arabs alike has extensively fuelled the sentiments of hatred and loathing towards Arab and Muslim minorities in Western countries. Such a threatening situation urged many Arab immigrant writers to venture into the writing-back literature, literature that carries the burden of resisting the stereotypical negative view that the West has created and maintained vis-à-vis the Arab world. This is the case of the authors we are dealing with in this work. The four writers who have dissimilar cultural affiliations and backgrounds, offer distinct critical insights with regard to belonging, identity, exile, racism, oppression, and history. Each of the selected writers has creatively and originally contributed to the writing-back process. First, Laila Lalami has offered a new version of history through her historical novel. She interpolates imaginary, but true-like, characters and events in official historical annals written by Westerners. In so doing, the writer destabilizes the established version of history to embrace history in parallel. Second, Hisham Matar has addressed the global reader by providing universal themes, themes of exile, loss, and despair. He transcends the boundaries of a mere story of oppressed and tortured people to reach a status of a national/ international allegory, an allegory of hope and emancipation. Third, M. M. Ahmed presents a unique way of writing back. The Arab-Australian author, unlike his counterparts, has decided to confirm and consolidate the Orientalists' and neo-Orientalists' stereotypes about Arabs. He portrays, honestly as he claims, his community as stupid and dumb. As such, the author writes back, in a reconciling tone, to the West, a place to which Ahmed seeks to adhere, distancing himself from his community. Fourth, Rawi Hage has questioned multiculturalism in Canada and has covertly accused the Western governments of being the cause of Arab immigrants' misfortunes. Last but not least, the writers have linguistically deterritorialized English to convey the revolutionary trait of minor literary artifacts. They have used minor forms and expressions, in their prose, to subvert the major language , in an attempt to fissure the English code and to create, to borrow Deleuze's terms, lines of Flight that enable the minor writer to transcend the linguistic constraints that may constitute an impeding factor to their literary expression.

Keywords: Arab Immigrant, Belonging, Deterritorialization, Exile, Identity, History, Postcolonial theory, Stereotypes, Story-telling.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

For the last few decades, Muslims in general and Arabs, in particular, have been subjected to an unprecedented campaign against them from the Western media, notably after 9/11. Indeed, the aftermath of the terrific event has impacted very negatively the Western perception of the Arab World. This event and many other terrorist attacks in the West have led to the emergence of Neo-orientalism that is a new version of Orientalism, which has consolidated the Orientalist discourse that paved the way to the colonization of most Arab countries. The Neo-orientalist discourse has drastically harmed the Arab psyche; it has added the most violent stereotype, terrorist, to the already seamy list of stereotypes long attributed to Arabs by Orientalists.

Terrorists and potential terrorists are the new stereotypes attributed to Arabs by the West, resulting in a flood of hatred towards all that is Arab or has a relation to the Arab world. Hence, Western authorities have decided to sentence all the Arabs for a lifelong penalty of rejection and resentment because of a minority's guilt. In so doing, unprecedented xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments have been cultivated in western societies, leading to the marginalization of Arab minorities in the West.

Trapped as they are in an atmosphere full of abhorrence, Arab immigrant writers have decided to react. Several writers have attempted to change the bleak image attributed to Arabs. Indeed, many of them have ventured into the writing-back adventure, an inevitable adventure that has for objective to inform the western reader about the Arab identity, culture, and lifestyle. These writers have decided to be a first-hand source of information, which is an authentic source contrary to the one introduced by the Western politicized media.

Arab immigrant literary production, written in English, has long suffered from neglect, before 9/11, but it has received considerable attention after the collapse of the twin towers. This unprecedented interest in Muslims and Arabs alike has for objective to scrutinize what constitutes, according to the West, a potential danger that threatens their existence. Hence, in this thesis, entitled "The Arabs Write Back in English (es)", the attempt is to spotlight some of the literary works, written in English by Arab immigrant writers and to analyse them thematically and stylistically.

Regarding the choice of the thesis' title, the researcher has been inspired by the seminal work entitled '*The Empire Writes Back'* written by Aschcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin in 2002. In this book, the authors argue that writers from former British colonies write in English, the language of the colonizer, to account for their experiences. Yet, to do so seems a challenging task for writers who cannot write in their language of origin simply because it had been suppressed by the colonial power. They have been obliged to write in the colonizer's language to talk about culturally distinct themes, themes that are tightly related to their linguistic code. Facing such constraints has urged the postcolonial writers to deterritorialize the colonial language so that it could meet the demands of its new territory, a place that is geographically, culturally, and linguistically alien to it.

In this thesis, it is argued that, in exile, both languages and writers are displaced. Firstly, the writers are displaced geographically, culturally, and linguistically. They are exiles who have been de-rooted from their native territories to find themselves living in a foreign country to which they have no relation except that of co-existence. Indeed, Arab immigrant writers co-exist with westerners while being on the margin. To put it otherwise, Arab writers, living in the Western world, struggle against the categorization

of Arabs and Muslims as a discarded ethnic group that is alienated and put in the periphery of society. Secondly, language is displaced in that it is used to recount stories about Arabs in Arab settings. English, thus, is deterritorialized and subverted because the Arab immigrant or minor writers as Wail Hassan (2011) calls them interpolate minor forms that belong to their native codes to their prose written genuinely in English.

Writing in English by Arab writers is not new since the first novel written in English by an Arab was *The Book of Khalid* (1911). The book was written by Ameen Rihani, one of the founders of Arab American literature, a literary movement that has started for over a century. Indeed, several Arab writers migrated to America as sojourners, planning to return to their countries after finishing what they came for. However, these writers ended as residents in the New World. Writers like Gibran Khalil Gibran, Ameen Rihani, Mikhail Naimy, Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, and Salom Rizk built the foundation of Arab-American literature, a body of literature that has flourished and gained unprecedented fame after the terrorist attacks. Such violent acts have drastically changed the American, as well as the Western world's, perception of the Arab world in general and Arab immigrants in particular.

The events of 9/11 constitute a turning point for all Arab immigrants in Western countries; Arab-British, Arab-Canadian, and Arab-Australian immigrants have suffered from the questionable classification of most Arabs as terrorists or potential terrorists. Most of them have struggled hard to resist this racist stereotyping machinery that has destabilized their existence. Arab immigrant writers who belong to the aforementioned minorities have participated, in resisting the cruel and racist classification of Arabs as violent criminals, by writing their stories in English, the major language.

English has passed from the status of a colonial language to the status of a global language. It is the lingua franca; the high stature that English has reached has urged several postcolonial writers to write in English, not because of their inability to write in their native languages, nor is it because of its neutrality for some writers that do not belong to ex-British colonies like Laila Lalami, Hisham Matar, Michael Mohammad Ahmed, Rawi Hage and a handful of others; but it is rather because it is the language of their host countries and that it may optimize the most their readership.

In this research, four contemporary novels, written in English by Arab immigrant writers, are selected: *The Moor's Account* (2014), by the Arab-American Laila Lalami; *The Return, Fathers, Sons And The Land in Between* (2016), henceforth, *The Return*, by the Arab-British Hisham Matar; *The Lebs* (2018), by the Arab-Australian Michael Mohammad Ahmed and *Cockroach* (2008), by the Arab-Canadian Rawi Hage . In the novels' analyses, we have respected the chronological order in which the four Arab Anglophone literary trends have emerged, that is, Arab-American, Arab-British, Arab-Australian, and Arab-Canadian.

This thesis aims at defining and enriching the body of literature concerned with Arab immigrant writings in English by trying to answer the question: how do Arab immigrant writers write back to the West? However, before answering this question, the following sub questions should be answered:

1. What are the themes tackled in Arab Anglophone novels?
2. What are the literary techniques used by Arab immigrant writers to resist the stereotypes attributed to Arabs by the West?
3. How could linguistic deterritorialization deliver a counter-hegemonic discourse?
4. How could a minor postcolonial historical novel generate a history in parallel?

Under the following assumptions, the attempt is to provide answers to the already raised questions:

Firstly, given that Arab immigrant writers are exiles who have experienced a forced or chosen displacement, and taking into account the fact that they are postcolonial writers who condemn colonialism and its legacies, they are more likely to tackle topics like displacement, exile, nostalgia, history rewriting, identity restoration, oppression, human rights violations, and so on. Secondly, taking into account the fact that these authors are immigrant writers, it is suggested that the texts at hand belong to what Deleuze and Guatari (1986) call minor literature. Hence, the linguistic deterritorialization, which is the first characteristic of minor literature, is more likely going to be used as a subversive force apt to destabilize and hinder the stereotyping machinery that has long generated negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. Thirdly, given that story-telling has proven to be a primary literary technique in postcolonial narratives, it is proposed that this technique is more likely to function as a counter-hegemonic discourse that resists the already established negative assumptions about the Eastern divide of the world. Fourth and last, given that Lalami's novel, *The Moor's Account,* is a historical novel, and taking into account the fact that Hisham Matar's book is a memoir, it is suggested that both writers are more likely going to subvert the historical annals by interpolating their accounts into the official records. In so doing, the two writers are probably going to create their version of history, a version that might challenge the official one.

As for the structure of this thesis, it is divided into six distinct but complementary chapters; the first two are theoretical, aiming to review previous works in connection

with the current research topic. The four remaining ones deal with the analysis of the selected novels.

The first chapter, entitled "Arab Anglophone Literature", is devoted to defining Arab Anglophone works of literatures. It introduces an overview of Arab-American, Arab-British, Arab-Australian, and Arab-Canadian literary productions in English. Yet, before that, an account of Arab presence in the previously mentioned territories is provided. Moreover, a section that is devoted to contemporary Muslim literature is introduced at the end of the chapter.

The second chapter entitled "Postcolonial, Historical and Minor Literature" is dedicated to the description of the postcolonial approach to literature as well as to the methodology adopted in this research work. In this section, an account of the postcolonial theory of literature and its main proponents are introduced along with the concepts they coined. Furthermore, a stylistic model is fashioned by the researcher to account for the linguistic deterritorialization of English and the meaning it yields.

The third chapter, which is a practical part, is devoted to the analysis of Lalami's historical novel *The Moor's Account* thematically and linguistically. In this chapter, the focus is on the several themes tackled by the postcolonial writer. Furthermore, an analysis of the various literary techniques used in the novel is performed to figure out how those very techniques when used in a minor historical novel could generate a history in parallel.

Regarding the choice of the aforementioned book, the attempt is to give right and tribute to Laila Lalami, the Moroccan writer who refuses to see her compatriot, the slave Esteban as the Spaniard called him, silenced in the official records written by Cabeza de Vaca. She gives voice and agency to the first Arab explorer of America. She

also voiced women who were flagrantly absent from the historical annals. She has written, as she said in one of her interviews, what has not been written beforehand. She has rewritten history in her own words.

The fourth chapter, which is the second practical section, is dedicated to the study of Hisham Matar's memoir entitled *The Return* (2016). The book has received a flood of praises from Western literary academia. In this section, the endeavour is to exhibit the thematic properties of a memoir that narrates the traumatic fate of the writer's father who was a dissident to Qaddafi's authoritarian regime. The attempt, in this chapter, is also to show how a personal memoir could turn into a source of historical data. Indeed, Matar writes about the events he witnessed during the so-called Arab Spring. He even gives his version of history when he narrates the stories of his ancestors who were inherently warriors. Also worth mentioning is the study of the linguistic properties of the memoir.

Regarding the choice of Hisham Matar's memoir, the endeavour is to show empathy to an Arab who lost his father in a truly cruel way; he could not even know when exactly he was killed, nor could he bury him after his death. The man vanished, simply because he refused to bow. He opposed to Qaddafi's dictatorship, so he was killed. The book transcends the fact of being a mere personal memoir to embrace universality. It is the story of loss and suffering, oppression and submission; in fact, it is the story of a nation that refuses subjugation.

The fifth chapter, which is the third practical section, is devoted to the scrutiny of Michael Mohammed Ahmed's autobiography *The Lebs*. This book has been described as confronting, by almost all the critics. Hence, in this chapter, the target is to uncover what makes it that confronting. To do so, the main themes of the book are analyzed.

Furthermore, a linguistic study is done to show how diction is crucial to the overall meaning of a novel.

As far as the choice of M. M. Ahmed's *The Lebs,* the attempt is to discover the thematic and linguistic peculiarities of the Arab-Australian novel, an Arab hyphenated immigrant literary production that is scarcely studied. Hence, to overcome this neglect and participate in enriching this body of literature, the researcher has opted to scrutinize the work of M., M. Ahmed, a writer, and an activist, who fights for a cause that is to emancipate minorities from the guilt attributed to them by the West, notably after 9/11. The writer's commitment to his cause stimulated his literary mind and gave birth to two novels; *The Tribe* (2014) and the book at hand.

The sixth chapter is the last practical section of this thesis. This part is dedicated to the thematic and stylistic analysis of Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, a novel that has received a myriad of praises from literary critics. The narrative recounts the life of an unnamed immigrant who suffers, as his fellow exiles, from rejection and alienation. The anonyous protagonist has experienced a trauma that causes the narrator's mental disorder; the man believes that he is a cockroach.

Regarding the novel's choice, the objective is to show how Rawi Hage questions the already established assumption that Canada is a multicultural metropolitan that celebrates diversity and embraces the foreign cultures that exist on its territory. Besides, the attempt is to demonstrate how the linguistic properties of the novel could serve as a tool of resistance.

In conclusion, Arab Anglophone literary productions constitute a body of literary texts that needs more attention, notably Arab-Australian and Arab-Canadian literary works, which are less explored than their Arab-American and Arab-British counterparts. Studies of such literary works could contribute to supporting the writing-back campaign launched by Arab writers who live in the West, and who wail because of marginalization and racism.

CHAPTER ONE

ARAB ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

> *Bookstores in Western cities and towns began to display on their shelves arrays of Anglophone Arab works placed next to Afghan, Pakistani, and Iranian ones. It did not seem to matter who was who, so long as the names and titles fed the euphoria of luring the reader to a better comprehension of the 'terrorist Other'.*
>
> (Layla El Maleh, 2009, p. 1)

1. Arab Anglophone Literature

1.1.Introduction

The epigraph above best illustrates how keen is the western reader about all that is Muslim in general and Arab in Particular. The unprecedented interest in Arab Anglophone literary works reflects the crucial role of literature in informing the reader about the socio-cultural peculiarities of the Arab world. In this vein, El Maleh (2009) writes: "Literary works accessible in a familiar language can offer plausible interpretation and humanization of Arabs much better than journalism, historical reports or political memoirs" (p. x). Indeed, literature can be the most credible way to define the Arab psyche to the *Other*. Literature, to one's sense, can offer the most plausible accounts of human experience, and the Arab one is no exception. Hence, in this chapter, the main query is to redefine the Arabs as the *other* who has long suffered from orientalists' stereotyping machinery and neo-orientalists' prejudices, notably after the 9/11. Furthermore, the attempt is to introduce the different trends of Arab literature in English. The start will be with Arab-American literature since it is the oldest and the most prominent as it will be illustrated later in this chapter. Then, we present an account

of Arab-British literature, the second most important Arab literature in English, for what it has brought to Arab literature as a whole and Arab literature in English in particular. Furthermore, the endeavour is to introduce the Arab-Canadian and Arab-Australian literature in English, two areas that have scarcely been explored. However, before starting, it is important to introduce a historical account of the Arab communities' existence in America, Britain, Australia, and Canada respectively.

1.2.The Arab 'other' versus the Western 'Other'

To define the Arab other, it is necessary to define, first and for most, the concept of the *other*. The word *other* means anyone different from us at different levels, such as race, religion, and gender. However, the use of the concept in Postcolonial studies goes back to the relationship between the imperial powers and the colonized countries, which is always based on binary oppositions (master/mastered, white/black, civilized, barbarian, masculine/feminine, etc.). In *The Key Concepts of Postcolonial Studies*, clarity to the word 'other' is given:

> Whereas the Other corresponds to the focus of desire or power (the M-Other orFather or Empire) in relation to which the subject is produced, the other is the excludedor 'mastered' subject created by the discourse of power.(Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 156).

As noticed in the quote above, the concept of Other and other do not have the same definition; hence, a distinction should be made between other and '*Other*' Aschroft, et al. (2007) mention that the dissimilarity of the use was first initiated by Lacan, for whom it is crucial to make a distinction between the 'Other', with capital 'O', and the 'other', with small 'o', meaning the colonizer and the colonized respectively.

> The construction of the dominant imperial Other occurs in the same process by whichthe colonial others come into being […] The Other- with the capital 'O'- has beencalled the grande-autre by Lacan, the great Other, in whose gaze the subject gainsidentity.(Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 155)

This definition of the other and 'other' sends us to the binary opposition introduced in Said's *Orientalism* (1978) where he confirms that "the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (p.881). Likewise, the premise ofimperialism and superiority is still omnipresent. In this regard, Said (1978) claims that the West perceives that "the Oriental as irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (p. 880). Arabs have suffered from these biased assumptions that facilitated colonialism which has lasted for centuries, giving birth to a torn and unstable world. The Arab world could not get rid of the colonizer's manipulation of its countries, but this time, colonialism has changed its form. Gone is the military confrontation; new strategies are in use to control the Arab World.

As stated before, Orientalism has given birth to Colonialism, and this time Neo-Orientalism gives birth to Neo-colonialism, using the most fatal stereotype given to Arabs: terrorists. Terrorism has been attributed to the Arabs by the western regimes that have consolidated this attribute, using the media which is of a tremendous influence on people's minds. Indeed, the Western world has recently adopted a biased attitude towards Muslims in general and Arabs in particular because of the flood of refugees that escaped from their countries that are economically and politically unstable.

The new waves of Arabs in the Western World have worsened the bleak image already given to the Arab minorities in the West, a West that fears the fanatic other who tries, according to them, to change the norms and values of their secular society. For instance, after 9/11, all Arabs are seen by the Other as terrorists or potential terrorists, a view that most Arab immigrant writers attempt hard to change.

Arab writers, in the Western world, have found themselves in an abyss of hatred and racism. They have to redefine the Arabs to the Western reader anew. They have to write their experiences as well as their compatriots' ones to get rid of what has been attributed to them unjustly. To this end, most of the Arab writers, from different parts of the Arab world, and residing in several Western countries, have ventured in a literary journey that has as an objective to free the Arab psyche from the gilt of terrorism and extremism attributed to it by the Western regimes. The Arab writers who chose English to be their literary tongue have tackled a myriad of themes and used several literary techniques to reach their cause from different parts of the globe: America, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia.

1.3.Arabs' Existence in America

Arabs existence in the United States is not a new one. In a historical account written by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, It was reported that among the explorers who took part in the 1527 ill-fated expedition was a Moroccan slave called Esteban, a moor who could survive, with only three Spaniards, despite the horrific natural as well as man-made misfortune (Lalami, 2014). Hence, Moroccans can be considered as white Americans as Sarnou (2018) states:

> One fact about the Arab existence on American soil is that as early as the 15th Century, Spanish explorers brought slaves from

> the Arab world to the Americas. In the late 18th Century, the South Carolina House of Representatives decided that Moroccan Arabs living in the state should be treated according to the laws for whites, not the laws for blacks from Africa.(para, 02)

Arab American migration to the US multiplied in the period named the Great Migration that lasted from 1880 to 1924. In this era, the number of immigrants to America exceeded twenty million, most of whom originated from the southern and eastern regions of Europe. However, Arabs outnumbered 95,000, most of whom came from Greater Syria The number of Arab Immigrants to the United States reached approximately 200000 by 1924(Sarnou, 2018).

The drastic quantitative increase of the Immigrants, after the Great Migration period, caused a counter effect to the flow of migration to the United States, notably Arab Emigration which was deemed exotic and un-American by anti-emigrant groups. Americans who wanted to end emigration accused the Arab migrants of not being able to understand The United States' policy and of being potential criminals. Anti-emigrants organizations strengthened and subsequently led the congress to pass a set of laws in 1917, 1921, and 1924 that caused the process of Arab emigration to drastically slow down until the 1960s when emigration revitalized. (Sarnou, 2018).

Arab immigrants to the US were not all the same; someintended to settle, i.e. they brought their families and started their new lives in America. Howbeit, another group contained single men who only came for work and who intended to return to their home countries. Some of the above-mentioned groups chose to cluster in certain towns;

whereas, others did not mind moving to any other cities in Britain. As Such, these groups took part in both the American and the Arab-American histories (Sarnou, 2018).

Arab existence in America passed through three stages and witnessed the arrival of the three waves. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the first wave of Arab exiles arrived in Northern America coming from the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire(Lebanon). Most of those first comers were Christians who came mostly as sojourners, having the intention to return home one day, but never to be immigrants. (Majaj, 2008)

Arab immigrants who settled in colonies in cities like New York and Boston expressed a 'diasporan' consciousness. However, the environment put them under pressure such as racism and segregation. As a result, the first Arab-American productions were mainly concerned with how to preserve the Arab Identity as stated by Majaj (2008) in the following:

> Settling in colonies in cities such as New York and Boston, and fully intending to return home one day, they voiced a mainly diasporan consciousness: a fact evident in their newspapers, which were often sectarian, political and geared toward events in the Middle East. (p. 3)

In the 1990s census, statistics reveal that the majority of Arab Americans (82 percent) is naturalized though most of them(63 percent) were not born in the United States. Arab Americans cluster in a few towns and states. In her essay entitled "American Demographics", El Badry, as cited in Sarnou (2018), states that more than two-thirds of Arab Americans reside in ten states while only three urban areas.

As stated above, the history of Arabs in America is not new, and so is its literary tradition which harks back to the nineteenth century.Arab American literature reflects every single event and aspect of the immigrants' life in the United States, as a minority that has endured very hard circumstances throughout its existence in its host country.

1.4. Arab-American Literature

The birth of Arab-American literature can be traced back to the nineteenth century; however, it has not gained its current significanceuntil the tragic events of 9/11 took place. Hence, I intend to divide the evolution process of Arab-American literature into two main phases, namely, the Pre and the Post- 9/11 Arab-American literature.

1.4.1. Pre-9/11 Arab-American Literature

Arab-American literature existed long before the tragic events of 9/11. Several literary productions stand as witnesses of the various literary experiences that the fathers of Arab-American literature went through. In the following section, the attempt is to give an account of Al Mahjar literature which is considered as a basic reference to anyone seeking to probe in Arab Anglophone literature.

Arab-American literature's start hacks back to the beginning of the Twenties century as the literary organization "Al Rabita al Qalamia"(the Pen League) was established by Ameen Rihani, Khalil Gibran, and few others. They created what is called the Mahjar school of Arab-American Writings using Arabic and English in their texts. In other words, the Arab-American literary pioneers had written first in their mother tongue before they wrote in the language of their host country, America. Ameen Rihani, for instance, was already an established writer in Arabic before he started his

literary journey in English. He wrote a myriad of articles, short stories, and poems, which boosted his reputation as a literary man.(Hassan, 2011)

The impact of these writers on Arab-American literature was tremendous since the very first novel, *The Book Of Khalid* (1921); a poetry collection, Myrthle and Myrrh (1905); and play, Wajdah (1909) were written genuinely in English by Ameen Rihani. Adding to this, Rihani was the first Arab to translate Arabic Poetry into English. Also important is the fact that he was the first Arab to write his literary critiques in English. (Hassan, 2011)

Using his talent of writing in Arabic and English, Rihani launched a project of culturally translatingboth western and eastern worlds in an attempt to reinterpret the two divides of the globe to each other anew. In so doing, the writer, through synthesizing the two distinct civilizations, aimed at bridging the gap between the two worlds. Furthermore, he struggled to serve his primary cause which is to free the Arab world from the spectre of colonialism and to reach political unity. (Hassan, 2011)

In addition to Rihani, Gibran was an Icon of Arab-American Literature in that his writings reached a huge readership, notably his book *The Prophet.* (Rejeb, 2014). In this regard, Rajeb (2014) further states:

> There is an enigma called Gibran. Since 1923, Gibran has earned global renown through his book *"The prophet"*. A small book of 26 poetic essays and a best-selling book of popular mysticism, "*The prophet*" and many other Gibran's works were translated into more than a dozen languages. Sales of "*The prophet*" have recorded more than 9 million

> copies in the United States to let him among the third best-selling poet behind *Shakespeare* and *Laoz.* (p. 2)

The Arab writer's literary production inspired many American celebrities like president John Kennedy who adopted Gibran's words in his most Known speech: "And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."(Gibran, as cited in Rajeb, 2014, p.2). Also worth mentioning is that the Beatles' song Julia was inspired by Gibran's works (Rajeb, 2014).

As a leader, among others, of The Pen League, Gibran brought a lot to the Arab Literary realm, in that he adopted Western modes of writings as he was influenced by writers like Freiderich Nietzsche and William Blake (Rajeb, 2014). It is this very cultural and linguistic diversity that makes Gibran the aptest to bridge the communicational gap between the two divides of the globe, namely the West and the East.

Gibran, Rihani and their contemporaries sought, not only to bridge East to West, but they also aimed at positioning themselves, in the New World, as civilized intellectuals, and at freeing themselves from the orientalist stereotypesthat portray them as exotic and barbarian (Majaj, 2008). Other writers, like Abraham Mitrie Rihbany and Salom Rizk, used a self-distancing strategy that helped them to stand away from any elements of Arab culture, mostly from Islam. Instead, they foregrounded their Christian faith in an attempt to gain the American readers' sympathy and to familiarize the exotic. (Majaj, 2008)

The founders of El Mahjar School brought new techniques which they adopted from their new literary environment, American mainstream, to their Arabic texts. On the

other hand, they interpolated Arabic forms and techniques in their English texts. Later on, the league was dissolved following Gibran's death in 1931 and Mikhail Naimy's return to Lebanon.

In addition to their crucial contribution in the Arab Literary realm, writers, considered the 'founding fathers' of Arab literature in the US, were cultural and literary ambassadors since they introduced the Middle eastern socio-cultural sphere to the West by projecting their cultural and ideological image through their fiction writings. The founders of Arab-American Literature expressed a national consciousness in their literary artifacts. To them, the exiled experienced a new situation in alien territory, a territory that gave them new spaces to sound their individual and collective concerns without constraints. Besides the national consciousness that permeated the works of Arab-American literary fathers, the mediation between the two divides of the globe was another concern of their writings. In this respect, Al Maleh (2009) states:

> They were the first real cultural mediators between East and West, finding themselves as they did in the conciliatory position of being able, through the medium of English, to dispel misgivings about each culture and establish genuine intellectual rapprochement between the two traditions. (p. 4)

As such, the fathers of Arab-American literature used English in their works to bridge the cultural gaps that had very long existed between the two distinct worlds, namely West and East.

Another point, which I see worth mentioning, is that the Mahjar writers wanted to break up with orientalist premises that haunted their spirits, by subverting their native

major discourse (Arabic). They challenged the norms of both Arabic and American literary traditions. In this vein, Gibran, as cited in Rajeb (2014) states:

> If the meaning of beauty of thought requires the breaking of rules, break it. If there is no known word to express an idea, borrow or invent one. If syntax stands in the way of needed or useful expression, away with the syntax (p14)

Gibran's words could be understood as Deleuze's "impossibility of not writing", as he described Kafka who deterritorialized the major language, German, in his writings to express his experiences. In the same line of thought, Deleuze and Guattari (2008) posit:

> Kafka marks the impasse that bars access to writing for the Jews of Prague and turns their literature into something impossible_ the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise (p. 16)

Deleuze and Guattari hint at the constraints that language can build in the face of a man, in the situation of Kafka, who seeks lines of flights to voice his experiences as a minor writer, living in an ambivalent space. A situation like Kafka's only makes it impossible for any minor writer not to write. Hence, creativity, in all its forms, is what fissures the impasse that bars access to writing for any Kafka-like writer, and gives entry to a new territory where impossibility becomes a possibility. As such, the founding fathers of the Arab American literature can be considered as the pioneers in the articulation of revolutionary literature, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's words.

This very literature functions as a counter-discourse to the established Arabic literature deemed exotic and even fundamentalist. However, unlike Kafka, The First

Arab-American writers started by subverting their language of origin before deterritorializing the English language which is the major language in their new territory, namely America.

In addition to Rihani and Gibran, who wrote in Arabic and English respectively, other writers, from the Mahjar wave wrote solely in Arabic. Such a group of writers include Ilya Abu Madi, Mikhail Naimy, Nudra Haddad, Nassib' Aridah, and Rashid Ayyub (Hassan, 2011). The aforementioned group of writers was minor writers considered as rebellions against the traditional conventions of Arabic literature (Hassan, 2011).

In short Al Mahjar literature, whether written in Arabic or English, is a tool of resistance at the hands of Arabs who seek freedom from their homelands' social and political constraints. Besides, it is a way to get rid of the burden of orientalists' stereotypes long attributed to Arabs.

Following the flourishing era of Al Mahjar literature, Arab-American literature passed through a period of stillness, as the number of immigrants got limited by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Quota Act (Majaj, 2008). Another reason for this halt was the ongoing separation from the home culture. As a result, they went through a severe assimilation process, that washailed by historians as a danger of 'assimilating themselves out of existence', to borrow Majaj's words. (Majai, 2008).

Again, things started to change after the 1960s as new spaces for immigrants were created by Black Power movements and Civil Rights. Publications of works, written by ethnic groups, flourished a fact that facilitated the task for Arab Americans to write about their origins and ethnic heritage after a period of stagnation. (Majaj, 2008).

In the same period, considerable waves of immigrants from different countries of the Arab worldentered America. The newcomers were, as mentioned previously, mostly Muslims and more educated and politically conscious than their earlier counterparts. The new settlers who constituted a larger readership stimulated the Arab-American writers to engage more seriously with the Arab culture and politics (Majaj, 2008).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Arab writers launched a quest for identifying the Arab self, in an attempt to restore what had been lost during the assimilation period. Almaz Abinader's autobiography *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey* (1991) is an instance of the fictitious works of this period. The novel portrays the suffering of an immigrant family that escaped from her home country which constituted a harsh context dense with misfortunes like famine, tyranny, war, and painful family divisions (Ludescher, 2006). As such, the writer attempts to represent the Arab exiles as victims of their respective countries, victims who seek a new space where they can co-exist with their American counterparts in harmony and mutual respect.

Furthermore, during this period, political events, most prominently the first war on Iraq have obliged the Arab Americans to struggle to restore their identity which started to be burdened with the guilt of the war's consequences on Americans. Hence, it was high time the Arab Americans introduced their ethnic and cultural identity to the West. They would, as Majaj (2008) put it, either define themselves, or others would define them.

Other Arab-American writers, who not only explored Arab-American identity and culture but also delved into criticizing the Arab world, were numerous. One of the most famous of those writers is Etel Adnan, the multi-talented artist who arrived in America

in 1950, coming from Lebanon. Adnan's works of art (paintings and poems) rank her in a transnational framework, rather than an ethnic one. Moreover, she considers herself a universal citizen, who struggles against injustice and violence. Her works' interests are less with Arab-American identity in America than with its devolution in the Arab countries. This daring way of self-critique has become an important element in contemporary Arab-American literature. (Majaj, 2008)

1.4.2. Post 9/11 Arab-American Literature: A Turning Point

The 9/11 attacks' impact on minorities in general and on Arab Americans, in particular, are tremendous. It has almost changed all aspects of American life (Salaita, 2005). The American leaders did overtly urge the American citizens towards a new lifestyle that should take into consideration every single act of the "Other", mainly Arabs and Muslims. In other words, American society has become sensitive and defensive towards ethnic groups, and most notably towards Arabs who shifted from a state of invisibility to that of glaringness as a consequence of the horrific attacks.(Salaita, 2005)

Indeed, 9/11 has reconstructed what Edward Said and other postcolonial thinkers have endeavoured to deconstruct, giving birth to neo-orientalism. To put it differently, it has not only reinforced the negative stereotypes (barbarian, savage, exotic, etc.) that the West has long attributed to the East, but it also has added the worst of the stereotypes ever attributed to the Arab Muslims_ 'terrorists'. In this vein, the Arab American writer Shihab Nye (2001) stated, in a letter addressed to the attackers, entitled " Nye *To Any Would-Be Terrorist",* which she published on the net shortly after the bloody events:

> I am sorry I have to call you that, but I don't know how else to get your attention. I hate that word. Do you know how hard some of us have worked to get rid of that word, to deny its instant connection to the Middle East? And now look. Look what extra work we have. (para. 1)

Arabs have long suffered from dichotomies, created by Orientalists, to differentiate between the West and the East. Superior and inferior, masculine and feminine, literate and illiterate, and so on are the categorizations that have urged the Arabs to strive against the stereotypical mechanism which stripped them the right to embrace their genuine identity without being loathed and rejected. Furthermore, According to Al Ghabri (2017), Arab Americans have faced a new dichotomy after 9/11, a dichotomy that distinguishes not Arabs from Westerners, but rather differentiates between good and bad Arabs. In this vein, Al Ghabri (2017) posits:

> 9/11 created a dichotomy between the good Arab and the bad Arab. A good Arab, in their view, is one who conforms to and does not challenge the American norms and does not also try to bring his own culture into the American scene, whereas a bad or evil Arab is one who resists, challenges, or maintains a connection either with his faith or culture. Thus, such a division into good and bad led to what is termed as moral racialization. (p. 33)

Such a moral racialization seems to strip Arab Americans of their Arabness. It even denies the right to be different in the New World that has always adopted diversity and

celebrated multiculturalism. Such a division dehumanizes the Arabs by refusing them the very legitimate right of having their language, religion, and culture. Such discrimination over fuels the sentiments of hatred generated after September 11th, which urged Arab-American authors to write about the terrific incidents in their works.

Despite the variety of topics tackled in the Arab-American narratives, some authors like Rabih Alamddine, Alia Yunis, and Laila Halaby opted for the 9/11 attack's influence on the Arab-American society to be the theme of their writings. The impact of the horrific incident on the Arab-American Psyche was so traumatic that most of the post 9/11 literary artifacts chose to exhibit their deep sorrow towards what happened. Also, important is the defensive position that most writers adopted as a reaction to the unprecedented amount of accusations ever attributed to the Arabs.

An example of Arab-American literary texts which tackle Arab exiles' identity, is *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005), a novel written by Laila Lalami. In her prose, Lalami highlights the issue of ' *el harga'(*the illegal immigration), of Maghrebi youth who sail illegally across the Mediterranean Sea in small inflatable or wooden boats seeking for heavens which they think are on the other bank of the sea. The writer endeavours to justify and defend this category of people who opt to take the risk of dying in the sea rather than to stay in their home countries which could not afford, according to them, the least portion of a decent life. Lalami, through her characters, who are deemed as self-exiles, attempts to resist the western machinery of stereotyping by portraying the illegal emigrants '*haragas'* as the outcome of the corrupted Arab political regimes. The author seems to address her western readers saying that the Arab exiles are not terrorists, bloodsuckers or invaders; they are merely the victims of injustice in their home countries; they are simply hope-pursuers.

Another instance of a post 9/11 literary works is Laila Halaby's *Once in the Promised Land* (2007), a novel that portrays how Arab Americans became subjects of racism and segregation after the devastating attacks. The writer's moving tale offers a bleak image of what it is to be Arab in the Aftermath of 9/11. In this regard, Halaby (2007) best illustrates the situation of Arab Americans in that period:

> I am a scientist; I work to make water safe and available. I am a normal citizen who happens to be an Arab. Yes, I have access to the city's water supply, but I have no desire to abuse it. The mere fact that I am an Arab should not add suspicion to the matter. I have spent my entire life trying to find ways to make water safe and accessible for everyone. Just because I am an Arab, because I was raised a Muslim, you want to believe that I am capable of doing evil (p. 232)

From the above quotation, we deduce that Arab Exiles in America suffered from an unfair classification that considers all Arabs as terrorists or potential terrorists. The writer tries to represent her characters as victims, and consequently, attempts to free them from the guilt of terrorism strongly attributed to them.

To conclude, from The *Book of Khaled* (1921) until the most recent books written in English, Arab-American literary writers have represented the Arab exile through three stages. Firstly, in Al Mahjar literature, national consciousness permeated the very first literary productions. To put it differently, the first wave of Arab Americans longed for their motherland; they endeavored to preserve their ethnic identity in a territory in which they celebrated more spaces to sound their experiences without any constraints.

Secondly, in post-1960 literature, transnational consciousness replaced the national one, in that Arab authors tried to restore what they lost during the assimilation period and build a bridge to could link their culture and the host one. In other words, Arabs attempted to create a third space where they could sound their personal as well as collective concerns in both their host as well as homelands. Thirdly, resistance and self-defense have become the main concerns of Arab literary writers, notably after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent war on terror. That is to say, writers have put a focus on liberating the Arab Americans from the guilt of terrorism and Islamism stuck to them due to ideological and political reasons. Thus, in most Arab-American literary works, writers, like Laila Lalami, Laila Halaby, Rabih Alameddine, Alia Yunis, among others, play the role of literary militants, in charge to defend and restore the Arab image that has long been distorted by first the Orientalists and later by the extremists.

1.5.Arabs' Existence in Britain

The presence of Arabs in Britain is an area of research that is largely unexplored (Ouhiba, 2017); thus, the lack of information about the Arab British minority is considerable. Arab-British minority originates from several Arab countries. It is claimed that the first wave of Arab migrants to Britain harks back to the nineteenth century. Syrian and Moroccan traders were the first comers who chose to settle in the northern industrial towns in the middle of the century (Karmi, as cited in Ouhiba, 2017). Later, at the start of the twentieth century, other Arabs (mainly Somali and Yemeni) hired by the British Merchant Navy, settled at British harbors (Ouhiba, 2017). Those Arab workers experienced misfortune after World War Two, as they lived in underprivileged urban spots (Karmi & Seddon, as cited in Ouhiba, 2017).

Few Egyptian and Sudanese migrants, in the 1940s and 1950s, arrived in Britain to seek work. Also did the Palestinians who were dislocated after the establishment of Israel in 1948(Karmi, as cited in Ouhiba, 2017). Nonetheless, According to El-solh, as cited in Ouhiba (2017), the amount of Arab migrants, in that period, was significantly low to form a respective ethnic community. El-solh further claims that the 1960s witnessed a considerable flow of Arabs into Britain, a fact that changed the history ofthe Arab community in Britain as the number and the diversity of its origins multiplied (cited in Ouhiba, 2017).

In this vein, Nagel (2011), as cited in Ouhiba (2017), notes that the 1960s marked a change in the British policy toward refugees, exiles, and skilled migrants. Hence, several Moroccan migrants moved their families to Britain in the late 60s and the beginning of the 70s; therefore, they changed their status, from temporary to permanent. In the 70s, events like the civil war in Lebanon, the oil crisis and the subsequent instability in the Arab world led to an Arab “Brain drain as well as the flight of Arab capital in search of investment opportunities in Britain”. (Karmi, as cited in Ouhiba, 2017, p. 69).

As a result ofthe British Nationality Act., in 1983, a significant number of Arab migrants applied forBritish citizenship. Indeed the naturalization process took effect as a considerable number of applicants were granted British nationality.

1.6.An Overview of Arab-British Literature

Unlike Arab-American literature which was initiated by Arab immigrants to the US, its Arab-British counterpart got started by Arab travelers such as Assaad Y. Kayat and Edward Atiyah who was described, by Hassan (2011), as the first Arab-British writer. Atiya wrote two novels that tackle Arab topics: *Black Vanguard* (1952) and *Lebanon Paradise: ANovel* (1953).

According to El Maleh (2009), Arab-British literary production is described as a political discourse that is of a female, feminist and diasporic consciousness. She also claims that female writers highly outnumber male ones (El Maleh, 2009). Indeed, Arab-British literary scene contains names like Ahdaf Soueif, who wrote *Aisha*, *In the Eye of the Sun*, and *The Map of Love*; Leila Abulela, author of *The Translator* and *Minaret*; Zeina Ghandour, who wrote *The Honey* (1999) and *Omega*(2006); Fadia Faqir, author of *Nisanit*(1989), *Pillars of Salt* (1996), and *The Cry of the Dove*48 (2007); and Ghada Karmi, who wrote *In Search of Fatima* (2002) and*Married to Another Man* (2007), to list but the major ones. Only a few male names can be added to the list of female writers. These are Jamal Mahjoub and Hisham Matar, Anwar El Madjid, and Robin Yassine Kassab. (Al Maleh, 2009)

Most of the Arab-British writers were not immigrants. They rather went there to further their studies and seek higher degrees. These writers celebrated freedom in their host country, a country located far away from their homeland. Hence, because of the distance that separated them from their country of origin, writers could voice their experiences without any constraints, be they spatial, temporal, thematic, or discursive.

Arab-British writers were fascinated by the new territory in which they could exercise their political as well as intellectual activism. (El Maleh, 2009)

Arab-British literature is a newly emerging stream if compared to its Arab-American counterpart that harks back to the nineteenth century. De facto, it was only after 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror that English literary works written by Arab-British authors gained unprecedented consideration.

