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Title

**Trauma Literature: The Negotiation of Arab Masculinities'  
Identity in Arab American Women Literature**

The case of Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Frances Khirallah  
Noble's *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*

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## Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this thesis, entitled “Trauma Literature: The Negotiation of Arab Masculinities’ Identity in Arab American Women Literature: Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land* and Frances Khirallah Noble’s *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*” and supervised by Pr. Nassima Kaid represents my own work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material, which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of any other Institution. I also certify that the present work contains no plagiarism and is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Date: 12/06/2022

Signature:

*ZEGHOUDI IMANE*



# Dedication

*I dedicate this work to my parents, whose words of encouragements and push for tenacity ring  
in my ears.*

*An exceptional thank goes to my dear husband, Demmana Amar, for his practical and  
emotional support,*

*My brothers Mahmoud and Abdallah and my sisters Bouchra and Hiba stand by my side and  
are very special.*

*I dedicate this work to my sweet son Mohamed Siradj Eddine and my lovely daughter, Amira.*

*Thanks to all the family members of Zeghoudi, Boukhalkhal, and Demmana.*

*Loving thanks to all who love me.*

---

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*I would like to thank the board of examiners for accepting to read and examine my work.*



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# Abstract

The present thesis analyzes the formation of masculine identity in post-9/11 Arab American novels written by Arab American women writers. It examines the trauma and identity crisis of the male characters following 9/11 by uncovering their diasporic experiences and suffering from loss and destabilization. This thesis explores how post-9/11 trauma affects the depiction of Arab American masculinities in *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) by Laila Halaby and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) by Frances Khirallah Noble. In doing so, it combines qualitative research with psychoanalytic approach to describe the Arab male characters' behaviour towards their disturbing experiences. It begins with detailed information about the painful history Arab Americans experienced in post 9/11 America and its mirrored image in Arab American women's literature. It also analyses *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) by Laila Halaby and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) by Frances Khirallah Noble. In analyzing these works, the findings reveal that 9/11 trauma leaves Arab American men in a thirdspace where their identity is neither American nor Arab. Thus, they accept their mahjar identities to continue functioning in American society.

**Keywords:** post-9/11 literature- Arab American women's literature- trauma- masculinity- identity crisis.

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## Summary in French

La présente thèse analyse la formation de l'identité masculine dans les romans arabes américains post-11/9 écrits par des écrivaines arabe américaines. Elle examine le traumatisme et la crise d'identité des personnages masculins après le 11/9 en dévoilant leurs expériences diasporiques et leurs souffrances de la perte et de la déstabilisation. Cette thèse explore comment le traumatisme post-11/9 affecte la représentation des masculinités arabo-américaines dans *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) de Laila Halaby et *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) de Frances Khirallah Noble. Afin d'atteindre les objectifs établis, cette thèse combine la méthode qualitative avec une approche psychoanalytique pour décrire le comportement des personnages masculins arabes vis-à-vis leurs expériences troublantes. Elle commence par des informations détaillées sur l'histoire douloureuse que les Américains arabes ont vécue dans l'Amérique post-11/9 et son image dans la littérature féminine arabe américaine. Elle analyse également *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) de Laila Halaby et *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) de Frances Khirallah Noble. En analysant ces travaux, les résultats révèlent que le traumatisme du 11/9 place les hommes arabes américains dans un tiers-espace où leur identité n'est ni américaine ni arabe. Ainsi, accepter leurs identités mahjar pour continuer à fonctionner dans la société américaine.

**Mots-clés:** littérature post-9/11- littérature féminine arabo-américaine- traumatisme- masculinité- crise identitaire.