The Egyptian writer Ahdef Soueif is the first Arab woman writer to reach such a high stature in the British literary realm. Her artifacts, be they fiction or not, are valued and studied by critics who seek knowledge about Arabs as an ethnic entity that is brought to the front by the current sociopolitical scene. Indeed Soueif, through her works of fiction like *Sand Piper* (1996), *The Map of Love* (1999), *and Aicha* (1983)and of non-fiction like Mezzatera could give a panoramic view of the Arab self and subsequently of Arab Eastern society. Also important is the fact that writers like Soueif and her Arab-British counterparts find in Britain a new platform where they can tackle topics that are considered taboo in their home countries. However, being in a Western country does not prevent the Arab writers from being harshly criticized by critics from their home countries. (Al Maleh, 2009)

Writers like Ahdef Soueif, Leila Aboulela, Hisham Mattar, to list but a few, participate in the contemporary British literary landscape by introducing an intercultural, hybrid, and deterritorialized set of minor literary works in which the deterritorialization that is the movement by which a system cracks open, allowing some of its parts to escape, or bleed into other systems, or allowing other systems to infiltrate, is a major technique (Jones, 2014). To put it differently, Arab Anglophone writers, living in the contact zone, subvert the English language to break the linguistic

constraints and find '*lines of flights'*, which give access to free expression. In this regard, Deleuze (1995) puts: "[I]f we're so oppressed, it is because our movement is being restricted" (p. 122); thus breaking constraints may be the best way to overcome oppression and create a new space for expression, an expression of joy, wail, acceptance, decline, and/or agony, which needs to be freed from any limits that can hinder it from reaching its target.

In so doing, Arab writers who choose English to be the language of their literary works address the universal reader and urge him to know what may be behind such a distortion of the linguistic norms. To put it differently, this linguistic deterritorialization intrigues the reader's willingness to figure out more about the writer's cultural identity. Moreover, this subversive power gives the literary author a new territory whereby he can foreground the constituent components of his culture.

Linguistic deterritorialization is the first characteristic of what Deleuze and Guattari (2008) call minor literature. According to the scholars, minor literature is not literature done in a minor language, but it is rather what a minority does in a major language. In other words, it is minor literature written in a major language. It is not only a deterritorialization of language within a minority group but a means of connecting the minor to a world that is both familiar and alien to it.

British fiction works written by Arab immigrant writers reflect the hybrid identity of their writers. A fact that is crystal clear through the choice of the themes tackled as well as the language used. Identity restoration, nostalgia, refugeeism, Islamism, islamophobia, Islamic feminism, cultural encounters, and polygamy are among the major themes tackled by writers who live in ambivalence – a state of being in a space

that links the Eastern world to the Western, a space that urges these modernist and contemporary writers to be experimental in their writings. For instance, the fusion of different languages as well as dialects within the same text is omnipresent in almost all Arab-British literary works. Another technique is the use of hybrid words which consist of roots and affixes belonging to different systems.

Leila Aboulela, the Sudanese contemporary British writer who lives between two different spaces: East and West, finds this movement disturbing, as she puts it in her essay '*And My Fate was Scotland'* (2000):

> I moved from heat to cold, from the third world to the first_I adjusted, got used to the change overtime. But in coming to Scotland, I also moved from religious Muslim culture to a secular one and that move was the most disturbing of all, the trauma that no amount of time could cure, an eternal culture shock (p. 175)

As stated in the quotation above, displacement or deterritorialization is what harms the exile's psychethe most; however, less does the geographical and climatic movement in comparison to the cultural and the religious ones. The latter, as claimed by Aboulela, causes an eternal scar that no time can heal. It is a shock that may resemble a trauma in its intensity.

In most of her literary works that include *The Translator* (1999), *Coloured Lights* (2001), *Minaret* (2005), and *Lyrics Alley* (2010), the writer gives voice to the transcultural world in which she lives via the characters that are kept in constant motion between the two culturally distant worlds namely; the first and the third world. Besides,

the Anglophone writer attempts to give a realistic view of the Islamic world. In other words, Aboulela presents the overall picture of the contemporary Islamic world with its positive as well as negative sides. In this regard, the following is stated in the article entitled “Halal Fiction”:

> Her novel, The Translator, and short stories, Coloured Lights -- written in English and published in Scotland -- give a taste of what it is like to be a brilliant writer with a sophisticated commitment to an Islamic worldview. To say this does not mean that Aboulela deals only with "Islamically correct" characters. There are pork-eating and whiskey-drinking Muslims in her fiction; what makes her writing "Islamic" is not religious correctness or didacticism. Rather, it is a certain narrative logic where faith and rituals become movingmodes of living.(Ahram Weekly online, 2001, p. 1)

Furthermore, the Arab-British writer promotes the status of Muslim women in her prose as an act of writing back to the West who claims that women are oppressed and ill-treated in the Islamic world. In this vein, Emenyonu, in his book *Writing Africa in the Short Story* (2013) claims:

> Expanding the narrow roles afforded to Muslim women in prose and talking back to Western notions of Islam as oppressive towards women and Africa as a continent of exoticothers who sleep among majestic wildlife, Aboulela is a seminal voice of her time and place, withoutwhich we

> may not adequately understand the nuanced perspectives of Muslim Sudanese women(p. 51)

In one of her works of fiction, the short story *Coloured Lights* (2005), the Anglophone writer narrates the tragic accident that took place in Khartoum killing the narrator's brother, Taha, on the day of his wedding. The bridegroom was trying to set the coloured lights' bulbs when a bare electric wire killed him. The short story starts in London as the narrator, sittingon the bus, recalls the memories of how she lost her brother in Sudan. Aboulela brilliantly swings between London and her motherland using the flashback andflash-forward techniques. The protagonist, right from the beginning of the narrative, feels 'homesick', a word that has no exact equivalent in Arabic according to the writer who states*:"*The English word homesick is a good one ; we do not have exactly the same word in Arabic. In Arabic, my state would have been described as 'yearning to the homeland' or the sorrow of alienation'' (Aboulela, 2005, p. 1).

Interculturality, then, maybe considered as the foundational layout of the thematic peculiarity of the short story. The author subtly introduces her reader to the ethnic diversity of London as she refers to the Indian driver, "It was not the West Indian conductor who checked my pass that day but a young man who looked bored "(Aboulela, 2005, p. 1). The Indian conductor shares the feeling of alienation and nostalgia with the narrator who reminds him of his daughter; 'The Western Indian conductor is very friendly with me; he tells me I look like one of his daughters and that he wants one day to visit the Sudan'(Aboulela, 2005, p. 1).Moreover, the solitude felt in a country where"darkness descended unnaturally at 4 pm*"*(Aboulela, 2005, p. 1)urges the narrator to recall hismemories in an attempt of escaping the present psychological shock resulting from the clash between cultures;"Perhaps itwas my new solitude,

perhaps he came to me in my dreams I could not recall.Or was my mind reeling from the newness surrounding me?"(Aboulela, 2005, p. 2)

Vividly, the writer describes the wedding preparations and shows how she, the girl, was spoiled by her elder brothers contrary to what is said about women being oppressed in Muslim countries "At that time he was ten years older than me and like my other brothers he had humoured me and spoiled me"(Aboulela, 2005, p. 2) It is in so writing that the Islamic Feminist writer declines the stereotypical claim about the Muslim being rude to women.

In addition to Islamic Feminism, Faith is another theme tackled in this literary work. For instance, Aboulela reveals aspects of the Islamic faith asshe states:"the Angel of Death makes no mistakes He is a reliable servant who never fails to keep his appointment at the predetermined time and place" (Aboulela, 2005, p. 6).Furthermore, the writer exhibits religious beliefs as she tells the readers about how Hamid, Taha's friend, stays in the graveyard to support Taha in his most difficult moment in the tomb. In this regard, the author writes:

> He had prayed to strengthen his friend's soul at its crucial moment of questioning. The moment in the grave, in the interspaces between death and eternity when the Angles ask the soul' Who is your lord ?' and there must be no wavering in the reply, no saying' I don't know'. The answer must come swiftly with confidence and itwas for this assurance, in the middle of Taha's fear, that Hamid Prayed. (Aboulela, 2005, p. 6)

Another aspect of the Islamic religion heightened in the short story is the belief that the best charity for the dead is something continuous that goes on yielding benefit over

time'(Aboulela, 2005, p. 7). *T*he aforementioned quotes among several others in Aboulela's text illustrate the extent to which the Muslim writer is determined to preserve her religious faith.

Like Aboulela, her Egyptian peer Ahdaf Soueif experiences displacement from her native country. She lives between Egypt and London. She puts into use her bilingualism to translate her experiences to both her Arab and British readers. The transcultural background of the writer gives her the potential to mediate between her home and host cultures in an attempt to fill in the cultural as well as the subsequent ideological gap between the two distant worlds. Indeed, the Arab writer, subverting English, the language of hegemony, endeavours to deconstruct the Orientalist assumptions of the Arab world being exotic, barbarian, feminine,and, recently, terrorist.

While Aboulela recalls memories of her mother country, Sudan, telling stories about her people, her Egyptian peer Ahdef Soueif, on the other hand, writes about an English woman who moves to the East with her Egyptian husband. The English narrator of the short story *Sandpiper (1996)* feels nostalgic, exactly as her counterpart in *Coloured lights.* Moreover, she seems to regret her choice to live in Alexandria, a choice that ends in a deception caused by a husband who does not understand the state of culture shock in which his Western wife is trapped. The woman remains passive and cannot fit in the different world. She watches the falling apart of her love, a lost love which causes sadnessto melt with alienation and regrets "Yes, I am sick- but not just for home. I am sick for a time that was and that I can never have again, a lover I had and can never have again" (Soueif, 1996, p. 33),a lover that she seems not to recognize once in his world.

The vastness of the sea that separates the two distant worlds, portrayed in the short story, symbolizes the huge differences that exist between the western and the eastern cultures. Besides, the unnamed narrator maybe another symbol that refers to a lost identity or a state of ambivalence from which the stranger is sufferingpassively. The protagonist mourns the moments when her husband was so attracted by her alien traits" My foreignness, which had been so charming, began to irritate him." Soueif, 1996, p. 33). The Egyptian man embraced his patriarchal society where women are not allowed to work, a fact that keeps the foreign woman in idleness and loneliness.

Both the Western and the Sudanese narrators share the difficulty of getting out of one's territory and the willingness to keeping its cultural peculiarities in the alien one. Aboulela and Soueif, being bilingual writers use the deterritorialized language of their narratives as an act of mediating between culturally different worlds. In this respect, Gamal (2012) states:

> Like translation, postcolonial writing involves an act of mediating across languages and cultures. Texts, written in English by bilingual Anglophone writers, often include strategies of transformation similar to those used by politically engaged translators to render the linguistic and cultural specificity of their source culture (p. 101)

Contemporary post-colonial Arab writers tend to use specific techniques that fit into the multicultural framework of their narratives. The techniques may include code-switching, borrowing, word-for-word translation, grammatical deviation, etc. In this vein, Gamal (2012) adds:

> Soueif avoids editorial intrusions and relies extensively on lexical borrowing, contextualization, historical and geographical references, colloquial conversational formulas, culture-distinct metaphors and idioms, and grammatical deviation- all of which enable her English text to accommodate the Arabic language and culture. (p. 118)

In addition to AhdefSoueif and Leila Abouleila, Sabiha Al Khemir has also participated in weaving Arab-British Literature. She is a Tunisian-born writer who has recently resided in the United States.She is a specialist in Islamic art and its literary aspects.She is a novelist, among a few North African immigrant writers, who opt for English as her literary tongue. She has written two novels: *Waiting in the Future for the Past to Come(1993)and The Blue Manuscript(2005)* in addition to the following non-fiction books: *Fables across Time: Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Art of Islamic Culture(2012), Nur: Light in Art and Science from the Islamic World(2014), Kalila and Dimna(2016).*

Contemporary Arab-British literature reflects, par excellence, the ambivalent state, which the Arabs, as an ethnic minority in Britain, keep willing to reshape in the light of a constantly changing world. Arab-British literature resists the stereotypical assumptions attributed to the East by subverting the major language in an attempt of creating a new set of rules that may defy the canonical norms and give access to a new area of study, an area in which no constraints, be they linguistic, thematic or discursive, can prevent the writer from exercising his power of expression and an area where the author of a literary artifact uses his cross/inter-cultural peculiarity, obtained from colonization, in all its manifestations: military, political, economic and cultural, to

produce carnivalesque literature apt to mirror the multidimensional identity of the post-colonial immigrant Arab writer living in contemporary Britain.

1.7.Arabs' Existence in Australia

Unlike its Arab-American and Arab-British counterparts, Arab-Australian history is a recent one. The first considerable wave of Arabs who arrived in Australia harcks back to the pre-1986 period (ABS, 2001 Census, as cited in Nekro, 2013). To be more precise, The Arabs' immigration goes back to the last century; however, it has become visible only after 1950 as Australia opened its doors to immigrants from non- European countries. The Lebanese constituted the majority due to the civil war in their home country, a war that urged them to become refugees in Australia. (Nekro, 2013)

Arab Australians have resided mainly in New South Wales and Victoria. However, a smaller number of Arabs have settled in Western Australia, Queensland, and South Australia. Another group, which was the smallest, has lived in the North.

The countries of birth of Arab Australians are Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. A number of 71,349 Lebanese-born Australians in addition to 89,021 other Lebanese who have a parent born in Lebanon; 33, 432 Egyptian-born Australians in addition to 10, 296 of Egyptians who have a parent born in Egypt; 24, 832 Iraqi-born; and 6,710 Syrian-born Australians are what constitute the overall Arab population in Australia. Arab Australians are not, as most of the people think, all Muslim. Rather, the majority of the Arab community is Christian. For instance, 55% of Lebanese-born and 84% of Egyptian-born are Christian. (Ghassan Hage, 2002)

The Australian Muslim population reached2.2% of the overallpopulation, what makes Islam the third religion in Australia, after Christianity and Buddhism (Riaz

Hassan, 2015). Moreover, Australian Muslims originate from 183 diverse countries, a fact that makesthem the first ethnically and nationally diverse community in Australia. Three-quarters of Australian Muslims dwell in Sydney and Melbourne. However, the Muslims' numberincreases at a high speed and subsequently more Arab population is found in the other main cities. The city wherethe highest speedof increase is detected is Adelaide. (Riaz Hassan, 2015)

Other Muslims cluster in some states and federal electorates, granting them considerable political impact in some places in Australia. For instance, in New South Wales and Victoria, for example, a quarter of voters are Muslims. Another element that seems worth mentioning is that the Muslim population contains a large number of people that are economically productive due to their younger age if compared to the overall Australian population. Furthermore, Muslims are considered more fertile than their counterparts because they tend to have more children than the other Australian families. (Hassan Riaz, 2015)

According to recent research, Muslims have integrated into Australian society at a progressive pace because of their high sense of citizenship and belonging. However, Australian Muslims still suffer from segregation and racism, notably in the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, launched by the American Government and adopted by most of the Western countries. Another point is that Muslims in Australia experience discrimination from their white compatriots who refuse to recognize their citizenship. White Australians have very long held the feeling of superiority towards minorities in general and Muslims in particular. As such, it could be claimed that what impedes the process of multiculturalism in Australia is the refusal of white Australians to accept the minorities' integration into the Australian country. Hence, Australians

hinder their country from becoming a cosmopolitan sphere apt to reach prosperity in the political and social fields. (Arimbi, 2017)

1.8.Arab-Australian Literature

Australia, like its Western counterparts, reacted negatively to the amount of violence and terror attributed to Arabs and Muslims. Its reaction was manifested in a flood of fear and hatred toward Arab and Muslim ethnic communities in Australia.

In October 2002, The Bali Bombing caused the death of eighty-eight Australian citizens. Such a crime, among others, constituted a threat that resulted in the tightening of the immigration laws. For the Australian authorities, the threat was brought from outside the country. In other words, the new waves of immigrants, not to say refugees, are the source of potential danger. This fact was shortly rejected as several attackers, who were born in London, where the actors of the London attack in 2005. The Australian authorities then changed their politics towards Arab and Muslim Minoritiesin that it alienated the religious people and encouraged those who were moderately religious. These measures were said not to be directed to Muslims exclusively; however, what the media propagated showed the contrary. (Arimbi, 2017)

Hence, as a reaction to the hostile campaign against Arabs and Muslims alike, Arab immigrants decided to talk back to the mainstream in their way, a way that is peaceful and efficient. It is through literacy that the Arab Australians wrote back to the White Australia that harshly destabilized their existence by over-generalizing what, to my sense, should not be generalized.

Like its counterparts, Arab-Australian literature draws its thematic properties from society. For instance, M. M. Ahmed, an Arab-Australian writer has found inspiration to

write his debut novel *The Tribe (2014)* in what took place in Australia in that period as stated by M. M. Ahmed (2015) in the following:

> For the last two decades, the representation of Arab-Australian Muslims has been coloured by media reports of terrorist conspiracy, sexual assault, drug-dealing and drive-by shootings. I wrote The Tribe in an attempt to step beyond these limited and simplistic images. I wanted to offer a complex and humanising portrayal of my community and culture which, as we have all learnt in recent months, is playing an increasingly important role in contemporary Australian society.(p. 1)

As stated in M. M. Ahmed's terms, Arab Australian Muslims have suffered an unjust representation of all Arabs as the enemies of, to borrow Hage's words, the *White Nation*. Media reports condemned the Arabs, as a one racial entity, for the deeds of individuals or even groups. They were represented as terrorists or potential terrorists. To put it differently, Arabs constituted a threat to white Australians who considered themselves superior to any other ethnic group, living on the land of their ancestors.

Constrained as they were by a myriad of negative stereotypes, Arab Australians sought a resort from this suffocating situation. Hence, Arab-Australian authors decided to write back to a society that discards their genuine identity. This society not only rejects the authentic components of the Arabic culture, but it also refuses to see the new identity formation that took place in Australia, an identity deemed hybrid due to the multicultural context it resides.(M. M. Ahmed, 2016)

As mentioned in the previous section, Lebanese and Iraqi immigrants outnumbered all the other categories of the Arab-Australian community by 2001, and this was due to the wars in their home countries. In this regard, Nekro (2013) states:

> Australia is thus dominated by the Lebanese, whose first, second, third, andperhaps fourth generations currently number well over 300,000. There arealso thousands of Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians and Jordanians. Sincethe 1990s there has also been an increasing number of Iraqi refugees and migrants coming to Australia. (p. 299)

With regard to the half-million Arabs who reside in Australia, we assume that Arabs are poorly represented in the Australian literary landscape. A small number of Arab-Australian writers write their texts in English. The list includes writers like Abbas El Zein(novelist, essayist, and memoirist) who wrote *Tell the Running Water* (2001) and *Leave to Remain: A Memoir* (2008); Randa Abdel-Fattah (novelist)who wrote *Does My Head Look Big In This?*(2005), *TenThings I Hate About Me* (2006), and *Where the Streets Had a Name* (2008); Loubna Haikal(playwright and novelist) who wrote *Seducing Mr. Maclean* (2002); Jad El Hage (novelists) who wrote *The Last Migration: A Story of Diaspora and Love*(2002),*TheMyrtle Tree* (2007), and *One Day in April*(2011); and Nada AwarJarrar, the writer of *Somewhere,Home*(2004) that was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Prize, *Dreams of Water* (2007) and *A Good Land* (2010); and Paula Abood (writer, filmmaker, and activist) who wrote *Waiting in Space* (1999).(Nekro, 2013)

One instance of Arab-Australian narratives is Abbas El-Zein's *Tell the Running Water* (2001) in which he tells the story of his Lebanese compatriots trapped in Beirut,

the city torn by religious and political conflicts. The book is an anti-war narrative in which the writer mourns his country that suffers from civil war, a war that destroys the lives of Lebanese and breaks their ambitions. (Bayeh, 2017)

El-Zein, through *Leave to Remain*, a memoir published in 2009, narrates the story of the journey he made from his homeland, Beirut, to his host country, Sydney. He outlines the tremendous impact of this displacement on his psyche. Indeed, the writer states that his journey has changed his perception of what he sees as his place in the world. (Bayeh, 2017) In this regard, El-Zein, as cited in (Bayeh, 2017) puts:

> Home is a concoction of physical and mental dwellings. I travel between them and live in a virtual metropolis of my making. I am still very much part of my family in Lebanon and I now have a family and friends in Australia, and enough loyalty to them to call Australia home.(p.6)

In the passage above, the writer explains his state of being, a state of in-betweeness and ambivalence. It is a state of a psyche, torn between its place of origin and its new residence, a residence to which it develops new sentiments of belonging and loyalty, that makes the host territory a new home.

Another writer is the pioneer Australian-born prolific Arab Anglophone writer, who originates from Lebanon, David Malouf. He writes in English; however, his works have received an internationally appreciable recognition, unlike his Arab-Australian counterparts. Malouf is said to belong to Arabs by blood rather than by sentiment. The writer tackles the theme of immigration covertly through his works inspired from history, myth, dreams, and tales. (El Maleh, 2009)

Unlike Malouf, other Arab-Australian writers, who were not born in Australia, but rather came as children or adults, addressed overtly and consistently the themes of hybridity and in-betweeness. Abbas El-Zein, Jad El Hage, Loubna Haikal and Nada AwarJarrar tackled issues of exile, displacement, and diaspora. They also addressed the epistemology of belonging, alienation, and recognition in a country where cultural diversity is a major trait of the society (El Maleh, 2009). El-Zein, for instance, in his memoir, *Leave to Remain*(2009), introduces the diasporic experience as dwelling in a third space in which the exile can construct a second home that is geographically and culturally distinct from his genuine one , but that constitutes a safe and convivial existence. To El-Zein, the concept of the home could be reconfigured in the exile's mind to enable him to sway between the two new definitions of home, namely, physical and mental dwellings. This to-and-fro movementthat allows the writer to embrace a virtual space of his creation, a space that keeps him connected and loyal to both his authentic and host countries, families and friends. (El-Zein, 2009)

To conclude, significant was Arab-Australian writers' version of their exilic experiences.Writers engaged substantially in the production of literary artifacts that tackle both the physical experience of the exile and the impact of wars on the Arab psyche.Most of the Lebanese who migrated to Australia left their homeland in the aftermath of the war- Lebanese dispersion. (El Maleh, 2009) As such, Arab-Australian literature seeks to introduce the Arab minority in Australia as refugees who look for safety and stability, contrary to what has been said about them from the Australian media that has recently launched an unprecedented campaign of hatred and abhorrence.

1.9.Arabs' Existence in Canada

Arab-Canadian immigrants' arrival to Canada started in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, and it didn't stop since then. The first wave of immigrants was identified as Syrian because most of them came from Greater Syria (Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordon).

In 1960, the number of Arab immigrants increased considerably. The newcomers differ from their predecessors quantitatively. Besides, each wave has its peculiarities in terms of origins, socio-economic and political as well as educational characteristics. (Abdul-Jabbar, 2019)

The two waves of immigrants are called the 'pioneer wave' and the 'new wave' respectively. However, the new wave of immigrants has recently (over a decade or so) included new categories of immigrants that didn't exist in the first wave: investors and refugees. (Abu-Laban, as cited in Abdul-Jabbar, 2019)

Immigration statistics reveal that a big number of Arab immigrants arrived in Canada in the period that stretches from 1981 to 1992. This large wave of immigrants accounts for more than 51 percent of the overall immigration in Quebec, approximately 37 percent in Ontario, about 5 percent in Alberta and nearly 2 percent in each of British Columbia and Nova Scotia. (Abu-Laban, as cited in Abdul-Jabbar, 2019)

Arab-Canadian immigrants originate from several Arab countries, and they moved to Canada for diverse reasons. The Arabs brought their rich and diverse cultural heritage with them. In so doing, the immigrants added more variety to the already rich and various Canadian cultural landscapes. (Abdul- Jabbar, 2019)

However, things started to change drastically after 9/11. Canadian state, like most of the western countries, declared its support to the U.S. in its war on terrorism. Hence,

many changes were brought to the politics of immigration in Canada. Subsequently, Canadian multiculturalism became a myth in the aftermath of what Patrick Grady, a high-ranked member of the Canadian government, ironically and notoriously labeled as the "Royal Canadian Jihad" (2005). The Canadian decision-makers ventured intomany acts that discredited the Canadian quest towards multiculturalism. Acts like the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2001 andthe Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in 2002 took back the country to the era when policies of discrimination towards immigrants were in practice. Hence, immigrants were exhibited to a new set of legislations that allowed the detention of any immigrant suspected of committing any violent act. Such rules, unfair as they appear, give authority to the government to practice unjust and cruel measures towards immigrants. (Gana, 2009)

Another worth mentioning point is that Canada has not only failed in its multiculturalism, but it has even accused the immigrants of being the cause of its national vulnerability and insecurity in the face of terrorist attacks that threaten its stability, and subsequently, its prosperity. Some Canadians, marketers of fear and hatred, speak of a potent Islamic revolution in Canada (Gana, 2009). In so doing, such people fuel the Islamophobic sentiments that urge the Canadian government to deliver exaggerated and unfair anti-Muslim acts. An instance of such acts is the arrest of seventeen Canadian Muslims in June 2006 because they were accused of participating in terrorist attacks against the national Parliament. Consequently, the threatening Islamic revolution has become more real than ever, resulting in an unprecedented media attack on Islam, Muslims and all that have a link with them. (Gana, 2009)

The arrest of the seventeen Muslims and the accusations addressed to them in racist terms like, '*brown-skinned'*, and 'home-grown terrorists' and 'Canadian-born'

demonstrated how vulnerable Canadian multiculturalism was. It showed that multiethnic Canada has never really existed; there were still unresolved issues about who a real Canadian citizen was. (Gana, 2009)

1.10. Arab Canadian Literature

Arab-Canadian literature in English belongs to a large body of literary texts written in three languages, namely, Arabic, French, and English. This corpus was produced by the first generation of Canadians of Arab origins, in the 1970's. The body outnumbered 250 volumes and more texts were published in literary magazines. The writings are distinguished by their creativity and originality, which enriched the already culturally diverse context, where it was produced. Moreover, they infused this locus with that inhabiting their memories of what they left behind in their home countries. (Dahab, 2013)

The Arab-Canadian literary scene counts almost forty Arab-Canadian writers. Approximately twenty-five have delivered at least one major literary artifact. The other fifteen writers have produced publications in reviews and magazines. Most of the writers are from Lebanon and Egypt, the rest are Maghrebi, Iraqi and Syrian. Some of those writers reside in Québec and Ontario. In addition to the Arabic Language, French English, Hebrew, German, and Armenian arelanguages mastered by Arab-Canadian writers. Also important is the variety of religious beliefs that characterizes the Arab community in Canada. (Dahab, 2013)

Apart from Ruba Nadda and Marwan Hassan, the Canadian-born writers descendent from Syrian and Lebanese immigrant parents, most of Arab-Canadian litterateurs came to Canada inclusively in the period stretching from 1963 and 1974 while others arrived in the 1950s, 1970s, or 1980s. For instance, Naïm Kattan

immigrated in 1954; Abla Farhoud came to Canada in 1951; Nadine Ltaif in 1980; Wajdi Mouawad in 1983, and Rawi Hage who travelled to Canada in 1992, coming from New York where he stayed eight years before coming to Canada. Among the Arab-Canadian writers are mediators who significantly played the role of transmitting and diffusing their works, as well as their compatriots' products via the literary reviews and the publishing houses they established: Saad Elkhadem founded *The International Fiction Review* in 1973, and after one year, he created York Press in 1974. Kamal Rostom, another Arab-Canadian writer founded Rostom Publishing in 1984 in Ottawa, where he published his works, as well as the products of his fellow countrymen, either in French or English. (Dahab, 2013)

Arab-Canadian writers have produced a corpus of works in several genres (Fiction, drama, poetry and non-fiction), and its style varied from realist to postmodernist. It also fits in what Deleuze and Guattari have labeled as minor literature, a literature that a minority does in a major language, and that has three characteristics, as defined by the two scholars, and as mentionedin the previous sections, namely, the linguistic deterritorialization, the political enunciation and the collective value of utterance (Deleuze &Guattari, 1986). Whatever is involved in the writings of immigrants, what plays a major role is to salvage their memory since restoring the past is a theme that permeates the exilic literature. Moreover, other themes like displacement, in-betweeness, and separation that characterize Arab diasporic literature are addressed in Arab-Canadian literature. (Dahab, 2013)

1.11.Arab-Canadian Literature in English

The history of Arab Canadian literature in English harks back to the pioneering writings of Marwan Hassan who wrote *The Confusion of Stones: Two Novellas* (1989),

which represent the first novellas written in English by an Arab Canadian. The same writer produced *The Memory Garden of Miguel Carranza*, the first Anglophone novel in the Arab-Canadian literary scene. (Dahab, 2013)

Later, other Arab-Canadian writers followed Hassan's path in writing in English. Rawi Hage, for instance, is an Arab Québécois writer who starred for his first English novel *De Niro's Game* (2006). He followed his début English narrative by *Cockroach* (2008), *Carnival* (2012), and *Beirut Hellfire* Society (2018) the latter being a finalist for the Rodgers Writer's Trust Fiction Prize and Governor General's Literary Award , English Fiction. It was also nominated for several otherawards. This successive production of English works constituted a turning point in the Arab Canadian literary arena. (Dahab, 2013)

Hage's literary production can be classified as both Arab-Canadian and Anglo Quebec literature that has recently intrigued scholars in the literary field, who questioned his linguistic choice. Writing in English,in French Canada, by a writer whose first and second languages are Arabic and French respectively, raised a considerable number of nationalists' eyebrows in Quebec. An example of such amazement was detected in an article published in *Le Devoir* (Montréal daily) in 2007. The article's writer covertly moaned about the fact of writing in English by a writer to whom the latter is but a third language. (Dahab, 2013) In this vein, and when asked about his choice of English as the language of his literary production and about the difficulties he met in the writing process, Rawi Hage, as cited in Diab and Steele (2018), answered as follows:

> By the time I started writing *DNG*, I had already lived in the English language for 22 years, so English was the language of

> survival and practicality. I must stress that I moved to NYC in the eighties with a limited mastery of the English language. At the time, before the coming of the internet, access to both languages, Arabic and French – especially in terms of printed material, was difficult. In *DNG* the thing that I most struggled with to translate were the swear words, profanity and other words related to violence. (p.1)

As stated by the Lebanese writer, writing in English was not that challenging to him because the man had already mastered English before he started his literary journey with his first book *De Niro's Game*. The only issue according to Hage was the translation of swear words.

Another Arab writer who contributed effectively to the rise of Arab-Canadian literature in English is Saad Elkahem, the writer of the first Arabic/English novellas: *Rijal* [Men] in 1967 and *Ajnihah min Rasas* (*Wings of Lead*) in 1971. The novellas were written in the Arabic language, with a translated version produced by the writer in 1994.They were written in Arabic in Canada, with an English translation by the authorin 1994. As a matter of fact, From Elkahem first *Arabo-English* novellas to Hage's stellar works of fiction, Arab-Canadian literary landscape have witnessed an unprecedented richness and variety in its content. (Dahab, 2013)

1.12. Arab Muslim Contemporary Writings in English

In the last thirty years, the drastic development in the Muslim world and the presence of a considerable number of Muslims in the West, and notably in Great Britain resulted in the production of a corpus of literary artifacts written by Muslim writers. These writings incorporates Islam in contemporary English literature in an attempt to

find an exit from already established stereotypes that have haunted Islam and Muslims for more than half a century. In so doing, Muslim writers attained three objectives. First, the way was paved to discussing themes such as racism, xenophobia, integration and discrimination. Second, an internal Islamic vision on topics like gender roles is introduced. Third, the Western readers is approached to the Muslim world.(Dickert, 2017)

Muslim writers, in America, Canada, Great Britain and Australia, attempt to describe Muslim life in the west and their home countries, challenging and contesting the bleak image of the Muslims as extremists and potential terrorists. They resist Islamophobic and Orientalist stereotypes that relate them to *Sharia*law,the*Hidjab*, the *Burka,* terrorism and all kinds of religious fundamentalism. They also struggle against thepremise that a global war on the West is waged by Muslims under the name of *Jihad.* (Dickert, 2017)

Dickert adds that Muslim writers try to demonstrate that the negative images of Islam marketed in the Western media are meant to justify the political policies and the military operations in the Muslim world. Most of the writers claim that the radical Muslims are at the origin of the young Muslims who seek to find the truth, and who are misled by the fundamentalist who preaches that the solution to their misfortune is extremism and radicalization. (Dickert, 2017)

Arab writers have endeavoured to stop, or at least to slow down, the flood of hatred and abhorrence towards Muslims, notably after 9/11. They have launched a literary campaign that aims at freeing the Arab from the guilt attributed to him by the West, the guilt of being a terrorist or a potential terrorist. Trapped as they are in a Western world

that looks at them as enemies, Arab writers venture into a writing back operation that has as objective to inform the Western readers about Islam and about what it is to be a Muslim in a Western country.

The writers have tried to be a first hand source of information to the Western readers so as to alter the questionable image given by the Western media about the Arab world. They also portray the Arab immigrant to the West as an outsider who suffers from segregation and racism. Not only first generation-immigrants are concerned with this ill-treatment, but also second and third generations are targeted by the politics of marginalization. Even the fact of being naturalized and active citizens do not prevent the Western authorities from considering these citizens who have Arab and Muslim roots as a potential danger. Such a practice has created a polemic among the children of immigrants and caused serious identity issues among them. . (Dickert, 2017)

Another aim that most Muslim writers seek to reach through their literary production is to re-represent the Muslim psyche as modern and moderate. Such writers decide to be mediators that attempt to createa third space, to borrow Bhabha's words, space where they can negotiate and discard the rigid assumptions long consumed in the western sphere. In so doing, Muslim writers carry the responsibility to bring the two worlds, West and East, close to each other. Also important is to mention how hard is the writers' mission in the light of the recurrent terrorist attacks which maintain the status quo of Muslim minorities in the Western world, a world that keeps on cultivating sentiments of hatred and abhorrence towards Islam and Muslims.

Arab Muslim writers then are representatives of the Muslim world, who have decided to change the Western view about Islam via a massive literary production that

seeks to clarify the ambiguities about the Islamic religion, ambiguities that caused a fuzzy image about Islam in general and Muslims in particular. Hence, these writers attempt to find solutions to what the West seesas problems caused by Muslims on their territories. They are determined to find justifications to every violent act though they categorically deny it. They endeavor to show the negative influence of Western policies in the Arab world on Muslim immigrants and their counterparts in the home countries. In short, they try to convey the message that Muslims are not violent in essence; they are, if they truly happen to be so, driven to violence by Western colonial and neo-colonial practices in their lands of origin.

Arab and Muslim writings gained unprecedented interest after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror launched by the American government. Several news articles addressed the theme of Muslim writings. An instance of such an article is the one published by the Guardian in 2009. The article tackles Pakistani fiction in English. It was written to accompany accounts about their country's political situation. The article mentioned some novels like *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), written by Mohammed Hanif; *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), written by Mohsin Hamid; *Burnt Shadows* (2009), by Kamila Shasie; and *The Wasted Vigil* (2008), written by Nadeem Aslam. (Dickert, 2017)

Recently, Muslim writers have received considerable acknowledgment for their literary productions. Several prizes and literary awards were allocated to them. The Muslim Writers Award, which is an alliance between, the Institute of English Studies, Penguin Book and Puffin Books. Among the Muslim writers who were supported and awarded in the last decades is Tahmima Anam, for her novel *A Golden Age* (2007),

which was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Prize and the Costa First Novel Award. The book also won the Commonwealth Writer's Award for Best First Book in 2008. Anam also received the critics' acknowledgment for her book *The Good Muslim* (2011). Nadeem Aslam is another writer who won a number of awards. He wrote *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) that won the Encore prize and the Kiriyama Award. Since 2000, three other Muslim writers have been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize: Monica Ali, the British Asian, in 2003; Hisham Matar, the Libyan, in 2006; and Mohsin Hamid, the Pakistani, in 2007. (Dickert, 2017)

In addition to Arab Muslim writers, Amine Maalouf, a christian Arab writer who originates from Lebanon, wrote about Islam, Muslim history and culture. His work was shortlisted for the Man Booker International Award. This is the evidence that Arab literary production has achieved a great stature and popularity among British contemporary writing. (Dickert, 2017)

Unlike in Britain, the situation in America is not that good; despite the number of Alliances that constitute a platform that supports Faith-based productions. An example of such associations is the Islamic Writers Alliance that supports networking like is the case in the Muslim Canadian literary scene. The pioneers of the Muslim literary production in America are Khaled Hosseini and Mohsin Hamid. These writers brought a new tradition to the Arab American literature: their plots are set in America as well as in the Muslim countries, a fact that has intrigued the American reader. Examples of such novels are *The Kite Runner* (2004), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *The Mountain Echoed* (2013). (Dickert, 2017)

Overall, Muslim writings in America, Britain, Canada, and even in Australia have gained considerable fame in the light of the status quo of Muslims in general and Arab Muslims in particular. Such writings tackle issues about Islam and Muslims in the Western world. Muslim writers attempt to bring Islam closer to the Western reader by giving them first-hand and genuine information about the Islamic faith that has very long been falsified by the Western Media which confuses Islam with Islamism and Islamists. These writers have ventured in a mission of resistance and restoration that may soothe the harsh atmosphere in which reside most of the Muslim emigrants in the Western countries, an atmosphere that threatens their existence in the host countries.

1.13.Conclusion

Since the horrific attack of 9/11, the West has launched a quest to know every single thing about their potential enemy (Muslims in general and Arabs in particular). Though this interest is not new, for it goes back to Orientalists who reported the lifestyle of Arabs (from their perspective), its amount has recently unprecedentedly increased. It has increased to the point of willing to scrutinize all Arab artifacts.

Given that literature is said to mirror the life of people, Western scholars have focused on literary works written by Arabs in Arabic as well as in several other languages. Arabs have always written in the languages of their ex-colonizers, as an act of writing back to the empire that has very long taken hold of their countries. However, and because of the stature that English as a lingua franca has reached in a world of globalization, a new tendency has emerged among Arab literary writers who have decided to write in English to optimize their readership.

In this chapter, the attempt was to give an account of literary artifacts written by Arab immigrants in English. Regarding the choice of the literary works at hand, the most prominent Arab Anglophone kinds of literature, that is, Arab-American, Arab-British, Arab-Canadian, and Arab-Australian works of literature in English were selected. However, the biggest section was devoted to Arab-American literature because of its long history that hacks back to the late nineteenth century, and because of its great contribution to the Anglophone literary field of study.

However, before writing the overview of Arab Anglophone writers' fiction works, the endeavous was to define the Arabs as the *other* to a Western world that considers himself as the big *Other*, as he has always thought and made us think he was. Moreover, the attempt was to account for Arab presence in America, Britain, Canada, and Australia respectively. In doing so, the endeavour was to figure out the social and geo-political background of Arab immigrants, a background that constitutes the impulse behind the production of a myriad of narratives, the narratives that have dealt with several themes among which history restoration, story-telling, and exile are the most prominent.

The last point, but by no means the least, was the account of the Muslim contemporary Anglophone narratives and their socio-political background. In this section, the endeavour is to introduce some Muslim writers who ventured into writing their literary works in English and to figure out the motives that prompted these writers to tackle themes like Islam, exile, identity, multiculturalism, and so on.

To sum up, in this chapter, the attempt was to give an account of the Arab Anglophone literary tradition that has long suffered from marginalisation, but that has recently gained a huge interest and consideration from the Western world, notably after the horrific event of 9/11 which has changed the occident's perception of all that is Arab

made. In the following chapter, the plan is to explain the approach and the methods used in analysing the selected literary texts written by Arab writers in English.

CHAPTER TWO

Postcolonial, Historical and Minor Literature

We allow justly that the Holocaust has permanently altered the consciousness of our time: Why do we not accord the same epistemological mutation in what imperialism has done, and what Orientalism continues to do?

(Edward W. Said, 1978).

2. Postcolonial, Historical and Minor Literature

2.1.Introduction

History has witnessed the drastic impact of European colonialism on the rest of the world. Early in the sixteenth century, and shortly after the defeat of Islamic presence in Spain, military troops started their expeditions toward the New World. Indeed, Spaniards launched many conquests to America in pursuit of gold and other precious materials. Greed has always been the first and foremost reason behind invasions of already peopled territories.

Like America, Africa and Asia underwent the same fate, colonialism. Portugal, Spain, France and Britain, among others, were the leading powers that ventured into several countries, taking hold of their wealth and sovereignty by using different forms of subjugation. The colonizers used all kinds of torture (physical and psychological) to satisfy their colonial thirst. The imperial countries imposed their rule for centuries before being finally forced to leave the conquered territories which witnessed unequal, confrontations between the colonizer and the colonized.

From the end of the nineteenth to the mid twentieth century, several colonies had already got their independence. However, though the colonizers left the colonies, their legacy stayed as to witness the long harsh period of oppression, a legacy that urged the

ex-colonized to search for ways to restore what has been damaged by the colonial destructive machinery. Indeed many postcolonial writers started to write back to the centre of the empire in the language of the colonizer, in an attempt to voice their frustration toward the cruelty of colonization and its aftermath.

Several writers, from the Arab world, have chosen to write in foreign languages like French, English and Spanish. Albeit the amount of such literature is surely smaller if compared to the overall production of creative writing in Arabic, it is considered an essential literary phenomenon that needs to be scrutinized.

In fact, after the decline of the French and British colonies that have oppressed several countries for over one century, and the end of their military domination, Arab writers, among other ex-colonized people, experienced a dilemma. To put it differently, Arab literary writers questioned their position in the literary realm. They wondered about which language, other than Arabic, they should use to voice their experiences as well as to optimize their readership.

However, since the issues tackled in their texts dealt mainly with identity restoration and colonial legacy, some writers chose to write in the languages of the ex-colonizers, as an act of resistance. In other words, postcolonial authors sought to rewrite their version of history instead of the colonizer's one which portrayed colonized people as exotic and savage subjects, who lived in marginal places, as opposed to the civilized and enlightened centre of the empire, a version written genuinely in a subverted form of language.

Ashcroft, et al. (2002) list writers such as J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Patrick White, Chinua Achebe, and Margaret Atwood,

among those who have 'written back', undertaking postcolonial reinterpretations of works from the colonial canon. Writers from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco have always written in French in addition to Arabic; thus they can also be listed among those who have written back to the empire. KatebYacine, Assia Djebar, Driss Chraibi, Abdelkébir Khatibi, to list just a few, expressed their experiences in the colonizer's language; French. Other writers such as Ahdef Soueif, Mohja Kahf, Laila Aboulela, Laila Halabi, mainly from ex-British colonies, opted for English to be the language of their narratives. Studies concerning such texts have been classified within the scope of the post- colonial literary studies.

As such, postcolonial writers attempt to resist the hegemony of the Western countries by subverting their languages i.e. English and French. Hence, these writers create lines of flights which may lead the subaltern, to borrow Spivak's term, to new territories where they can sound their wails and joys via the deterritorialization of the language of the majority. The techniques whereby they can down-grade the major language may be, among others, the use of borrowing, code-switching, hybridization, and translational strategies.

In this chapter, the attempt is to account for the post-colonial theory in terms of its emergence and scope of study. Furthermore, the plan is to introduce its major proponents and explain its main concepts. Besides, a stylistic model of analysis is created to account for the linguistic deterritorialization detected in most of postcolonial writings.

2.2.Post-Colonial Theory and Narratives of Resistance

Laila Lalami, Hisham Matar, Micheal Mohamed Ahmed and Rawi Hage belong to postcolonial writers who suffer, as many Arab immigrants, from a forced or chosen deterritorialization from their native countries. Lalami, Matar, Hage and Ahmed live in America, Britain, Australia, and Canada respectively, countries considered as the most hegemonic forces worldwide. However, unlike most of the postcolonial writers who write in the languages of their ex-colonizers, Laila Lalami is the first immigrant writer, from North Africa, who has opted for a language which is neither her native nor her colonizer's (Yacoubi, 2011). Like Lalami, several other writers, from different countries, have not chosen to write in Arabic which is their mother tongue, nor have they chosen the languages of their countries' ex-colonizers, to be the language of their literary works. Instead, they opted for the language of their host countries and above all a neutral and global language. Studies concerned with such writers and their literary artifacts fall within the field of post-colonial studies.

Postcolonial studies, as a discipline, is an area of constant debate and controversy. It intrigues several scholars, theorists and literary critics, who still do not agree upon its definition. A first and obvious definition refers to the period that comes after the end of colonialism. To put it differently, the term postcolonial implies the military decline of great empires such as France and Great Britain, and the emergence of a new era in which new powers come to the front.

As it is mentioned before, the term postcolonial is hitherto without a fixed definition. Some scholars see that even Latin America and The United States can

conform to the criteria of post-colonialism mentioned in the previous paragraph. Thus, the concept of postcolonial needs yet to be defined and its scope limited. In this vein, the Indian critic Ahmad, as cited in De la Campo, et al. (1995) states:

> But I have seen articles in a great many places, in the special issue of Social Text on postcoloniality [...] which push the use of the term 'colonialism' back to such configurations as the Incas, the Ottomans and the Chinese, well before the European colonial empires began; and then bring the term forward to cover all kinds of national oppressions, as, for example, the savagery of the Indonesian government in East Timor.'colonialism' then becomes a trans-historical thing. (p. 31)

As stated in the quotation, the scope of postcolonial studies can cover a huge area of study, stretching from the Incas to the Nowadays-Australia. As such, Postcolonial is, to borrow Ahmed's words, a trans-historical thing that is omnipresent in different areas of the world, and several periods of history. It covers all types of oppression and injustice practiced on colonized people. By colonized here I refer to any kind of colonialism: military, political, economic, and even cultural. In this regard, Mishra and Hodge, as cited in Daina, (2012) state that:

> We use the term post-colonial, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. (p. 1)

As such, Postcolonial studies' main concern is to show the legacy of European empires like, France, Spain, Britain and Portugal that have been racing to obtain more colonies, from mainly Africa, Asia and even America, from the sixteenth century till the mid of the twentieth century. Thus, according to some post-colonial theorists, answering the question 'what period should be called post-colonial' is seen as a complicated task.

Regarding the postcolonial scope of study, Ashcroft, et al. (1998) claim that all the texts written by writers who reject the premises of colonialist intervention by producing a counter-hegemonic discourse, are considered as post-colonial texts, and their analyses fall into the postcolonial field of studies as well.

Another point, which is worth considering, is that although the fathers of postcolonial studies, like Said, Fanon and Albert Memmi, have very tight relations to the Arab world, scarcity in the number of studies concerned with Arab Anglophone artifacts is ironically surprising. In this respect, Hassan and Saunders (2003)state the following:

> One of the striking ironies of postcolonial studies, for instance, is that colonial discourse analysis began with several theorists who studied colonialism in the Arab world: Albert Memmi (in Tunisia), Frantz Fanon (in Algeria), Said (in the Levant). However, the work of those critics led to the development, in the 1980 s and 1990 s, of a sophisticated theoretical apparatus that rarely takes Arabic literary and cultural production into account.(p. 18)

In the same vein, Nash (1998) claims that Arab works in English are still largely unexplored if compared to other ethnic writers' productions in English. Hence, in this thesis, the attempt is to contribute to enriching the postcolonial literary studies devoted to Arab literary productions, written in English. To sum up, Postcolonialism is a set of theories applied in several disciplines. It is interested in, but not restricted to literary writings that react against colonization and its premises. It tackles the political, social and cultural independence of the societies formerly occupied by the imperialist powers. Besides, it tries to restore the identity of the ex-colonized subjects which has long been marginalized and even neglected. In short, postcolonial theory investigates and examines the effect and legacy of the Western invasion, occupation, subjugation, colonialism and control of the non-western world (Rey, 2008). Furthermore, post-colonial theory gives great importance to the decolonization process. It deconstructs the rigid assumptions imposed by the imperial forces and breaks the hierarchical order made by the colonial hegemony.

2.2.1. Major Postcolonial Proponents

As mentioned in the previous sections, most of postcolonial scholars are in a way or another related to the Arab world. One of the founding fathers of the postcolonial thought is Frantz Fanon who was born in Martinique. Fanon worked, as a specialist in psychiatry, in an Algerian hospital during the war against the French colonizer. Fanon participated in the Algerian revolution, just as an Algerian who would struggle and die for his country. Indeed, one might say that Fanon was more Algerian than the Algerians themselves. In addition to Algerian people, other colonized and oppressed minorities were influenced by Fanon's views on race politics. *Black Skins, White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth* are passionate manifestos for black people before the decolonization. These major books are still crucial to the study of the neocolonial world, that is, the third world. In his books, Fanon tackles the issue of how black people behave, in a white world, towards their ethnic community. Fanon's study is concerned with black subjects living in colonized countries. However, the influence of his works reached a great number of theorists from different regions of the globe.

Another proponent of post-colonial studies is Edward Said whose revolutionary book, *Orientalism* (1978), initiated the colonial discourse analysis. Williams and Chrisman, in their book, *Colonial Discourse And Post-colonial Theory: A Reader* (1994), write that it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Edward Said's Orientalism (1978), inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry that is the colonial discourse, also known as colonial discourse theory or colonial discourse analysis.

In his work, Edward Said deals with how negative stereotypes such as; inferior, feminine, weak, illiterate, and barbarian, attributed to the Eastern world, have drastically

impacted the East and changed his fate. Orientalists have paved the way to colonialism, by introducing the Easterners as passive and submissive people, ready to be colonized. Furthermore, Said's work is considered as a corner stone in the postcolonial realm, for Orientalism is a basic text in contemporary post-colonial studies, to an extent that in nearly all academic theses and articles that deal with postcolonialism, Said is very frequently quoted.

In addition to Fanon and Said, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin have a great impact on the post-colonial theory. Their book, entitled *The Empire Write Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature* (2002), has become a foundational reading for all scholars who are interested in post-colonial studies. The three writers have been inspired from Rushdie's well known utterance, ' the Empire writes back to the center ', in the choice of their book's title. The book offers an account of all issues that are relevant to the understanding of the literature of ex-British colonies. Concepts such as; language, displacements marginality, hybridity and new theories and methods, that are used to comprehend the new literary corpus, are also tackled in the book.

Postcolonial theory, following Ashcroft, et al. view, states that writers from former colonies tend to write in the colonizers' languages to write back to the ex-empires in an attempt to restore their identity and to voice their agonies. This very identity is said to be hybrid due to the synthesis of the colonizer's and the colonized's cultures. Hybridity as a concept was introduced by Bhabha who is a major scholar in the field of postcolonial studies. In the next sections, the definition and usage of hybridity are introduced.

Another proponent of the post-colonial theory is Guayatri Spivak. In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak accuses Deleuze and Foucault of being Eurocentric. She criticizes them for speaking about, and on behalf of, the subalterns. In this regard, Janz (2012) argues that:

> The single most important essay in the history of postcolonial theory, Guayatri Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak? is directed against both Deleuze and Foucault, and maintains that neither can deal with history sufficiently to imagine a form of representation adequate to the subaltern. (p. 22)

Indeed no one can speak for the subalterns who, to my sense, are the only ones from whom truth, about their existence, can emerge. They are the oppressed silenced people who have never been given the right to voice their agony. In an interview with Lahiri, Spivak (2011) states: " When the Subaltern speaks, there is no enough infrastructure for people to recognize it as a resistant speech " (p. 4) . Hence, in this dissertation, the attempt is to demonstrate how Deleuzian concept of Minor Literature can be the basis for analyzing and understanding a subaltern's collective enunciation expressed by a minor writer, as he decides to voice his ethnic concerns via minor, but revolutionary, literary works.

In this view of things, Deleuze and Guattari could be considered as major figures in postcolonial studies as their theory of minor literature, which is explained in the following sections, could constitute a fertile area of experimentation, in which postcolonial literary(and nonliterary) works could be scrutinized.

Deleuze was a French philosopher who gained wide recognition in France by the late-twentieth century. He was a multi-disciplinary scholar; however, his interest in literature was the most consistent. Deleuze wrote books on Proust (1964), Leopold Sacher-Masoch (1967), Kafka (1975) and *Essays Critical and Clinical(1993),* a collection of essays on literature. In addition to the aforementioned books, Deleuze constantly referred to literary artifacts, such as novels, plays, poems and essays, in almost all of his works (Bogue, 2003). In this regard, Bogue (2003)stated: "Much of Deleuze's writing on literature is a thinking-alongside literary works, an engagement of philosophical issues generated from and developed through encounters with literary texts"(p. 2). Indeed, Deleuze's philosophical experimentation chose as a corpus of study a myriad of literary texts. One instance of texts that inspired Deleuze and Guattari was Kafka's Diaries (1911) whose analysis gave birth to Deleuzian theory of minor literature which I will try to define in the next section.

Deleuze's works have a great impact on post-colonial theory. His philosophical thought has brought new visions to the contemporary world. In this vein, Colebrook (2003) states the following:

> At the heart of all Deleuze's thought is his insistence that our relation to the world is dynamic, not just because our ideas about the world change, nor because the world is a thing that goes through change. Life itself is constant change and creation. (p. 51)

Howbeit, Deleuze's artifacts have been undervalued and rejected in post-colonial studies due to the critiques posited by some thinkers, as stated in Bignall and Patton (2010):

> For some, his failure to relate expressly to postcolonial issues does not simply suggest a careless lack of concern on Deleuze's part, but also the more worrying possibility that his silence on colonialism conceals a certain Eurocentric self interest, a neo-imperial motivation or a hidden or unacknowledged desire to defect attention away from the political concerns of the postcolony. (p. 1)

As such, Deleuze is accused of being covertly supportive of the colonial machine. Another scholar to accuse Deleuze of not showing an overt interest and commitment with postcoloniality, both as a thought and as a site of analysis, is Spivak (Bignall and Patton, 2010). In her revolutionary essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988),Spivak condemned the author of being Eurocentric in his writings. In the same vein, Robinson and Tormy , as cited in Patton and Bignall (2010) state that Spivak's critique could be split into five main points. Firstly, Deleuze and Foucault covertly reintroduce the transcendent European Subject. Secondly, they lack a theory of ideology. Thirdly, they exclude the urge for 'counter-hegemonic' ideological production in addition to dialogue with the Other. Fourthly, Deleuze and Foucault's references are drawn on the reference that is a self-contained West and Europe. Fifthly, their refusal of constitutive contradiction reintroduces an undivided and essentialist subject. (Patton and Bignall, 2010).

However, as claimed in Bignall and Patton's book, other scholars, in many of their works, consider their peers' critiques of Deleuze's thought as being misguided. In this respect, the authors of *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* (2010) state:

> The texts and interviews collected in Desert Islands (2004) and Two Regimes of Madness (2007) document Deleuze's supportive

> interest and active involvement in struggles for decolonization and the return of appropriated territory in colonized regions including Algeria and Palestine. (p. 2).

Furthermore, the Palestinian founder of the "Revue d'ètude Palestinienne" in 1981, Elias Sanber, Deleuze's friend, states in an interview with Dosse that Deleuze and Guattari's work was an important resource for his thought (Dosse, 2007). To put it differently, Deleuze's thought is acknowledged by some post-colonial intellectuals as supportive to the colonized 'other'. Thus Spivack's critique could be mistaken in that it accuses Deleuze of being Eurocentric because, according to her, he refuses to speak for and about the 'other', which, to my sense, could be a positive point that may urge the subalterns to speak for themselves about themselves. In this regard, I find that the following quotation illustrates best the point: "[I]f we're so oppressed, it's because our movement is being restricted" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 122). In short, the meeting points between Deleuze and the post-colonial assumptions lie in finding lines of flights from all kinds of constraints. Commenting on the converging points between Deleuze and Postcoloniality, Patton and Bignall (2010) claim:

> Defining the contours of an encounter between Deleuze and the post-colonial is to define the shared problem of finding lines of escape from forms of capture and containment, but also identify some of the ways in which these lines of escape might come together mutually reinforcing one another. (p. 9)

Deleuze's '*line of flight'* is what the post-colonial theorists seek to find_ a line of flight that frees the post-colonial subject from all kinds of oppressions. Thus, deterritorialization, be it linguistic or cultural, can be seen as a line of flight taken by the

minor writer (immigrant, nomad, or marginalized) to express his worries that are put on the fringe by the oppressor or the hegemonic system.

2.2.2. Key Concepts in Postcolonial Theory

Throughout postcolonial studies, many concepts have been delivered as a result of the thriving development of the postcolonial theory. In the following section, I will introduce the most used concepts in this area of studies.

2.2.2.1. Orientalism

Edward Said, the American Palestinian scholar, published his revolutionary book titled *Orientalism* in 1978. The writer criticizes the Western scholars' biased constructions of the oriental part of the globe and its culture. The Western scholarly community has generated a diversified corpus of knowledge about the Orient. Said endeavours to foreground the relation between Orientalism, as a field of study that attempts to present the Western institutionalized knowledge of the Orient, imperialism and colonialism (Said, 1978). Furthermore, he studies its role in shaping the Western identity. Said's corpus of study included various texts (journalistic, religious, literary, political, travel, philological, etc.) that treated a common subject, namely the Orient, but from different angles and perspectives.

Said claims that Orientalism referred to an area of study founded on a geographical, linguistic, ethnic and cultural entity named the Orient. After Said's harsh criticism of the Western attitude towards the Orient, the concept of Orientalism became a term used to describe a patronizing attitude towards the eastern divide of the world. Scholars who practice, within the vast field of study called Orientalism are named Orientalist whatever is the subfield they exercise.

Europeans focalized on every single aspect of the Orient. They showed an unprecedented interest in the Oriental lifestyle. They wanted to own all the knowledge about the Oriental Other, a knowledge that has indeed served their colonial thirst.

Indeed, Orientalism, as a discourse has always served the colonial powers in colonizing the Eastern countries. It has started in the mid-eighteenth century, as a result of an asymmetrical relation between the East and the colonizing powers: Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, etc., which dominated the Orient via a considerable body of knowledge about the Orient. Also worth noting is that the superpowers were more powerful, than the Orient, in all the fields (military, scientific, economic, etc.), a fact that enabled the imperialist powers to further scrutinize the oriental societies in an attempt to strengthen their hold of the colonized countries and to pave the way to more colonies (Said, 1978). As such, orientalism can be said to serve political agendas. In other words, Orientalists belonged to imperial powers, namely, France, Britain, and America, and they served their nations' interests through a massive production about the East which was bleakly represented. Hence, objectivity, as a trait is far from being exercised in the writings of Orientalists which were heavily biased (Said, 1978). In this vein, Said (1978) posits:

> [i]t meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with a definite interest in the Orient, and more importantly, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient (p. 11).

Therefore, wherever there was interest in a given region of the world, there was a study about it in the academic sphere as it was the case in Orientalism.

According to Said, Orientalism is partial and biased due to ethnocentricism which was prevalent in Europe because of the Eurocentric assumption that Europeans are superior than the other ethnicities " the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (Said, 1978, p. 7). As such, one might argue that Orientalism consolidates the Eurocentric assumptions that preach for the superiority of Europeans.

Overall, Said's Orientalism addresses the West which disdains the Eastern divide of the globe in general, and most notably the Muslim world. He accuses the Orientalists of creating a body of biased writings about the Orient to justify their colonial deeds and to consolidate the imperial ideologies that state that the East was Immature, barbarian, illiterate, and uncivilized and that it needed the West to better and civilize it. Hence, the west was and is still considered as the tutor of the East which is hitherto deemed static and backward by Europeans and Americans alike.

2.2.2.2. Neo- Orientalism

After World War Two, American Orientalism thrived, paving the way to what scholars have called neo-Orientalism. It is a phenomenon that refers to a new mode of representing the Orient by the West. It has not only consolidated the already generated stereotypes, but it has added new features to the old version of Orientalism. In other words, neo-Orientalism continues what has been established by Orientalists with a touch of innovation. In this respect, Behdad and Williams (2012) contend:

> We designate this mode of representation neo rather than new in order to signal the continuity between contemporary and

> traditional forms of Orientalism which Edward W. Said has carefully mapped (p. 1)

As such, Neo-Orientalism is not a new creation, it is rather a continuity of what Orientalists have started for centuries. What is new is the condition in which neo-Orientalism is operating. In other words, Orientalism was created to meet the agendas of imperialist powers while neo-Orientalism was created to serve the neo-imperial forces. I use the term forces to refer to the war on terror launched by the Americans in the aftermath of 9/11.

Neo-Orientalism, unlike its predecessor, is based on the distinction between the West and Islam rather than the traditional difference between West and East. To put it differently, Neo-Orientalism, as a discourse, is anti-Islamic; it focuses on attacking the Islamic orient in particular rather than the traditional binary opposition between East and West, as two geographically and culturally distinct divides.

Several historical events are at the origin of Neo-Orientalism. Samiei (2009) argues that the collapse of The Soviet Union and the fall of Berlin Wall caused a state of "*threat vacuum*" (p. 22) for the Western world, a fact that urged the West to look for a potential enemy. Samaiei further states that the current topicality of Islam is due to the Israeli-Palestinian problem, the Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979), the rise of the Islamic movements, and the threat of terrorism that uses Islam as their major motive. In addition to the aforementioned events, Samiei adds that the rise of the number of Muslim immigrants in the Western world is also a major cause of the topicality of Islam. The events above foregrounded Islam and brought it to the centre of the socio-political world scene, giving birth to a Neo-Orientalist discourse that examines and

judges Islam and Muslims. It also focuses on the clash between cultures and the war on terror.

2.2.2.3. Hybridity

Hybridity is " one of the most widely employed and disputed terms in postcolonial theory " (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 118) . It refers to "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Laragy, 2008, p. 1). It is the process in which two different elements combine together to give a third one. There are numerous types of hybridity; linguistic, cultural and political etc. Though the term is ancient, its literary usage is a new one. It is a critical tool that is currently used to analyze cultures and identities. In the contemporary mutating intellectual field of the post colonial terrain, hybridity is continually being reused by scholars and critics from diverse parts of the world. In addition to the fact of being used in different contexts and across several disciplines, hybridity has a history that is very charged.

Young (1995) claims that the origin of the term hybridity can be traced back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The term originated from Latin, and it was rarely used until the nineteenth century in biology and botany. It was first used in botanical field: it referred to a genetic combination of at least two species to produce a third that has characteristics inherited from all its component agents (Kistnareddy, 2010, p. 5). In addition to botanical area of study, biological studies have also used the term, as stated by Goetz (1991), to refer to:

> Offspring of parents that differ in genetically determined traits [and] may be of different species, genera or (rarely) families. The

> term 'hybrid', therefore, has a wider application than the terms 'mongrel' or 'crossbreed', which usually refer to animals or plants resulting from a cross between two races, breeds, strains, or varieties of the same species. (p. 183)

As such, hybridity is a term that has many definitions and many usages, depending on which field of study is targeted. For instance, hybridity was reused during the colonial era to talk about children born of white and black parents. Young (1995) posits that " a hybrid is in technical terms a cross between two different species and thus hybridity evokes both botanical term and the Victorian conviction that different races were other species" (p. 10).

In this vein, hybridity could be perceived as a negative term since the white colonizer was convinced of his superiority vis-à-vis the colonized other who was enslaved, according to the White, because of his barbaric nature and blackness. As a consequence to the colonizer's racism, the term 'hybridity' became a symbol of shame and racial impurity. For the White, the hybrid person should never be recognized because he was but a result of a cursed intercourse. Thus hybridity, as a colonial concept, bears negative connotations: It is a racial corruption, and it is the outcome of an illicit union between the white master and the black colonized.

The term 'hybrid' has reoccurred in France under the term 'mètis'. Here again this term was given negative connotations, and people who were labeled as 'mètis', were marginalized and rejected by the others. That is to say, the pure community rejected the impure one. In this respect, Prabhu (2007) argues:

> Hybridity, then, is first and foremost a 'racial' term. Hybrid individuals in the colonies testified to real encounters between the white colonizer and the native (most often slave) subsequently required an active inscription in the laws and policies that managed and oversaw colonial activity. (p. 12)

However, after the independence of colonized countries, and the start of the postcolonial era, the advent of the decolonization has transformed hybridity into a positive concept that appeared under different terms such as; metissage and creolization in addition to ambivalence, third space, liminality, mimicry and in-betweeness. These concepts are fundamentals in post-colonial field of study.

Recent studies have endeavored to approach 'hybridity', as a means of resistance against the hegemony of the Western identity. In this respect, Prabhu (2007) states:

> Hybdity is an enticing idea in current postcolonial studies. In its dominant form, it is claimed that it can provide a way out of binary thinking, allow the inscription of the agency of the subaltern, and even permit a restructuring and destabilizing of power.(P. 1)

In addition, Prabhu (2007) claims that hybridity, according to prominent theories in postcolonial studies can lead us out of different constraints in conceiving agency. He puts: "In its most politically articulated guises, hybridity is believed to reveal, or provide a politics of liberation for the subaltern constituencies in whose name postcolonial studies as a discipline emerged" (p. 11). He goes on saying:

> Postcolonial hybridity intervenes in the form of a theoretical argument against the homogenizing tendencies of global capitalism. It represents, one might say, the optimistic view of the effects of capitalism (12)

Indeed, hybridity in all its manifestations is the only good thing that capitalism and the subsequent imperialism could generate. It is, to my sense, what resists the arrogant assumption of purity very long attributed to the Western Other.

As such, hybridity is, as put by Bhabha, the in-between and contact zone where cultures converge, giving birth to a third space where differences are negotiated. In this regard, Grates (1998) states:

> Bhabha argues that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to pre-given, irreducible, scripted, ahistorical cultural traits that define the conventions of ethnicity. Nor can "colonizer" and "colonized" be viewed as separate entities that define themselves independently. Instead, Bhabha suggests that the negotiation of cultural identity involves the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances that in turn produce a mutual and mutable recognition (or representation) of cultural difference. As Bhabha argues in the passages below, this "liminal" space is a "hybrid" site that witnesses the production--rather than just the reflection--of cultural meaning (para. 3)

Hence, hybridity, according to Bhabha, necessitates a continuous process of exchange between distinct but mutually comprehensible cultures. Such an exchange is supposed to take place in the liminal space where culturally different people meet and interact in

an attempt to produce intelligible models of cultural meaning. However, Bhabha's conception of hybridity is too idealistic to be true. Instead of celebrating the in-between space where ethnic groups try to voice and present their cultural peculiarities, Western societies consider this very space as an enclosed area where they can keep these minorities in the margin, far from the authoritative centre.

2.2.2.4. Globalization

Globalization is the term of the century. It surrounds the world covering all the domains. Globalization, as a concept, can mean the process by which individuals and communities are influenced by a unifying economy and culture world-wide. Or it is the world being one single common place. The term has known a spectacular spread in the mid 1980's. However, before this period, other terms were used such as "international" and" international relations" (Ashcroft, et al., 1998). Besides, Kongar (1997), as cited in Ornek (2007) defined the concept of globalization as a three dimensional term which covers political, economic and cultural forms.

To analyse the concept of globalisation, two groups of people can be approached. Some favor it and feel enthusiastic about it because it broadens the horizons for them by offering them access to benefit from technology, thus the world leading forces will assist in making a global success (Konger, 1997, as cited in Ornek, 2007). For this category globalisation is a word " for values which treat global issues as a matter of personal and collective responsibility " (Albrow, as cited in Aschroft, et al , 2007, p. 101).

However, others are sharply against globalizing the world, because it is but another form of imperialism, since it declines the dominance of states by interfering

with the power of the quasi-governmental associations such as United Nations and World Trade Organizations (Connell, 2004). Moreover, this process makes the world and individuals lose their peculiarities by homogenizing everything from economy to culture. The chief flaw of globalization is that there is always that dominance of the first world over the third world because the global culture and economy originate from the most powerful and hegemonic countries which is but another sort of colonialism.

Thus, globalization, just as colonization, can be at the origin of hybridity in several fields starting from economic to cultural realms. Indeed, in the cultural sphere, the impact of globalization is tremendous. For instance, in literature the tendency of writing in English from non-native writers increases considerably. This phenomenon may be the outcome of the huge permeation of the English language worldwide due to the economic, cultural and political hegemony of some of the English speaking countries such as the USA and the UK.

2.2.2.5. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a focal concept in the post-colonial studies. To account for 'ethnicity', a distinction between two overlapping terms, race and ethnicity should be made. Ashcroft, et al. (2007) suggests a clarification to the confusion between these notions:

> Ethnicity is a term that has been used increasingly since the 1960s to account for human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry, rather than the discredited generalizations of

> race with its assumption of a humanity divided into fixed, genetically determined biological types. (p. 75)

Many definitions are given to the term 'ethnicity'. For instance, (Schermerhorn, as cited in Aschroft, et al. (2007, p. 75), describes it as: "a composite of shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, and consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties". In addition, according to Cashmore in Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations (1996) , ethnic and ethnicity refer to a group of people sharing some unity and commonality and conscious of having common origins and interests.

Many investigations were made to give a definition to both an ethnic group and to what constitutes it. For example, Ashcroft, et al. (2007) explicate the ethnic group as: "A group that is socially distinguished or set apart, by others and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national characteristics " (p. 10). Another scholar, Isajaw, as cited in Ashcroft, et al. (2007) introduces a definition to the components of an ethnic group:

> a group of category of persons who have a common ancestral origin and the same cultural traits, who have a sense of peoplehood and of group belonging, who are immigrant background and have either minority or majority status within a larger society. (p. 77)

Thus, belonging to an ethnic group means possessing its identity components. It is to adhere culturally to a particular group of people, a group that shares the same linguistic, religious and cultural elements. Regarding the use of the term 'ethnic', researchers of the field relate its use to the waves of European

migrations to the USA in the twentieth century (Ashcroft, et al., 2007). Indeed, in that period, minorities started to notice the marginalization of the ethnic groups in the USA, so they started to write about their experiences to make themselves visible to main stream America.

2.2.2.6. Exile

The word 'exile' originates from' exiluim ' , the Latin word which is composed of the prefix 'ex' that means 'out' and the root '*solum'* that refers to 'ground, land or soil'(Naguib, 2011). It also relates to the Latin word '*salire* ', that means '*to leap or spring*' (McClennen, as cited in Naguib, 2011).

Exile is said to go back to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from heaven. It is the geographical and the subsequent psychological displacement that the deterritorialized person experiences as soon as he steps into the host territory. Moreover, exile refers to the dislocated state of being, in which the displaced person cannot forget his place of origin . In this regard, Seidel (1986) states: "an exile is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another".

According to Elad-Bouskila (2006), exile is either a forced or chosen experience, i.e. exiles can be those who are obliged to flee their homelands due to political persecutions or economic issues as well as those who choose to settle abroad for cultural reasons, i.e., Searching a better academic achievement or seeking a more appropriate environment for intellectual innovation. Being a voluntaryor obligatory exile does not, in my sense, impact the extent to which the process of deterritorialization can be harming to the dislocated psyche. At the very moment the exile departs from his

respective territory, he, I would argue, sentences himself to a life time penalty of dislocation and instability. By instability, here, I refer to the psychological state of being. To put it differently, the exile may not recover from the cultural shock he confronts in the host polity, and even if he does, the recovery will engender sacrifices among which is the loss of his identity.

According to Elad-Bouskila (2006), regardless of the several reasons behind their displacement, Exiles have always kept an idealized image of their home countries, countries to which they hold strong feelings of belonging. Elad-Bouskila ((2006) further states that, in an attempt of overcoming such feelings, exiles seek to build an artificial space that resembles their home territory by using objects, names, commodities, that belong to their origins. The constructed polity is, on the one hand, a way of reducing distances between the host and the native countries in an attempt of healing the exile's homesickness and, on the other, an introducing technique of the home culture to the host one. In this respect, Said posits:" The exile's new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction" (Said, as cited in Elad-Bouskila, 2006).

Exile is an umbrella term that subsumes several concepts which are often used interchangeably. Though expatriate, diasporan and refugee share the meaning of displaced people; they do differ in other aspects. In a similar vein, Said, as cited in Naguib (2011) puts:

> Exile originated in the Age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth century state. The word 'refugee' has become a political one, suggesting

> large herds of innocents and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas 'exile' carried with it, I think solitude and spirituality; Expatiates voluntarily live in an alien country usually for personal or social reasons (p. 43)

For Edward Said, as cited in Naguib (2011), the notion of exile is tightly linked to pain and homesickness contrary to that of expatriate which is a pure matter of choice. To put it differently, the expatriate opts to live in a new territory that fits his/her new lifestyle and interest. Besides, the exile's pain is due to the fact of not being able to go back home; howbeit, the expatriate can easily visit his native country whenever he wants.

The concept of 'refugee', according to Said, as cited in Naguib (2011), is loaded with politicalideologies. Recently, thousands of Arab exiles, dubbed 'refugees', coming mainly from war zones such as Yemen and Syria, invade most of the European countries as well as parts of The United States of America seeking safety that seems to vanish from many of the Arab countries notably after the so-called 'Arab spring'. De facto, because of the civil wars that raged almost everywhere in the Arab world, many Arabs decided to flee from an absolute death towards, what they believe are secure areas.

However, after the recent terrorist attacks, attributed to Arabs, in America, France, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, etc., refugees are now facing rejection from Europeans and Americans alike. This refusal not only targets the refugees, but it also declines all the Arab and Muslim immigrants' right of citizenship in these countries. In so doing, the host countries resend the immigrants to the starting point of their state of being in

these countries, namely exiles. In the same token, Shahidian, as cited in Naguib (2011), claims that "exiles can become immigrants, just as circumstances could make the latter exiles" (p. 46)

Like expatriate, Diasporan is another category of exile, which originated after the fall of Jerusalem and the '*Shattet*'of the Jewish people who dispersed worldwide. Prior to 1948, the concept of 'diasporan' held as much pain and nostalgia as the term exile; however, after the establishment of Israel, diasporan , as a concept, could be used interchangeably with expatriate since the diasporan Jews could finally return home (Naguib, 2011).

Overall, exile could be considered as an umbrella term that covers all the aforementioned concepts, namely, expatriate, diasporan, refugee and immigrant, which seem to be sub-categories sharing a major characteristic that is the displacement from the home territory and the subsequent suffering it engenders.

2.2.2.7.Trauma in Postcolonial Studies

The postcolonial field of study has recently devoted many studies to trauma and its aftermaths. Trauma is defined by Leyas, as cited in Visser (2011) "an event that involves a "recognizable stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone" (p.3). Indeed trauma is caused by violent events, be they physical or psychological. The impact of such events could accompany the traumatized person throughout his entire life. Hence, what is more important than the trauma itself is its consequence. In this regard, Visser (2011) states the following:

> […] trauma refers not so much to the traumatic event as to the traumatic aftermath, the post-traumatic stage. Trauma thus denotes the recurrence or repetition of the stressor event through memory, dreams, narrative and/or various symptoms known under the definition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (p.3)

Indeed, the effects of traumatic events, like wars or rapes, could be extremely profound, to the extent that traumatized people's need for curative therapies is simply inevitable. For example, many traumatized Algerian people, during the 'Black Decade' of terrorism in the nineties, could not recover from the mental disorders that were caused by terror. Hence, they were obliged to attend psychological therapies to overcome their trauma. Trauma then haunts the traumatized people's life; it reoccurs whenever events, similar to the stressor one, are present. Such events may not be real like fiction, drama, or even dreams.

Wars, as stated above, are the major causes of trauma; hence, colonized and oppressed people are more likely going to be exposed to it. For this reason, postcolonial scholars have enquired about the aftermaths of violence, in all its manifestations, in postcolonial societies. For instance, Arab societies, in general, have been traumatized by several wars throughout their history. Moreover, they have been subjected to the dictatorship and tyranny of their governments. Such a constant traumatic situation has urged Arabs, from several Arab countries to escape from their homes and to venture into the unknown in search of a better existence. However, as soon as they arrive in the Western countries, these exiles or refugees, face rejection and alienation, a fact that makes them experience another trauma, the trauma of exile.

Several Arab postcolonial writers, mainly Arab immigrants, have tackled the theme of trauma in their literary productions. They have written about how traumatized immigrants and refugees are perceived in Western countries. In her first collection of short stories entitled *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, Lalami narrates the story of illegal immigrants who fled their countries in which they had experienced injustice, wars, dictatorships and hunger. Most of the characters got lost on the other bank of the sea. They faced another trauma, the trauma of loss and despair.

2.3. Minor Literature

Arab Anglophone literary production fits into what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) call minor literature (Wail Hassan, 2011).This can be confirmed in Ronald Bogue's book *Deleuze on Literature* (2003) in which he puts:

> The concept of minor literature cuts across at least three different categories: the literature of numerically small nations and groups ;the literature of oppressed minorities ; and the literature of the modernist avant-garde.(p 112).

As such, the Immigrant writers articulate a minor literary body that is influenced by the cultural peculiarities of its articulators. Writers like Laila Lalami, Ahdef Soueif, Sabiha El Khemir, to list but a few, are the creators of literature deemed revolutionary by Deleuze and Guattari who advanced the theory of minor literature after analyzing the works of Kafka, the German Jew writer, about whom Bensmaia (1986)states:

> Kafka appears as the initiator of a new literary continent: a continent where reading and writing open up new perspectives, break ground for new avenues of thought, and above all, wipes out the tracks of an old

> topography of mind and thought. With Kafka_ at least with the Kafka that Deleuze and Guattari think through anew_ one has the feeling that literature has been given a new face: it has changed both its addresser and its addressee. (p. 15)

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature (1975),* Deleuze and Guattari elaborated on the concept of minor literature, introduced and exemplified in Kafka's writings. Nonetheless, minor literature is also characteristic of many writings of different genres (Bogue, 2003, p. 91). Minor literature, according to French scholars, is what a minority makes within a major language (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986,p. 16). To put it differently, it is literature written by a minor writer in the language of the majority. As such, it is a way of linking the alien to the familiar through the use of a subverted major language. An instance of such minority literature can be, as I aforementioned, the Arab immigrants' literary production in English.

For Deleuze and Guattari (1986), minor literature is characterized by, first, a high coefficient of deterritorialization; second a political immediacy of enunciation; and third, a collective assemblage of enunciation.

2.3.1. Linguistic Deterritorialization

The first characteristic of minor literature advanced by Deleuze and Guattari is that its language is highly deterritorialized. In his interview with Robert Maggiori, Guattari, as cited in Roffe (2005), claims:

> Deterritorialization […] is a barbarous formula that I articulated, and then Gilles related it to the concept of the earth, which, at the beginning, was not part of my perspective_ but,

> from the moment we brought these elements together, the notion was recast anew. (p. 2)

Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept more thoroughly in their book *The Thousand Plateau* (1987). They argue that the enforcement of language norms leads to the establishment and imposition of a hierarchy of power. However, language is constantly changing over time, and its standards are continuously challenged and revised. And this very process is what is called deterritorialization and reterritorialization(Kelley, 2011). As such, deterritorialization can be defined as the process of subverting language norms and structures; whereas, reterritorialization is the reinforcing of these very structures of expression (Delay, cited in Brown, 2011).

Another definition of deterritorialization is introduced by Patton(2010) as he makes an analogy between lines of flight and deterritorialization which, to him, are both the source of an utmost creativity and the affect linked with it, like a state of joy or strong despair. Indeed, it is these very states of being that make it impossible not to write, not to voice one ‘s experiences, agonies and wails. In the same line of thought, Deleuze and Guattari (2008) posit:

> Kafka marks the impasse that bars access to writing for the Jews of Prague and turns their literature into something impossible_ the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise. (p. 16)

Deleuze and Guattarihint at the constraints that language can build in the face of a man, in the situation of Kafka, who seeks lines of flights to voice his experiences as a minor writer, living in en ambivalent space. A situation like Kafka’s only makes it impossible

for any minor writer not to write. Hence, creativity, in all its forms, is what fissures the impasse that bars access to writing for any Kafka-like writer, and gives entry to a new territory where impossibility becomes a possibility. In this regard Patton (2010) states:

> Deterritorialization is defined as the complex movement or process by which something escapes or departs from a given territory (MP634, 508), where a territory can be a system of any kind, conceptual, linguistic, social, or affective. (p. 52)

In Patton's view, then, any territory can be confronted to deterritorialization. A territory can be any system: linguistic, conceptual, social or affective. Hence, deterritorialization can operate on many levels of enunciation.

2.3.1.1.Graphological Deterritorialization

Graphologic signs differ from one language to another. In Arabic, for instance, we write from right to left, using signs like the followings: ك , م , خ , س , ي, ن , ض etc. However, In English, we write from left to write, using symbols such as, A, B, G, K, P, S etc. In narratives, written in English by Arabs, English graphology is deterritorialized, that is, Arabic words are written in English symbols, for example, *'madina'* مدينة( ) which means a city, *'madrassa'* (مدرسة)which means a school. In so doing, Arab writers deterritorialize the English language by using its typography in another linguistic territory, namely Arabic.

2.3.1.2. Phonological Deterritorialization

The science that studies and generates the rules for sound patterning is phonology. An instance of such rules can be that in English, the maximum number of consonants that can make up the syllabic onset, at the beginning of an isolated word is three. The first can be /s/; the second must be /p/, /t/, or /k/; and the third has to be an approximant /w/, /j/, or /l/ (Harrington and Cox, 2009). Consonants clusters have three positions in a word, initial, central, and final (e.g. struggle, cluster, French). Harrington and Cox (2009) advance the following table to account for the different kinds of onsets allowed in different languages:

	/kn/	/skw/	/sb/	/vr/
English	No	Yes	No	No
German	Yes	no	No	No
French	No	No	No	Yes
Italian	No	No	Yes	No

Table 2.1: Clustes' Differences between Languages (Harrington and Cox ,2009, p. 3)

An instance of violating phonotactic constraints is detected in Lalami's book *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*as illustrated in the table below:

Words	Not allowed consonant clusters
-mbarek	mb/
-Hlibbhabrchad	/hl/_/bh/_/rS/
-Kotb	/tb/
-Asr	/sr/
-Chleuh	/Sl/
-Gnawa	/gn/ (in initial position)
-kohl	/hl/
-Guenbri	/nbr/
-Casba	/sb/

Table2.2: Phonotactic Constraints in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuit* (Hairech, 2014, p 98)

2.3.1.3.Morphological Deterritorialization

The linguistic branch that studies word structures and patterns, within and across languages, is Morphology. It attempts to generate rules that help in the formation of words in a particular language. Furthermore, it studies affixation behavior, roots and pattern properties. (Al-Khuli, 1991; Hull&Grefenstette, 1996; Krovetz, 1993 cited in Al-Sughaier& Al-Kharachi, 2004)

An example of morphological deterritorialization could be found in Al Khemir's*The Blue Manuscript (2005).*The Arab writer created new words to reflect the ambivalent condition in the Oriental sphere of the globe. Al Khemir formed words that

contain Arabic roots and English affixation. An instance of such words is '*Gallabiyas'* in which the Arabic (Egyptian vernacular)root *'Gallabiya'* is joined to the English suffix's', to mark the plural form. In so doing, the writer shows her readers that the garment *'Gallabiya'* is peculiar to the Arab world and that it has no equivalent in English. As such, she opts for the promotion of the Arab culture and encourages its spread worldwide.

Another example of morphological deterritorialization is the creation of hyphenated half-Arab-half-English words like '*Kohl-rimmed'* that is a combination of the Arabic word *'kohl'* which has a highly cultural significance to the Arab Beauty. Indeed, Arab women have always considered *'Kohl'* as indispensable to their beauty. Again, the writer enhances the Arab culture and links it to its English counterpart via the juxtaposition of two distinct tongues.