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## Summary in Arabic

تحلل هذه الأطروحة تشكيل هوية الرجل في روايات ما بعد 11/9 من تأليف كاتبات عربيات. تدرس هذه الأخيرة الصدمة وأزمة الهوية للشخصيات الذكورية بعد 11/9 من خلال الكشف عن تجاربهم في الشتات ومعاناتهم من الخسارة وزعزعة الاستقرار. تستكشف هذه الأطروحة كيف تؤثر صدمة ما بعد 11/9 على تصوير الذكورة العربية الأمريكية في رواية *"Once in a Promised Land"* (2007) لليلى حليبي و *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) لفرانسيس خير الله نوبل. ومن خلال القيام بذلك، فإن هذه الأطروحة تجمع بين البحث النوعي ومنهج التحليل النفسي لوصف سلوك الشخصيات الذكورية العربية تجاه تجاربهم المزعجة بدءاً بمعلومات مفصلة عن التاريخ المؤلم الذي عاشه الأمريكيون العرب في أمريكا ما بعد 11/9 وصورته المعكوسة في أدب النساء العربيات الأمريكيات. كما تحلل أيضاً رواية " *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) لليلى حليبي و " *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) لفرانسيس خير الله نوبل. في تحليل هذه الأعمال، كشفت النتائج أن صدمة 11/9 تترك الرجال الأمريكيين العرب في فضاء ثالث حيث هويتهم ليست أمريكية ولا عربية. وبالتالي، فهم يقبلون هوياتهم المهجرية لمواصلة العمل في المجتمع الأمريكي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أدب ما بعد 11/9 - أدب المرأة العربية الأمريكية - الصدمة -

الذكورة - أزمة الهوية.

## List of Abbreviations

**AMWAJ.** Arab Movement of Women Arising for Justice

**APA.** American Psychiatric Association

**AROC.** Arab Resource and Organizing Center

**EGM.** An effeminate gay man

**FAN.** Feminist Arab-American Network

**GRDS.** Gender Role Discrepancy Strain

**GRS.** Gender Role Strain

**MGM.** A masculine gay man

**NSEERS.** The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System

**PTSD.** Post-traumatic Stress Disorder



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# **General Introduction**

Literature has dramatically influenced human beings' lives. It displays the inner world through its empowered language whereby a writer expresses his/her emotions and thoughts. Any literary work is simply an imitation and representation of the real world of human life. In some cases, literature is viewed as a psychological phenomenon in which the author shows his characters' psyche aspects. Exposure to any traumatic experience causes an extreme reaction to one's psyche and psychology. Such an effect is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is a psychiatric disorder that threatens a person's safety and makes him/her feel helpless. It commonly happens immediately following a traumatic event; the symptoms can take weeks, months, and years to appear. They vary from one individual to another, depending on the situation.

Trauma narratives date back to the ancient writings of Aristotle, Homer, and Sophocles. However, the trauma field has been branched in various directions with a basis on Freud's trauma writings in his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which covers psychoanalysis and traumatic neurosis. In 1906 and 1907, Freud was followed by Pierre Janet, who presented his lectures at Harvard Medical School about a biological understanding of trauma and its effects on the brain. After World War II, contemporary trauma theory appeared, and multiple theorists, such as Lacan, Caruth, and Butler, have furthered their studies about it. Trauma theory and its rise have provided novelists with specific ways of conceptualising trauma in fiction. The attention has been changed from what has been remembered to how and why it is remembered. However, like Caruth, contemporary theorists emphasised the traumatic moment's belatedness in which the traumatic experience takes its place delinquently and is not registered in the first place. It repeatedly imposes itself in fragmented forms, such as flashbacks, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts, to compensate for the experience's

missing part. The missing piece keeps returning and haunting the survivor to make itself known. So, it is not remembered as something that occurred in the past but rather as part of the survivor's identity, which happened compulsively in the present. Such collapsing distances performed between past and present shape the force of trauma.

The beginning of the twenty-first century is alarmingly noted by the tragic attacks of 9/11. 9/11 is the most dangerous and most hazardous event compared to previous ones, such as the genocide of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, WWI, WWII, and the cold war. The event has led to incurable trauma among Arabs in America. In fiction, authors found literature as a healer through which they give a solution. In doing so, they tell and retell their traumatic experience by translating the meaningless fragmentations into meaningful language. Versluys argues that "language is the first healer [...] telling the tale is the first step in getting on with life, integrating what happened into a meaningful narrative" (14). In the wake of the traumatic attacks of 9/11, trauma has become a primary cultural concern in literary history. 9/11 fiction focuses more on trauma rather than the War on Terror. It starts dealing with the traumatic suffering of the victims on psychic and cultural levels.