2.3.1.4. Syntactic Deterritorialization

Lalami's stellar Prose is straightforward albeit the deterritorialized nature of its language. The linguistic deterritorialization is present in all the linguistic systems, and the syntactical is no exception. In the following table, I will try to highlight instances of syntactically deterritorialized sentences:

Syntactically deterritorialized sentences	Syntactically accurate sentences
-" You were looking through my things?"	-Were you looking through my things?
-"Si Tawfik. Remember him?"	-Si Tawfik. Do you remember him?
-"I already do"	-I have already done....
-"She cheated?"	-Did she cheat?
-"It can't hurt, right?"	-It can't hurt, can it?

-“And you think Spain is going to be great?”	-And do you think Spain is going to be great?
-“He is going to leave you behind?”	-Is he going to leave you behind?
-“And you are not afraid?”	-And are not you afraid?
-“God help us all”	-God helps us all.
-“The men can’t behave, so now my daughter has to cover herself	-Does my daughter have to cover herself because men cannot behave

Table 2.3: Syntactically Inaccurate Utterances in *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*.(Hairech, 2014, p. 100)

2.3.1.5. Code-Switching as a Technique of Deterritorialization

Minor writers interpolate minor forms in their literary texts written in the major language, that is, they use code-switching as a technique of linguistic deterritorialization. Code-switching or language switching is a phenomenon that occurs both consciously and unconsciously in the speech of bilinguals (Auer, 1995, 1998;Scotton, 2002 cited in Riehl: 2005).The majority of the studies conducted on code-switching tend to focus on the spoken utterances used in interpersonal interaction or media (Paugh, 2005; Shinee, 2006 cited in Albakry andHancock, 2008). Consequently, little importance has been given to the deliberate use of code switching and bilingual creativity as an aspect of English literature. As far as Arab Anglophone literature is concerned, scarce are studies conducted on the employment of Code-switching strategies by the Arab-Anglophone authors.

Code-switching is a socio-linguistic phenomenon that consists of shifting between various languages or variations of the same language. Hoffman (1991) describes the concept as the alternation between two languages or linguistic variations in the same

utterance or the same interaction. Gumperz (1982) defines code-switching as" the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". (p. 9)

Linguists' primary concern, in studying code-switching, is more with investigating the reasons that urge individuals to alternate two codes and the factors involved in the process. Code-switching is influenced by several social factors that surround the participants, factors such as the setting, the social distance between interlocutors, and the topic of discussion.

Scholars divide code-switching into two categories. The first type is the intrasentential codes-witching that occurs in a word or phrase within the same utterance. For instance, switching from Arabic to English like "*la trouh outside*"(Al Rowais, 2012). The second kind is the intersentential which occurs between various sentences like *"don't bother, hiya galatlo"(don't bother, she said)*(Al Rowais, 2012). The first type is frequently used in bilingual countries like Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, etc.

According to Lipski (1985), unlike 'codes-witching' in speech, literary code-switching might not be comprehensible to the reader. It is however, worthwhile to examine code-switching as a literary device,its motivation and strategies in fiction.The use of code-switching in literature is not a new fashion. Postcolonial writers use code-switching as a bridge to cover the metonymic gap with the 'Other'. As far as postcolonial authors are concerned, Arab Anglophone literary writers create new forms and different fashions through the implementation of code-switching which aims at showing their identities as well as the culture they belong to.

Hence, the primary reason for using code-switching, in Arab literary productions, is to restore and redefine a lost identity. Besides, it helps the minor writers foreground their cultural peculiarities such as language, religion and values. In short, code-switching is an authentic technique that enables the literary writer to disturb the reader's schemata and stimulate their curiosity to know more about the Arab world. In so doing, the Arab authors wittily resist the already established Orientalist stereotypes and introduce what they see as the real image of their physical, psychological and cultural territory.

In the following table Instances of Code-switching as linguistic deterritorialization device in Lalami's Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits are introduced:

Code-Switching	Examples from *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*
Arabic nouns functioning as subjects	-*Murad* notices the scarface -*Rahal* opens his sypplies box -*Faten*became a regular visitor -*Aziz* clicked his tongue." -*Larbi* stroked the ends of his thin mustache -*Tawfiq*cleared his throat - and *Nadir* had asked for ice cream. -Noura shot her father -*Salma* glanced at Larbi. - The *hijab* is a protection
Arabic noun functioning as object/ object of preposition	-it stirs feelings of respect in *Murad* -everyone turns to look at *Rahal* - *Halima* took off her jellaba

	-what happened to *Halima* -over his bottle of *Sidi Harazem* -the centrellated fortress walls at *Bab Rouah* -asked the *chaouch* -stood up to welcome *Si Tawfiq* -Larbi Noura glances at *Noura* -It was *Maalim fi Tariq* -in the *briwat*pastries -pagan times of *jahiliya* -Fatiha lit the *butagaz* -neighbor in The *Zenata* -was going to make *rghaif*. -for making a *tagine*. -bent on her *marma* -the pocket of his *seroual*. -hard work and *ghurba* -they had let *Zohra* marry him "The *Chleuh* who sold her -the swap meet at *DerbGhallef*, -He took off the *jellaba* -who liked to smoke *hashis* -smoked his *kif* -that made *kefta* -unmistakable signature of the *a'duls*at the bottom." -she put a kettle on the *mijmar* -selling *beghrir*at the market. -she made for *Eid* -she rounded off the meal with *pastilla* -were lined with *kohl*. -and the plate of *halwa*.

Noun as Modifier	-hidjab scarf *-harira*soup with lamb
Exclamation	"*a* lalla" *ya* *Balak*!

Table2.4.: Code-Switching in Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits(Hairech, 2014, p. 84-85)

2.3.2. Collective Assemblage and Political Immediacy

Minor literature is collective by definition (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986) . It works as a particularly collective utterance. In fact, in minor literature, there is less focus on singularities that are scarce (no great and talented writer is considered a referential and canonical figure in minor literature). Instead, more emphasis is on the collective creation of artifacts. As such, minor literature can be a stimulator to the emergence of a yet-to-come nation. Hence, it is the collective arrangement of utterance, particularly inherent in minor literature that makes it a revolutionary literary machine.

In addition to the collective assemblage of enunciation, everything in minor literature is political (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). It is political in that the individual lives and concerns of the narratives' characters are always related to the social collectivity's concerns; any individual or familiar issues are of secondary considerations. Indeed, most of minor writers focus on collective issues like politics in their homelands, or problems of their immigrant counterparts in their host countries.

2.4. The Postcolonial Historical Novel

The postcolonial historical novel is a new genre in the Arab Anglophone literary landscape, a genre that needs much inquiry. Nonetheless, Postcolonial researchers have

always done skeptical about historical narratives, a suspicion detected in the area that relates postcolonial studies to historical fiction (Dalley, 2014). Still, scarce are studies devoted to historical novels despite the latter's centrality to ex-colonized societies' literature (Dalley, 2014).

The historical novel analysis is an area of study that intrigues not only literary critics but also historians who consider writers of historical fiction as their rivals. Indeed the writers of the aforementioned genre claim that they do observe, to a certain extent, the criteria of plausibility and very similitude in their artifacts. Also important is the fact that historical novelists ask to be read as serious interpretations of the past (2014). In this regard, Dalley argues:

> Such an appeal to archival evidence is commonplace for postcolonial historical novelists, whether they work in experimental modes or not. In Australia, for example, Kate Grenville—author of The Secret River (2005), a novel about colonial genocide—has repeatedly affirmed her desire to produce "a tale that drew its power from the fact that it was real."(p. 54)

Rejected as it is by critics, the idea of plausibility in historical novels remains a core element upon which the way this genre should be read and interpreted is decided. For instance, If Grenvilles desire is considered seriously, her novel will transcend the boundaries of a mere fictitious tale to embrace the position of a real account of historical events, a fact that risks to destabilizing any established version of the same events. Hence, in this dissertation, the attempt will be to demonstrate how historical narratives written by Arabs in English could subvert already established historical

records. Moreover, the primary aim of this research work is to demonstrate how minor historical literary works can blur the boundaries between official history and literary history.

2.5. The Historical, Postcolonial and Minor Literature: A Revolutionary Triangulation

In this section, the plan is to demonstrate how a novel that is historical, postcolonial, and minor at once can generate a revolutionary discourse of resistance apt to destabilize the taken-for-granted Western discourse of hegemony, that has very long been accredited by the international society.

As mentioned in the previous sections, the postcolonial novel, be it written by a postcolonial writer or not, is a literary production that projects the image of oppressed people who originate or live in ex-colonized countries which suffered from submission and tyranny. In addition, the novel portrays the impact of the oppressed psyche of the colonized on his personal as well as collective life. As such, the postcolonial novel is genuinely a narrative of resistance against the Eurocentric colonial discourse that has very long marketed for colonialism.

The second attribute of the triangulation is the historical nature of the novel. Historical, here, means that the temporal setting of the events is history. Adding to this, the characters can be a mixture of real and fictitious personages. This approximation to real historical events is what blurs the limits between fiction and history. Hence, historical novels could challenge official manuscripts and bring doubt into the readers' minds towards the established historical knowledge.

The last characteristic is the fact of being a minor literary text. This literary text is written in a major language that is highly affected by deterritorialization. By deterritorialization, I refer to the minor forms that subvert the major discourse - minor forms that mirror the cultural peculiarities of the minority writer. An example of such forms can be the use of Arabic in novels written in English by Arab immigrants. It can also refer, as mentioned in the previous sections, to the use of ungrammatical structures such as hybrid words, incorrect sentences, and so on.

Also worth mentioning is the collective trait of the minor literary discourse. A minor writer, as aforementioned, is said to speak for the collectivity. His major concern is the societal rather than the personal or familiar issues. As such nationalism and belonging are to be major elements in minor literature.

It goes without saying that whenever collectivity is involved, political issues are highly in use. And this is what has being detected in minor literary texts.

Overall, the post-colonial historical and minor novel enclose a set of characteristics that make of it a revolutionary text apt to create a sense of illusion of propinquity that causes the obscurity of the past's so-called real events. In addition, the revolutionary triangulation could generate, through the imaginary representation of its characters, most of the time oppressed people, a discourse inflected with postcolonial peculiarities that may affect the previously skeptical readings of the genre. Moreover, the attribute of minor, when added to postcolonial and historical, revolutionizes the literary and fictional discourse by changing its status from a mere educational or entertaining text to another source through which historical evidence could be sought.

2.6. Conclusion

Literary postcolonial studies' primary concern is to shed light on how postcolonial people are represented in literary texts written by postcolonial writers, or about postcolonial lives. To put it differently, postcolonial scholars study the literary representation of the subalterns' experiences and conditions in a world of unbalanced powers. Such thinkers struggle to settle a counter-hegemonic literary canon that gives credit to postcolonial or minor writers, as Deleuze labeled them.

Minor literature is the revolutionary body of literary texts that transcends the boundaries and constraints, set by the West as a set of norms that should not be violated by the Other.It is indeed the literature that gives the minor writers new spaces to sound the silences that have very long permeated the Eastern emptied discourse. Hence, minor literature is the literature of the rebels who refuse the Orientalists' binary classification. Instead, they introduce what they see as the genuine representation of the Eastern psyche, as different but not necessarily opposite to the Western one.

In this dissertation, the attempt is to scrutinize four literary productions to figure out what could be the outcomes of applying Deleuzo-Guattarian theory of minor literature on postcolonial and historical literary texts written by Arab emigrant writers who originate from North-African countries.

In the previous sections of this chapter, the endeavour was to present an account of the postcolonial theory and its major scholars and concepts. Deleuze and Guattari were considered as proponents of postcolonial thought because of their theory of minor literature which could be considered as a yielding approach to postcolonial literary studies.

Following the definition of minor literature introduced by Deleuze and Guatari, the plan is to analyse the literary productions at hand from both thematic and discursive

perspectives. Firstly, a thematic study is undertaken. Second, a stylistic model is structured to account for the linguistic deterritorialization in the novels. It also targets the implicature behind the violation of the linguistic norms in the texts at hand.

CHAPTER THREE

The Moor's Account: A Revolutionary Historical Novel

> *"Laila Lalami has fashioned an absorbing story of one of the first encounters between Spanish conquistadores and Native Americans, a frightening, brutal, and much-falsified history that here, in her brilliantly imagined fiction, is rewritten to give us something that feels very like truth"* (Salman Rushdie)

3. *The Moor's Account*: A Revolutionary Historical Novel

3.1. Introduction

History has provided the world with several accounts about the discovery of America or the New World. Spaniards, Portuguese, French, and British competed to have the biggest part of the newly conquered virgin territories. Historical annals have reported several versions of events that took place in America for centuries. However, official records have mostly been written by the conquerors that defeated the natives and took hold of their lands. Hence, the chronicles were jotted down by the powerful people who decided that history, to borrow Churchill's words, 'will be kind to (me) them because (I) they intend to write it' (cited in Smith, 2012, p. 1).

An instance of such official historical accounts is Cabeza de Vaca's *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition (2002),* which was written in 1536 shortly after the collapse of the ill-fated Panfilo de Narvaez's expedition that was launched in 1527. The record was written by one of the four survivors of the unfortunate journey. However, only three of the men were asked to give their testimonies. The fourth man whose testimony was left out was a dark-skinned Arab Moroccan slave called 'Estebanico'. Only one sentence, in the whole account, was devoted to the Arab explorer (Lalami, 2015). The flagrant

denial stimulated Lalami's *Arabness* and gave birth to the book at hand. Hence, *The Moor's Account* (2014) is a written-back testimony, under the guise of a brilliantly imagined story of how hope could help Man survive and defeat all kinds of misfortune.

In her subtly woven fictitious saga, Lalami penetrates the borders of official historical records and enters a restricted territory. She mixed so-called real events with fictitious ones to deliver her version of history. This created version could show the vulnerability and unreliability of official records.

In this chapter, the endeavour is to scrutinize Lalami's novel *The Moor's Account* to uncover its thematic and linguistic properties. Furthermore, this section seeks to figure out how this narrative that belongs to minor literature could generate a counter-hegemonic discourse that can destabilize the already established Orientalist assumptions. The study of Lalami's stellar work of historical fiction is divided into sub-sections that probe the narrative in terms of both form and content. Regarding the form, the research focuses on the deterritorialized characteristic of the novel's language; a stylistic analysis is deployed in an attempt to show how linguistic deterritorialization could yield a discourse of resistance. Concerning the content, thematic scrutiny is done to unveil the ideological property of the historical narrative.

3.2. Introducing Laila Lalami

To conceive one's biography while their lifespan is still in process is a hard task, especially when this concerns a young versatile personality like the Moroccan American writer Lalami. She was born and raised in Morocco, and she received her higher studies in Britain and America respectively. Now, she teaches creative writing at the University of California.

As a woman of literature, Lalami claimed that she was inspired by several contemporary American writers such as Edward P. Jones, Ha Jin, Andrea Barrett, Cormac McCarthy, Gary Shteyngart, Colum McCann, Antonya Nelson and many others. Besides, she stated that she preferred fiction that exhibits a great sense of creative compassion and brings in the psychological and emotional complexities of the characters (Martin, 2009). When asked about her choice of English to be her literary tongue, Lalami, cited in Martin (2009), answered as follows:

> I started to feel really uncomfortable with the idea of writing fiction using the colonial tongue. At the same time, I had been working on my dissertation at the University of Southern California, and I had to write in English every day. That was how the idea of writing fiction in English came about. (p. 298)

The postcolonial writer seems to have a great sense of nationalism and commitment to her ancestors who have sacrificed their lives fighting against several colonial forced throughout history. She refuses to write in the language of the colonizer, yet, to her, it was simply, to borrow Kafka's words, impossible not to write. So, Lalami decided to write in English, the language of her host country. However, narrating stories about Moroccan characters was challenging. The writer was obliged to excise some expressions and common phrases that are culturally specific like "*She went to bat on this project*" or "*He kicked the bucket*" from her prose (cited in Martin, 2009). Instead, she integrated words and expressions from Arabic that are difficult to translate into English. Instances of such interpolations are words like *Tagine, Djallaba, Pastilla, R'ghaif, Shebbakia, Mufti, Niyya* , etc.

Lalami started her journey as a novelist by writing a collection of short stories entitled *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* (2005) followed by her first novel *The Secret Son* (2008), and then a second novel *The Moor's Account* (2014), A book that won an Award from The Before Columbus Foundation. It was also a nominee for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction. Besides, it was long listed for the Man Booker Prize. Lalami is also the writer of *The Other Americans (2019),* a novel that received considerable appraisal from literary critics.

3.3. *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits:* A Fatal Hope

According to Imen Yacoubi (2011), Moroccans are the pioneers, among North African writers, to venture in the experience of writing literary texts in English. Laila Lalami's novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is the very first novel written in English by a North African writer. The book tackles the truly serious issue of illegal immigration (*El Harga)*of young people from North African countries to Europe via the Mediterranean sea, an unsafe journey, at the end of which several Africans die, drowning in the sea. The book's publication made a splash in the universal literary community; a lot of writers have praised it. For instance, her Moroccan peer Anwar Majid said, "Laila Lalami's novel, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, feels as if literature has spoken directly to me for the first time in my life."(Majid, cited in Lalami, 2006). Majid's words reflect how concerned he is about a book that addresses issues and themes about his home country Morocco.

"Fourteen kilometers" are the very first words of Lalami's collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. The two words reflect how short is the space that separates two lands, two peoples, two cultures and two universes. This exit site has become, especially in the last two decades, the line of flight for Africans in

general and the North Africans (Moors) in particular. Hundreds of young people who suffer from oppression (physical, cultural, social...) risk their lives for the sake of what they see, as a better existence.

Lalami, the post-colonial Arab-American writer, wittily addresses the issue of illegal immigration, from Africa towards Europe. She exhibits the dangers that the youth face while trying to cross the sea in unsafe boats without any security. Lalami's collection of short stories tells the story of four Moroccans: Murad, single and has a BA degree in English, from a Moroccan university; Aziz, married but have no fixed job; Halima, the oppressed housewife who suffers from domestic abuse; and Faten, the university student who belongs to an Islamist organization.

She starts her novel amid the sea where her characters, on an inflatable boat, try to pass to the other part of the world; Europe, or to be more precise, to Spain. Then, she flashes backward to portray her character's motives to embark on such an adventure. After, the author flashes forwards to depict the four Moroccans' fate after reaching the Spanish coasts.

Lalami's first literary work is a narrative of exile and the suffering it engenders. It is a narrative that seeks to restore the bleak image of the Arab refugees and exiles seen, by the West, as invaders and potential danger. It is a work that addresses the colonial world which has impacted the destinies of colonized and ex-colonized people and that ironically resulted in massive waves of Arab refugees to the Western countries which have very long subjugated and oppressed them.

3.4. The Secret Son: A Synopsis

The Secret Son (2009) is Lalami's first novel after her collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*. In this book, Lalami tackles themes such as identity, the need for a family, love, and desperation that imprisons ordinary people in a world torn by politics, languages, cultures and religions. It narrates the story of a nineteen-old man who had lived, with his mother, in poverty and misery before he discovered that his father was alive, contrary to what his mother had always told him: he was dead. Youcef El Mekki has lived with his mother in slums in Casablanca. He had always dreamt big, and suddenly and fortunately his dreams came true when he knew that his father was a wealthy man, ready to help him become someone else, i.e. his father was ready to support him s financially. Youssef left his mother to join his father to live a new life of wealth and luxury. However, misfortune seems not willing to divorce Lalami's protagonist; a reversal of fortune brought him back to his slums. The man desperately became easy prey for an Islamic party.

3.5. *The Other Americans (2019):* A Story of Agony and Love

The Other Americans (2019) is Lalami's latest work of fiction. The book is a beautifully written amalgam of love, loss, murder, hope, racism, and trauma. It tracks Nora's struggle to find out who is responsible for her father's hit and run. Nora's father, Idriss, was a Moroccan immigrant who suffered, like many other immigrants from racism, notably in the aftermath of 9/11 when his donut shop was burnt by a group of racists.

Noura refuses to accept the premise that her father's murder was a mere accident. She is determined to pursue the killer until he is put in jail. Jeremy Goreck, Nors's

former schoolmate, is the police officer in charge of the case. He sympathizes with Nora and supports her in her sorrow.

Another immigrant called Efrain witnessed the crime, but he refuses to bear witness in the police office because he fears that the criminals attack his family. Lalami seems willing to depict the immigrants as people who are constantly under the threat of being aggressed, just because they are different, or they are Muslim.

Amid violence, sadness, and loss, Lalami succeeds in growing a seed of hope when she weaves a love story between the detective and Nora. This love story could magically soften the agonizing atmosphere of the novel. In so doing, the writer sends a message to her immigrant compatriots, telling them that one should never lose hope because life is unpredictable and lunatic. Sometimes, it is happy and full of hope, but in other times, it is cruel and full of despair.

In the end, the murderer is arrested, and Nora thinks that the crime was racially driven. In fact, it was racism that caused her father's death. The father, who had escaped from oppression and persecution in his home country, Morocco, in the 1980's, found himself subjected to an even more dangerous oppression_ Racism.

In *The Other Americans*, Lalami subtly succeeds in presenting the other category of Americans, namely, immigrants who are not treated equally as white Americans. She tries to gain the American readers' empathy towards immigrants who were destined to a life of exile, and who are unfairly paying for acts to which they have no relation but the racial and religious ones.

3.6. The Moor's Account: A Historical Saga

Lalami's stunning historical novel, *The Moor's Account* (2014), is a fictitious account of a real expedition launched from Spanish territories in 1527 towards the New World in search of gold and other precious materials. Headed by Cabeza de Vaca, the journey turned into a disaster as, after eight years in America, only four men could survive the monstrosity of life in the Indian's land.

Mustapha, Lalami's protagonist, is a Moorish character who originates from Azemmur in Morocco, and to whom the writer decides to give voice and authority in her novel. Mustapha or Estebanico, as the Spaniards use to call him, was mentioned only once in the official records reported by De Vaca, a fact that intrigued the writer, and led to the creation of the stellar work at hand. The Moroccan American writer could brilliantly tell the story of her compatriot who voluntarily fell into slavery and subsequently lost himself in the bottomless abyss of exile after he had been sold to a Spaniard.

The novelist narrates a story of conquests, wars, and misfortunes in a subtle technique of alternation. The writer swings between the protagonist previous life in his native country, Morocco, and his new experience in the unknown, America. He sways between a nostalgic past and a shocking present.

When asked about the technique of alternation in her novel, Lalami claimed that it was a way to get and keep the readers' interest in a novel whose context is dense with scenes of violence. Indeed, the narrative contains so many hostilities that it was described by critics as a manly narrative (Lalami, 2015). The writer wittily describes the atrocities of the conquerors wherever they are. In the New World, for instance, she

narrates how the Spaniards tortured the natives, raped their women, and stole their properties. She also describes how the Portuguese ill-treated the Moroccans, like in the following scene where Mustapha's father is struck on his shoulder: "How dare you question me? One of the soldiers replied. He drew his sword and, despite cries of Wait, wait, from his companion, he struck my father on the shoulder."(p. 34)Lalami, through such scenes, shows how cruel the colonial practices were in her home country, for such atrocities are never reported in historical annals.

Concerned as she is by history, Lalami stated in an interview in 2020 that history was an argument that never stopped. Hence, the writer seems committed to participate in this long-lasting argument by telling stories about people who experienced oppression, colonialism, tyranny, and submission, people who witnessed horrific scenes and reported them, but their accounts could not reach people, nor could their testimonies be recorded in official records. In this regard, Lalami (2020) claims:

> When I look at experiences of people like that and people that I know who have gone through experiences like that, those are very real experiences, and people have tried to record them. But whether they reach wider audience, whether they are taught to generations of people, those are forces that few of us control. (p.7)

We agree with Lalami's argument in that not everyone's testimony could reach a wide audience or could be found in books of history because this is a process that involves many factors, mainly political ones. But we think, people like Lalami and other Arab or Muslim writers have their word to say in such cases. They are the ones who can voice

what has been silenced by historians who work under given agendas. In the book at hand, the writer challenges historians and decides to write the missing chapters and to voice the silenced characters, in De Vaca's chronicles, in an attempt to destabilize his version of history. She decides to tell her fictionalized account of the cursed expedition in the form of stories rather than chapters to add an Oriental touch to it. In doing so, the Moroccan writer gave birth to *The Moor's Account*, paying tribute to her Moroccan compatriot who seems to be the first Arab explorer of the New World.

3.7. Story-telling: The Creation of Identity

From his creation until now, Man has always questioned the meaning of his existence. Stories were the very first tools man used to create significance to his being. Stories, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, are in constant movement along with the reality that keeps on moving as well.

According to Henry Gates (1998), stories are meant to organize the world in which we dwell; hence, they are the basis on which our sense of reality is constructed. They also enable us to understand and analyze the events that we meet in our daily lives. Stories encode all the values and norms that we respect, all the misbehaviors that we decline, all the fears that we do not dare to confess, and all the dreams that we wish to realize. As such, stories create us, define our existence, and connect us to the surrounding world. In the following Quotation, Gates (1998) illustrates best the point:

> The stories that we tell ourselves and our children function to order our world, serving to create both a foundation upon which each of us constructs our sense of reality and a filter through which we process each event that confronts us every day. The values we cherish and wish to

> preserve, the behaviour that we wish to censure, the fears and dread that we can barely confess in an ordinary language, the aspirations and goals that we most dearly prize –all of these things are encoded in the stories that each culture invents and preserves for the next generation, stories that, in effect, we live by and through. (P. 17)

In addition to what has been stated by Gates, stories help us preserve our past, present and even future existence. To put it otherwise, stories permit both personal and collective memory to assure the survival of its holders. For instance, the story of a nation makes its history, and it is its history that teaches its people how to preserve it.

Storytelling is a core element and a major technique in *The Moor's Account*. Lalami foregrounds the importance of storytelling in shaping Mustapha's identity. From his early childhood, the protagonist was told stories from his mother "…my mother, who nourished me with stories, both real and imaginary" (Lalami, 2014, p. 43). For Mustapha, stories are just like food without which he simply cannot survive. Indeed, Mustapha's mother has a story for each event. For instance, the story of the embroiderer tells about the curious girl who decided to go with the palace women musicians, to whom she had made amazing caftans, to participate in a musical party, just to see how the palace looked like. Unfortunately, she was harshly hit and put out by the guards; her broken hands could never recover properly to be able to embroider again.

Mustapha's mother told him this story when he started to fire his school lectures to go to the *souq*. She wanted him to think of his actions before it's too late. However, the son, though he had critically listened to her stories, refused the path that his parents

wanted him to follow, and chose his own, a road that will lead him to the abyss of slavery.

3.8. The Power of Story Telling

Story-telling is an ancient creation, and its use, as a literary tradition, is no exception, notably in African Literature. Recently some Arab emigrant writers like Sabiha al Khemir, Laila Lalami and Hisham Matar, among others, have opted for the use of story-telling as a major technique in their artifacts, and Lalami is among the pioneers to follow this tendency.

Stories are created to be told and retold either by the same or by different speakers. Stories tend to gain different meanings whenever repeated regardless if the teller is the same or a different person. An example of the multitude of interpretations is detected as Mustapha's mother keeps telling and retelling the same story of his birth from different perspectives. Lalami's book also shows how diversity is promoted by this multitude of interpretations generated by the multi-voiced feature of retelling stories, a feature that has given storytelling a new place in literature and most notably in post-colonial novels.

Laila Lalami splits her novel *The Moor's Account* (2014) into stories rather than chapters in an attempt to give it, as stated before, its oriental taste. Like Sheherazade tells stories in *One Thousand and One Nights* to save her life from the bloody king, Lalami tells stories to give life and voice to the silenced Moroccan slave whose testimony was left out from official chronicles written by Cabeza de Vaca. The moor whose journey in the New World was summarized in no more than few sentences in the Spaniard's report is given authority in Lalami's novel. The author adopts her Moroccan

predecessors' legacy _ storytelling_ which is a postcolonial feature that has always functioned as an instrument of resistance in the hands of oppressed people who have very long used it to sound their wails and agonies to the world. Hence, storytelling could be considered as an effective literary tool used by mainly postcolonial writers, especially those who write historical fiction, to restore what has been falsified by history.

Before being a tool of resistance, story-telling is a means of survival in the narrative. It helped the narrator in his quest for food and shelter. Mustapha entertained the natives by telling them stories in change for food and other gifts. He even cured their ills by using stories, as stated in this excerpt:

> If I was confronted with an illness I did not recognize, I listened to the sick man or woman and offered consolation in the guise of a long story ... This, too, was something I learned in the markets of Azemmur: a good story can heal. (p.304)

Story-telling was the protagonist's only resort towards freedom after being betrayed by his master who would never give him his papers and freedom. Indeed, Mustapha created a fictitious story that narrated his misfortune and death by natives to mislead the Spaniards who were too powerful to be fought back by natives as stated in the following: "But they cannot be fought with weapons, I said. I explained to Ahku that the white men's weapons were far more powerful than anything he had ever seen and that his only means of salvation was to create a fiction." (p. 426)

Through the excerpt above, the writer attempts to transmit a powerful message to her readership. It is the fact that literature or fiction is a mighty tool that could resist and defeat neo/colonialism and neo/imperialism. It could peacefully address minds and change already established convictions. Hence, Lalami's novel is a written back version of history that needs to be scrutinized and squeezed to obtain its gist which consists in paying tribute to the first Arab African man who travelled to America, freeing the subaltern's soul and permits him to master his after/existence.

3.9. *The Moor's Account*: Rewriting History

Lalami (2015) states, *"I think all history is fiction"*. Indeed, history is a set of stories said or written by victorious people who have been given credit by specialized institutions. The extent to which the stories are truthful is and will always remain debatable. Therefore, the only difference that exists between the so-called real and fictitious stories lies in its label.

History, to one's sense, is about victorious and defeated people whose stories were narrated. However, there are gaps and silences in it that should be filled with other stories. Hence, only those who hold stories can hold the truth. As such, stories constitute a fertile field of experimentation through which postcolonial writers could voice their experiences as alienated exiles and dislocated psyches. De-facto, through the use of story-telling, writers can explore many areas without constraints. In other words, by telling stories, writers exploit a territory in which rules freedom of expression and liberty that gives access to creativity in all its manifestations, and Lalami is no exception; the novel at hand is a sound example.

Lalami's historical novel *The Moor's Account* (2014) is an imaginary account of the Spanish ill-fated expedition that landed in the New World in 1527. By deciding to write the Moroccan slave's testimony, which was left out from the official annals, Lalami ventures into a fictitious experience by which she wittily subverts the historical chronicle *La Relacíon* (1542) , written by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. In so doing, Lalami transcends all the restrictions and decides to give voice to the silenced Arab slave, whom she calls Mustafa ibn Muhammad ibn Abulssalam al-Zamori. Although Mustapha survived the cursed mission, among only three Spaniards, he was weirdly not asked to testify, a fact that stimulated the writer's curiosity and, subsequently, gave birth to the novel at hand (Lalami, 2015). As such, we assume that Lalami, as an author of postcolonial historical fiction, is a rival to the historian Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.

Mustafa narrates his adventures along with his Castilian companions (Dorantes de Carranza, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado and Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca) , an adventure that lasted eight years in the unknown. Mustapha's motivation behind writing his testimony lies in his keenness to be eternalized, as he states in the following: " What each of us wants, in the end, whether he is black or white, master or slave, rich or poor, man or woman, is to be remembered after his death. I am no different; I want to survive the eternity of darkness that awaits me" *(Lalami, 2014, p. II*). Lalami hints at the fact that all human beings have the right to write their histories regardless of their colour, status, wealth and sex. Another stimulus is the narrator's strong willingness to convey a truthful testimony through an entertaining tale,

> "If by a stroke of luck, this account should find its way to a suitable secretary, who would see fit to copy it down without any embellishment (….) then perhaps, someday, if that is to be the will of God, my countrymen will hear about my wondrous adventures and take from them what wise men should: truth in the guise of entertainment." (p. II)

Lalami subtly interpolates fictitious stories into historical discourse, weaving an extraordinarily composed saga. As such, the writer, along with her narrator, fissure the official annals allowing, to borrow Deleuze's words, lines of flights from which skepticism could find its way into canonical history. De facto, storytelling, when used in postcolonial historical fiction, becomes a powerful tool that operates as a written- back version of history. In other words, Postcolonial novelists, who write historical narratives, subvert the historical records and generate a postcolonial account of history_ a history of the oppressed rather than the history of the victors. Hence, by giving voice to a silenced and oppressed Arab, Lalami challenges the Eurocentric assumption that history should, not to say must be written by the more powerful people, who give themselves the right to create, delete, modify and fashion history the way that fits their interests.

As such, they neglect the right of expression to the defeated 'other'. They reject any version, other than theirs, that might destabilize the divine position they attribute to themselves by portraying their deeds as heroic and fair. They even believed that anything they utter is true only because they have decided so, as shown in the following:

> "How strange, I remember thinking, how utterly strange were the ways of the Castilians_ just by saying that something was so, they believed that it

> was. I know now that these conquerors, like many others before them and no doubt like others after, gave speeches not to voice the truth, but to create it."(p. 8)

As Lalami puts it, the conquerors, Castilians or others, try to justify their horrific deeds in any way. For instance, they address speeches to conquered people, as the Spaniards did when they arrived in The New World. However, ironically, there were no people in the village where they read their declaration**.** Thus, the speech was not meant for natives, but it was rather meant to be recorded in historical records. In the following quotation, it is crystal clear that the speech was not meant for Indians, or else how would one interpret such an ironical statement:

> If you do as we say, you will do well and we shall receive you in all love and charity. But if you refuse to comply, or maliciously delay it, we inform you that we will make war against you in all manners that we can, and shall take your wives and children, and shall make slaves of them, and shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can. And if this should happen, we protest that the losses will be your fault, and not that of their Highnesses, or of the cavaliers here present (p. 8)

The Castilian said that they would receive the Indians! How grotesque such a statement is: Conquerors, receiving natives! They even warned them to not defend themselves; otherwise, they would be enslaved and perhaps killed. This is how civilized people colonized the uncivilized! This is how the empires assured their expansion and rule for centuries and centuries.

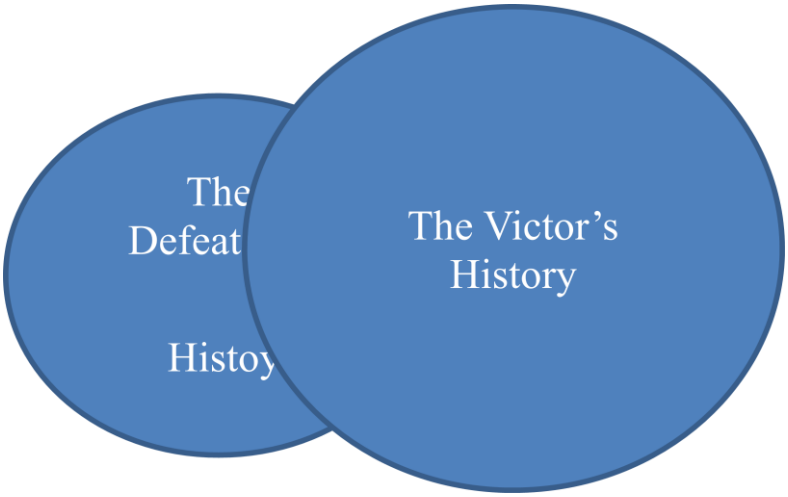

Figure 3.1.The Representation of History in Official Records

From the beginning of the novel, the writer decides to attribute the role of a history rewriter to her ancestor compatriot, the Moroccan Mustapha El Zamori or Estebanico as his Spaniard master called him. The slave, who was never asked to give his testimony, has been given the right to tell his version of the events in this novel. He claims in the introduction of the novel: "I testify here that I have described these events as I have witnessed them, including those that, by virtue of their rarity, may seem to the reader to be untrue." He adds:

> I intend to correct the details of the history that was compiled by my companions, the three Castilian gentlemen known by the names of Andrés Dorantes de Carranza, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and especially Álvar Núñes Cabeza de Vaca, who delivered their testimony,

> what they called the joint report, to the Audiencia of Santo Domingo. The first was my legal master, the second my fellow captive, and the third my rival storyteller. (p. I)

The storyteller thinks that the three men who delivered their testimony might have been put under pressure; therefore, they could not give the accurate version of history. Hence, Mustapha decides to testify since he is neutral "…, whereas I, who am neither beholden to Castilian men of power nor bound by the rules of a society to which I do not belong, feel free to recount the true story of what happened to my companions and me". Lalami's protagonist thinks that he is the best positioned to give the correct and unbiased version of history.

Lalami could insert fictitious events into the official historical chronicles. Events like the atrocities of cannibalism that took place between Spaniards, who experienced fear and famine, interpolate the falsified version of history. Other scenes of tyranny and exploitation are also depicted in the novel, scenes of Spaniards who conquered and tormented the Indians simply because they tried to defend their respective territories. In doing so, Lalami attempts to fill in the gaps, she wittily detected in the official annals, and consequently write her version of history, knowing that any story, if well written can rival historical annals as stated by Mustapha in the following passage: "Chauberkwan taught me that, just as unfounded gossip can turn into sanctioned history if it falls in the hands of the right story-teller, an untested cure could become effective if the right shaman administered it"(p. *280*)Hence, story-telling is truly powerful if told by the right person, in the right place and space. Lalami seems to be the right story-teller who wittily weaves his/her real and imaginary events to create unique stories which are truly real-like stories that could, if used in historical settings, shake already established

versions of history; and subsequently, they could create a new version of history. In the following figure, I will attempt to schematize what Lalami does in her minor historical fiction, namely, *The Moor's Account.*

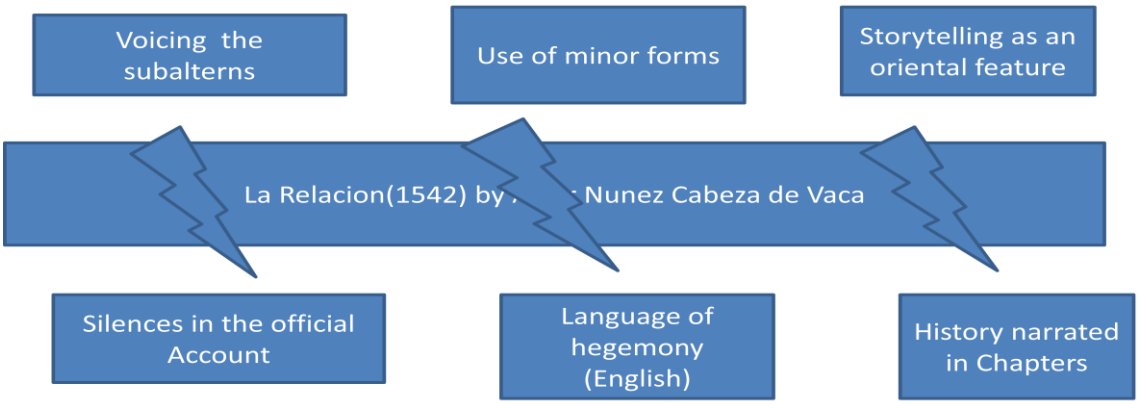

Figure 3.2.Lalami's Subversive Techniques to Deterritorialize Historical Annals.

As mentioned in the figure above, Lalami detects the fissures that constitute, to borrow Deleuze's words, lines of flights to the minor writer. Through these fissures, the postcolonial writer could insert imaginary and real stories and events which should have figured in the official annals, but they did not. As such, writers like Lalami and several others, decide through this technique of deterritorialization to voice what has very long been silenced, namely, the subaltern. Through this literary technique, Lalami stimulates the Western and the Eastern readers alike and prompts them to revisit the already established assumptions. She endeavours to incite the reader to question any version of history, be it official or not. The idea is that history is dense with stories embellished with fake events to serve the narrators' agendas.

3.10. Narrative Techniques

Lalami, in her historical novel *The Moor's Account*, does not opt for the traditional linearity of narratives. In other words, Lalami's text does not have a beginning, a climax, a denouement and an end as most traditional narrative structures have. The writer uses a technique named ' in media res', a technique that means the beginning of the literary work starts in the middle of the story like she did when she started her novel on the other coast of the ocean as the expedition was landing in La Florida. In fact, this is not the first time Lalami uses this technique. She used it in her first work of fiction *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* in 2005, as her novel started in the middle of the sea, in an inflatable boat that carried illegal immigrants.

Another narrative technique used by the author is flashback and foreshadowing, techniques that allow him to sway back and forward in time as he narrates retrospectively the events of the narrative. An instance of such a method is found in the second chapter named "The Story of My Birth", as Mustapha tells the story of his family and what happened to them before and while he was born. In the third chapter entitled "The story of the Illusion"the first scene pictures the burial of three Spaniards who were murdered by Indians in Rio Oscuro. The fourth chapter called "the Story of Azemmur" is devoted to Mustapha's hometown. The narrative, thus, switches between two distant settings, namely Azemmur and the New World in a go-forth and go-back trajectory.

In addition to the two narrative techniques explained above, the stream of consciousness is another method used by Lalami to reveal the internal thoughts of the narrator. Indeed, more than once, the protagonist Mustapha thinks out loud to let the

readers penetrate his mind and know all that happens in the narrator's psyche. One example of such internal thought externalized by Mustapha is the following excerpt: "Return their women, I silently begged. Return their women. Senor Dorantes turned toward me. What did you say, Moro? I had not realized that I had spoken out loud, so for a moment I looked uncomprehendingly at my master's surprised face" (p. 121). This passage is meant to show how frustrated Mustapha was in front of such barbarous acts from the Spaniards. His only resort was to cry internally and let his cries resonate in the form of monologues that escape from his burnt soul to be heard mistakenly from the Castilian master.

In deciding to attribute the role of first person narrator and protagonist to Mustapha, Lalami grants her central character the right to tell his personal story and ,consequently, to create his subjective self. Lalami also gains the readers' sympathy as she allows them to inhabit Mustapha's psyche by using, as previously stated, the first-person narrator, a technique that brings a feeling of closeness toward the protagonist. In this vein, Awad (2015) states:

> Lalami's novel is narrated by the protagonist himself, adding a sense of immediacy and propinquity, and subsequently, creating a solid bond between the hero and the reader as the latter becomes privy to the former"s inner thoughts. (p. 192)

In so doing, the writer enables the reincarnation of Mustapha in each reader's soul i.e. various readers identify with the narrator and embrace the affective dimension of the narrative. In this respect, Dalley(2014) posits:

> This "sentimental appropriation" then becomes a further source of anxiety for critics of the genre, who argue that readers' identification with invented people can produce an illusion of proximity that obscures the past's cultural difference. (p. 58)

Another technique that reinforces the sense of immediacy in the novel is a technique where the messages are addressed directly to the readers. This technique gives a sentiment of involvement and connectedness to the literary piece. An instance of such messages is: "Reader, it is not easy for me to confess that I served the forbidden drink, but I have decided in this relation to tell everything that happened to me, so I must not leave out even such a detail" (Lalami, 2014, p. 15). By confessing his deeds, good or bad, to the readers, Mustapha shows honesty and humility. He also demonstrates a strong determination to convey truth, and nothing but the truth. Another instance of the complicity between the writer and his readers is his eagerness to share every detail of his narrative with them. Addressing the readers, Mustapha states the following: "Reader, the joy of a story is in its telling" (p. 175). Through the quotation, we can guess how important are the readers to the narrator who does not spare any opportunity to interact directly with them in an act of celebrating the good moments he had in his misfortunate journey, moments that he highly enjoys while telling stories.

Another trait of the narrator is his sense of humor which he shares with the readers in the following quotation:

> Reader, beware: the things you say to impress a beautiful woman have an odd way of being repeated to you when you least expect them. I was embarrassed by my boasting, but, in my defense, I had said those things

> many months earlier, when I was starting out with the Avavares and still trying to attract Oyomasot's notice. (p. 311)

3.11. Islamic Faith in The Moor's Account

Lalami starts her book by *'El Basmala'* (In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful) and *'Essalatt ala Annabi'* (prayers and blessings be on prophet Muhammed and upon all his progeny and companions). Thus, right from the beginning of the novel, the reader detects the presence of the Islamic Faith in the novel. The whole narrative is written from the perspective of an Arab Muslim slave. Lalami starts *The Moor's Account* in the same way travelogues of that period, written by Muslims, started.

Another Islamic presence is seen as the writer opts for the Islamic calendar in the narration of his novel. Instances of such use are detected in several passages throughout the novel such as, in "The Story of La Florida": "It was the year 934 of the Higira, the thirtieth year of my life"; "The Story of My Birth": "…that autumn evening of the year 903 of the Higira" and other stories in the book. The Islamic calendar is omnipresent in Lalami's literary work, a fact that needs inquiry. No one time does she make use of another calendar, as if she wants to foreground this peculiarity in her writing, and subsequently urges the readers to know about this calendar as typically Islamic.

Not only does the writer use the aforementioned Islamic feature, but she also quotes the prophet Mohammad in her text like the following *Hadith* recorded by Abu Huraira"_when hear a cock crow, ask for God's blessing, for their sound indicates they have seen an angel, and when you hear a donkey bray, seek refuge in God for their sound indicates they have seen Satan" (p. 35). In so doing, Lalami exhibits some of the

Islamic particularities in an endeavor to inform her readers about some features in Islam.

The writer, more than once, referred to stories from the Qur'an as mentioned in the following excerpt: "I felt like one of the people of the Cave, awakening after many years of slumber into another world, a world they no longer knew." (*p. 327)* In this quotation, for instance, Mutapha referred to the people of the Cave whose story is told in the Surat El Cahf (the cave). The Cave people slept for three hundred and nine years in a cave, and when they got out they did not know how long they have been in; they were shocked to see that everything has changed around them. The moor made a comparison between the states of those people, as they went out of their cave, and their state, de Vaca and himself, as they met Patricio Torres in the wilds as stated in the following passage:

> To ward off the cold, Cabeza de Vaca and I wore thick furs on our shoulders and knee-length tunics made of deerskins. My braids hung down to my chest, my ears were adorned with turquoise earrings and my walking staff was painted red and decorated with scarlet macaw feathers. As for Cabeza de Vaca, his hair fell in a yellow mass all around him, his beard reached his navel and he carried, slung across his chest, a satchel filled with the herbs we had been collecting (p. 326)

In addition to Sourat *Al Cahf* (The cave), Lalami introduced the five prayers in the following excerpt:

> I had not heard the call for prayer. In Azemmur, I heard it five times a day, every day of my life. The morning prayer woke me; the noon prayer

> told me that it was time to eat and rest; the afternoon prayer refreshed me after a long nap; the dusk prayer delivered me from my workday and to my family; and the evening prayer commended my soul to God.(p. 137)

She tells her readers about the call for prayers five times a day. She even explains the philosophy behind their timing according to her protagonist who explains how praying, in Islam, can regulate one's life.

3.12.Voicing the Silences in *The Moor's Account*

Lalami claimed in her interview (2015) that she was shocked and fascinated by the silences which permeated the Account written by Cabeza de Vaca. Apart from the muzzled Mustapha, women were also neglected and silenced in the official annals, a fact that intrigued and urged Lalami to give voice and agency to the grotesquely marginalized women.

Lalami (2015) argued that Cabeza de Vaca did not mention any encounter between Indian women and Spaniards, a thing that stimulated the writer's skepticism "I know that none of the Castilians have mentioned their wives in their Joint Rapport, but I feel bound by honor to reveal everything that came to pass, without leaving anything out" (Lalami, 2014, p. 308). Lalami (2015) stated that it was inconceivable that men could live eight years without women in their lives, knowing that the Spaniards conquered many Indian tribes during their stay in the New World. Hence, to the writer, it was of no doubt that the account delivered by de Vaca was embellished, not to say falsified.

The main women characters that have impacted Mustapha's existence are Henia, his mother; Ramatullai, his fellow captive; and Oyomaso, his Indian wife. Henia had an unfortunate matrimonial life: she had become a widow, at an early age, before she lost

Mustapha's father, her second husband. She bravely gave birth to her son on that bleak day when her man was seriously injured by the Portuguese soldiers' sword.

Despite all the hardships, Mustapha's mother could equip her son with the knowledge and the critical mind that enabled him to analyse and solve any kind of issues he might face in life.

Through the character of Ramatullai, Lalami attempts to show that women have always faced the same fate as men; that is, they have both endured slavery along with all kinds of misfortunes. To put it differently, the writer tries to illustrate that women and men have always been exposed to the same hardships; hence, both of them should be mentioned in the official annals, and silencing women is simply unacceptable.

Lalami represents Ramatullai as an oppressed slave who was subjected to rape by her master Bernardo Rodriguez who was also Mustapha's master, before being sold to Andrés Dorantes. She shows how weak were the two lovers, Ramatullai and Mustapha, in front of their owner_ incapable of expressing their fury against his humiliating practices as stated in the following:

> Ramatullai did not speak of the violations she endured, and I did not bring them up, but the image tortured me that night and many nights to come. When I came into the kitchen and saw the curve of Ramatullai's hips on, I tried not to think of my master's stubby fingers curling around

> them. I tried not to think of his knee parting hers on the same mat upon which we sat every night. (Lalami, 2014, p. 108)

As the note confirms, the trauma of violation tormented the slaves who could not sound their wail and agony. The only resort for the protagonist and his beloved was to remain silent and avoid the subject.

A third core character in Mustapha's account is Oyomasot, the moor's Indian wife who decided to accompany her husband in his quest for freedom. The Moor fell in love once more with an oppressed woman, but this time, it was a Native American who married him without caring whether he was a slave or a free man.

Apart from women who were grotesquely silenced in the novel, several cruel events were omitted. Collective raping was committed on the Apalache land as confirmed in the following excerpt:

> As I was nearest the doorway, I lifted a small portion of the deerskin and peeked outside. Some soldiers were dragging women out of the earth mound. The women clawed at the men's faces and pulled their beards, but the men easily restrained them. One of the Castilians lifted a girl off the ground and, slinging her over his shoulder like a sack of wheat, he ran to his lodge. (p. 117)

From the quotation above, we can see how cruel were the Spaniards to Indian women who were carried like sacks of wheat to be raped. The animosity of the white man exceeded all that one can imagine; they ate each other when they did not find what to eat. This act of cannibalism was clearly stated in the following passage: "Ruiz, where are the others? I ate them! There, I said it, is this what you wanted to hear?"(p. 231) Indeed, Ruiz ate the dead and when he was done with them, he killed the other men to

satisfy his hunger. Such atrocities were not mentioned in de Vaca's chronicle which was falsified and embellished.

3.13. *Greed:* A Major Theme in *The Moor's Account*

Greed is a major theme in *The Moor's Account,* for it is because of it that the protagonist fell into slavery, and it is also because of it that the Spaniards launched their cursed trip towards the unknown. Mustapha, who refused to obey his father when the latter asked him to take care of his studies, chose the *Souq,* and trading instead of considering his father's words: "He warned me that the trade would open the door to greed and greed was an inconsiderate guest; it would bring its evil relations with it" (Lalami, 2014, P. 75). The Moor wanted to better the miserable life he and his family were living; however, things did not happen as he expected because Mustapha, greedy as he was, decided to trade in human beings. As such, he neglected the ethics without which a human becomes a calculator that does not question the source of gains. In this regard, Lalami states: "But as time went on, I fell for the magic of numbers and the allure of profit. I was preoccupied only with the price of things and neglected to consider their values." (p.76)

Greed was also the reason behind the launching of the expedition from the Spanish territories towards the New World where wealth was expected to be abundantly found. Moreover, it was the Spaniards' thirst for the gold that led the expedition towards calamity. In fact, it was the golden pebble that Mustapha found in the Indian's land that made the conquerors think they would find more gold in the area. The Castilians put their lives as well as their companions' in danger when they decided to head towards the unmapped territories for the sake of gold, and it was because of this very gold that hundreds of lives were dead or lost in the wild land.

3.14. Resisting Stereotypes through Linguistic Deterritorialization

'Arab' is a word that has recently gained an unprecedentedly tremendous fame worldwide, yet the new connotations attributed to it are incredibly seamy. In addition to exotic, barbarians, illiterate and feminine; extremist and terrorist are the very recent stereotypes generated to stand for Arabs wherever they are. Such stereotypes are maintained and sustained by the politicized media that spots light on the Arab community whenever and wherever a misfortune happens.

9/11, Charlie Hebdo, and Orlando, to list but a few, are the terrorist attacks that took place in the rise of the twenty-first century making the ideological gap between the East and the West get the deepest ever. The amount of hatred that has been generated due to the so-called extremist Islamists acts is unprecedented in that anything related to the Arab world has become severely skeptical if not blindly rejected in the occident. Hence the stereotyping machinery has reached the peak of its production resulting in an unjust classification that over generalizes what, to my sense, should not be generalized.

Stereotypes, in this regard, could be said to be mightier than weapons since the latter's harm is temporary whereas the former's lasts for generations and generations, a fact that urgently rings the warning bells. Thus, I guess that a massive production of literary works, written by Arabs in English, could operate as an antidote to the venomous status quo.

Arab immigrant literary artifacts could be considered as an efficient antidote that could alter, to some extent, the stereotypes generated by the West to categorize the East as the evil 'Other'. Literary texts in all genres play a considerable role in informing foreign readers of the genuine characteristics of Arab identity.

3.15. Linguistic Deterritorialization in *The Moor's Account*

The Moor's Account, a novel written by an Arab Immigrant, could be considered as a minor literary text that has, as a first characteristic, the deterritorialization of language. As mentioned in the second chapter, the deterritorialization of language could be manifested on several levels: graphological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, phonological, etc. In the following section, the attempt is to trace the linguistic deterritorialization in Lalami's historical novel and try to figure out the reason behind such a subversion of the English language. To put it otherwise, in this section the attempt is to decode Lalami's prose in terms of stylistic choice.

3.15.1.Graphological Deterritorialization

In her narrative, Lalami deterritorializes English to convey interpretive purposes, and its graphology is no exception. What I mean by graphological deterritorialization is the use of English designs and characters in writing Arabic words. Examples of such subversion are as follow:

Arabic words written in English graphology	Arabic words as written in Arabic graphology
-Mekhazniya	مخازنية
-Madrassat el-Attarine	مدرسة العطارين
hammam es-Seffarine	حمام السفارين
-shari'a	شريعة
-jellaba	جلابة
- haik	حايك
-Msid	مسيد
-Hijama	حجامة
- souq	سوق
- the guenbri, the Kamanja	قمبري كمانجة
- Higira	هجرة
- kif	كيف
- Tarawih	تراويح
- Burtuqali	برتقالي
- Fqih	فقيه
-sultan	سلطان

-ash-Shawiyya	الشاوية
- Ayat al Kursi	اية الكرسي
-hamman(English word of Arabic origin)	حمام

Table3.1. Graphological Deterritorialization in The Moor's Account

In the table above, a list of graphologically deterritorialized words is sorted out from the novel. The writer deliberately kept the genuine pronunciation of the words, but she wrote them in English designs to facilitate their reading. In so doing, Lalami incites her English readers to search for the meaning of words that are both familiar and alien to them: familiar in that they are written in English letters and alien in that they have no meaning in English. Weird as it is, this situation is what the minor writer looks for: a situation of defamiliarization that rings a bell in the readers' mind and stimulates his sense of curiosity to know more about the Arabic language. Another reason behind this kind of deterritorialization is the writer's desire to foreground her narrator's cultural and linguistic peculiarities as an act of writing back to the empire who has tried vainly to distort the subalterns' Muslim and Arab identity.

3.15.2.Morphological Deterritorialization

Root	Affixation	Hybrid word
-Ghoulish tales Ghoul (Arabic noun that means ogre)	Suffix 'ish'(meaning belonging to)	Ghoulish
-Jellabas Jellaba(a garment worn by	Suffix 's'(plural marker)	Jellabas

Egyptian men, especially those who live in rural areas)		

Table 3.2. Hybrid Words in *The Moor's Account*

In the above table, the researcher tries to show the way Lalami deterritorializes language morphologically in her novel. 'Ghoulish' and 'Jellabas' are Arabic words metamorphosed into English by adding suffixes like 's' and 'ish'. This kind of hybridization creates a sense of familiarity and weirdness at once. When the word 'Ghoulish' is first detected by readers, the grammatical category (adjective) is recognized because of the suffix added to the root 'Ghoul'. The same thing happens with the word 'Jellabas' which is categorized as a plural word because of the's' added to its end. In so doing, Lalami attempts to familiarize the English reader with the Arabic language by using defamiliarisation as a linguistic device in her prose, a device that might stimulate the reader's scheme and urges him to know more about the Arabic code.

3.15.3.Minor Expressions and Arab Proverbs

Lalami and many other multilingual writer endeavour to use the phenomenon of code-switching and some translational techniques in their literary works. However, the insertion of minor forms and expressions in addition to the use of literal and explicative translational techniques, in English texts, maybe a very challenging task but not for a writer like Lalami who masters the English language to such an extent that allows her to violate some typographic, phonological, morphological and syntactical rules without

harming the least the overall understanding of her work. Commenting on the effects of such practices, Hassan (2011) claims:

> This has the effects of estranging or deterritorilizing the English language by confronting its native speakers with linguistic differences within a deliberately hybridized discourse, challenging their assumptions and expectations. Readers are called upon to engage in a difficult task, the end result of which is a new cultural awareness. (p. 5)

Linguistic deterritorialization is also detected in the insertion of minor expressions (Arabic expressions and proverbs in the major discourse that is English. Such minor forms reflect the cultural background of the protagonist. A list of Arabic expressions, found in *The Moor's Account*, is inserted in the following table:

Translated Arabic Expressions	**Source expressions**
- A living dog is better than a dead lion	الكلب الحي أفضل من الأسد الميت
-If you are a peg, endure the knocking, but if you are a mallet, proceed with the strike	إذا كنت الوتد ، تحمل الضرب ، ولكن إذا كنت مطرقة ، فاستمر في الضرب
-The elders teach us: if you must drown, let it be in a deep well, not in a shallow pond.	يعلمنا الكبار: إذا كان يجب أن تغرق ، فليكن في بئر عميقة- ، وليس في بركة ضحلة
-when the cow is down, the knives come out.	- عندما تسقط البقرة تخرج السكاكين
- "But Satan, may he be cursed	ولكن الشيطان ملعون

-God willing	ان شاء الله-

Table 3.3.Arabic Expressions and Proverbs in The Moor's Account

Lalami introduces the readers to her Arab culture by inserting Arabic proverbs and expressions in her prose, making of it a multicultural literary work. These very sayings give the reader an idea about Mustapha's native environment, namely, Morocco. They allow access to an alien territory's cultural aspect (to the English reader). For instance, when saying "A living dog is better than a dead lion" (Lalami, 2014, p. 12), one may deduce the way the elderly think and live. This saying has a negative meaning, that of choosing to live even as a dog rather than to die as a lion; it represents the people who believe in this proverb as coward and submissive. Another example is "if you must drown, let it be in a deep well, not in a shallow pond" (p. 75). This quote shows the wise side of the Moroccans who know when and why they should risk their lives. In short, sayings and expressions mirror the society that uses them, in that they reflect the way its people think and live. Hence, using this technique is a subtle way to present the Moroccan society, along with its cultural components, to the global reader.

3.16. The Moor's Account: An Agonizing Language

Lalami's historical memoir is a narrative of disaster and misfortune. As I stated before, the novel accounts for an ill-fated expedition that ended in the death of six hundred human souls in the wildness of the New World. Hence, the writer's prose is dense with words that denote the extent to which the narrator's journey was terrific. In the following table, a non-exhaustive list of such words is exhibited:

Words of suffering	Words of colonialism	Words of violence and submission
Hunger/ starvation	Castillians	Slavery
Illness/ disease	The Spanish Crown	Rapes
Sexual abuse	Injustice	Torture
Cannibalism	Portuguese	Subjects
Death	conquest	Attacks
Pain	Rebellion	Whip
Suffering	Armada	Bondage
Killing	soldiers	Master
mourning	contingent	Howls
silence	captains	Cries
	Indian territory	Battles
	dominion	Blood

Table 3.4. Language of Suffering and Agony in *The Moor's Account*

From the above table, though as I mentioned, the list of words is not complete, one could imagine how dense is the novel with violent and horrific scenes, scenes that are so terrifying that the reader may not believe they are true. An instance of such a scenes is when men ate each other out of hunger. Indeed, the journey was so disastrous that the remaining men turned into cannibals to survive. To sum, Lalami excels in her linguistic choices; the novel reflects, par excellence, the hardships faced by Mustapha and his companions in the Indian territories.

3.17. Mustapha: A Deterritorialized Self

Lalami excels in the portrayal of the Arab slave's deterritorialized psyche. At the beginning of the novel, she introduces his genuine identity as a Muslim Arab Moroccan who lived in Azzemmur with his parents and siblings. He celebrated his life, though it was a modest one, and dreamt of a better future. However, as a grownup, greed found his way to his heart, and subsequently, he decided to sink into the trading of human flesh. In so doing, Mustapha sentenced himself to a life-long penalty of slavery. Indeed, to sell himself to slavery was the only resort for the protagonist to save his family from poverty and starvation. In one single deal, he lost his freedom and became a slave, someone else's property. His master not only stripped him of his freedom, but he also changed his name to Esteban (the slave). In this regard, Lalami (2014) puts:

> When I fell into slavery, I was forced to give up not just my freedom, but also the name that my mother and father had chosen for me. A name is precious; it carries inside it a language, history, a set of traditions, a particular way of looking at the world. Losing it meant losing my ties to all those things too. (p. 4)

Such is the importance of one's name to the well-being of his psyche. It is a pillar to the exiled identity, for it relates him to his genuine territory, a territory that contains the totality of identity components: language, religion, traditions, etc. The name that is chosen by one's parents carries within it a psychological peace; hence, losing it may cause psychological and social instability.

As he became a slave, Mustapha was obliged to give up his faith; he was converted into another religion "I had entered the church as the servant of God Mustapha ibn

Mohammad ibn Abdussalam al- Zamori; I left as Esteban. Just Esteban _ converted and orphaned in one gesture."(*p.* 136). Buried as he was in the abyss of slavery, Mustapha could not help but accept his fate which he compared to someone's resurrection in another world: *"*To go from freedom to slavery was a fate worse than death; it was a rebirth into an alien world*"* (p. 144). As such, Lalami's protagonist destiny was to be de-rooted from his territory and taken away to an alien land to which he has no psychological or even physical adherence.

After he had lived a life of slavery for many years in the unknown, al Zamori developed a sense of multiple perceptions of the world around him. His deterritorialized new life was double-edged: on the one hand, it was a life of nostalgia, suffering, and sour regret; but on the other hand, it was a life of new people, new experiences, and new horizons. It was a rebirth meant to widen and strengthen Mustapha's awareness of the diversity and multiplicity of peoples, languages, faiths and cultures.

In fact, it was Mustapha's double consciousness that facilitated his adaptation process in the New World, contrary to the Spaniards who struggled to get accustomed to the new territory and the new people, namely the Indians. Indeed, several Castilians died or went insane because they could not cope with the new situation: a new distant land, a different language, distinct traditions, and alien people. Such is the situation faced by most of the exiles; however, what is different, in *The Moor's Account*, is that the Castilians are not exiles; they are invaders, and this makes all the difference.

3.18. The Collective Enunciation in *The Moor's Account*

As it is mentioned in the second chapter, emigrants or minor writers speak for the collectivity. To put it differently, the writers adhere to their society's traits and act

accordingly. Such adherence is detected in the protagonist's following words: "One of the travelers, perhaps remembering the saying of **our** Messanger, as recorded by Abu

Huraira when hear a cock crow, ask for God's blessing, for their sound" (Lalami, 2014, p. 35). As stated in the quotation, Mustapha used the possessive adjective "our" to describe the noun Messenger (ProphetMuhammad); thus, the protagonist, and implicitly the writer, overtly joins the Muslim community, and subsequently speaks from a Muslim point of view.

Another example of belonging is the following: "All I wanted was to return home, where I could die among **my own kind**" (p. 46). As illustrated in Mustapha's words, he longs for his homeland and his compatriots. In fact the narrator feels homesick at the extent that he cannot sleep in an alien territory, and the following quotation illustrates best his nostalgia: "I tossed and turned for a long while before I realized why it felt so quiet and so empty – I had not heard the call for prayer" (p.137*).* The writer, then, writes about and for her people , that is, Moroccans or Moors. She tries to give them the voice and agency that have been neglected and even violated in the Spaniards' annals. To the Moroccan writer, it is simply inconceivable to strip her compatriot his right of being mentioned as the first Arab historical figure to set sail in the New World.

3.19. Conclusion

The Moor's Account is a historical novel that narrates the story of a black Arab explorer who survived an ill-fated expedition launched in 1527 from the Spanish territories towards The New World. Lalami, the Arab-American writer, gave voice and authority to the Moroccan Mustapha Alzamori, the protagonist and the narrator of the novel.

Doing so was a reaction to the grotesque discard of the moor's testimony in the official historical account written by Cabeza de Vaca. Lalami was surprised to see that only one sentence, in the whole account, is devoted to the Arab who could survive, among only four men, the unfortunate journey.

Keeping the same historical framework of the official, the author wittily interpolated fictitious events and characters in the historical record. She succeeded in writing a real-like version of history told from the perspective of a Moroccan slave who was denied the right of giving his testimony to the generations to come.

The Muslim Arab slave who was stripped from his name and religion shortly after he sold himself to slavery experienced the abyss of exile from which he could never get out. Mustapha could not return to his home country to which he felt sickly nostalgic. Instead, he was imprisoned in the memories, of his life in Azamour,that haunted his curse present in an alien territory dense with dangers and misfortunes.

Lalami vividly and bravely described the scenes of violence and horrors experienced by the survivors to the extent of being praised by many critics for having a man's capacity of dealing with scary and terrific scenes. However, unlike the man's account, she gave justice to women who were weirdly absent in De Vaca's version. Indeed, Lalami pictured Mustapha's mother as not only a parent but also as an educator who instilled into her child how one thinks analytically and critically.

In addition to voicing the silenced Arab in her historical saga, Lalami tackled several themes and used different techniques in her literary work. Greed, nostalgia, enslavement, loss of identity, history restoration and the quest toward freedom were the main themes dealt with in the book. Regarding the literary techniques, the writer was

creative and innovative in writing her prose. She deploys linguistic deterritorialization to accentuate the thematic properties of her work. Story-telling, the stream of consciousness, media res, first-person narrator, and the travelogues' methods in accounting for history were the main techniques adopted by the Moroccan author in narrating her compatriot's journey in the New World.

Like Laila Lalami, several Arab writers who reside in Anglophone countries have launched a campaign against second-hand sources of information (Western media, films and even literary productions) about Muslims in general and Arabs in particular. Such writers have decided to provide the readers with first-hand information about the Muslim and Arab world. Hence, most of the literary production of these writers is either set in the Arab sphere or their protagonists are Arabs. In the fourth chapter, we intend to examine, a novel, written by the Arab-British writer Hisham Matar whose memoir, *The Return (2016),* made a splash in the Western literary arena in general and in Britain in particular. The book tackles a myriad of themes like exile, loss, suffering, dictatorship, resistance, tyranny, revolution, the Arab spring, etc.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Story of Exile

Hisham Matar has the quality all historians_ of the world and the self_ most need: he knows how to stand back and let the past speak. In chronicling his quest for his father his manner is fastidious, even detached, but his anger is raw and unreconciled; through his narrative art he bodies out the sharp of his loss, and gives a universality to his very particular experience of desolation. The Return reads as easily as a thriller, but is a story that will stick; a person is lost but gravity and resonance remain. (Hilary Mantel)

4. The Return: A Story of Exile

4.1. Introduction

Like Tunisia and Egypt, Libya experienced the so-called Arab spring in 2011; however, unlike them, Libya could not find its way out of the chaos that followed the revolution. Libya fell into the abyss of vengeance and war between the brother enemies.

Currently, Libya is considered as a site of anarchy and instability, where opponent military groups fight against each other, preventing any attempt to elect civil power to rule the new Libya. It is also considered as a place of dangerous transit where notorious traffic of human beings takes place. Migrants who try to reach the other side of the sea are blackmailed and abused. Besides, traffickers and weapon dealers do not hesitate to make a profit from arming teenagers; they even make posts on Facebook to support their infamous business. (Brant, 2018)

Libya, the North African country that has a history dense with wars and misfortunes, has succeeded to stand at the face of all the colonial forces and has preserved its identity, a complex identity that consists of various cultural elements.

Indeed, Libyans are people originating from several tribes that have managed to live in harmony for decades. Howbeit, after the revolution, and because of the death of Gaddafi, the tribes split into two main fronts: supporters and opponents of the dictatorship.

Qaddafi's opponents have always been the target of the dictator's men. Before the uprising, several dissidents had been persecuted or imprisoned in the infamous prison of Abou Salim in Tripoli. Hisham Matar's father's fate is a sound example of what it is like to be a dissident in Qaddafi's Libya, a fate that has been brilliantly and subtly described in his son's latest memoir, *The Return* (2016). However, the seminal narrative transcends the limits of a mere description of an oppressed nation or suffering of a son who lost his father. It recounts the fate of exile people in alien places in which they have no roots, places that have offered them refuge after been expulsed from their homelands. It describes the state of being unable to live or to leave, a state of uncertainty and instability.

This chapter seeks to analyze the way Hisham Matar tackles both personal and universal themes such as history, exile, loss, nostalgia, authoritarianism, oppression, and human rights. This section also attempts to study the prose's stylistic and literary properties and their impact on the overall meanings of the memoir.

Hisham Matar's life is almost fully jotted down in his memoir; hence, in the following section, I attempt to focalize on the writer's literary production, rather than on his personal and social life. Before he wrote *The Return*, Matar had written two other books: *in the Country of Men* (2006) and *Anatomy of Disappearance* (2011).

4.2. In the Country of Men: A Story of Loss and Betrayal

Matar's book, nominee for the Booker Award in 2006, narrates the story of a child, Suleiman, whose father has been hunted by the Libyan authoritarian regime, and whose mother could not bear the pain of loss, so she turned to alcohol to overcome her suffering. It also depicts the chaos that characterized people's life in Qaddafi's Libya, a life of social oppression, danger, and betrayal

The novel is narrated from the perspective of a nine-year-old young boy called Suleiman el Dewani. The child seems confused throughout the book because of the events happening within his family and his country. The narrator witnesses the terrific and oppressive attitudes of Qaddafi's regime like hanging people in public squares, and arresting people and imprisoning them without legal trials. The boy witnesses his family's collapse: after the kidnapping of his father, the young narrator's mother, Najwa, could not cope with the situation and fell into alcoholism. Suleiman's father is introduced as a dissident to the dictator's regime. He is accused of his pro-democracy activities, and subsequently he is hunted by the oppressor's men.

Betrayal and secrecy are the major themes of the novel. For instance, the father is introduced as a mysterious man who is seen, more than once, by his son, in the city while he is supposed to be elsewhere. The boy, on the other hand, is left alone with his depressed mother, trying to console her by listening to her stories about her early marriage to Faraj. The woman got married at the age of fourteen and had her first and only child at fifteen. Responsible as he is, at an early age, The narrator attempts to heal his mother's physical, psychological, and emotional sufferings. With no parental care and support, Suleiman seeks guidance from his best friend, Kareem Rasheed, and Moosa, his father's best friend.

While narrating his life, Suleiman offers a panoramic overview of what it is like to live in Libya, in the seventies and eighties. He accounts for people's struggle to survive in an unfair politically oppressive atmosphere. The novel starts by introducing the arrest of Kareem Rasheed's father. Then, it focuses on the attitude of Qaddafi's men towards his father who was followed and arrested for what they see as the guilt of being an opponent of Qaddafi's regime. Suleiman's father is tortured, and then released, but he is no more the Faraj everyone knows; he is psychologically insane and physically damaged.

Matar's book tackles another theme that is women's oppression in Libya, a fact shown through Najwa's miserable existence. Firstly, she got married and pregnant at a very early age. Secondly, she is left alone without being able to handle her life without a husband. As such, Matar seems willing to uncover the practices of the Libyan patriarchal society that oppresses women and prevents them from controlling their lives by themselves.

Suleiman's account, not only hints at women's oppression but also refers to the powerlessness of men in Qaddafi's Libya. Matar, through his young narrator's perspective opens a window into the Libyan society in Qaddafi's era. He describes it as a place of constraints and banned acts, a place where fear and anxiety rule. Indeed, it is this very fear that pushed the young boy into betrayal. Suleiman betrayed his best friend out of despair; he thinks that is the only way that could free his father from the regimes authoritarian practices.

After betraying his best friend, Suleiman is betrayed, in his turn, by his parents who sent him to Egypt to live with Moos's family in Cairo. However, the child thought that

his visit to Cairo is a short one, but to his surprise, he discovers that he is not allowed to return to his country, even to bury his father. Suleiman is exiled at nine; he experiences the traumatic feeling of exclusion from one's home, Libya, at a truly early age.

4.3. *Anatomy of Disappearance:* A Story of Absence and Longing

In the second novel, *Anatomy of disappearance* (2012), and once more, the ghost of loss haunts Matar's narrative. In this novel, the narrator is a ten-year-aged boy whose mother passed away, leaving him with his father Kamel. The latter is a dissident to Qaddafi's regime. The father was hunted by the Libyan authorities.

Traumatized as he is because of the loss of his mother, Nuri, suffers and wails from the disappearance of his father who was abducted in the dead of night by the Egyptian state men, as stated in the following except:

> There are times when my father's absence is as heavy as a child sitting on my chest. Other times I can barely recall the exact features of his face and must bring out the photographs I keep in an old envelope in the drawer of my bedside table. (Matar, 2012, p. 1)

In the passage, the author shows the extent to which he feels suffocated because of his father's disappearance. He couldn't accept, nor could he bear his father's absence though he once wished his disappearance because the man married Mona, the woman his son saw and loved the first. Nuri, soon, regrets what he wished and lamented his father's fate. He wanted to be his father's reflection; he fell into adultery with his stepmother, and lived with guilt and endless suffering. The stepmother Mona was

betrayed by her husband who was found with another woman on the night of his abduction.

To sum up, *Anatomy of Disappearance* is a story of absence, betrayal, and longing. It is the Absence of a dissident, a betrayal of a man, and a longing of a son to his father who vanished amid the night.

4.4. *The Return:* A Story of Loss and Despair

As stated in the previous paragraphs, all of Matar's novels lament a vanished father whose fate is to remain unknown for his son and family. The writer's obsession to know the whereabouts of his father prompts him to write a third book that is devoted to the same tragedy, a tragedy of disappearance and loss. In the following section, the attempt is to describe *The Return,* Matar's latest book.

The Return (2016) is a book that won the Pulitzer Prize in Biography and the Rathbones Folio award. It was shortlisted for The Baillie Gifford award for non-fiction, The Costa Biography prize, and The National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography. The book also received a flood of prizes from the literary community. Barack Obama praised *The Return* in the following words: 'A beautifully-written memoir that skillfully balances a graceful guide through Libya's recent history with the author's dogged quest to find his father'. Indeed, through his graceful prose, Matar gives his account of contemporary Libyan history without letting of his primary cause, knowing his father's whereabouts.

The book narrates the story of a son who suffers from the loss of his father *Jaballa,* a devote dissident, who was abducted and imprisoned by Qaddafi's men, and whom he could never see again. It is also a story of a country torn from within: by its people who do not accept any compromises, and from outside: by countries which want

to interfere in its internal affairs for the sake of oil and other riches. It is also about the return of Hisham Matar to his home country Libya, out of which he and his family were exiled to Egypt when he was still a nine-year-old child. It was in Cairo that Hisham's father, Jaballa Matar was abducted by Egyptian security men and handed to Qaddafi's authorities. Since that day, the writer has lived with constant pain caused by the brutal absence of his father.

In 2012, Hisham, the protagonist, accompanied by his mother and wife, returned to his home country after decades of forced exile mixed with memories of his family's agony that have not only haunted both his past and present, but it has also made of his perception of the future an opaque one. The absence of the father caused continuous suffering that Hisham had no option but to get accustomed to it. Yet, not knowing the whereabouts of his father restricted Hisham's life to a journey toward unveiling the mystery of the horrific disappearance.

Jaballa Matar was a successful businessman and a devote nationalist to whom Libya represented everything; it was more important than his family. Matar's political convictions were opposed to those of Muammar Qadaffi. In fact, it was because of his convictions that Jaballa, the writer's father, and a number of his male relatives were imprisoned in the notorious Abu Salim jail in Tripoli for decades.

In June 1996, 1,270 prisoners were shot down in the signature massacre of the Qadaffi rule, but the Mattars could not know whether Jaballa was among the dead. Rumors and false information nourished their hope that he was not dead, a hope that persisted even until 2011 when the doors of Abu Salim were broken open and several prisoners were freed by the revolutionists.

The nineteen-year-aged Hisham Matar was stripped of not only a father's love, but he was also deprived of the typical rebelliousness of youth. Matar (2016) puts: "To be a man is to be part of a chain of gratitude and remembering, of blame and forgetting, of surrender and rebellion" (p.9) Indeed, Hisham was denied the right to live a normal life, a life in which he could have experienced his father's care and love. Hisham's return to his homeland is an endeavor to repair the links of that chain, a chain that might cure the writer of his country and bring psychological relief. However, to mend the broken links seems unattainable since no information could satisfy the writer's thirst for the truth.

Mater's return to his home country was charged with paradoxical feelings: a feeling of release to be able to visit one's dear land and a feeling of sourness for not being able to see his father and to share the victory of revolutionists with him. Matar tried to compensate for this void by visiting his father's relatives and friends, but to his sadness, he saw his father in each one's eyes. His father's reincarnation was everywhere in his family; his presence was felt in each corner of his native territory. Yet, at the end of the book, Hisham seems unburdened by his father's loss. He gave up his quest; he knew that Djaballa no more existed in this world. Hisham stated:

> A strange thing happened then, something that had never occurred before. I sensed my father's presence, just behind my right shoulder, beckoning me away, and I expected him to say_ somehow I knew it was on the tip of his tong_ 'Stop. Enough now.' (p. 127)

Through the previous passage, the writer announced the end of his long-lasting quest to find a father whose absence has tormented him for more than twenty years. He finally knew that the man was massacred by the dictator who was, in his turn, awfully killed by revolutionists, as revenge to their martyrs.

4.5. *The Return*: A National Allegory

Matar's memoir is a universal narrative that could be considered as a national allegory par excellence. The writer brilliantly and subtly targets the readers' empathy, voicing his agony and suffering caused by the loss of his father who had been abducted by the Libyan authoritarian regime. In so doing, the writer, not only addresses a personal concern, though it is the case, but he also addresses a national true problem that is a dictatorship. The book shows how people are oppressed and discarded in their country by their compatriots. Matar's novel narrates the story of a nation that has suffered from more than one colonial experience.

Hence, as a postcolonial writer, the Libyan author tackles postcolonial themes such as Libyan colonial history and its legacies. An instance of such a theme is detected as Hisham recounted Rajab Abouhweish's experience with colonial camps that tortured and killed Hundreds of Libyans. The man was a Libyan poet who had worked as a jurist in Algeria before he returned to his country. There, he witnessed a traumatic experience when the Italian colonizers burnt his village and took him and his family, along with the other villagers, to El- Agheila notorious camp where they were treated. In this regard, Hisham translated one of the poet's poems. It is a poem composed of thirty stanzas which Rajeb Abouhweish committed to memory because he was short of writing instruments. Later, the poem was memorized by most people, a fact that fuelled the

Libyan resistance. The following is an excerpt of this poem introduced in Matar's memoir:

I have no illness but El-Aghila camp,
The imprisonment of the tribe
And being cut off from the open country.

I have no illness but this endless despair,
The scarcity of things and the loss of my red mare,
its forelegs black to the hoofs.

When disaster struck
She galloped, stretching her long neck
With incomparable beauty.
I have no Illness but the loss of noble folk
And the foul ones who now,
With calamitous, shameless faces, govern us

How many a child have they taken and whipped?
The poor young flowers return confused,
made old without having lived.(p. 156)

Hisham selected stanzas reflect the inhumane practices of the Italian colonizer. Here, once more, the writer addresses the readers, showing them how terrifying was the

colonial experience to Libyans, an experience that made of a child an old man overnight as stated in the poem. Matar deliberately narrates the tragic story of his ancestors who were warriors that had never accepted to be subjugated. In so doing, the writer seems to send a strong statement to the world reader: a Libyan never bows, to borrow Djaballa's words.

As such, one may say that Hisham Matar, being the son of a Libyan dissident who loved his country more than anything else, attempts to introduce an allegorical novel in the guise of a real personal story. It gives an account of Libya's contemporary struggles with dictatorship and the subsequent revolution that overthrew the authoritarian regime. Hence, Matar's book could be considered as a post-post-colonial discourse that criticizes, interrogates and challenges the postcolonial corrupted regimes that brought their countries backward. It also seeks to represent Libyans as active agents in the making of their nation, a free nation that could embrace development and prosperity. However, unfortunately, things did not happen as he wished, and the country fell into the abyss of the civil war.

4.6. Hisham Matar and Narratives of Exile

Hisham Matar's life is nomadic; he has always kept moving from a territory to another in search of both psychological and physical stability and safety. The writer inhabited several cities, Nairobi, Libya, Cairo, Rome, London, and Paris, as stated in the following excerpt:"In the thirty-six years since we left Libya, my family and I had built associations with several surrogate cities: Nairobi [...] 1979[...] Cairo, [...] Rome [...] London[...] Paris, ..."(Matar, 2016, p. 3)

The writer and exile seem to be inseparable friends. Hisham was conceived in exile (America), during the period when his father was sent by Qaddafi on a mission to the United Nations. Three years after his birth, the Matars returned to their home country where he spent six years of his life. At the age of nine, Hisham, experienced exile for the first time when the family left Libya to settle in Nairobi then in Cairo because Jaballa, the father, could not live safely under the Qaddafi's rule.

Being forced to leave his home scarred deeply Hisham. He was sick of changing places and leaving people he loves. This everlasting displacement has taught him how to be able to live far from people and places he loved, as Hisham stated on the day of his return to Libya: "This could rob me of a skill that I have worked hard to cultivate: how to live away from places and people I love" (p. 2). It is this very exilic experience mingled with the suffering due to the mysterious loss of his father that made him an expert in the narratives of exile and estrangement. He was even invited to lecture about them in Barnard College as stated in the following: "I had gone to New York the previous month, at the invitation of Barnard College, to lecture on novels about exile and estrangement" (p. 3). The writer, more than once, refers to writers that experienced exile and, just like him, struggled with questions like, "What do you do when you cannot leave and cannot return?" (p.2) Writers like Vladimir Nabokov, Homer and Dante as well as Joseph Brodsky seem to represent comforting and supporting art works in which Matar finds refuge when confronted with pain and agony; All of the aforementioned writers shared a common experience that is exile and the subsequent loss of the loved ones.

Matar's work's density with quotes from several writers who, as stated previously, experienced the pain of exile is an act of universalizing his tragedy, and

consequently, gaining the universal readers' empathy. The following words of Telemachus, quoted more than once in the memoir, are instances of the universality of the loss of one's father and the sorrow it engenders: "I wish at least I had some happy man / as a father, growing old in his own house — / but unknown death and silence are the fate / of him." Indeed, Hisham's sorrow could be shared with world readers who could have experienced the same fate, a fate that is too heavy to be carried by one single human being.