This study contributes to Arab men and masculinity vis-à-vis the 9/11 trauma and its effects on Arab men's identity crisis. It provides approaches for conceptualising masculinity by focusing on theories that define masculinity. They demonstrate a diversity of men's social identities, constructed and influenced by the socio-historical context. More focus has been placed on men as gendered subjects since it is considered that gender equality and development cannot be achieved without focusing on them. Specific forms of masculinity, like hypermasculinity, have been viewed as hindrances to the development of masculinity and emphasise its superiority which causes gender

inequality. Following the social constructivist theory of gender and masculinity, masculinity is open to change, deconstruction and reconstruction. For gender equality, there has been a need to transform masculinity by altering social and cultural aspects that control and guide men's behaviours. Masculinity has been mentioned to be in crisis, and its various forms compete for hegemony. This study assumes that political, social, and cultural events have contributed to the masculinity crisis and have their mark on culturally produced texts.

Post-9/11 literature has also been seen as a counter-narrative. It aims at resisting dominant narratives and language that create binaries, like them and us, Christian and Muslim, and West and East. The enemy has been identified, and the battle lines have been drawn. As a reaction, some 9/11 novels resisted the world's categorisation into black and white by subverting such oppositional language. Therefore, they opened a new possibility for reconsideration, critical thinking, and reimagining. The incident of 9/11 has often been viewed as a masculine phenomenon in which most victims were men. The American media projected such an event as a tragedy that brought together the American people suffering from terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Moreover, Arab-Americans have been portrayed as guilty; though, in reality, the victims of the tragedy included Americans and non-Americans, encompassing Muslims.

As two Arab American women writers, who demonstrate an opposite perspective, Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble focused on the aftermath of this traumatic event. The event of 9/11 had a significant impact on Arab Americans and has deeply affected them in various ways. Most annoying has been recognising Arab Americans as collective terrorists for the actions of a small number of radical fundamentalists. Because most contemporary Arab American women writers are entirely concerned with



their ethnic identities and experiences, they write about Arab Americans in the U.S. They attempt to deal with masculinity issues in their texts by highlighting a new and un-stereotypical representation of Arab men in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Rather than dealing with women's issues, Arab American women writers explore the impact of 9/11 on depicting Arab men in the United States. As a result, they sought to enhance the image of their counterparts, Arab men, in the minds of Americans. They include terrorism in general and 9/11, particularly in their works as a literary and cultural response to that day.

Constant questions of how to represent and interpret 9/11 in literature are among the issues they attempted to answer. Since the 9/11 trauma is incomprehensible, authors face the dilemma of finding a suitable language that expresses that catastrophic event. They struggle to deal with the meaning of 9/11 in a wide and varied scope of literary responses. Arab/Muslim men have always been the focus of such literature that counter-narrates western misrepresentations because Arab/Muslim women are often regarded as harmless and victims of men's patriarchy. After 9/11, the representation of Arab men has undergone specific changes in western narratives. Arab/Muslim men have never been marginalised in western discourses as in post-9/11. However, orientalist stereotypes, such as barbaric, uncivilised, terrorists, and trouble-makers, are often mentioned in pre and post-9/11 literature whenever Arabs/Muslims, in general, and Arab/Muslim men, in particular, are addressed.

Several novels have been established after the tragic attacks and mainly dealt with the direct or indirect effects of that event on individuals. Arab American women writers like Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble have contested and challenged American hegemonic discourses. *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and *The New Belly Dancer of*

*the Galaxy* (2007) create a space for Arab/Muslim men to redefine their masculine identity. Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble have been aware of the estrangement in American society following the attacks of 9/11. Although women have been considered the object of the male gaze, this thesis reverses the trend in presenting women's looks. The two women writers offer representations of masculinity that change the western discourse about Arab men.

The present work attempts to get an idea about one of the crucial Arab-related issues that Arab American women writers dealt with after 9/11. In analysing the works of Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble, the importance of this study lies in the presentation of the significant changes in 9/11 literature about Arab men as the main characters in literature written by Arab American women writers. The world after 9/11 changed; thus, literature also changed. Furthermore, both works present the psychic and cultural traumas that Arab/Muslim men pass through in the aftermath of 9/11. The two pieces focus on 9/11 and its inspiration for the War on Terror and its influence on American society. In addition, both writers attempt to redefine Arab men's identity and challenge the Western misrepresentation that viewed them as terrorists, pagans, foreigners, and inferior.

Several studies have been pursued to discuss Muslim-related issues after the 9/11 attacks. Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin's *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (2011) is a well-researched study dealing with 9/11 and its effects on Muslims. Morey and Yaqin assert that the stereotypes that regard Muslims and their presence as a problem in the West significantly influence the public imagination; thus, they create a gulf between the representation and the complex reality. Another book, *The 9/11 Novel: Trauma, Politics, and Identity* (2014) by Arin Keeble,

presents how literature speaks about the 9/11 attacks. The event is regarded as a basis for the world's conflicts; thus, Keeble argues that one of the characteristics of 9/11 literature focuses on disputes between trauma, mourning, and politics. This book provides a detailed analysis that shaped our understanding of 9/11 as a critical moment in American and world history.