Matar's burden was so heavy that he was unable not to mention it in his two other books: In The Country of Men and Anatomy of Disappearance. The protagonists of both books, Suleiman el-Dewani and Nouri el-Alfi, are exiles who have very long suffered from loss and nostalgia. In one scene, in The Return, Hisham's Mother, wanting to distract her anxious son asked him the following question:" 'Who's returning?' She Asked. Suleiman el-Dewani or Nouri el-Alfi?'"(*p. 38).*The mother, according to her son, wanted, not only to cheer him up," but also implicit in her question was a warning against what she knew I intent on doing: searching for my father" (p. *38).* She knew about his stubborn and tenacious will to find him.

Overall, *The Return* is more about exile and the subsequent feelings of displacement and de-rootedness it engenders than it is about knowing the fate of a lost father who was kidnapped by an oppressive regime. Yet, the book highlights the role such authoritarian regimes play in the exile' life: they not only cause his departure and prevent his return, but they are also responsible for the unstable life of the exile

4.7. Hisham Matar and Seif al-Islam Qaddafi: Face to Face

Britain started the normalization of its relations with Libya shortly after it had stopped its nuclear program; Qaddafi's son, Seif al-Islam owned a house in Hampstead.

Matar states in his book that the idea of knocking at the door of his compatriot's house and shooting him haunted him for several days after he heard the news"For several days after I heard the news," writes Matar, who has lived for most of his adult life in London, "I had to drive away thoughts of knocking on the door and shooting him" (p. 198). This strong statement shows the extent to which Hisham's rage could reach. Yes, he could kill.

The Return contains numerous chapters on Matar's dealings with Seif al-Islam who wanted to soothe the tense atmosphere caused by the propagation of the Arab Spring in Libya's neighboring countries. Qaddafi's son sought to calm Matar and prevent him from continuing his campaign against his father's regime that was considered inhumane and tyrant.

Matar refers to his meetings and dealings with the dictator's son in several sections to show how malicious the younger Qaddafi was. The man offers his help and promised to answer Hisham's question about his father's location, but he never does. Instead, Seif keeps on trying to shy Matar away from his cause by offering him to return home and giving him opportunities in his home country. However, Qadaffi's son breaks his promise several times. He even coldly provokes his compatriot when, in one scene, Seif answers Hisham's phone text by writing that it was his birthday, and by sending a smiley face_ Like father like son. After the revolution, Seif was jailed by revolutionists, and he remains there until now. But, the irony is that no one knows his whereabouts (Cumming-Bruce, 2017).

4.8. Jaballa Matar: A Threat

Djaballa Matar, as portrayed by his son in *The Return*, seems to be a dissident of character. He was a principled opponent who did not accept any compromises with the

dictatorship, who was very generous to his inmates, and who was a dedicated and humble man of *belle lettres*.

'*My forehead does not know how to bow*.' (Matar, 2016, p. 136) Djaballa Matar stated in one of his letters sent from Abou Salim infamous prison in Tripoli. Almost the same words were written by Djaballa in one of the stories he had written when he was still a student, stories about which his family had no idea, as noted by Matar: "The story was signed, 'Jaballa Matar, Year 3'. The old man's words, 'I will not let disgrace strain my forehead', were echoed thirty-six years later in father's first letter from prison." This excerpt demonstrates the extent to which Matar, the father, was committed to his principles.

The man seemed not to fear oppression, nor was he scared of the oppressor. The dissident devoted his life for a cause, and only death could prevent him from reaching it. He sacrificed his family life for a country in which his ancestors had lived as warriors for centuries and centuries. They had rebelled and fought against invaders and colonizers; they had struggled to gain freedom and dignity. Such is Matar's origin, an origin that made Hisham's father an unusual man as stated in the following passage:

> I am the son of an unusual man, perhaps even a great man. And when, like most children, I rebelled against these early perceptions of him, I did so because I feared the consequences of his convictions; I was desperate to divert him from his path. (p. 34)

Indeed, Djaballa showed an unusual determination, a determination to change the fate of a nation_ his nation. He was ready to scarify his life for Libya because, to the man,

one's country matters more than anything else in life. This is how a warrior and a son of warriors like Djaballa fights for a cause, especially if this very cause is to free his fellow citizen from dictatorship. Djaballa was a man of action; he was a leader of a small army in Chad, a thing that made him a real threat to Gaddafi and his government who kidnapped him and imprisoned him in Abou Salim notorious jail.

No one knows exactly how many years Hisham's father spent in prison, but what is known is his courage and sense of responsibility. He was a leader ready to be tortured instead of his inmates, for he did fear that they would not bear the torture and subsequently divulge the secrets. In addition to his courage, Djaballa was humane; he did not hesitate to help poor people whenever he met them. He was generous and humble in the sense that he did not hesitate to sit on the floor with poor workers and share their meal, and then slip a sum of money in their pockets secretly to save their dignity.

The man was a prototype of a national hero who sacrificed his life for the sake of a better Libya, a Libya where a citizen can freely and actively participate in the making of its political, economic and social systems. Such is how Hisham Matar, through his stellar memoir, wants the whole world to see the courage of his father and his likes. Matar wants to show to the entire globe who that father, for whom he has tenaciously looked for decades, was.

4.9. Hisham's Struggle to Find his Father

Matar struggled very hard to know about his disappeared father's fate. Hisham and his family could not know any information had not they received some smuggled letters from Djaballa. The letters stated that Hisham's father and one of his friends were

kidnapped by Egyptian intelligence men. They were interrogated in Egypt, and then they were taken to Libya to be jailed in Abou Salim prison.

Matar, the father, had never had a legal trial; hence, the man had never been given the right to defend himself. Instead, he was enclosed in the most notorious prison in Libya. No overt accusations were presented against him. The prisoner vanished, leaving his family without any news about their loved member.

In 2010, Hisham and his family could, with the help of high ranked people, submit a communication to the Human Rights Committee of the United Nation to ask about the whereabouts of Djaballa. The communication aimed at inciting the Libyan government to undertake the necessary acts to find out what happened to the man and to return his remaining in case of his death. Besides, Hisham's family asked for the right to receive all reparation and integral compensation, a compensation that guarantees restoration and dignity. (TRIAL International, 2016)

Matar did not hesitate to knock at any door for the sake of finding the truth behind his father's disappearance. An open letter to the foreign secretary David Miliband was organized by the English section of the worldwide association of writers, PEN International. The letter incited the British authority to Use its new relationship with the Libyan government to demand sincere and significant improvement in Libya's human rights records. It also asked the foreign office to seek information, from the Libyan government, about all the political prisoners in Libyan jails and Djaballa Matar in particular.

On January 15th, 2010, *The Times* published the letter, along with a list of the most significant names, among those who signed it. In this respect, Hisham Matar states

in his book that the Libyan embassy in London was on alert. A member from the embassy, Matar (2014) claims, reported to him that the letter caused an earthquake there and that the ambassador was shouting 'Where the hell did this Hisham Matar descend on us from?'(p. 186)

The foreign secretary responded quickly to the open letter, and once more, *The Times* published his reply. David Miliband said, " Hisham and his family need to know the Truth now" (p.187). This response supported Hisham's struggle and brought him further support from friends who consolidated his quest for truth. Indeed, Hisham's friend Paul Van Zyle, who was experienced in dealing with dictatorships and oppression, guided him in his hard journey to know the whereabouts of his father. His guidance entered Djaballa's case to the House of Lords, where Matar's name was spoken out loud, and his case was boosted and strengthened. In this regard, Matar puts:

> After the session ended we felt bold and optimistic. None of us had expected the support to be so broad or so passionate. Lord Lester came to tell us that it was unusual for such questions, which are allotted only few minutes for discussion, to provoke so many supporting statements. We walked out and for few moments that afternoon I felt useful. (p. 191)

Indeed, Matar was very useful that afternoon but useful for what exactly? Was he useful for his father's case solely? Or else was he used to destabilize Qaddafi and proceed in the pre-revolution phase? Such questions are asked from people whose eyebrows were raised at unprecedented interest in a case that, as stated by Lord Lester, is usually allotted no more than five minutes_ a case of a Libyan Arab Muslim whose father was abducted and imprisoned by the Libyan authorities. Then, what is it that makes of this

case an exception to the rule in the House of Lords in Britain, knowing that the country, as most of the Western countries, notably after 9/11, looks at Muslim Arab minorities with discard?

4.10. *The Return* and the Literature of Prison

In *The Return,* Matar, introduces his readers to a powerful account of his father's imprisonment journey. He excelled, though he has never been to Abou Salim prison, in giving a vivid description of the terrible place where his father passed decades of his life, a place where human beings are mercilessly tortured. Matar recounts how ugly the prison is, how dark its corridors are, and how inhumane its officers are.

Hisham Matar , in giving such an account on Abou Salim Prison , rejoins a kind of literary works concerned with prisons, imprisonments, and prisoners. In fact, the writer follows what Antonio Gramsci 's "Prison Notebooks, Wole Soyinka's "The Man Died", Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and Nelson Mandela's "Long Walk to Freedom", to list but a few, narrated about the fate of prisoners who periled in infamous jails for a reason, or sometimes for no reason at all.

Such books, among others, give a real-like image of what it is like to be tormented, to be inhumanely treated in prisons, not because of any guilt other than to be a political opponent. Instances of books that narrate stories about notorious prisons like the Russian Gulag is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" (1962). The book was awarded the Noble Prize in 1970. It narrates the fate of millions of Russians, oppressed under Stalinist rule, who suffered from the brutality and atrocity exercised over them in the prison. It is a story of death and survival under the rule of

Stalin; the writer was exiled shortly after his book had been awarded (Gideon Polya, 2019)

4.11. The Trauma of Loss in *The Return*

Removed from their territory, the brothers, Hisham and Ziad, went to distant boarding schools on the other coast of the Mediterranean, where they were obliged to change their names and hide their beliefs to protect themselves from the dictator's men who were ordered to hunt all the dissidents and their families living abroad. Indeed, Hisham and Ziad used pseudonyms and pretended to be some people else. Robert and Bob replaced their real names in Europe. In this regard, Matar (2016) states in his memoir:

> How odd to enjoy a longing now superseded by other places and the fragile life I had made for myself some 3000 kilometres north, in a land where none of the words I grew up hearing are spoken, where my grandfather, had he been alive, would not be able to read a word of what I have written, and where the colours contradict, as though deliberately, those of the southern Mediterranean. (p. 106)

In the excerpt, Hisham describes his new life in exile as fragile. This statement confirms what several writers who write about exile state about the exilic experience, a fragile experience that is becoming even more and more fragile in the current socio-political atmosphere that has generated a new way to look at the other. Besides, the writer feels alien in the host country, a country where no one component of his native culture is detected. He laments the fact of writing in a language that is not his, a language that he

learned in his exile. He realizes the immense gap between his genuine and his new territory in terms of language and culture.

The brothers suffered, not only from home-sickness, but they also agonised the loss of their father, a father about whom they had no information. They could not find him, nor could they find the release one feels when he buries his dead. In one moving passage, Hisham described his grief as follows: 'I envy the finality of funerals. I covet the certainty. How it must be to wrap one's hands around the bones, to choose how to place them, to be able to pat the patch of earth and sing a prayer.' (p. 35). The fact of not being able to know his father's whereabouts scarred his soul and prevented him from finding his psychological peace.

Another traumatic effect of Hisham's father's loss is the son's inability to divulge his genuine identity to a fellow compatriot. In one of the stories, in the book, the writer described how painful was the fact of not being able to say his real name to a friend who originates from Libya until the day of farewell. The following excerpt describes best the scene: 'Hamza, I am Libyan. My name is Hisham Matar. I'm the son of Jaballa Matar.' He didn 't let go. I felt his body become rigid. 'I am sorry,' I said. I was not sure what exactly I was apologizing for. (p. 19*).* Indeed, so hard is such a moment when one is not allowed to say the name he was given by his parents, simply because he is frightened to be recognized by the dictator's men.

4.12. Qaddafi's Regime Versus the Indomitable Mattars

Matar's memoir introduces Libya to the world readers as a site of repression and tyranny as stated in the following passage:

> In any political history of Libya, the 1980s represent a particularly lurid chapter. Opponents of the regime were hanged in public squares and sports arenas Dissidents who fled the country were pursued_ some kidnapped or assassinated. (p. 4)

As it is described by Matar, what happened in Libya in the 80s was terrific and extremely inhumane, or else what is it to hang innocents, only because they said what they thought was right? Dissidents were killed or kidnapped, for they have disagreed with the dictator's assumptions and acts. Opponents were stripped of the freedom of expression; they had to obey blindly and submissively. Such is authoritarianism.

However, the Matars, as depicted by the writer, are indomitable Libyans. They are people who refuse injustice and submission. Hamed, Hisham's grandfather, for instance, was a patriot who had been imprisoned by the bloody fascist Italian colonizers before he escaped. As mentioned in *The Return*, several other family members and associates of Hisham were jailed by the Libyan authoritarian regime. Hisham Matar is a descendent of a truly large family composed of more than a hundred cousins, all of whom were significantly influential. They embraced a political stature that seriously threatened Qaddafi's regime. The Matar's tribe's location, Ajdabiya, was based in the south of Benghazi, a coastal city in eastern Libya. Indeed, Hisham's family and tribe seem to be truly powerful, for they were the organizers of the revolution, along with other Libyans who had suffered from oppression and tyranny for a long time.

4.13. Human Rights' Violations in *The Return*

The Return is a literary text and a human right discourse at once. It focuses on traumatized people and their experiences under the rule of hegemonic cultures and

authoritarian regimes. Besides, Matar's memoir could be considered as a therapy for all injured souls, in the world, that have suffered physical and psychological traumas.

It narrates the story of a bleak experience lived by an author who wrestled against tyranny in all its manifestations, notably the violation of human rights. It recounts the struggle of an exile that was exposed to double traumas: a forced exilic life and the abduction of a father from his house.

As a person who survived an extremely painful experience of loss and exile, from his early youth, the writer faces the amalgam of his past and present with great courage and tenacity. He has challenged his state of vulnerability as a victim in the past and reincarnated his hope and determination to find the truth about his father into stellar works of literature, namely, *In The Country of Men*, *Anatomy of Disappearance* and *The Return.*

Hisham Matar could subtly campaign for human rights by uncovering the seamy and flagrant violations of human rights in his oppressed country, Libya. He recounts his personal story as a human being who was stripped of the right to know his father's fate. He, also, narrates the stories of his family members who were jailed in Abou Salim for decades without having a legal trial. Moreover, he writes the historical saga of a country that has been subjected to inhumane practices throughout its history: from foreigners and its sons.

Hence, *The Return* is an amalgamation of personal and national stories told from the perspective of an oppressed writer who rejects tyranny and decides to struggle against its monstrous practices. It is the account of a subaltern who wanted to share his tragic story with the whole world in an attempt to find empathy and support from the globe warriors who fight against injustice and cruelty worldwide.

As a literary text, *The Return* addresses human experiences from a humanist perspective. It recounts how innocent people, in his country, were treated as deprived subjects; how, illegally, they were imprisoned and tortured, just because they diverged with the regime's ideology; how these very people's families were denied the right to know the whereabouts of their jailed members; and so on.

Matar relies on his memory in writing his book. He recalls his memories of childhood along with his youth experiences to tell his story. Adding to this, the writer, more than once, acts as a witness, or interacts directly with eye-witnesses as he did via the phone, from his apartment in London as Matar (2016) states in the following excerpt:

> I want to be there and I don't want to be there. Countless voices were now shouting, 'God is great!'He handed the hammer to another man, and I listened to him pant, purpose and victory in every breath. I want to be there and I want to be there. (p. 11)

The quote above is a vivid example of what it is like to be exiled from a country in which your father is captivated and imprisoned, and to which you have no access to look for a father about whom you have heard nothing for more than two decades. Besides, the quote portrays the state of being of the writer as he witnesses, through the phone, the freeing of hundreds of prisoners, hoping to find his father among them, but unfortunately the father is not there. At this very moment, the writer is speechless, for the sensitivity of the situation is immense, as stated in the following passage: "I could not speak. I want to be there and I want to be there." (p. 11) Moving as it is, this very scene shows the atrocity and universality of dictatorship that has stimulated scholars

and literary critics to probe literary texts that narrate traumatic experiences engendered by colonialism, wars, dictatorships, and civil uprisings.

4.14. Linguistic Deterritorialization in *The Return*

Unlike most of his Arab Anglophone writers, Matar's literary tongue, English, is scarcely deterritorialized linguistically. Matar seems to use a few minor forms and expressions. In the following section, I plan to account for the few deterritorialized words and expressions.

Deterritorialized Arabic Words	Genuine Arabic Forms
'Marhaba'	مرحب
'farmala'	فرملة
'mardoma'	مردومة
'Al- Haqiqah'	الحقيقة
'Al-Mayadin'	الميا دين
'Sharh el-Bal'	شرح البال

Table 4.1. English Words and Expressions Detected in *The Return.*

4.15. The Power of Story-telling and Poetry in *The Return*

Matar states, in his memoir, that his father was a man of literature. The author puts:

> Father's literary memory was like a floating library. It would have been unusual for him not to be able to recall at least one poem by every significant Arabic poet from the modern era. (p.58*)*

In the passage above, Matar describes the potential of his father's memory. He even compared it to a floating library. Indeed, Djaballa was a man of literature to the extent of not forgetting to recite poetry in the most notorious prison in Libya. poems were Djaballa's only resort from the darkness of jail cells that smelled humidity melt with fear and melancholy. Literature was then what kept him strong in the most vulnerable moments of his imprisonment. It was even a way to comfort and accompany his inmates in the hardest hours. In short, reciting poetry was his sole way towards solace and emancipation, the soul's emancipation.

4.16. The Arab Spring in *The Return*: A Myth

The propagation of the so-called Arab Spring in the Arab world was viral-like. It started from Tunisia, under the name of The Jasmine Revolution, from where President Ben Ali escaped to Saudi Arabia. After, it extended to Egypt where hundreds of people were shot down resulting in the imprisonment of President Mubarak. The contagion, then, extended to Libya where revolutionists decided to confront Qaddafi's military forces after the regime had shot hundreds of them. However, the opponents were not alone; they were supported and framed by the NATO forces that covered the rebels in their fatal journey towards Al Aziziya in Tripoly.

Despite NATO's crucial role in the defeat of Qaddafi's regime, and the killing of the dictator's sons, Hisham Matar, weirdly does not mention it in his contemporary historical saga. This could be seen as a flagrant absence that should not be detected in

such an exhaustive account in which so many, and sometimes futile, details are narrated. In fact, such an absence raises the readers' eyebrows at the omission of Nato's participation in the Libyan revolution from Matar's memoir. The question of why is it so brings to mind a myriad of suggestions among which the acceptance of the work by editors and publishers appear to be the most reasonable. Indeed, no American or British publisher would accept to divulge what the NATO forces had committed in Libya while supporting revolutionists_ they destroyed, crashed, and almost erased the country.

In his book, Matar presents a vivid account of the revolution which he followed from London. In fact, it was via the phone that he could know what was happening in his country. In a very moving scene, the writer narrates the fate of one of the revolutionaries who was killed by Qaddafi's men, and whose father was not able to bury, simply because he was afraid of the dictator. In this regard, Matar (2016) writes:

> Yes. He's in his room. The air-conditioner has been on the whole time'. Then after a pause he added, 'But it's been three days now. I am doing my best but he's beginning to smell. I must find a way to bury him soon. (p. 96)

Such a horrific situation is the dictatorship inhumanity incarnated. It illustrates how merciless Gaddafi's regime was. It is this very scene that could help readers understand the motives behind the fact of not burying Qaddafi after his death until his body smelled.

Another terrific scene is the murder of Izzo, Hisham's cousin, by a sniper. "He fired a single bullet. It entered Izzo's forehead and exited from the other side. Izzo fell on Hamed's shoulder. Hamed tried to stop the bleeding"(p.102). The death was a

trauma to his friend and relative Hamed who decided to continue fighting the dictators in Syria after he had, with other revolutionists, freed Libya from the cruel government, as stated in the following: "I'm sorry I couldn't call earlier. It took longer than I thought. But I 'm now over the border in Syria. I've joined the resistance." (p. 103) Indeed, for Hamed, fighting tyranny has become a cause in its self. 'We have to defeat these dictators.' (p. 103) Via the use of **We**, Hisham sends a message in which he adheres and supports the collective enunciation articulated by his cousin who seems determined to defeat dictators in the whole Arab world. By crossing the borders to Syria, Hamed shows the revolutionaries' determination to accomplish a mission that they see as noble and decisive to their people. By people here, I refer to the Arabs, with all their identity markers i.e. cultural, geographical and religious.

4.17. The Exile: An Ambivalent Self

Arab Exiles could be considered as ambivalent selves as stated by Hisham in the following quote:

> I began reciting Surat al-Fatiha. Here was an eighteen-year-old Arab Muslim praying in an English pub for a Scottish team because they had a black player who might not have been African, while his Libyan family, exiled in Cairo, were rooting for a German team. (p. 79)

In one of the few humorous and ironic scenes in *The Return*, Hisham narrates, as stated in the quotation above, how paradoxical and ambivalent is the exile's life. He is a Muslim but drinks alcohol in an English pub, and at the same time, that is while he is drinking wine, he recites Surat al-Fatiha. A very weird situation that is very typical of exiled Muslims in the West. Indeed, several Muslims, in Western countries, struggles

with identity issues; they do not know to what culture they should adhere. And even if they know, they will never totally adhere to it. Such is the exile's fate: loss.

Another instance of the exile struggle with identity issues is detected when Hisham supports a Scottish team, just because it contains a black player within its team. Though he does not even know if he is African or not, he sympathises with him because he is also an African. Such is solidarity between immigrants. On the other part of the globe, in Egypt, his Libyan family supports a German team. Strange as it is, this situation could make sense in that the Libyans, though exiled in Egypt, they do not feel the same feeling of dislocation and nostalgia that their son feels in a culturally alien territory like London.

To sum, Hisham Matar portrays the exile as an individual who struggles to keep his identity, but at the same time, wants to adopt his host country's cultural components in an attempt to be accepted and to be able to integrate into the new society. Between the authentic culture and the host one, the exile inevitably experiences a sense of loss and disillusionment in his quest for integration. He is likely going to lose some of his cultural identity's components.

4.18. The Libyan Revolution: A Historical Timeline

The Return is a book that tells not only Matar's personal story but also narrates the hi/story of a nation. The writer, through his revolutionary novel brilliantly reported several historical events from his perspective.

In his memoir, Hisham Matar, brilliantly reported what happened in his home country before and after the uprising that took place in 2011, under the name of Arab

Spring. The writer stated that he had followed the revolution from his flat in London via the phone, as written in the following passage:

> I remember the day well because, in my efforts to supply international journalists with information about what was happening in Libya, I got the telephone number of a man involved in the attack. All I knew was that up to then he had been a diplomat and that his name (I was only given his first name) was Hisham. (p. 93)

The quotation above demonstrates Matar's active involvement in what took place in his home country. He was a reporter of the revolution's events. He supported the revolutionists in their mission to free Libya from dictatorship; he internationalized his people's revolution.

In the following section, we intend to demonstrate how Hisham Matar could rival historians by giving his account of the revolution that caused the fall of Qaddafi. To do so, the plan is to list all the dates and events that happened in that period, and that had a direct or indirect relation with the 2011 uprising, in the following tables:

Dates	**Events**
-1969	-Qaddafi's putsch against King Idris
-1977 **(April 7th)**	-As a response to the student union's demand to protect the academy from growing political interference, two students, Omar Ali Dabboub and Mohammad bin Saud, were hanged in the gardens of the cathedral.

-1980 s **-January 2010** **-2011** **January** **-February 15th** **-February 16th**	- The arrest and imprisonment of several university students. -Announcement of Qaddafi's campaign to hunt down exiled dissidents. -Execution of opponents of Qaddafi's regime in public squares and sport arenas. -Establishment of an armed and determined resistance to the dictatorship In Chad. -The Abduction of Jaballa Matar from his home in Egypt - An open letter to the foreign secretary David Miliband, about Djaballa's case and human rights violations in Libya was published in *The Times* - Djaballa's case is discussed in The House of Lords. -The Libyan dictatorship attempt to prevent the kind of uprisings seen in Tunisia and Egypt by freeing political prisoners, promising interest-free loans to young people and increasing foreign scholarships for students -.violent crackdowns on journalists and human rights activists -A group of judges and lawyers staged a protest in Benghazi. - The same group gathered again in front of the courthouses.

Table 4.2. Pre-Revolution Events

Dates	Events
2011	-The authorities attacked and killed several demonstrators.

February 17th	-Armed revolutionists decided to fight the dictator's army and march to Tripoli
June 9th	-An armed assault on the military garrison in Zliten.
Summer 2011	-Zliten became of immense strategic importance to both sides: revolutionists and Qaddafi loyalists.
July 12th	-The freedom fighters of eastern Libya fly the first liberation flag in the town of Zliten
August 23rd	- revolutionists entered the capital -They reached Bab al-Azizia, Qaddafi's compound; they found it empty. -The fall of Tripoli.

Table 4.3. While-Revolution Events

4. 19. The Fall of Tripoli

Matar followed the revolutionists from his flat in London. He could recount the several events that took place during the revolution. In the following excerpt, Matar shows the readers how courageous the revolutionists were:

> 'Mama', Izzo said. 'Forward, forward. '
>
> 'But forward till when?'Aunt Zaynab asked him.
>
> 'Till Bab al-Azizia, 'he told her. (p. 90)

In the quotation above, Matar describes how enthusiastic and optimistic was Izzo, Hisham's cousin and Hamed's brother. Izzo parodied Qaddafi in his declaration of the war against revolutionaries, a war that resembled a fire that would burn a whole

country. Forward, forward, till Benghazi, Qaddafi declared in 2011. Indeed, revolutionists, with the help of NATO, marched towards Bab al-Azizia, Qaddafi's residence. They found it empty from its inhabitants; Qaddafi and his family had deserted the place before the arrival of revolutionists.

As soon as they reached Bab al-Azizia, some revolutionists hurried towards the notorious prison of Abou Salim to free the prisoners, crying *Allaho Akbar.* In the other part of the globe, Hisham was following the operation from his flat in London. He was very stressed and anxious to know whether his father was among the prisoners or not. Hisham wanted to be with the men to participate in liberating political dissidents, like his father, who perished in the moisture of the cold and dark cells in which they had passed most of their lives. Hisham's state of mind was pathetic, and that could be detected as he kept repeating "I want to be there, and I want to be there" (p. 11); but when the men opened the door of a last cell, he said, "I don't want to be there" (p. 11). This last statement showed the extent to which the protagonist was terrified to know anything about his lost father; he was even scared to find him after more than two decades. He was maybe scared of not being able to recognize him after the long period he spent in that torture site.

Hisham's anxiety and trauma continued and got even worse when he heard of his cousin Izzo's death. "He fired a single bullet. It entered Izzo's forehead and exited from the other side" (p. 102). This is the account of how Izzo was aimed at by a sniper who was hiding in al-Azizia. In reporting his cousin's murder, the writer wants to show the price of Tripoli's fall, a truly costly price_ the death of Libyans by Libyans.

4.20. Post-Revolution: The Failure of the So-called Arab Spring

Arab countries which experienced the so-called Arab Spring are suffering from a myriad of internal issues, but what is happening currently in Libya, in the aftermath of the 17th February popular uprising, is far from being a mere political issue. It is a devastating civil war that is tearing up a whole country.

After the revolution that has cost Libya thousands of dead Libyans from both sides (Qaddafi's followers and opponents), things get out of control, and the country sinks in the blood of its children. About the atrocity of the situation in after-revolution Libya, the author writes:

> Revolutions have their momentum, and once you join the current it is very difficult to escape the rapids. Revolutions are not solid gates through which nations pass but a force comparable to a storm that sweeps all before it (p.112)

Indeed what is happening in Libya is quite similar to a storm that destroys everything in the country. Buildings have collapsed; schools have closed; and hospitals have become partially operative. "The situation would get so grim that the unimaginable would happen: People would come to long for the days of Qaddafi." (p. 112)

All aspects of a normal life vanished from the country. Instead, the smell of blood and the odour of smoke permeate the atmosphere. Hatred and vengeance have become the currency in the new Libya. The pro and the anti-Qaddafi burn their country, thinking that they are freeing and building it anew. Indeed the cost of any war is a huge number of human lives in addition to the collapse of not only regimes but also whole countries.

In short, Matar, through his prose, portrays the outcome of the *Arab Spring* in his home country. He feels sorry for a country that dreamt of freedom and prosperity, a

country that approximated change but could not embrace it. The writer laments the opaque and scary future of the country that his father loved more than his sons. However, he does not overtly mention what currently takes place in his native land: a civil war is taking place between Libyans; civilians are killed daily; children are stripped of the right to education; women are abused, raped and sold into slavery. In short, *"Horror, Horror, Horror",* to borrow Conrad's words, is everywhere in Libya.

4.21. Silences in *The Return*

Matar, in his book that overtly supports the revolutionists' struggle against authoritarian regimes, remains silent in some cases as to what became of the after-revolution Lybia. A whole country was destroyed by the NATO forces, forces which bombed the most strategic places in the country such as tanks of water and industries of tubes. Furthermore, they smashed electricity generators to sink the country into darkness. They cut all ways of communication to break the regime's back. However, it was not only the dictator's back that was broken but also the citizens'. The foreign forces helped one front against the other. It enabled the revolutionists to defeat Qaddafi and his loyal men. Yet, blinded by vengeance, the anti-Qaddafi could not see the horrors caused by this intervention, nor could they detect the real reason behind such a support, a support that may have cost the alleys billions of dollars. Hence, what it is that urged NATO to spare such a huge sum of money? Is it oil? Is it the geostrategic location of Libya? Or is it something else?

The other silence, detected in the memoir, is the aftermath of the revolution. Libya became a site of chaos, starvation, illnesses, human trade, drug dealing, and other seamy and cruel businesses. It lost the least component of human life. People are starving in their rich country. They are afraid and terrified of the opaque political and military situation in their land, a situation that shifted from a liberating revolution to a deadly and bloody civil war nourished and fuelled by hatred and abhorrence between the Libyans.

Such results of the so-called Arab spring are truly disastrous, a fact that Matar briefly and covertly referred to when he said that Libyan longed for Qaddafi's days_ a strong statement that denotes the failure of the revolution in Libya. Indeed, Matar could not write about the atrocities in his novel; otherwise, this could be considered as a counterargument to his support of a revolution that had not only brought Qaddafi down, but that brought an entire country back to the colonial past.

4.22.Conclusion

Hisham Matar's writings belong to the narratives of exile. Such narratives focalize on one central issue, namely, exile. Furthermore, they tackle the problem of belonging faced by exiles in the Western countries; exiles who feel detached from their homelands, but not completely attached to the host land, notably after 9/11. This state of ambivalence and instability is what urges Arab writers who live in exile to write about their experiences in an attempt to sound their agonies to the world readers.

The Arab-British writer incarnates brilliantly what it is like to be exiled from one's country for more than two decades, what it is like to be stripped of the right of return to your homeland, and what it is like to be denied the right to know the whereabouts of

one's father. Such is Matar's impetus for writing his three books that account for the same tragedy of loss and despair experienced by exiled psyches.

Exiled people, as represented by Matar, are ordinary persons who have been forced to leave their authentic territory to find themselves in an alien space to which they have no belonging, be it racial, religious or cultural. Trapped as they are, in a foreign territory, exiles struggle to bridge the cultural gap between their respective territory and the host one, trying to adapt to the new environment while preserving the components of their genuine identity.

This very identity of the exile has recently been the major concern of the Western media as well as the academic sphere. Several studies have been conducted to uncover the mystery of the Muslim and Arab identity, especially after the events of 9/11 that have impacted negatively the Western perception of the Arab world. Those cursed attacks have caused a flood of hatred and abhorrence towards everything that is Arab, or that is related to it.

Considered as a terrorist or a potential terrorist, the Arab exile is trapped in a situation of a constant threat. He cannot stay, nor can he return. The only resort, to my sense, is that the exiled writer should tell his stories to the world to define and defend himself. In so doing, Arab writers could restore what has been destroyed by Western media. They could act as first-hand source of information, about Arabs, that may replace the readymade information that fuels the sentiments of hatred already present in the Western countries.

Indeed, in his latest book, *The Return,* Matar tackles a universal theme. It tells the story of how tormenting and traumatic is the loss of one's father when the whereabouts of the latter are unknown. Matar could not know the fate of his abducted father who was

an opponent to Qaddafi's rule. The writer's allegorical memoir could transmit a strong message to the world reader, a message about how courageous were the Libyan revolutionists in their struggle against dictatorship. It tells the history of contemporary Libya, a new country that suffers from the aftermath of the so-called Arab Spring.

The Libyan uprising, called Arab Spring, was a disaster. Though revolutionists could free the country from Qaddafi; they, unfortunately, could not protect it from destruction. Shortly after the death of Qaddafi, the country fell into the abyss of the civil war that broke its back. The civil war and several other factors plunged the injured country into a deep well.

Through a brilliantly written memoir, Matar could write Libyan's contemporary history by jotting down what he had witnessed during and after Qaddafi's period. In fact, the book is dense with accounts of historical events. An instance of such events is the Arab Spring that started in February 2011 and ended with the death of Qaddafi in the summer of the same year. Several details about the revolution are mentioned in the memoir, details about the atrocities of the war and the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Overall, Matar's memoir could be considered, as several critics claim, a literary classic that transcends the fact that it is written by an Arab Muslim. It is acclaimed for being a universal work that addresses the readers, be they Western or Eastern, in English, the language of globalization, not to say, the language of hegemony(Kramatschek, 2017). In so doing, the Libyan writer could subtly and wittily convey a strong message to the world about his origins; he could portray the Arab as a warrior who never gives up a cause, notably if this cause is to free one's country from tyranny and dictatorship.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Lebs: A Confronting Novel

> *On this level, the novel is a more or less straightforward indictment of the racism of White Australia. 'I tried so hard to be an artist, to be White, to be one of them,' Bani laments near the end of* The Lebs*, 'but all they wanted me to be and all they saw in me was a dirty Arab'* (James Ley, 2018)

5. *The Lebs*: A Confronting Novel

5.1. Introduction

Arab-Australians have suffered, like their counterparts in Western countries, from an unprecedented flood of hatred and loathing, notably in the aftermath of 9/11. Australian media fuelled these sentiments by a massive campaign against Arabs and Muslims in Australia. News' headlines read as follows: "Terror Australis – Bin Laden in our suburbs" and so on. All these titles refer to the Arab community as a site of potential danger, a danger caused by 'Eastern demons'. In fact, what has negatively had an impact on Arabs and Lebos in Australia is the unjust categorization of all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists or potential terrorists.

Such a classification is a result of a series of events committed by gangsters from Arab origins, events that have caused a number of Anti-Arab/Muslim demonstrations in Australia. As a reaction to such an out-of-control situation, Arab-Australian writers and intellectuals have decided to act to soften the tense atmosphere. An instance of such reactions is M. M. Ahmed's writings like essays in newspapers and novels that enrich the literary landscape in Australia.

In this chapter, the attempt is to scrutinize Ahmed's second novel *The Lebs* (2018) to figure out how the writer fashion, linguistically and thematically his literary text, a text meant to be a counter-discourse to the racist assumptions of White Australia against Arab and Muslim minorities.

5.2. About the Author

Ahmed is a second-generation Arab-Australian immigrant writer. He is also a teacher, an editor, and a community arts worker. He has founded the directed Sweatshop, a Western Sydney literacy movement that is concerned with the empowerment of artists that belong to diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds via creative writing. The writers ' productions appeared in *The Guardian, The Sydney Review of Books, Seizure, The Australian, Coming of Age: Australian Muslim Stories*, and *Heat*. Furthermore, he received the Australian Council Kirk Robinson prize for his great achievements in community cultural improvement in 2012. In 2017, Ahmed obtained his Doctorate of Creative Arts from Western Sydney University.(Ahmed, M.M., 2018)

Ahmed's first novel, *The Tribe* (2014), received the award of Sydney Morning Herald Best Young Novelists of the Year in 2015. His second novel, *The Lebs* (2018) won the NSW Premiers Multicultural Literary prize in 2019 and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award in the same year. The second book is a sequel to The Tribe because it narrates the events from the perspective of the teenager Bani Adam, the narrator of both books. However, in the first book, he is still a nine-year-old child.

5.3. *The Tribe*: A Family Saga

The novel is a story of a Lebanese family, which belongs to the *Shiaa* that is a Muslim sect, and their ethnic community in Sydney. The book is written from the perspective of a young child named Bani Adam which means a human being (Saeed, 2018). To tell a story from a child's eyes is challenging and fascinating at once. The writer kept many unseen things that are as stimulating as those that are shown by the young narrator. For instance, several implied troubles faced by adults, in the outside world, are kept out of the prose.

The book is composed of three separate yet connected stories. Each of the three stories starts with almost the same sentence in which Bani announces his age that is different in each section. Then, the reader is taken backwards to childhood memories overlaid by adult reflections (Saeed, 2018). Challenging as it is, the fact of narrating a family saga from a child's perspective makes *The Tribe* a book of an unstable, disturbing but appealing quality. Indeed, such quality is both confronting and convincing. It is confronting in that the reader feels trapped in an unstable book that sways between a child's account and an adult's reflection. It is yet convincing because it is the very naïve insights of the child that makes the book a reliable one.

'The House of Adam' is the first story of the book. The story introduces the reader to Bani, the child protagonist, and his grandmother whom he calls "Tayta", an endearment term used in Lebanon for grandmother. The writer portrays Bani's grandmother as the one who holds the immigrant family unified and connected to its origin. Tayta represents power and respect in her family. She tries to maintain the cultural and historical peculiarities of her family while living in alien territory, a truly challenging task as shown in Ahmed's debut book.

While narrating the small moments in his family members' lives, Bani exhibits the challenges experienced by immigrants while trying to live between two distinct cultures. The child questions the traditions, behaviors, and customs in his culture. He tries to build his identity in a double-cultured environment, an environment that makes Bani's quest a tough one. However, more than once, the writer seems willing to detach himself from his genuine identity or let us say he implicitly confirms Orientalist assumptions that introduce the East as a desert place only. Ahmed alludes to the idea that he is stuck to an origin from which he wants to get out and embrace new ideas and places.

Trapped as he is in this confronting area, the writer excels in portraying the state of being a second-generation immigrant who struggles with identity issues. Immigrants who adhere to both cultures, but profoundly belong to none of the two, are lost in the in-between territory in which they reside.

'The Children of Yocheved' is the second story of the book. It recounts the story of Uncle Ali and Zubaida's marriage. The wedding party takes place in a large centre with several hundreds of guests. Through this technique of exposure, the writer fissures the closed borders of *The Tribe*, and uncovers the vulnerability of the family's unity, a unity that could be broken easily as the family members are constantly ready to violently argue for very futile reasons. They oftentimes quarrel about issues about to holding onto or abandoning their genuine cultural values and traditions.

Bani tackles the themes of racism, segregation, and sectarianism through stories about the people of the tribe, who experience casual racism from white Australia. He

also tells of the sexist views held about women who are still discarded by men in his patriarchal culture of origin. The writer subtly exhibits his native culture's assumptions and behaviors without judging them or showing his opinion about such attitudes and practices.

'The Mother of Ehud' is the third and final story of the book. The narrator is now eleven of age. He is no more the young child who is too close to his grandmother who is confined to her bad. Bani witnesses the death of his Tayta, and so do the readers. The sorrow is immense and the tension within the family is even bigger. Ahmed's description of the happenings of the day of death is so vivid that it brings the readers into the events and allows them to have a tight connection to that world. At the end of the story, the narrator realizes that he does not know anything about Tayta's past, a fact that sends the boy's thoughts backward and forward through his life where this realization resonates. This state of mind urges the reader to think of the unstable nature of the boy's or the author's identity.

5.4. ***The Lebs:*** **An Immigrant's Reaction**

Ahmed's inspiration to write *The Lebs* (2018) came from "Lebs and Punchbowl Prison" (2016), an essay published in the Sydney Review of Books. He refers to Punchbowl Boys High School, his *alma mater*, as a prison. The essay is an account of the writer's journey as a student in the period stretching from the late 90s to early 2000s. The school, then, was not considered as a site of academic brilliance, a perception that the writer does not bother to deny.

In the essay, Ahmed wanted to justify the horrific events that were attributed to Arabs or to use the writer‘s word ‘*the Lebs’,* a word used by most Australians to refer to Arabs, Africans, or even any Muslim, regardless of his origin. The author shows why and how young Muslim teenagers were transformed into demons that attacked, raped, and even killed White Australians. He narrated what happened in the prison-like school, and how his peers were badly treated and often marginalized. They were even categorized as criminals, gangsters, and terrorists, notably, in 2000, after the series of terrible gang rapes of White Australian girls who were referred to as sluts by the gangsters. Seamy as it was, the image of Arabs in Australia worsened after the 9/11 attacks that had directed another flood of abhorrence and fear against Muslims worldwide.

Once more, in 2018, the writer emphasized his position and opinion about the events that took place in the Australian society: gang violence, rapes, murders, terrorist attacks, etc. by publishing his second novel, *The Lebs*, in which he vividly and wittily describes the harsh context in which he and his friends have studied in Punchbowl High School.