Themes of terrorism and Arab men's identity have been discussed in an article by Salim E. Al-Ibia titled "Islam and Terrorism in Post 9/11th Literature." He states that Islam has been wrongly equated with terrorism in the post-9/11 novel. According to Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Islam and Arabs identity are two vital elements of Arabs' experience after the attacks. Furthermore, Islam is a religion of terrorism, and terrorists are falsely viewed as radical Arabs and never being American citizens.

The idea of Arab men's representation in Arab American women's literature is presented in a dissertation titled *Post-9/11 Representations of Arab Men by Arab American Women Writers: Affirmation and Resistance* by Marta Bosch Vilarrubias. It deals with literary works written by Arab American women writers, emphasising male characters and their condition in the United States after 9/11. The writers expose new Arab men in their pieces, including Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Frances Khirallah Noble's *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*, in a way that counters the stereotypical discourses towards them. The dissertation examines the contexts, causes, and consequences of depicting Arab American masculinities. Theories on biopolitics, necropolitics, monster-terrorist, neopatriarchy, heterotopias, and third space have been a basis for such a work. Arab American feminisms also participate in this

dissertation, emphasising their characteristics and influence on Arab American women writers.

*Men in Color: Racialized Masculinities in U.S. Literature and Cinema* by Joseph M. Armengol is another book that deals with the racialisation of Arab men in literature and cinema. It highlights the representation of ethnic masculinities, both white and non-white, in U.S. literature and cinema by presenting different racialised masculinities, including African American, Asian American, Chicano, Arab American, and even white masculinity. It aims at showing the differences and similarities between them.

These books and articles have tackled different aspects of 9/11 or its influence on Arab men. Still, they have not addressed the link between collective and individual traumas and their influence on Arab men's couple relationships. The main characters' attachment to their traditions through the grandmothers' storytelling in moments of loss and self-discovery is another element not studied in the previously mentioned works. The present study intends to fill such a gap. It aims at providing a set of Arab American women's literary responses to the event of 9/11 by focusing on Arab men as main characters. For the Americans, Arab/Muslim men are regarded as terrorists and responsible for the attacks, whereas Americans are viewed as victims; thus, the works of Halaby and Noble challenge and contest what the West conceives by trying to correct the Arab men's image rather than distorting it.

Following 9/11, Arab and Muslim men have been the focus of the 9/11 novel by Arab American women writers. However, diasporic discourses attempt to counter-narrate the stereotypical hegemonic literature by correcting their image. After 9/11, Arab Americans were excluded from national belonging because of their affiliation to a racially and culturally inferior status. This thesis looks into Arab American women's

literary representations of Arab American masculine identity crisis in a post-9/11 American context. Arab American women writers wrote in a way that touches, glancingly and sometimes directly, on Arab male identity and challenges homogenised depictions of Arab Americans.

In this study, specific questions have been answered: How does trauma affect and /or (re) define men's identity formation in post-9/11 America in the literary works of Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Frances Khirallah Noble's *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*? How do they use folklore and magic realism in discussing Arab masculine identity?

Following the traumatic events of 9/11, Arab American women's literature has changed and focuses mainly on Arab men's identity and representation. As a central idea for such a statement, Arab American women writers changed their trend, which has been based on dealing with women's issues, and spoke for Arab men to demystify the image of Arab men and provide a realistic representation concerning the 9/11 attacks. Arab American women writers, like Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble, tried to counter-narrate and reverse the western rhetoric that misrepresented Arab men and victimised Americans. Hence, Arab men have a renewed awareness of themselves and their identity.

The research also necessitates a qualitative method for knowing facts about the traumatic event of 9/11 and its impact on Arab American women's writings about Arab men's post-9/11 identity. It involves collecting and analysing the experiences, attitudes, relationships, and actions of those under study. Moreover, this study includes some psychoanalytical ideas that focus on the individual's unconscious mind rather than the conscious one. Concerning Freud's theories, the research highlights the registration of

past experiences in the unconscious mind and its influence on directing the protagonists' behaviour. Besides the two theoretical chapters, the third chapter exposes Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* with a deep insight into the struggles of Arab Americans to define themselves after 9/11. This chapter examines Halaby's style of challenging western stereotypes through her criticism of the American Dream as a counter-narrative technique. As a literary response technique adopted by Halaby, storytelling makes Arabs close to each other in moments of discrimination and disillusionment. The fourth chapter touches on the work of Frances Khirallah Noble, *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*, to challenge the western discourse and examine the hostile attitude of Americans towards Arab/Muslim men after 9/11. This chapter investigates the main protagonist's identity crisis and complexity after being estranged and disillusioned by Americans. The transformation from the 'Other' towards the 'Self' and Kalil's journey of self-discovery are discussed in this section.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first and second chapters are the theoretical context of the study that presents the two different discourses about Arab/Muslim men after 9/11. The first chapter deals with the theories of Trauma, identity crisis, and masculinity studies concerning the racial discrimination of Arab men in the United States. With a close link to the media, Arab men are represented as terrorists, aeroplane hijackers, and fundamentalists after the tragic event of 9/11. The second chapter presents Arab American women's literature and its concerns with masculinity studies. Arab American women writers attempt to reverse neo-Orientalist stereotypes to assert Arab men's identities. The event of 9/11 urged them to correct the image of Arab men in the United States.

The third and fourth chapters analyse the works of Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Frances Khirallah Noble's *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007) based on the theories and studies of the first and second chapters. The academic challenges of Halaby and Noble to the hegemonic discourse are manifested in these two chapters. Rather than being regarded as terrorists, killers, and aeroplane hijackers, Halaby and Noble highlight the mistreatment and hostility of Americans towards Arab men after the attacks of 9/11. The third chapter reveals Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* with a deep insight into the struggles of Arab Americans to define themselves after 9/11. As a counter-narrative technique, this chapter examines Halaby's style of challenging western stereotypes through her criticism of the American Dream. As a literary response technique adopted by Halaby, storytelling makes Arabs close to each other in moments of discrimination and disillusionment.

However, the fourth chapter touches on the work of Frances Khirallah Noble, *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*, to challenge the western discourse and examine the hostile attitude of Americans towards Arab/Muslim men after 9/11. This chapter investigates the main protagonist's identity crisis and complexity after being estranged and disillusioned by Americans. The transformation from the concept of the 'other' toward the 'self' and Kalil's journey of self-discovery are discussed in this section.



# **Chapter One**



## Introduction

Trauma and its causes may be a prominent aspect of history, particularly modern history, and it has a close connection to social and political conditions. The twentieth century is one of the darkest periods the world has ever witnessed, mainly because of horrifying events. Universal tragedies, like the 9/11 attacks, murder, colonialism and postcolonialism's successive wars, and ethnic wars in Africa and Southeast Asia, have taken place in the latter decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the calamity of the 9/11 attacks has been a turning point in the lives of Americans and Arab Americans as well. The 9/11 event affected Arab Americans' social position in America, reinforcing Orientalist narratives about the East versus the West. Furthermore, mass media played a vital role in shaping public opinion about the World Trade Centre attacks.

Since both the media and culture circles deemed the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to be a traumatic event, literary criticism has used the notion of trauma in 9/11 fiction. Different genres and modes of interpretation encompass theoretical, social, cultural, political, psychological, and literary contexts attempted to represent trauma and analyse the post-traumatic aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The present chapter tackles a detailed and comprehensive study of trauma in its history as a concept. Moreover, it is dedicated to highlighting the concept of masculinity and its changing forms with a basis on specific circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> Today, intractable conflict is found in many once colonized places (Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and South America). These conflicts have resulted in poverty, disease, and the destruction of lives and properties. Between the 1980s and 1990s, the homicide rate peaked and resulted in several people's ending lives, including Africans, Asians, and Native Americans. Since 1945, post-colonial civil wars have emerged in the former colonies primarily from political, economic, and cultural factors, including poverty, bad governance, human rights violations, ethnic marginalisation, and corruption.

## Section One: Trauma Theory and Trauma Narratives after 9/11

Trauma has recently become a research subject among psychologists who deal with sexual and physical abuse or collective violence survivors. It has also caught the attention of literary scholars, theorists, and historians. Following the traumatic event of 9/11, literary scholars attempted to represent the effects and symptoms of such a horrifying event on Arabs in America. In literature, they study the multiple dimensions of characters' psyche, focusing on traumatic themes, moods, and tones to convey the pains of their disturbing experience.