The ‘Lebs’, in the notorious school, refer, not only, to students from Lebanese origins, but also designates students from the Middle East, Indonesia, and even Africa. All of them share a specific Australian identity created and fostered in an environment dense with hatred and unjust categorization, an environment in which they are stereotyped as violent, criminals, gangsters, and even worse, terrorists. They were characterized as the holders of a culture in which people disrespect education, fear change and, freedom, do not tolerate diversity, and oppress women.

The Lebs is an autobiographical fiction book. Its protagonist is a teenager called Bani Adam. This young man is the same protagonist of Ahmed's first novel titled *The Tribe*. The writer's second book is divided into three chapters entitled as follow: 'Drug Dealers and Drive-bys', 'Gang Rape', 'War on Terror'. The titles reflect, par excellence, the dirty context in which the Lebs, all the Lebs, are forced to sink in.

The Lebs' publication caused a noise of negative critiques by the Australian literary society. The critics accused the writer of justifying the acts of violence enacted by his fellow people. They even claimed that Bani was his fictional alter ego. They stated that the book was his disguised memoir. However, Ahmed rejected their accusations as he posits in the following quotation:

> If you're reading my book it doesn't mean you know anything about me as a human being. It's based on the experiences of my life, but I fictionalise characters, events, sequences, politics, ideas, which is a kind of literary form I developed from James Joyce, the Irish writer. (Ahmed, cited in Sleiman, 2018)

The writer then denies the fact of considering Bani as his alter ego. Instead, he considers his method in writing his fictionalized memoir as a literary form already used by writers like James Joyce. He claims that most of the events, characters, and sequences are mere fiction inspired by his real life.

The Arab-Australian writer's real life is much more than a life of a novelist who is content with his writings. He is an activist who struggles for a cause, a cause of freeing the Arab minority, along with other ethnic groups in Australia from illiteracy and ignorance. He has created a literacy movement meant for the

intellectual empowerment of minorities that are alienated and discarded by White Australia.

5.5. Sweatshop: An Empowering Movement

As aforementioned, Ahmed is a director of Sweatshop, a literacy movement concerned with teaching Arab-Australians how to read, write and analyze critically any piece of writing, be it fiction or non-fiction. Sweatshop aims at empowering silenced voices via storytelling and literacy. It is a model inspired by the work of the American social activist and feminist Bell Hooks (Ahmed, cited in Sleiman, 2018). In this respect, Ahmed, cited in Sleiman (2018), adds:

> "We took her philosophy and said let's create a literacy movement which is about teaching marginalized people how to read and write because that will determine how they will see what they will see, and in turn that will create models and modes of justice for them" (para. 13)

Ahmed attempts, via this intellectual movement, to raise his ethnic minority of what takes place in an Australian environment dense with feelings of fear, hatred, and even abhorrence of the Arab and Muslim others. He wants to teach his oppressed community how to get rid of the bleak image, of them, as immature criminals and even terrorists. He tries to open a window of hope and prosperity for those people, of his race, who suffer from unjust categorizations**.** (Sleiman, 2018)

The writer of *The Lebs* seeks to create a forum where white Australians can refer to whenever they have inquiries about Arabs in general and or Lebs in particular. In this regard, Ahmed (2018) states:

> If you want to know us, you have to come to us, you have to know from a Leb, you can't know us from a second or third-hand source. I wanted to use my voice – an authentic voice – to subvert and challenge the fake and inaccurate ones. (n. p.)

Ahmed's initiative is what minorities like Arabs and Muslims in Australia best need. They need to restore their genuine culture, long deemed violent and barbarian by main stream Australia, a culture that could only be defined by its own people according to the writer who seems determined to subvert the already established yet fake assumptions about Arabs and Muslims in White Australia. In an interview with Robert Wood (2018), the writer states:" Buy *our* books and let us speak for ourselves" (n. P.). So, for the writer, the only way to speak about and for one' self is to write books.

5.6. The Lebs: A Confronting Novel

Ahmed's latest novel is controversial because of the confronting assumptions it contains. An instance of such assumptions is detected in the first part of the book, entitled, 'Drug Dealers and Drive-bys', in which the writer blames white Australia's racism and segregation against Arabs more than he blames the latter for the violent acts committed by the Lebs. He accuses the host countries' authorities and media of being the primary cause of the acts of terror that threaten Australia (Ley, 2018). The writer struggles to picture his community as a marginalized ethnic group, who is unfairly accused of acts of violence and terrorism in Australia. In this respect, Ahmed, in *The Lebs*, states:

> We are sand niggers, rejected and hated and feared. Cops and transit officers target us and chicks and Skips avoid us. There's nothing I can do about it. Fatala and I look like the gang rapist Bilal Skaf, who is on the front page of every newspaper today. (p.2)

Indeed, Bani can do nothing about this fact even if he tries hard to show that he is not like his peers. The protagonist rejects and denies his 'inmates' practices. To him, these acts are immature and stupid. Hence, he sees himself unique among these foolish teenagers as the following note illustrates: "Perhaps the boys haven't noticed, or perhaps they've accepted the truth_ that I am unique among the lost-found Nation of Islam within this wildness called Punchbowl Boys." (p.12) In the precedent quotation, the writer raises the crucial issue of what he describes as the lost-found Nation of Islam. This is a powerful statement that needs reflection. The writer mourns a nation that is torn out by internal as well as external conflicts. One example of internal problems faced by the Nation is the civil wars that resulted from the hatred between the same but different Muslims. In a moving scene, the writer shows how he is looked at after uncovering the fact that he is an Alawite to his schoolmate Mahmoud who is Sunni or a "Wallah bros" as the writer calls them. "*Anna Alawy"* Bani shouts out proudly to distinguish himself from the other sect of Sunni which is, according to the writer, a euphemism for Wahabi Muslims.

Mahmoud Mahmoud and Solomon Akawi, both of them Sunni, argue with Banni about what it means to be Alawite. Akawi states" Ay, you guys believe Ali is the prophet", but Bani Says "No, we believe he is an Imam". Then the Sunni adds" Your

women don't believe in the hidjab", and the Alawite answers" Just because they don't wear it doesn't mean they don't believe in it". Akawi continues" You guys believe it's hallal to drink alcohol", and Bani asks" Do you drink?" Akawi answers by "Yeah, but just for fun". At this very moment, Bani announces that he does not drink. Through this argument, the writer seeks to show how vulnerable is the nowadays Muslim's relation to Islam, a relation that is still at the level of very futile things. He then adds that he is a real Muslim because he believes, as all Muslims, in Allah and in the prophet Mohammed as he notes in the book:

> What do you guys believe, bro, what do you guys believe?' I say, 'Ashado an la ilaha ill allah, wa ashado anna Muhammad an rasul Allah,'which means, I bear witness that there is no god but God and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God. (p. 19)

Through the *Shahada*, Ahmed unifies the two sects who are both Muslim but are constantly in conflict. Such is the reality that the writer wants to show about Islam. He shows how the Nation of Islam is internally divided and torn because of such arguments. Yet, this is not the only reason the writer aims at reaching; he rather wants to dissociate himself from a community he sees as stupid and immature.

Apart from the sectarian conflicts, Ahmed, more than once, confirms the Western stereotype attributed to Arabs, violent, by excerpts like the following:

> What he doesn't know is that Mohammad Usuf never comes to school without his Zippo lighter. He bought it last year in Lebanon. It has the word Kafir written across the lid in Arabic, which means 'infidel'.

This quote may infer that Mohammed Usuf imports violence and terror from his home country, Lebanon. The message here seems to be that somewhere in Lebanon they incite people to burn the *Kafir* (the Infidel). In so doing, I think, the writer alienates more his minority, even if he justifies their violent deeds, simply because a violent act cannot be justified once it is committed.

In another passage, Ahmed expresses his feeling of frustration against his fellow Arabs as follows:

> I'm looking at them, the olive-skinned Arabs with baby beards and a thick, curly hair razored at the sides.[…] How will I ever be more than a Leb while I'm surrounded by terrorists? I am no longer above this place. I am in the rubble, among the carcasses of suicide bombers (p. 32)

In the excerpt, the writer exposes Bani's unstable identity, an identity that suffers from self-hatred and self discard. The protagonist is suffocated by his origin, an origin from which he wants to distance himself. However, here again, the writer harms his community by foregrounding Bani's affirmation that the Lebs are indeed terrorists and potential suicide bombers.

However, in confirming the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist stereotypes about Arabs by telling stories about his teenage mates' foolish acts, the writer seems willing to distinguish himself from this immature community in his narrative. He criticizes his fellow's practices that have stripped him the right to dream big; they have prevented him from developing his skills of writing to embrace the status of a novelist.

Ahmed, by distancing himself from Punchbowl boys, creates a new binary opposition within the emigrants themselves. It is 'he' versus 'his school mates'. This new distinction fissures the Muslim Arab minority in Australia. Indeed, the novelist may be willing to show that Arab immigrants could be divided into two categories: the first being like his schoolmates who are delinquent and violent and the second being like himself, intellectual and civilized. The following excerpt illustrates best the point discussed before: "This person, who I later learned was none other than Mr. Guy Law himself, seemed to live between the Lebs, who did not want literature to be here, and me, who did not want literature to leave". The writer then wants to expose that he is a man of literature and thought, contrary to the illiterate other Lebs who are, as he infers in his book, stupid.

What the writer wants to show seems to be well received by critics like James Ley whose review of *The Lebs*, in Sydney Review of Books, entitled "I'm with Stupid" (2018), looks like the second war on terror in that Ley fiercely attacks the characters in the narrative as if they were real. The critic seized the opportunity of Ahmed's critiques of his community to over-fuel the sentiments of hatred already present in white Australia. He is, as stated by Hammed (2019), incapable of reading a piece of fiction appropriately.

> I have read Ley's review several times, and I continue to marvel at the slippage of the mask, at the way he seemed to say the quiet part out loud, the barely contained contempt. And I wonder, does Ley even now not realise that at some point in his review he was no longer writing about fictional characters (para. 24)

Indeed Ley, in his review (2018), is so absorbed by the narrative's account that he ceased to be a reviewer; instead he is like a warrior in a battle against what he perceives as imbeciles and '*gronks*'. In fact, Ley's seems to be unable to review an Arab fiction work. Instead, he is more concerned with foregrounding the seamy side of the Muslim Arab minority in Australia. He categorically refuses to let go of Mohammed's argument that attempts to justify the Lebs' practices that are, as the writer claims, the outcome of racism against his community.

Ley (2018), more than once, recalls the passages in which the Arab writer reinforces both Orientalists' and neo-Orientalists' assumptions about Arabs. He seems to say such is how a Muslim Arab describes his fellow terrorists who are threatening and frightening our Western world.

> They harbour a sneaking sympathy for Bilal Skaf, the ring leader of the Sydney gang rapists, and they are outrageously and absurdly anti-Semitic – one boy claims that Hitler was secretly Jewish and the Holocaust was a conspiracy to allow the Jews to steal Palestine. At the beginning of the novel, Bani wonders if 'stupidity is Allah's way of protecting us from ourselves'; later, it occurs to him that maybe the reason everyone hates the Lebs is 'not because we are drug dealers and rapists, but because we are dumb cunts'. (p. 201)

Such a depiction, to one's sense, is the logical perception of a novel written by an Arab about Arabs, but that castigates them and divulges their foolish deeds to his readers. In so doing, Michael Mohammed wants to be as authentic and as reliable as he can, but is not he being too harsh to his teenage peers who are but adolescents after all?

To end up, and regardless of the aim behind his narrative, the fact is that the writer does not reject the Western negative view towards Arabs. He even reinforces it, forgetting that the community he is writing about in his book is not representative of the Arab world, nor is it representative of the Arab-Australian immigrants. It is rather representative of a small community of teenagers that is the prototype of any delinquent teenagers in the world. To reach his thematic target, *The Lebs'* author uses a prose dense with minor forms and expressions, a technique called linguistic deterritorialization.

5.7. Linguistic Deterritorialization in *The Lebs*

Ahmed structures his contemporary minor book in a language that constitutes an amalgam of codes; it is a mixture of Standard English, colloquial English, Standard Arabic, colloquial Lebanese Arabic, and slangs. In so doing, the writer cracks the English code and inserts minor forms, which belong to the latter's language and culture of origin, in his prose. This subversion of English is what Deleuze and Guattari (1986) call the deterritorialization of language that is the first characteristic of minor literature. In this section, the attempt is to sort out the different techniques, used by the writer, to deterritorialize language in his minor novel.

2.7.1.Graphological Deterritorialization

In this section, the attempt is to extract the passages where the writer uses English letters or symbols to write Arabic words and expressions. To do so, a table is structured to account for this graphological deterritorialization.

Lebanese Vernacular Arabic written in English graphology	Words written in Arabic
'*Skout ouh-laa*!'	سكوت ا وولا
Majnun Layla	مجنون ليلى
haloumi	حلومي
falafels	فلافل
thobe	ثوب
taqiya	طاقية
najis	نجس
Naaaaaaaaar	نااااااااااار
Khashby	خشبي
Jannah	جنة

Kufiya	كوفية
Kib mai, Kib mai	كب مي كب مي
Al-nadaafy min al-imaan	النظافة من الايمان
' Airy bel-Yahud, wa airy bel-Yahud'	عيري باليهود و عيري باليهود
'Takbeer!	تكبير
Saahibtou	صاحبتو
'Yullah'	يللا
Malfouf	ملفوف
Warak eneb	ورق عنب
koosa	كوسة

Table 5. 1. Instances of Graphological Deterritorialization in *The Lebs*

In the table above, the writer uses, as his Arab American and Arab British writers counterparts, a graphological deterrotorialization in his prose. It is, as stated in the previous chapters, the writing of Arab words and expressions using English letters. It is a literal transcription using English letters instead of using International symbols meant for transcription. In so doing, that is in using defamiliarization, the wrier attracts the reader to his native language and accentuates his cultural distinctiveness. As such he gives more credibility to his narrative, a narrative told from a first-hand source of information.

2.7.2.Slangs and Swear Words in *The Lebs*

In the following table, the endeavour is to spot the passages where the writer uses slang and swear words. This exhibition of the code used by the novelist is necessary regarding the recurrence of such expressions in the prose. Indeed, the novel is dense with swear words, a fact that, to my sense, needs inquiry.

Slang expressions and swear words in *The Lebs*
'Fucken black cunt!'
Bros before hoes
'I'm not saying Bilal was innocent, cuz, but Aussie bitches are always asking for it'
'No bitch will ever be able to pin shit on me, bro'
'I agree to give Bassam and Ali and Mohammed and Ziggy head jobs
'Why the teacher beat down niggaz?'
'This school's a maa-fucken prison, bro'
'Show us your flaps!'
'He thinks he's fucken better than us!'
'Bani Adam is a shum shoom'
'shut the fuck up, shut the fuck up'

‘Cock-Asian, he’s married to a cock-Asian’
That surgeon was the biggest fucken kafir, bro’
He replies, ‘pffff, we’re not gonna write shit, bro_that was the best, we got outta History’
‘Yeah, so you’re like me, cuz?’
‘I’m going to take my boat and I’m gonna kick that son of a bitch Bison’s ass so hard that the next Bison wannabe is going to feel it!
I fisted your bitch, you fat motherfucker
‘Fuck you, ye spiks’
‘Fuck you too, ye *khashaby’*
Fucken Bullshit
‘I’m gonna get a pie, brah’
Arabs are dumb. Arabs are so fucken dumb.
‘Get off me, ya faggot!’
That’s gay, bro, that’s so fucken gay.
‘*Gronk! Gronk! Gronk!*’

Table 5.2. Slang Use in *The Lebs*

The Arab-Australian writer, Ahmed, brilliantly gives an account of his community's daily life. He narrates stories about his schoolmates, and how they are looked at by white Australians. To reach authenticity, the writer uses the slang that is the code peculiar to the teenagers in Punchbowl high school. As the table above shows, the amount of slang in Mohammed's prose is truly considerable, and this could be seen as evidence in a book that describes life in a notorious school as Bunchbowl Boy institutions.

Another point which is, to one's sense, worth mentioning, is that in the table above the sentences represent not only slang, informal expressions used by this minority, but it also reflects the impolite nature of the boys that use them because, as the reader could notice, the sentences are dense with swearing and offensive words. Hence, one may conclude that the writer deliberately uses such expressions and swear words to show the extent to which his ethnic minority is delinquent and thug, to borrow Mohammed's word in describing his mates' life.

2.7.3.Self-Translation as a Deterritorializing Technique

Mohammed uses, like most of his Arab Anglophone counterparts, minor forms, and expressions in his prose. However, he does not insert such alien words without explanations; he either translates or explains these utterances. In the following table, instances of self translated passages, extracted from the first part of the book, are provided.

Minor expressions in *The Lebs*	The author self translation and definitions
-It has the word *Kafir* written across	-Which means 'Infidel'
-'Skout ouh-laa!'	-Which means 'Shut up, you'
-In Islam we call the dog *najis*,	-which means 'ritually unclear'
-'*Lakum deenukum waliya deeni'*	-You have your religion and I have my religion
-Bani Adam is a *Shum shoom*	- which means I'm a snifer.
-*Bab Al-Hara*	-The neighbour's Gate
-*'salat al-Zuhr'*	-the midday prayers
-*'Anna Alawy!'*	-which means ' I'm Alawite!'
-*'Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar'*	-' God is great, God is great'
-*'Saalaaaeeem alaeeekam'*	-'Peace be upon ya'
-*'Airy bel-Yahud, wa airy bel-yahud*	-which means 'Fuck the Jews, and fuck the Jews
-*only jannah*	-only paradise
-*Khashby*	-which means wood

-'*Al-nadaafy min al-imaan, al-nadaafy min al-imaan.'*	-'Cleanliness is equal to holiness.'
-*'Bas Allah kaan-m-neeh,*'	-'But Allah this one was a good boy.'
-'*Akal al-baat ahsan men Macdanas.'*	- 'The food of the house is better than McDonald's.'
- *katab lik'taab*	- the writing of the book, a girl's approval to be my wife and my approval to be her husband before Allah.

Table 5. 3: Author's Self-translated Arabic Words and Expressions in *The Lebs.*

Another technique used by the writer to help his readers understand his novel is definition and explanation. More than once in the book, the author explains Arabic words like when he says "There is a small round hat called a *taqiya* nestling on his bold head and a baggy grown called a *thobe* hanging from his shoulders*"(p.19).* In this excerpt, Ahmed defines the two Arabic words written in Italics like all the Arabic words used in the book. In so doing, the writer introduces his readers to the traditional Arab garments; however, the way he does it seems sarcastic. Indeed, the writer seems to mock the traditional clothes, or at least, he is not a fan of them.

In the following excerpt, Ahmed introduces and describes some Arab dishes, but once more, he is not a fan of them:

> […] she prepared *malfouf*, meat and rice wrapped in cabbage; and *warak eneb*, meat and rice wrapped in vine leaves; and *koosa*,

> meat and rice stuffed in zucchini. If only my mum understood how boring it is to eat the food of the house. (p. 129)

Ahmed finds that it is boring to eat this traditional Arab food. Hence, and once more, the author's attitude seems questionable.

5.8. The 9/11 Events in *The Lebs*

9/11 has become the symbol of terror and terrorist attacks worldwide. This date is both timeless and timely; it is timeless because it does not contain a year in it, so it will eternally remain alive in the world' memory; and it is timely in that the world is still struggling with terrorism, regardless of its origins and causes, to which 9/11 seems to be a turning point. It is a turning point because it gave birth to the most devastating war on Muslims and Arabs; it is the war on terror launched by George W Bush.

These tragic events have become the theme of almost all Arab immigrants' narratives, and Ahmed is no exception. He states in his semi-autobiographical novel:

> Before I turned on the television this morning I felt like I would be a boy forever and that I had forever Mrs. Leila Haimi to drive me away wither down that endless road; then I saw those towers coming down and suddenly I was becoming a man, and the world was ending and I could see the end of that road as a cliff top before me. (p. 28)

In the precedent quotation, the writer shows to what extent Bani is traumatized by 9/11 events which constitute a turning point in his life. In fact, since the collapse of the twin towers, nuances have been lost from the Australian society who has put all the non-

white people in the same category, the Lebs. For after-9/11 Australia, any Leb person has become synonymous to terrorist, regardless of his country of origin or religion.

However, while Bani is mourning the falling apart of his dreams because of the cursed events, his fellow mates are celebrating the terrorist attack against America. "On the Quadrangle fifty boys are drumming on garbage bins and dancing in circles, their feet springing from the floor like popping corn" (p. 28). The Lebs, then, jubilates when they hear that a terrorist act hits a Western country. This is what the book lets the reader know about the Muslim Arabs.

Mohammed also shows the reason behind such celebrations, according to Punchbowl boys, in the following excerpt:

> I am the only Punchbowl boy who believes suicide bombings are *haram*, forbidden in Islam. Every other boy stands with Mr. Abdullah, who says in his sermon before midday prayer, 'There's no other option for those of us that must stand before tanks with nothing but rocks.' All the boys nod but I keep my head frozen and think, what a fuckwit. (p. 29)

As the note shows, Bani considers himself the only one, among his small community, who rejects suicide bombings which are seen by his Muslim mates as the only option to those Arabs living under colonization and oppression in the East. While Mohammed wittily distances himself from these potential terrorists, he puts the entire Arabs within the constrain of his perception that is consolidating all the negative stereotypes generated by the West about Arabs.

Portrayed as vengeance seekers, the Lebs will never be accepted in their host countries though, once more, their reaction is justified by the writer in the following passage:

> I've been at this school since 1998 and throughout that time a million Arabs like us have been murdered by America and Israel and you never cared, then this morning some Americans die and you put the flag at half-mast. (p. 42)

Through Musa's words, the writer raises two main points. First, He tells about the killing of almost a million Arabs by America and Israel in the last few decades. In so doing, he hints at the Western external policy that targets Muslims in general and Arabs in particular, a policy that has made many war decisions against the Eastern sphere of the globe. Second, Mohammed reproaches to the Western countries the fact of not expressing sympathy to Arabs when a huge number of them are murdered in wars waged against them by the Western neo-imperialist countries. In doing so, Mohammed seems willing to send a message to humankind telling us that we are all human and that the loss of any person, Arab or not, Muslim or not, should be considered as a loss of a human being, no more, no less. To put it otherwise, all human losses should be treated evenly regardless of their race and religion.

5.9. *The Lebs*: A Story about Racism and Segregation

Arab-Australians, like any other Arab minority in the Western countries, have always been subjected to racism although they have very long endeavoured to integrate into the host societies, or at least to co-exist with them. However, after the terrorist

attacks on America, things have worsened to such an extent that no one immigrant could ever imagine before. Muslim Arabs have been looked at as dangerous people who could explode at any moment_ walking bombs. Such is the new image that Western media have worked hard to endorse and foreground.

Ahmed has extensively tackled the theme of racism in his latest book. The writer shows how terrifying is to find yourself guilty of something you did not; how unfair is to bear the burden of defending your community, a community that has been categorized as a threat to white Australia; and how suffocating is to see your aims and ambitions sink in the abyss of hatred and prejudice.

The writer, right from the beginning of his semi/autobiographical novel, shows how his ethnic minority is ill-treated by Australian authorities. He starts by describing Punchbowl 'Prison', as Mohammed calls his high school. Indeed, it looks more like a prison than a school. It is the school from which three hundred and ninety-nine students have been expelled at once. It is a school surrounded by barbed wire and cameras, a school which could be accessed only through a one-way in and one-way out, through the front office, a true prototype of a prison.

The Lebs' author describes his school inmates as sand niggers who are alienated and feared by society, a society which they are both in and out of. They are in because, to them, it is the environment where they work, eat, and sleep. But they are simultaneously out because they are rejected by its indigenous people who see themselves as superior to them. This ambivalent situation is reflected in Bani Adam's character who suffers from self-hatred and self discard. Indeed, the protagonist Bani

Adam, whose name literally stands for the son of Adam or mankind, is struggling to find out what his genuine identity truly looks like.

Ahmed pictures Arab-Australians as a community undermined by first, the Australian white community, and second, by its very sons. For the first category of racists, it has become common sense to be inferiorly looked at by foreigners whose loathing and resentment could be justified, though it should not, by their ignorance of the Muslim and Arab culture. However, what is truly uncommon is the internal racism, that is, Arabs' racism towards other Arabs. This self-hatred that is detected in Ahmed's book, one argue, could be considered, by the world readers, as a strong confirmation and consolidation of the established assumptions about Arabs. It simply gives the right to the White's racist acts.

When interviewed by Robert Wood, the writer states that he has just been honest in his novel and that such is the real image of his mates (Robert Wood, 2018). Yet, as stated in the previous sections, the writer seems to forget that this school is meant for delinquent adolescents, or else what is the point behind imprisoning them like criminals. These young men are truly immature, but this does not mean they will remain like this their entire life. It is more about age and environment than it is about race and religion because even in the "First World", there are schools like Bunchbowl, that contain a category of students that are just like gangsters and drug dealers, needless to mention their sexual seamy practices. Hence, Ahmed's self-discard could not be justified because the fact of belonging to a community that is punished by the host country for a myriad of reasons does not give him the right to sentence his very community to a life-long penalty of hatred and subjugation.

5.10. Sex and Sexism in *The Lebs*

Sex and Sexist language permeate Ahmed's narrative in such a way that any reader of the book may think of the community described in it as a sexually obsessed one. Mohammed, then, pictures his fellow Arab teenagers as a group of boys who suffer from confusion and ambivalence about their sexuality. Being Muslims, these teenagers seem to have a wrong understanding about sex issues in Islam. For instance, Bani's mates claim that it is haram (a sin) to practice adultery, but that it is ok to have any other forms of practices to reach sexual orgasm. This religious misunderstanding is typical of most of the second-generation immigrants who reside in, to borrow Bhabha's terms, the third or in-between space. This space is the liminal area where two distinct cultures approach one another, resulting in a new territory where several immigrants who are born in this very territory suffer from identity crisis.

Indeed, second-generation immigrants struggle with identity issues caused by the incapacity of the new generation of Arab immigrants to understand and embrace their culture of origin in a host country that adheres to a different culture, notably in a xenophobic and Islamophobic world that categorically rejects their native culture. They are neither completely Arab nor are they utterly Western. They are the lost generation that needs understanding, support, and help. However, this minority is rejected, hated, and marginalized, a fact that worsens their state of ambivalence and drives them more into the abyss of uncertainty. And this may be what the author of *The Lebs* seeks to convey to Western readers, yet, and once more, Ahmed, by uncovering the seamiest side of his small minority, harms Arabs at both the micro and macro levels.

At the micro-level, the writer destabilizes the already unstable community of Arab immigrants by reinforcing and encouraging the negative attitudes of Australians towards the Arab minority in their country, a minority deemed, by the writer, as dump and immature. At the macro level, the problem is worse because *The Lebs* constitutes the illusion that the Arab-Australian minority is but a sample of a wider community that resides in the Arab World. This fallacy is even more dangerous than all the stereotypes already generalized over Arabs because it gives the Western reader a feeling of relief from the possible guilt they might feel when any unfair political decision is taken against the Arab World. It is as if a Muslim Arab is giving the right to his subjugator, and how?

In addition to sex, sexist discourse is another theme in *The Lebs*. The writer portrays his schoolmates as machos to whom women are no more than sexual instruments. Women, according to Bani's masculine community, are passive and silent; they have no authority over their lives. Such a depiction is detected when Bani speaks about his teacher of literature Mrs. Haimi. He is more attracted by her soul and intellect contrary to his mates who are obsessed by her physical virtues. In highlighting this bleak aspect of his schoolmates, the writer addresses the patriarchal Arab community in which women are oppressed, distancing himself from them by showing respect and decent love to his teacher as well as to his girlfriends.

Indeed, Bani, more than once, tries to seduce his teacher by memorizing literary excerpts. He wants to conquer her heart romantically and humanely. The same strategy is used when the protagonist meets his girlfriends; he quotes writers as Djebran Khalil and Nabokov. To Bani, what matters the most is the soul of a girl, but it is this very

humane attitude that has prevented him from preserving them in an inhumane atmosphere where boys betray their friends and try to share their girlfriends.

5.11. Islam in *The Lebs*

Islam is an essential theme in Ahmed's novel. The whole book is narrated from a Muslim teenager's perspective. However, the writer accentuates the fact that Bani, the protagonist is Alawite, and that most of his peers are Sunni. He even states through George's words that "There are different kinds of Muslims" (p. 40), a reality that no one can negate.

The writer focalizes on the issue of Muslim sects throughout the book. He says that his parents have warned him to be vigilant while speaking to Sunni. He adds that the latter is considered as a normal sect just as Aussies (white Australians) are normal. In this vein, Ahmed notes:

> Back then Omar did not know the difference between Alawite, Shi'ite and Sunni. He didn't need to know. He was Sunni and this meant that he was normal, just like Aussies are normal, never needing to question their existence. (p. 40)

The excerpt above shows that Bani experiences a double alienation. On the one hand, he is an Arab teenager who suffers from racism and rejection in a country where he is born and raised. On the other hand, he is the Alawite (a minority within the large Muslim community) who feels threatened and rejected by his community. Such a situation of double rejection is what any Muslim, other than Sunni, is struggling with. Yet, what

makes this problem less serious is that most seconds-generation immigrants ignore what Islam truly means, so they do not probe into such sectarian issues.

In his book, Ahmed portrays his Muslim characters as ambivalent. Indeed, the writer's mates, who belong to the second-generation immigrants, are lost between the teachings of Islam and the secular world in which they reside. These boys are trapped in the contact zone where the borders between cultures are blurred, giving birth to a hybrid culture, a new culture that resembles neither the native nor the host one.

Such a zone is the luminal space in which immigrants are enclosed. Suffocated as they are, these people are unable to integrate in a society that is both familiar and alien to them. It is familiar in that it is the place where they are born and raised, but it is alien in that it refuses to accept their hybrid cultural peculiarities like language and religion.

As a major component of any culture in the world, religion plays a crucial role in people's lives in general, and the Muslim Arab-Australian community is no exception. However, the role of Islam in the lives of these adolescents seems paradoxical. It is indeed paradoxical in that their understanding of religion is incomplete and sometimes false.

Examples of such misunderstandings and fallacies are numerous in Ahmed's book. Bani's mates, for instance, seem to confuse Islam with Islamism. Teenagers know very little about their religion, and their knowledge is oftentimes mistaken. For example, they think that they can do as many sins as they can and that a single visit to Mecca, for pilgrimage, is enough to erase all those sins, as stated in the following passage:

> 'I'll burn in hellfire for drinking,' I say to the boys. 'The prophet_' 'Ouf' Osama scoffs. 'This guy. Relax, bro. Forget about the prophet, you think this is gonna matter when you do hajj and get your sins cleared?'(p. 96)

The excerpt shows how these boys perceive their religion, how shallow is their understanding of Islam, and how hypocritical, as the writer states, they are. This depiction of second-generation Muslim immigrants portrays this community as a lost minority that overtly adheres to a faith about which it knows very little. Indeed, such is second-generation immigrants' relation to Islam, a vulnerable relation that strengthens only when an international issue with the Muslim Arab world is raised.

Weird as it is, this situation of ambivalence and confusion is indeed what characterizes the new generations of Muslims in the West. It is a situation that, in my opinion, needs a new approach or theory to deal with it because the postcolonial theory cannot account for everything about this community's concerns, stories, and artifacts. It is no more about postcolonial people; it is rather about a yet-to-come generation, a generation torn between their past and future. The past is imposed on them though they had no authority upon it, a past that impacts negatively their present life. The future, however, remains opaque because of the ambivalent status quo of these people.

In short, the writer launches an agonizing cry to the readers, trying to explain the complex situation of the new generation of Muslim immigrants who ignores almost everything about the religion of Islam. They are imprisoned between their culture of origin, a culture they have inherited from their parents, and a culture they have acquired in their host countries, or what they consider as their real countries.

5.12. Conclusion

The Lebs is a semi-biographical literary work written by an Arab-Australian writer who originates from Lebanon, but with Syrian roots as well. The book is an account of how the Muslim and Arab minorities that have been blurred together after 9/11 to be called Lebs, and nothing but lebs, are treated by white Australia.

After the events that caused the fall of the twin towers in America, the Western world's perception towards Arabs has taken a dangerous turning point. Arabs have become the target of Western authorities; they have become over spotlighted_ they have been put under the microscope. Hence anything performed by an Arab has been scrutinized in an attempt to know their potential enemy, namely, Arabs.

Squeezed as they were in this suffocating and frightening atmosphere, Arab immigrant writers, as elites, have decided to write back to the Western World, trying to soften this truly harsh situation. They have seized the opportunity of the westerners' unprecedented interest in Arab productions to venture in the writing back campaign launched by Arab immigrant writers all over the globe, and Arab-Australian writers are no exception.

Ahmed's experience of the writing back process is manifested through his latest book. However, his writing back is original in that the writer prefers to confirm rather than deny the negative stereotypes already established by Arabs in Western countries. The writer, then, tries to justify the terrorist and violent deeds of the Lebs by saying that it is the result of the unfair segregation and racism to which his community is constantly exposed, notably after the terrorist attacks that took place in different places of the

Western divide of the world. As such, the writer seems to give up the fight against Orientalist and neo-Orientalist machinery against Arabs. Instead, he prefers to dissociate himself and his likes from the shaming minority to which he does more harm than ever by generalizing the bleak image of a tiny minority of school delinquent boys over the large and diverse community of Muslim Arabs.

Apart from the confirmation that Arabs are violent and stupid, Ahmed tackles several issues about Arab people like their religion that is, for the majority of them, Islam. He shows how these people are hypocrites in that they preach to be Muslim, but act as if they have no relation with Islam; they drink, watch porn videos, practice adultery, smoke weed, consume drugs, and so on. However, once more, the writer seems to forget that these acts could not be generalized and that everywhere in the globe there are people who are more pious than others who may not even know anything about their religions(Islam, Christianity, and Judaism); but they are not looked at as hypocrites like Muslim Arabs are.

Ahmed, then, writes back to the West in a reconciling tone. He writes as if willing to say that the West is not mistaken about the Arabs who are, according to the writer, rude, stupid, sexist, misogynous, and violent; however, he is just looking for justifications to attract the Western reader's sympathy towards this community, a community that has suffered from hatred, segregation, alienation and discard from the entire world. This way of writing back is questionable in that it could threaten the stability as well as the safety of the Muslim Arab community in the West. It, indeed, harms more than it supports the Arab minority in Australia.

To sum up, Ahmed's narrative is a unique mode of writing back to the West because, unlike the other Arab immigrant writers around the globe, he confirms the orientalists' assumptions about the Arabs; he even tries to dissociate himself from his ethnic community. In so doing, *The Lebs*' author, regardless of his intentions, reconstructed what Arab elites have attempted to deconstruct throughout history, namely the Orientalists' assumptions.

Chapter Six

Exile and Liminal Space in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*

> *"I do wonder what kind of reaction* Cockroach *will get," admits Hage. "Will I be portrayed as the ungrateful immigrant*?"(Quill and Quire staff)

6. Exile and Liminal Space in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*

6.1. Introduction

Canadian official state policy of multiculturalism is oftentimes introduced by Canadian media as a policy that supports cultural tolerance and acts accordingly. However, in practice, immigrants or let us say ethnic groups are not truly welcome in the Canadian society; they usually experience racism and the subsequent rejection and pain in the so-called multi-cultural Canada.

In the upcoming chapter, the attempt is to demonstrate how Arab Canadian literature defies and challenges the assumption that Canada is a country that embraces multiculturalism and welcomes, accepts, and respects the cultural peculiarities of immigrants from several parts of the globe.

To reach the objective of this research, Rawi Hage's novel *Cocroach* (2008) is selected to show how one of the most prominent Arab Canadian writers accounts for his _ as well as his immigrant community's_ experience of exile. He narrates the experience reflected in the disillusionment of exiles in a country that has long been introduced to the world as a site where immigrants live in perfect harmony and mutual acceptance with the 'so-called natives'. Following this line of thought, the endeavour is to scrutinize the novel to foreground the thematic and linguistic properties that may serve as tools in the writing back process that has been launched by most of the Arab immigrant writers, notably after 9/11, and Arab Canadians are no exception.

6.2. About the Author

Rawi Hage is an Arab-Canadian writer who originates from Lebanon where he was born in 1964. He passed his childhood in Lebanon and Cyprus. In 1984, he travelled to New York where he settled for seven years. In 1991, Hage moved to Montreal.

The Lebanese immigrant has become a novelist, a photographer, and a visual artist. *De Niro's Game* (2006) is his first novel, the novel that won the International Impact Dublin Literary prize. The writer's book has been translated into approximately twenty languages. Hage is a trilingual writer; he masters Arabic, his mother tongue; French, his ex-colonial tongue; and English his host country's language. However, the writer has opted for English to be his literary tongue. His literary production could be categorized as immigrant, ethnic, minority, multicultural, and emergent literature.

Hage's second novel, *Cockroach* (2006), won the Paragraph Hugh MacLennan Award for fiction. It was also a finalist for the Governor General's Prize. Besides, the book was shortlisted for two other prizes, the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction and the Giller.

In addition to *De Niro's Game* and *Cockroach*, *Carnival* (2012) is Hage's third novel. It was the winner of the Paragraph Hugh MacLennan Award for fiction and was a finalist for the Writers' Trust Prize. His fourth novel is *Beirut Hellfire Society*. The novel was first published in Canada in 2018 and was translated into thirty languages.

As an Arab-Canadian writer, Hage belongs to the multilingual writers in Québec, a category of writers that are neither French nor English. The new tendency of writing in English in a francophone province could be called the "Anglo Literary Revival", to borrow Linda Leith's words. Writing in English in Québec started

approximately in 1990, and since then, it has gained a considerable place in Canadian literature.

As a man who has lived in Montreal, the writer has presented a new perception of his host city. He has introduced it as a bleak and seamy place where people are as cold and rigid as the frozen climate of their city. As such, Hage has disappointed his Canadian readers who claim that their country has embraced multiculturalism and that they have succeeded to live in harmony with immigrants.

6.3. De Niro's Game: War and Betrayal

The novel is set in Beirut during the period of the civil war which has torn Lebanon and divided it into fragments. *De Niro's Game* recounts the story of two young men, Bassam and Georges, who were very close in their childhood. As grownups, the men try to survive in a war zone haunted by the spirits of the dead people who fall massively and daily in Beirut.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first and the second sections are devoted to Bassam's seamy life in the torn city of Beirut as he endeavours to gain money through illegal and corrupted methods such as drug-dealing, armed robbery, thefts, and murders.

The protagonist, Bassam(nicknamed Alpachino), is traumatized by the war, just like all the Lebanese people who are scarred by the daily bombing and gun killing. He witnesses his family's death, so he decides to leave. He attempts to collect money in all ways to escape to Rome, a city in which he hopes to live freely.

In *De Niro's Game*, Beirut is depicted as a place of division and conflicts. It is divided into the Eastern Christian part and Western Muslim divide. It is also fragmented because of gangsters, politicians, militias, and even ordinary people who

seek personal benefits from the war state. Divided as it is, Beirut becomes a place for seamy deals and betrayals from foreigners and its citizens.

Bassam and his friend George (nicknamed De Niro) are both the prototypes of Lebanese young men who are trapped in a merciless war zone. They are portrayed as thieves that look like gangsters in Hollywood films, with open shirts, curly hair, and Marlboro cigarettes in their mouths. The two friends know exactly what it means to live in Beirut: it means they have to join the army or the militias. Indeed, George joins Abou-Nahra militia that is composed of a Christian armed group that seeks money and power.

Bassam, on the other hand, decides to smuggle into Paris. The third part of the novel, then, is an account of Bassam's journey in France where he discovers that his childhood friend is no more than a Mossad agent, just like his father, who has participated, in a way or another in the bloodbath of Sabra and Shatila in 1982.

By discovering his friend's treason, the ultimate treason that followed several other betrayals, George has attempted to kill Bassam several times, in many ways, but he failed. In the last attempt, it is George who is killed while playing Robert De Niro's game. In this regard, Gana (2006), in his article entitled 'Rawi Hage *De Niro's Game'* states:

> This revelation comes as the final blow to a friendship that had already been jeopardized by George's betrayals and schemes to kill Bassam through various ways, including a confessional round of Russian roulette, with three bullets in the five chambers of George's gun. Unlike Michael (Robert De Niro) in Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*, Hage's De Niro does not survive the game that earned him the "De Niro" nickname. By

> withholding the details of George's death to the very end of the novel, Hage arguably contends that to survive the Lebanese civil war is indeed to survive a mindless, "three out of five" game of Russian roulette. (par. 4)

As stated in Gana's quotation, to live in a war zone like Beirut, and to be able to survive is as dangerous and risky as Robert De Niro's game of the three-out-of-five killing bullets that are shot in a confession game. Hence, Hage's book may be the best way to introduce the war traumatized Lebanese people. According to the writer, these people have lost their minds and sense of danger. To them, everything is permitted in a chaotic territory where no one knows his real friends or even his enemies.

Hage also shows the reasons behind his fellow Lebanese migration to Western countries; it is a quest for survival and safety. But do these countries truly offer a life of dignity and peace to those refugees?

6.4. Carnival: The Absurdity of Life

Carnival (2012) is Hage's third novel. The book recounts the story of Fly, the narrator. The man was born to a circus performer and was raised between clowns, acrobats, and animals. Fly quits the circus work to start a new job as a taxi-driver.

The novel's protagonist is nicknamed fly, an insect that is known for its wandering in dirty places. The narrator picks up his clients from seamy streets; his customers are drug dealers, prostitutes, fools, thieves, and drunken people.