### I.1. Brief Overview of the Concept of Trauma

Theoretical research found difficulty in providing precise meaning and definition of trauma because of the confusing array of conceptualisations of trauma in various domains. Trauma is derived from the Greek word τραῦμα (traûma) "Wound", which means damage and injury. The term refers to a highly stressful event applied to physical and psychic wounding. However, trauma as a term (not a concept) first appeared in the seventeenth century, referring specifically to a physical wound. In the late nineteenth century, physicians and psychologists began to think about the psychological nature of trauma. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines trauma as "a wound or an external bodily injury," or "a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed" or "the state or condition so caused" (qtd. in Hwangbo 1). According to Leys, trauma is "originally [as] the term for a surgical wound, conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective envelope of the body resulting in catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism" (qtd. in Huong Giang 4).

Other critics have defined trauma differently and focused on the traumatic event rather than the trauma itself. For example, Caruth (1991) claims that “in classic medical terminology, ‘trauma’ refers not to the *injury* inflicted but to the *blow* that inflicted it, not to the *state of mind* that ensues but to the *event* that provoked it” (184). In other words, trauma is psychological or mental damage to the mind’s tissues caused by an irresistible event, which results in disordered behaviour. Caruth also argues that, in 1980, the American Psychiatric Association added Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to its Clinical Practice Guideline to provide clinicians with recommendations on psychological treatments for traumatised clients. After being alluded to by some critics’ definitions of trauma, Caruth assumes that it is “a catastrophic experience in which the response to the event is delayed and occurs through uncontrolled repetitive appearances of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (qtd. in Lahrech 24). Here, it is vital to note that the event’s return is an imagined remembering that seems to be happening again.

In addition, a traumatic experience or event is said to cause physical, emotional or psychological damage to the individual or group of people who share the same situation. For example, physical trauma often leads to bodily injuries, like sexual assault, domestic violence, and natural disasters that cause death or damage. However, psychological/emotional trauma refers to persons who experience physical abuse or physical assault that negatively affects their emotional well-being.

The distinction between physical and psychological traumas is unavoidable since each affects the other differently. On the one hand, Physical trauma may result in psychological trauma. For instance, Rape is mainly a traumatic experience that physically and psychologically influences the victim. Moreover, physical trauma can

lead to other physical trauma. For instance, sexual abuse, as physical trauma, can lead to another physical trauma, unwanted pregnancy, or death. On the other hand, psychological trauma sometimes causes physical trauma. For example, emotional stress can lead to headaches, stomachaches, and even chronic pain. In traumatology, Robert Scaer, a neurologist and leader in the domain, describes the effects of trauma on the body and the brain. He states:

In the brain of the trauma victim, the synapses, neurons, and neurochemicals have been substantially and indefinitely altered by the effects of a unique life experience. Not surprisingly, the perceptual experience that constitutes the mind has been equally changed [...] Trauma thus represents a time-based corruption of learning. The brain in trauma has lost its ability to distinguish past from present, and as a result, it cannot adapt to the future. This confusion of time further immobilizes the trauma victim, who remains immobilized by a thwarted freeze discharge. Procedural memory is bombarded by environmental and internal cues that represent old, unresolved threat (qtd. in Duffy and Sperry 149).

From the above description, it can be noted that the alteration of neurological processes can lead to the emergence of physical and psychological symptoms. It shows the intersection between physical and psychological traumas. However, Freud argued that trauma, as a wound, causes damage to the mind rather than the body. The repetition of the catastrophic events to the traumatic individual is one of the striking aspects he has

no control over. Freud coined the term ‘traumatic neurosis’<sup>2</sup> to explain the unconscious behaviour that forces the individual to repeat the past traumatic event in the present through flashbacks and nightmares. Put another way, Freud says, “the patient [...] is fixated to his trauma” (7).

Physical or psychological traumas can be experienced collectively or individually. Collective trauma happens to a particular group of people or segment of the population that “has been exposed to extreme circumstances of traumatization, such as natural disasters, technological catastrophes, and social, political, cultural, gender, ethnic, or religious persecution, that leave them with life-long problems” (Robben and Suárez-Orozco 24). Collective trauma is also a search for meaning; it often transforms into a collective memory and culminates in a system of meaning that puts the groups in a situation of asking who they are and where they live.