As such, *carnival* seems to be a sequel to *Cockroach* since both novels deal with underprivileged people. Besides, in the two books, the narrators are referred to as insects: in the first, the protagonist believes that he is a cockroach that can slip under the

doors or smuggle in narrow openings; and in the second, the man is nicknamed after another insect that likes garbage and dirt.

In both books, Hage tries to empower his vulnerable characters by giving them the characteristics of insects that are, on the one hand, tiny and disgusting, but on the other hand, speedy and invisible. Both insects can enter any space without being seen. In so doing, the writer gives his immigrant character that lives in the underground the power (of insects) that is underestimated by most people, a power that could be very threatening and harmful when neglected.

Another characteristic that is shared between both narratives is the anonymity of the main characters and places. For instance, in *Cockroach* the protagonist and its place of origin are unnamed, and likewise, in *Carnival*, the city and the protagonist are anonymous; the narrator is only given a nickname of an insect. In so doing, the Arab Canadian writer may be willing to give his novels the trait of universality and timelessness.

In addition to the attribution of insect characteristics to his immigrant characters, Hage portrays his Muslim characters as non-pious people who drink alcohol and practice adultery; they even commit crimes. An instance of such Muslim characters is Fly's neighbour who is lesbian. Such a depiction of Muslim characters as ordinary people, just like Christians or Jews, to my sense, is a genuine picture of most of the present-day Muslims, notably the immigrants.

Fly likes flying on his father's carpet to see the city from above. He likes to have the panoramic view that no one but him can have. However, the man constantly practices masturbation, and this, in my opinion, is an act that shows the writer's non-

satisfaction with his life; he looks for another way to reach spiritual orgasm and happiness.

Indeed, Fly is far from being a happy man, especially by the end of the novel. The man is sad to bury the taxi-drivers who are killed in a series of murders. Once again, the theme of killing is introduced by Hage who may be willing to warn his readers of the potential violence and danger that can arise from the underground, the underground where marginalized people are imprisoned. All in all, Hage, in his third novel, introduces the immigrants' life as a chaos of which contradictions and absurdity are major characteristics.

6.5. Beirut Hellfire Society (2018*):* A War Trauma

Rawi Hage writes in the acknowledgement to his latest book that it was a work of mourning for all those who suffered from the atrocities of senseless wars, and for the many that were killed in those merciless fights. In this novel, death is everywhere. It is so present that it has lost its significance.

The novel starts in Beirut in1978 with the protagonist Pavlov whose father was an undertaker. The son inherited his father's business which consists in preparing dead bodies for cremation. The corpses belong to a sect whose members varied from pagan-like people, and atheists to homosexual persons who were rejected and persecuted in Lebanese society. In so doing, Pavlov challenges his society's values and norms, just like Diogenes, as Hage states explicitly in his novel.

Unlike his previous books, *Beirut Hellfire Society* is written from a third-person narrator's perspective. The novel recounts Pavlov's seamy job, in a society inhabited by

Muslims and Christians, who both bury their dead people. He describes how he gathers the remains of corpses, for he cares for dogs and highly sensitive people.

Lonely as he is, Pavlov befriends a stray dog named Rex. He talks to him, but the conversations are as weird and incomprehensible as the situation per se. Pavlov incarnates exile in a society where he is rejected by both Muslim and Christian people, who consider him as an omen for potential death. Indeed, the man is most of the time in his balcony, observing people's funerals in a neighboring cemetery.

Funerals, in Hage's novel, are very frequent because of the endless war that takes the lives of hundreds and hundreds of people daily. It is a sectarian war that has traumatized Lebanese people. It has fragmented Beirut into similar but different pieces. They are similar because they contain Lebanese people who share the same blood and the same land. Yet, they are different because these very people think differently, worship different gods, and have different cultures.

Unfortunately, differences have overcome similarities and cultural and religious ties have defeated brotherhood and blood ties. Indeed, war has devastated a country; it has led it into hell, the hell of war's trauma. Several Lebanese have lost their mind as a reaction to the atrocities of weapons that caused the death of a huge number of civilian citizens whose only guilt was that they were from Lebanon.

Through his work of fiction, Hage attempts to convey a message to humanity, a message about what it is like to live in a country torn by civil wars, a country where different sects inter-kill because of differences in their beliefs, or sometimes for very futile reasons. The writer wants to illuminate the readers about the terrible effects of

wars, like the psychological disorders that lead, most of the time to suicide. He also hints at wars as the primary cause of exile, and he is the best example of people who left Lebanon in the war period to find themselves living as exiles elsewhere.

The Arab-Canadian writer addresses the readers, showing them the complexity of life and its vulnerability in the face of death, the predator that can devour its prey at any moment and any place. So, once more, the writer sends a strong message to the universal readers, telling them how precious and fragile human life is, and that it is truly unfair that it is not properly valued by human beings.

6.7. *Cockroach:* A Story of an Immigrant

In *Cockroach* (2008), Rawi Hage tells the story of a nameless Middle Eastern man who leaves his homeland, a land torn by internal conflicts and civil wars. The names of the protagonist and his country are unknown. By keeping them anonymous, the writer seems willing to give his book a universal trait, i.e., he wants each Middle Eastern immigrant or any other exile who escaped from oppression and wars to identify with the narrator, a narrator who lives as a miserable exile: stranger, intruder, alienated and unwanted.

After a suicide attempt from which he is rescued by some policemen, the narrator is sent by the court to consult a psychologist. While having his therapeutic sessions, the narrator goes back to his childhood period where memories of war and violence are recalled, along with the tragic existence he had with his family. Hage makes an analogy between the therapist and sultans in that they both like stories. In so doing, the writer brings his Oriental touch to a novel that recounts the fate of Eastern

people who fled their Orient in search of a better existence. The writer, just like his unnamed character escaped from war to find himself living in Canada as an exile.

The exiled narrator is presented as a hungry vagabond, wandering in the street in frozen weather. He cannot live a normal and decent life in his host country; instead, he lives in the underground, just like the cockroach he imagines he metamorphoses to. Hence, to survive, the narrator needs to change into someone or something else. Such is the exile life Hage wants to show to his readers in an attempt to change the fake image, about immigrants, they have been introduced to by the media.

6.8. Exile in *Cockroach:* Inescapable Origin Rupture and Illusory Hopes

Hage portrays the exile as a de-rooted self who suffers from a journey imposed on him, in a way or another. According to the author, exile is, just as Said (2000) defines, a "discontinuous state of being" (p. 177). Indeed, exiles are those people who are "cut off from their roots, their lands, and their past" (p. 177). Besides, they cannot be nourished by their family, culture, and territory (Said, 2000). Such a human being, cut off from his origin could never embrace a new and normal identity in his host country, notably if he fails to integrate, or if he is alienated in the new territory.

In his novel, Hage raises the issue of mass immigration and refugeeism by presenting his protagonist as an illegal immigrant who smuggles into Canada, holding a fake visa. The narrator could obtain his legal residency after he had acquired the war refugee status. The protagonist's journey to obtain "the papers" is very similar to what Arab youth, who escape their countries for a myriad of reasons, experience daily in their Western host countries. Hence, one may say that *Cockroach* is a timeless book that tackles themes that are very present nowadays.

Like his Arab immigrant counterparts, the nameless narrator escapes the merciless war waged in his native land. However, he cannot escape the scares carved very deep in his soul. For instance, the protagonist is not unable to forget, nor can he forgive himself for not being able to save his sister from her husband. Yet, the narrator cannot find satisfaction in his host country either even though he could legalize his status as an immigrant.

Hence, the problem of immigrants is not about papers and residency or even naturalization, it is rather about an origin that is deeply rooted in his soul, but that is, alas, rejected by the host territory. In this regard, Hage (2008) notes: "I cursed my luck. I cursed the plane that had brought me to this harsh terrain" (P. 4). From this excerpt, we can deduce the protagonist's state of being: he is frustrated and he regrets his decision to leave his country and come to Canada. He also calls Canada 'this harsh terrain', a fact that shows how uncomfortable he is in a territory that is both literally and figuratively frozen. It is figuratively frozen in that his people do not have sympathy for immigrants; they are not hospitable and they do not care about ' others'.

Indeed, the unnamed protagonist is not the only exile character in the novel; Reza, Shohreh, Majeed, Farhoud, etc. are multinational immigrants who share the same concerns and agonies with the narrator. All of these characters fled their countries because of oppression and persecution; to be more accurate, they escaped tyranny and dictatorship.

All of those immigrants who experienced, in addition to what has been mentioned, torture, imprisonment, and rape looked at the host country as heaven where they could live in peace; where they could find dignity and respect; and where they

could better their lives. Nonetheless, what they find in reality resembles in no way what they hope for. They are instead ill- treated and marginalized. They are forced to live in the margin of a society of human rights and social justice!

Through the character of Majeed, Hage uncovers the seamy side of the Western policy towards the Eastern divide of the globe, a policy that preaches for something but does the opposite. For instance, Western countries support the Arab regimes regardless of their way of ruling. Democratic or dictator does not matter provided that these regimes accept to make lucrative deals with them. Hence the Westerners support and will always support the regimes that accept to be submissive to their power. In a passage from the novel, Majeed claims: "You know we come to these countries for refugee and to find better lives, but it is these countries that made us leave our homes in the first place" (p. 219). By writing this, Hage writes back to an empire that have colonized the Eastern world, and that is still imposing its norms and laws on it. He accuses it of his people's misfortune, chaos, and the subsequent mass migration.

Indeed, immigrants are forced, in several ways, to leave their countries, and when they are abroad, they are blamed and rejected by the host society for leaving them as stated in the following excerpt: "If you ask why the inhumane temperature, the universe will answer you with tight lips and a cold tone and tell you to go back where you came from if you do not like it here" (p. 126). Such is the impasse wherein immigrants are trapped. And such is how writers like Hage want to picture their fellow immigrants, just like trapped creatures. These de-rooted trapped creatures continue to suffer and struggle in their new countries; they continue to experience "the desperation of the displaced, the stateless, the miserable, and stranded in corridors of bureaucracy

and immigration" (p. 9). This is how difficult and nearly impossible the immigrants' journey in Western host countries is. In such countries, exiles may be allowed to survive, but never to thrive and progress in their new lives, notably if they try to remain loyal to their native cultural traits.

Exiles, according to the writer, are in a constant state of nostalgia and homesickness. They long for their origin despite the latter's chaos and instability. As such, exiles go through a double-psychological trauma: on the one hand, they are traumatized because they are cut off from their home country, and on the other, they are terrified to discover that what they thought was heaven is no more than a mirage. What exiles discover once they are in the host country is no more than an alien territory that embraces only the native people, and that rejects newcomers.

Trapped as they are, in a situation of despair and depression, the exiles sink in a state of endless "sadness of the break which can never be surmounted" (p. 176). This state could be detected in Hage's narrative, as the unnamed narrator is most of the time in a state of sadness and despair. Through this portrayal, the writer hints at the alienation experienced by most of the exiles in Canada.

6.9. Identity Crisis in *Cockroach*

In *Cockroach*, Hage introduces his protagonist as an exile who suffers from an identity crisis. He does not feel at home in his host country, nor can he go back to his home country. He is disillusioned in this new territory as stated in the following passage:

> Where am I? And what am I doing here? How did I end up trapped in a constantly shivering carcass, walking in a frozen city with wet cotton falling on me all the time? And on top of it all, I am hungry, impoverished, and have no one, no one. Goddamn it! Not even a nod in this cold place, not even a timid wave, not a smile from below red, sniffing, blowing noses. All these buried heads above necks strangled in synthetic scarves (p. 7)

One may see here the extent of alienation and ambivalence experienced by the exile in foreign territories. Indeed the protagonist is so ambivalent and disillusioned that he imagines himself, or he thinks he is a cockroach as stated in the following passage during the narrator's therapeutic session:

> Genevieve.
>
> Genevieve, I repeated.
>
> You said that when Tony was hitting you, you felt you could slip under the door and disappear, and climb walls, and flutter. Do you still have feelings of slipping or disappearing?
>
> Yes, doctor, Genevieve, I am good at slipping under anything. I told you. I can enter anyone's house.
>
> She nodded. Have you entered anyone's house here in Canada?
>
> Yes.
>
> Did you steal anything?
>
> Yes.
>
> Have you made any break-ins?

> Yes.
>
> Genevieve was quiet for a few moments. Then she terminated the session. (p. 78)

The protagonist's metamorphosis into a cockroach is a kind of escape from the bitter reality he experiences in the alien territory. The half-man-half-insect protagonist is a powerful metaphor of the identity crisis that most exiles suffer from, notably in the light of the recent Islamophobic sentiments that pervade the West. Being a cockroach, which is a tiny creature very close to the earth, helps the oppressed narrator to smuggle in any place to get food, to survive. It can also join with other cockroaches in hidden places where no human being can see them. Such is the power of the cockroach; it seems vulnerable, but in reality, it is not. Likewise are immigrants who are poor, weak, hungry; they can be powerful if they join with their fellow immigrants. They can also be violent and corrupted, just like the narrator who commits thefts and breakouts.

The writer is conscious of the seamy trait of the insect he incarnates, yet he does not care because what matters, to him, is to survive, to exist, as stated in this excerpt: "Yes, I am poor, I am vermin, a bug, I am at the bottom of the scale. But I still exist. I look society in the face and say: I am here, I exist." (p.79) By saying this, Hage speaks for the immigrant subalterns who are pushed to the underground, to the seamy parts of the Canadian society. He seems willing to stand on their side, to support them, and to justify their deeds.

Bewildered as they are, exiles are determined to survive despite the rejection of the host society. They are poor, weak, hungry, and rejected; but they exist. Such is the

message that Hage may be willing to convey: one should never underestimate the power of an oppressed exile.

6.10. Liminal Space in *Cockroach*

Canadian authorities have always claimed that immigrants have the right to take part in Canadian society without being obliged to give up their genuine religion, norms, values, and traditions. However, in *Cockroach*, the writer seems willing to uncover the real practices of the Canadian policy, the policy that sanctions immigrants for their races, beliefs, and ideologies. Hence, in Canada, to retain ones' ethnic identity while participating in Canadian society is simply inconceivable according to Hage.

The exile is then stuck in an in-between space; he is neither Canadian nor could he embrace his genuine ethnic identity. Therefore, Hage places the exile in a liminal space, the space that is far away from the centre of society; it is on the threshold of society where the exile is unable to leave and unable to integrate. The unnamed protagonist asks: "But how to exist and not to belong?" (p. 135). He is in between two spaces and subsequently two existences as the writer notes in the following: "I was split between two planes and aware of two existences and they are both mine" (p. 78)

They are not really his places because the narrator is not allowed to act freely in the host country; he cannot do what he used to do in his home country like looking from the roof of his house; otherwise, he will be arrested by the police "When I told the policemen that I had always done this, all my life, he replied: Well, here people do not look at each other from their roofs. I will only look at the stars then, I said. He forbade me from looking at the stars, and threatened me with jail" (p. 174). The policeman wants to show the exiled narrator that things, in Canada, are different from what they

used to be in his homeland. In so doing, the writer stresses the notion of otherness; the narrator is a small 'other' that needs to fellow the big Canadian 'Other'. He needs to be reconstructed following a new mode of living and a new set of norms and traditions.

To be short, the liminal space in *Cockroach* is equal to the seamy underground where the gangsters rule over the unprivileged poor exiles, and where these very exiles resist and refuse to give up their right to live, to exist, and to survive. It is also similar to Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization, in that it is the narrow space through which the oppressed immigrant could fly into another territory where they can exist and survive without constraints.

6.11. *Cockroach*: A Story of Trauma and Depression

The unnamed protagonist of Hage's second novel, *Cockroach*, is a prototype of a person who has experienced a violent trauma in his life, a trauma that makes him willing to commit suicide. Indeed, he attempts to suicide, but he is rescued by some policemen. Later, he is sent by the court to a therapist to report on his case. In a therapeutic session, he tells the doctor that he believes he is a cockroach. He is an insect that lives in the darks, an insect that can pass through the narrowest openings without being detected by anyone. He is a creature that excels in escaping any danger, and this is this very trait, of this bug, that the traumatized character needs the most.

The protagonist attempts to get rid of the feeling of frustration and violence he used to feel once in his homeland. However, his therapist seems not truly helping him as stated in the following passage: "She brought on a feeling of violence within me that I hadn't experienced since I left my homeland."(p. 2) Yet the doctor is determined to find a remedy to his psychological disorder; she asks him to tell her stories about his

childhood and his home country. In so doing, the therapist could put her hand on the most painful experience lived by the narrator: the murder of his sister, by her cruel husband. This terrific event, I argue, constitutes the deepest scare in the man's soul, the soul that could not find its psychological peace since then. The therapist, then, chooses the technique of story-telling to cure her psychologically disordered patient.

6.12. Story-telling in *Cockroach*

As it has been advanced in the third chapter of this thesis, stories are those tales that help us make sense and order in our life. They can have a healing power as stated in Lalami's *The Moor's Account*. Indeed, stories could be used in therapeutic sessions to heal patients, as the doctor does in *Cockroach.*

Indeed, Genevieve, the therapist, incites her unnamed patient to tell her stories about his daily activities and his childhood in the Far East. She was keen to know about the protagonist's oriental background. She was very excited to know how his stories would end. She could not wait for the next sessions. And, here, once more, the writer refers to his oriental background by parodying Shaherazedian way of story-telling and the suspense it caused while telling her stories.

Unlike Shaherazed who wanted to save her life from the criminal Sultan, the narrator used his skills of story-telling to gain time, fearing that the doctor would send him back to the institution where he had passed time before starting the therapeutic sessions.

6.13. The Myth of Montreal's Multiculturalism

Montreal is always presented by the media as a metropolitan area that celebrates diversity and multiculturalism. However, what is depicted in Hage's novel is the diametrical opposite. Montreal is introduced, to the world reader, as a site where

immigrants are rejected and alienated. In fact, according to the novelist, the city is divided into two distinct spheres: white peoples' and immigrants' underground. By underground, the writer hints to the seamy places where poor, disadvantageous, and foreigners exist and try to survive.

The unnamed narrator's metamorphosis is the best argument against those who preach for the multiculturality of Montreal or Canada. The protagonist is mad at the injustice of his host country; he wants to escape, disappear, and be invisible to survive in such a cold environment. By cold here I refer to both physical and psychological cold.

A sound example of Canadian indifference vis-à-vis immigrants is detected as the therapist fails to cure her patient using western methods and western language. The doctor's main concern is to know more about the exotic Middle Eastern patient who embarked for Montreal and who could not integrate into it despite the efforts made by her country as stated in the following excerpt.

> That is interesting, she said, dismissing the act of theft and changing the subject: Do you want to tell me more about your childhood today? If we do not move forward, if we do not improve, I might have to recommend that you go back to the institution. Frankly, you do not give me much choice with your silence. I have a responsibility towards the taxpayers. (p. 36)

The therapist is then more concerned with her compatriots, Canadian citizens, who pay taxes that are devoted to the underprivileged people like the unnamed immigrant than she is about her alien patient. However, the writer subtly gives his opinion about those taxes in the following passage:

> TAXPAYERS, THE SHRINK SAYS. Ha! I thought as I finished my chocolate in the alley. Well yes, yes indeed, I should be grateful for what this nation is giving me. I take more than I give, indeed it is true. But if I had access to some wealth, I would contribute my share. Maybe I should become a good citizen
> and contemplate ways to collect my debts and increase my wealth. (p. 39)

The narrator claims that there is no point in allocating taxes for underprivileged people if they are not given the opportunities given to their native counterparts. He states that if they were given money, they would contribute their share, just like the Canadian citizens do.

To sum up, what Hage portrays in his book resembles in no way what the international community claims about Montreal as a multicultural city where cultures converge in harmony and mutual respect. He instead highlights the underground where immigrants are enclosed and rejected by a society deemed racist and xenophobic by the minorities who live in the shadow areas_ in the fringe of the Canadian society.

6.14. Metamorphosis in Hage's *Cockroach*

In his work of fiction, Hage uses a literary device that is scarcely used by Arab Anglophone writers. It is metamorphoses or therianthropy that is when a human believes he is an animal or a part-animal-part-human creature. Indeed the unnamed narrator of the novel thinks that he is a cockroach as stated in the following excerpt:

> When I see a woman, I feel my teeth getting thinner, longer, pointed. My back hunches and my forehead sprouts two antennae that sway in the air,

> flagging a need for attention. I want to crawl under the feet of the women I meet and admire from below their upright posture, their delicate ankles. (p. 1)

The description given by the protagonist reflects the extent to which he is mentally disordered. He feels his metamorphosis; he is aware and conscious of his shift into another species, that of insects. Hence, In Hage's novel, the character changes voluntarily since he enjoys being tiny and invisible, a fact that allows him to admire those women from below as stated above.

In another scene, the protagonist states: "Or maybe if I was an insect I could crawl under their doors at night and slay them all in their filthy bed sheets" (p. 65). Hage, then, uses the technique of metamorphosis to empower his character and enable him to do the things that he cannot do while being a human being_ while being visible. Indeed, miserable as he is, the narrator's only way out of his cruel and merciless life is to change into an insect as small, and speedy as the cockroach.

6.15. Violence and Revenge in *Cockroach*

Violence is a major theme in Hage's novel. It is at the origin of all that happened to the narrator. It is violence that caused the protagonist's departure from his homeland which was torn by civil wars. And it is also the violence that caused the death of his sister, the terrific event that scarred him deeply.

The writer was exposed to violence from his very childhood as stated in the following passage:

> Who was violent?
>
> My grandfather beat my grandmother when he got drunk.
>
> You saw it?
>
> Yes, once. (p. 106)

As a boy, then, the unnamed narrator witnessed violent acts; his grandmother was beaten by her husband in front of her grandson. Such a family could but cause psychological damages to its son, a son who would remain violent even in his adulthood.

Indeed, the protagonist cannot stay away from violence; he always quarrels with other people as stated in the following passage:

> I walked. I walked all evening. I could have picked three more fights. I did not feel the cold anymore. I felt the warmth of violence. I thought: All one has to do is substitute one sensation for another. Changes. Life is all about changes. (p. 175)

From the excerpt, we deduce that violence has become an addiction, an alternative to everything that does not please the writer. In emphasizing the violent trait of the narrator, the author hints at the amount of violence that could be generated from the feeling of vulnerability and alienation that immigrants experience in the slums of Canada.

Enraged as he is, the rejected immigrant can commit any violent act or even a crime to find his emotional relief that is lost in the abyss of racism and segregation. Indeed, the end of the novel was very violent and even terrific: the narrator kills his

girlfriend Sohreh's rapist. The Iranian man's name was Shaheed. Hage described the violent scene as follows:

> The bodyguard had his back to me. I stuck the knife in his liver. He fell across two tables and crushed the candles with his body, and flying plates landed and shattered silently on the floor. The gun fell from his hand. I picked it up and aimed it at Shaheed. I shot him twice. I shot him right in the chest and he fell beneath his tablecloth. (p. 192)

Such is how a half-insect-half-man killed two men at once. Such is the power of an oppressed psyche, a dangerous soul that could if given the opportunity, revenge her pains and suffering by causing of a lot of harm to the whole society.

6.16. Linguistic Deterritorialization in *Cockroach*

Rawi Hage, like most of his multilingual Arab immigrant writers, uses minor forms and expressions in his prose to subvert the major language which is, in Hage's case, English. In addition to his mother tongue, Arabic, French, and English are brilliantly mastered by the author. However, unlike his contemporary writers, Hage scarcely uses Arabic words and expressions in his prose. This linguistic choice mirrors Hage's socio-cultural identity. Indeed, the man lives in Montreal, a place that is multicultural and multilingual. French and English are both spoken and understood by most Canadian people. Hence, the writer makes use of French more frequently than he does with the Arabic language, as illustrated in the following section.

6.16.1. Graphological Deterritorialization

The use of Arabic is rare as I stated before. Hage writes the very few words in English, or to be more accurate, in Latin graphology, a thing that disturbs the English reader's scheme and urges him to search to understand the alien words. In the following table, a list of such words is presented.

Arabic words written in English graphology	Arabic words as written in Arabic graphology
-*Salaam*	سلا م
- *Wa Allah alaazim*	و أله العضيم
- *Arak*	عرق
Kebbeh	كبة
Falafel	فلافل
Saqi	ساقي

Table 6.1. Graphological Deterritorialization in *Cockroach*

As shown in the table, the amount of Arabic language used in the novel is tiny if compared to its French counterpart. This is, in my opinion, Hage's way to mirror the vulnerability of the Arab community in a society that speaks French and English simultaneously. In so doing, the writer, though he belongs to a relatively large Arab and middle Eastern community in Montreal, reduces his linguistic heritage into no more than few words as an attempt to show how constrained and neglected his minority is.

6.16.2. Code-Switching in *Cockroach*

In the novel at hand, the Arab Canadian writer uses, significantly, the French language; he uses it more than he uses Arabic, his mother tongue. In fact, French is omnipresent throughout the narrative. However, most of it is not translated by the author as shown in the following table which consists of examples of code-switching in the book. In the chart, two types of code-switching are exhibited: the intra and the inter-sentential code-switching.

Intra-sentential code-switching	Inter-sentential code-switching
-He sits all day in that café and talks about *révolution et littérature*. -No kitchen, and no toilet-paper stealing, *d'accord*? -At least, that is how the empty-headed technocrat of an *arriviste* put it to me the night…. -I went to her room. She was lying in bed, half-naked, reading *un livre de poche*, smoke rising from… -They come to this Québécois American North and occupy every *boulangerie*, conquer every French restaurant and *croissanterie*… Photos of *la campagne rustique, le*	-Is it a yes or a no? *C'est urgent*, I shrilled at him, intending to interrupt his epistemological plot. *-Alors, appelle la police, quoi, bof. Ah moi, alors, je ne veux pas me mêler de cette affaire.* He did not pay his share of the rent last mooonth. *J'en ai marre là de vous deux.* *-Mais non là, tu exagères.* *-D'accord.* I will call you. *-Il n'est pas sous le lit*. *-Quel magazine? C'est un article, ça?* *-N'importe quoi, bof, en tout cas les religions me font chier, moi.* *-Vingt-cinq sous, mon professeur*, I said,

Québec du nord des Amériques, depicting cozy snowy […] ; and *le nouveau monde français* is discovered on every travel show.	and laughed and extended my hand towards him.
-They abstain, or […] into *canard à l'orange.*	*-Non, non, pas du tout*, she said.
-Just imagine, I laughed, a stuffed duck à l'orange!	-Salaam, I said today, as I pulled a chair from the next table.
-[…]saw so-and-so sitting *dans le café*, and […]	*-Et voilà! La belle vie! La belle province!*
-Those locals would just empty their desks and give you *le plus grand bureau* to smoke in,	*-Le visage mélancolique, les textures, l'innocence, les pas, le vieux monsieur avec un chapeau*
-…guard, who would greet you with a *Bonjour, Monsieur*, and have…	*-Le poisson frais et la dame au visage ridé.*
-…and naturally, *mon vieux*, everyone would…	*-C'est horrible!*
-…, *un apéritif* between *séances, ...*	*-Il est char-mant, ton copain.*
- This must have been the professor's *grand amour.*	*- Ah, oui, spirituel. Mais, bien sûr, spirituel. Comment j'ai pas pensé à ça?(p.*
- …all these *préoccupations avec la nature, le vent, les hirondelles*…	*- Il est fou, il est fou.*
-all I had to do was call	*- Non, je ne peux pas faire ça.*
	- Un fou, t'es malade, mon ami, un homme malade, he replied

them and ask something about *un regard que j'ai senti de votre part et je voulais savoir si je m'imaginais des choses.* *-Ça, mon ami,* *c'est pour ceux qui* want to mess with me. - But *mon cher*	

Table 6. 2. Use of Code-Switching in *Cockroach*

From the previous table, the excessive use of French in Hage's novel is illustrated, a fact that needs inquiry. Indeed, by overusing French words and expressions as stated in the table, and without translating them, the writer may be willing to include and address the French readers as part of his potential readership. He may also be willing to reflect the bilingual heritage of his host city, Montreal. In fact, in Montreal, French is considered a first language, so via the use of French, the writer pays tribute to his new shelter.

6.16.3. Translation in *Cockroach*

As I stated in the previous section, most of the French words and expressions are not translated in the novel. In the following table, the attempt is to sort out the very few passages where sentences, written genuinely in French, are translated into English.

As the use of the Arabic language is truly scarce, I have inserted only two instances where the writer translates from Arabic to English in this table:

French Words and Expressions	**The author's translation into English**
-*Tu es un peu trop cuit pour ça*!	- you are a little too well done for that
-*Le soleil t'a brûlé ta face un peu trop (p.*	-the sun has burned your face a bit too much
- Iranian Hezbollah,	-,the Guards of God
-Ah, *je comprends, je comprends*, she replied,	- I understand *ça doit être tellement délicat*.
- *Ahlan be ibn alaam*	- welcome to the brother-in-law

Table 6.3. Use of Translation as a Literary Technique in *Cockroach*

Hage chooses to translate the utterances listed in the table while the majority of the sentences written in French are not translated. In so doing, the writer may be willing to mark a literary effect like irony when he translates 'Hezbollah' as 'Guards of God', or he wants to avoid confusion like when he writes" *Ahlan be ibn alaam"* (p. 38) that may also mean 'Welcome my cousin". In addition, Hage may be willing to foreground an instance of racism, as when Maître Pierre disdained the narrator who wanted to work as a waiter. The following excerpt illustrates best the incident.

> Once I approached Maître Pierre and told him that I would like to be a waiter. He looked at me with fixed, glittering eyes, and said: *Tu es un peu trop cuit pour ça* (you are a little too well done for that)! *Le soleil t'a brûlé ta face un peu trop* (the sun has burned your face a bit too much). (p. 18)

In the quotation, an act of segregation and racism is introduced when the narrator is ill-treated because of his dark complexion. He is denied the right to work simply because he is not white. Such a scene, in my opinion, truly needs not to be missed by the reader, so this may well be the reason behind the author's translation of the passage written in French.

6.17. CONCLUSION

In *Cockroach*, Rawi Hage, portrays the experience of migration from different angles. First, it gives the motives behind the exile's decision to leave his home country like the civil wars and the tyranny of the authoritarian regimes. Second, it represents the Middle Eastern exiles as a category of second-class people who are rejected and alienated by so-called multicultural Canada.

In fact, according to Hage, Canada has failed to embrace the variety of cultures that coexist on its land. It has been unable to accept the differences of the others, those human beings who came from the orient. Moreover, Canada has pushed the immigrants to the fringe of society, to the underground, as Hage puts it.

Indeed, rejected immigrants are doubly traumatized; they are sad and terrified because they left their country and family behind them, and they are frustrated and deceived to find out that they are not welcome in the new territory. Such trauma is what causes psychological damages to the exile's psyche.

In the book at hand, Hage, introduces an immigrant unnamed character as a prototype of a disillusioned exile who escapes the hardships of a cold society that refuses to embrace him. Rejected as he is, the man prefers to be an insect that can move

freely and, most importantly, invisibly in the alien society. This insect, though vulnerable and hated by everyone, just as immigrants in Canada, can access any house without being detected to steal or do other seamy behaviours.

Hage justifies the immigrants' violent acts, accusing the Canadian government and its society of being at the origin of such acts. Indeed Canadians have excluded and prevented the immigrants from having a normal and decent life, a fact that awakened in them a feeling of frustration and want of vengeance. Indeed, at the end of the novel, the writer describes a terrific act of vengeance, as the narrator commits two murders for the sake of his beloved Shohreh. He killed the man who tormented and raped her when she was in Iran.

In so doing, Hage's anonymous narrator externalizes the hatred and abhorrence that he feels for both himself and for his host society. He changes into a fierce beast able to devour human beings. Such an act is what any oppressed and rejected peoples can commit, and immigrants are no exception.

By portraying his main character as a constrained and alienated person who is unable to integrate into a society that puts him on its fringe, the writer draws the reader's attention to this category of people who reside in a liminal space, in the underground. These minor groups are denied the right of living decently in their territory of exile. They are trapped in-between two cultures that refuse to melt into each other. Yet, they are determined to survive, to exist in the host territory despite the rejection of its native people, simply because immigrants believe that the Western policies are the cause of their misfortune. They oblige them to leave their torn countries which suffer from wars caused by the interference of western countries in their internal

affairs, and they reject them once they arrive on the new territories, claiming that those immigrants cannot integrate properly in their Western society.

Hage's book, *Cockroach*, could be considered as an open letter to the world reader, a letter of agony and despair caused by the Western policies against, in the one hand, Eastern countries, and on the other, refugees and exiles that experience an unjust treatment in their host nations. He warns of a potential danger that may be caused by such vulnerable alienated people, as a reaction to the rejection and belittlement they face daily in their new territories.

To conclude, Hage seems willing to address the empire, condemning its old as well as its new policies in the East. These policies, according to the writer, are what caused the actual chaos in the Eastern sphere of the globe and urged its people to leave their loved countries and families, only to find themselves unwanted and enclosed in the underground of the Western societies.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

In the West, Muslim and Arab people have been recently perceived as a threat, especially after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Indeed, since the horrific event, a flood of sentiments of fear, resentment, and abhorrence has been directed towards Arabs in general and Arab immigrants in particular.

Arab immigrants have a long history of struggle against the bleak image marketed by the western media. Since the arrival of the first waves of immigrants to western countries, Arab minorities have attempted to bridge the cultural gaps that have long existed between the two distinct worlds. They have represented their native world as a territory that is different but not contradictory to the host one. They have always sought to integrate into the new society, but they did not want to be assimilated into it. As a consequence, they have been obliged to live on the fringe of the host society.

For many decades, Arab immigrants have lived in an invisible space despite of the constant efforts made by the elite like artists and writers, among others, to foreground the cultural peculiarities of their countries of origin in an attempt to resist the stereotyped negative images long attributed to them by the Orientalists. However, Arab minorities in the western world have recently passed from a state of invisibility to a state of over visibility because of the terrorist attacks that have hit the West since 9/11. Indeed, 'The First World' has decided to put Arabs in general and immigrants in particular under scrutiny, trying to gain as much knowledge and information as possible about what they consider as potential enemies.

Spotlighted as they are, Arabs' elites have launched a counter-campaign to the one launched by the Western media that discards the Arab psyche and fuels the sentiments of

hatred and fear towards Islam, Muslims, and Arabs. This counter-campaign consists of extensive writings about Arabs' lives, culture, and religion(s).

This corpus of literary texts has been received by Western academia with great interest. Muslim and Arab writings, as a discipline, have attracted a myriad of contemporary immigrant writers who consider their writings as a counter-hegemonic discourse that could destabilize the already established stereotyped view about their countries of origin in general and about Arab Immigrants in particular.

The writing back process is not new, nor is it exclusive to ex-British colonies. Several postcolonial writers have always written in the language of the colonizer, be it French, Italian, Portuguese, or British. However, what is new is the tendency of writing in English by writers who originate from non-British ex-colonies like the Moroccan writers Laila lalami and Anour Madjid, the Libyan novelist Hisham Matar, the Tunisian author Sabiha El Khemir, the Lebanese writer Rawi Haj and a handful others. These writers could be considered as hyphenated immigrants because they live in both their countries of origin as well as in their host territories. Such writers have experienced cultural shock, but they have attempted to create a space where they can introduce their cultural peculiarities to the West.

Laila Lalami, whose literary artifacts are shelved within Arab American literary texts, is a versatile writer who writes about her country Morocco, as well as about her fellow immigrants in the US. Lalami has tried to represent the cultural peculiarities of the Moroccan psyche through her fiction books in which all the protagonists are Moroccans. Indeed, her first collection of short stories *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits* is a strong message forwarded to Westerners who claim that Arab refugees are illegal invaders who constitute a danger to the West. She brilliantly portrays her character as victims of the

oppressed corrupted countries from which they originate. Another example of Lalami's commitment to her nation is the book, at hands, entitled *The Moor's Account*. In this minor historical fiction, Lalami excels in paying tribute to her fellow compatriot Mustapha Azamori, whose testimony has been rejected and denied from the official annals written by Cabeza de Vacca. It is this very omission that has urged the writer to write her imaginary account, an account described by Rushdie as truth-like. The Moroccan 'minor' writer has subverted the official records in her narrative by inserting the moor's testimony in an attempt to destabilize the institutionalized history and to give space, voice, and agency to her imagined version of history. Besides, the writer has deterritorialized the language of hegemony by using minor forms in her prose. Such forms vary from Arabic words and expressions to Islamic calendar and Qur'anic verses. In so doing, Lalami voices the silenced subaltern to deliver history in parallel to that written by the West.

Another example of Arab contemporary writers who have enriched the world literary libraries is Hisham Matar, the British Libyan writer, who was exiled from his country because he is the son of Qaddaf's dissident. Matar has written a trilogy in which he mourns his lost father, a father he could not even attend to his funerals that have never taken place. Hisham Matar, transcends the limits of a simple memoir in his work to embrace a national allegory. Indeed, *The Return*, Matar's latest book is more about a loss of a nation than a father.

Hisham Matar's book is a literary production that tackles the themes of oppression, dictatorship, human rights violation, loss, exile, and the so-called Arab Spring. Indeed, the writer has excelled in narrating his story, a story that recounts Matar's personal, familial, and national saga. The Arab novelist has touched several domains, in his memoir, like politics and history. He has succeeded in interpolating his account of contemporary historical events in the book. Hence, Matar's novel is more than a story of a people; it is

Libyan history told from a Libyan militant's perspective. Such is Matar's writing-back technique that constitutes a national allegory.

In addition to Lalami and Matar M. M. Ahmed, the hyphenated Arab Australian immigrant, has also ventured, as his Arab American and Arab British counterparts in writing literary texts meant for liberating the Arab soul and help it find a resort from the impasse built by the Westerners who accuse Arabs of being potential terrorists who threaten their security. In addition to being a novelist, Ahmed is also an article writer and an intellectual militant who struggles for a cause that he considerers vital to ethnic minorities in Australia. He is the founder of Sweatshop, an organization meant for empowering, culturally and intellectually, oppressed ethnic people.

In his book, which is described by several critics as a confronting novel, Ahmed exhibits what, according to him, is the genuine seamy nature of his minority, a community that has very long suffered from marginalization and rejection in Australia. The writer, unlike any other Arab immigrant writer, confirms and consolidates the bleak image of Arabs in Western countries. The novelist claims that the Lebs' current state of violence and delinquency is due to the racist and unfair attitude of the Western authorities and media towards this alienated minority. Yet, in so doing, the writer harms his fellow Arab Muslim ethnic groups, giving them more negative stereotypes than the already established ones. He has added stupid, dump, and sexually obsessed to the long list of negative attributes already bestowed on Arabs in general and Arab immigrants in particular.

As such, Ahmed unveils the identity crisis he suffers from, an identity deemed ambivalent and unstable. He struggles with self-hatred and self discard; he hates being an Arab because he looks at Arabs, or at least his minor community, as a lost nation. He distances himself from them, seeking to integrate into white Australia which he thanks for

accepting to let him and his likes into its territory. He describes Australians as civilized and intellectuals to whom he works too hard to resemble.

Last, but by no means the least, is Rawi Hage, the Arab Canadian who has enormously contributed into Anglophone literary production in Canada by his fiction works that have received several valuable Awards from Western countries. Hage writes about exiles' experiences in Canada. He recounts stories about the oppressed immigrants and refugees who escaped from their home countries in search of a better life or let us say a better existence.

In *Cockroach,* Hage narrates the story of an unnamed immigrant who suffers from psychological disorders; he thinks he is a cockroach. By choosing a disillusioned protagonist, the author emphasizes the identity crisis from which several immigrants suffer. The writer shows how Arab immigrants, like other ethnic minorities, are rejected and alienated in a country that preaches diversity and multiculturalism.

Moreover, the writer focalizes on the underground where most immigrants live. He mourns the inhumane conditions in which exiles are forced to live. He also claims that this situation is what externalizes the violence, inherent in people who experienced trauma in their home countries.

As such, Hage's writing back consists in criticizing the Western's external and internal policies. On the one hand, he states that Western policies in the East are what urge exiles to leave their countries. On the other hand, he claims that internal policies fail to embrace the immigrants and to help them integrate into the new society.

Overall, Arab immigrant writers, who have chosen to write their literary texts in English, the language of hegemony, participate in the eternal struggle that exists between the West and the East. They have written about a myriad of themes like exile, loss, identity

crisis, belonging, oppression, history, etc. In so doing, they have contributed into informing the universal reader about the Arab world's cultural components. Arab writers have decided to be a first-hand source of information to assure an authentic and more reliable image about the Western divide of the globe. As such, Arab immigrant novelists deploy their literary texts which are linguistically deterritorialized, as shown in the previous chapters, to achieve their cause, the cause of freeing the Arab psyche from the guilt of terrorism bestowed on it. To reach such a noble cause, these writers have excelled in using various techniques such as storytelling which could be a powerful literary technique apt, if used appropriately and efficiently, to destabilize the already established assumptions about the Orient. Such is how the Arabs write back to an empire that has sentenced the Arab world to a life-long penalty of injustice.

At the level of analysing the various techniques used by Arab immigrant writers to deterritorialize English, the researcher has faced an immense shortage of documentation, a fact that has prevented the work at hand from reaching optimal results. Yet, this research could be considered as a starting point to any researcher who intends to probe Arab Anglophone narratives from a linguistic perspective.

At the end of this research work, we hypothesize that teaching Arab Anglophone narratives could be efficient and motivational to our students, especially if taught in the first year (LMD) because such literary works could be linguistically more accessible than texts written by natives. Besides, they are culturally familiar to Arab students, a fact that could be intriguing and motivating. Hence, a study could be conducted about how viable the inclusion of Arab Anglophone literary texts into the syllabus of first year (LMD) is.

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