However, individual trauma results from an event or circumstance experienced individually, for example, life-threatening illness and sexual abuse. In addition, it happens to an individual “who has undergone a potentially mortal aggression or has been a direct witness of a devastatingly traumatic event such as ethnic cleansing, political persecution and torture, extermination of a “race,” a nation or a social group” (Mucci 8). Both traumas are inevitably harmful and have severe bad effects. Individual trauma is like a blow to the psyche, while collective trauma is a blow to society. Kai Erikson explains it more:

By collective trauma, [...] I mean a blow to the basic tissue of social life that damages the bonds attaching people [...] and impairs the

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<sup>2</sup> Freud depicted the term in his book, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1940) as “a condition [...] which occurs after severe mechanical concussions, railway disasters and other accidents involving a risk to life; it has been given the name of ‘traumatic neurosis.’”

prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma.” But it is a form of shock [...], a gradual realization that the community no longer exists in an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. (qtd. in Mucci 208)

As mentioned above, collective trauma harms victims and witnesses (individuals) and damages society and culture. Erikson points out that people might experience an individual or collective trauma, but people will share them if they pass through a shared catastrophe. He adds that the person suffering from individual trauma will suffer from an identity crisis and find difficulty recovering if the society he belongs to remains shattered. Meanwhile, individual therapy is usually helpful if done with the support of the environment.

## **I.2.Modern Trauma Theory**

There has been increasing attention to the theoretical analysis of trauma by historians and researchers who based most of their interpretations on Freudian’s use of trauma terms. However, these psychologists were mainly influenced by the intersection of interests of a post-structural faction that calls for enhancing minority groups’ situation through the discourses of feminism and postcolonialism.

As a field of study, trauma was first investigated by the French Neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot to study the relationship between trauma and mental illness. In the late nineteenth century, Charcot studied hysteria, commonly associated with women. Symptoms of hysteria include anxiety, paralysis, amnesia, sadness, sensory loss, and

convulsions. Charcot believed that signs of trauma originate in a woman's womb or uterus, and he first understood that those hysterical symptoms are mainly psychological rather than physiological.

Following the same study, Pierre Janet, Freud, and Breuer adopted Charcot's ideas. Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot, dealt with "dissociative phenomena and traumatic memories" (Ringel and Brandell 1). He argued that the patients' severe feelings reacted to their perceptions of the traumatic experience they passed through. Freud and Breuer gave a new term to traumatic dissociation, "hypnoid hysteria" (167). It is a term that involves "double consciousness," in which thoughts are fragmented and separated from the waking consciousness. In addition, they studied the relationship between hypnoid hysteria and a traumatic event. They acknowledged that the main reason for hysteria is psychological trauma. Freud proposes that "a precocious experience of sexual relations [...] resulting from sexual abuse committed by another person [...] is the *specific cause* [italics added] of hysteria [...] not merely an agent provocateur" (qtd. in Ringel and Brandell 2). Moreover, they agreed that a state of consciousness, called dissociation, appeared due to "unbearable reactions to traumatic experiences" (2).

Freud's studies about hysteria and trauma resulting from sexual abuse led to the emergence of the current trauma hypothesis. In the nineteenth century, Freud was regarded as the pioneer of psychological studies because of his multiple articles and other related ideas to psychological illnesses. To state it clearly, Caruth says that

If Freud swings to writing to depict horrible experiences, writing, similar to therapy, is keen on the unpredictable connection between knowing and not knowing. What's more, it is at the particular time

when knowing and not knowing cross that the dialect of writing and the psychoanalytic hypothesis of horrible experience exactly meet (3).

Caruth stresses that her contribution also included analysing literary works by different writers who discussed characters' painful experiences with an obvious connection to Freudian interpretation and analysis of traumatic events.

However, Freud did not use the contemporary term of trauma and instead explored the physiology of traumatic neurosis. The one who suffers from trauma will be exposed to "signs of subjective ailment." Freud equated these signs with fright as a state of being not prepared for the trauma. Fear and anxiety are not like fright since they show preparation on the part of the subject. This sense of fright happens mostly in dreams and will return the subject to the moment of trauma; thus, a division between the conscious and unconscious occurs. Freud notes that "[he is] not aware [...] that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with *not* thinking of it" (7). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud suggests that "traumatic neurosis" is a sort of "repetition compulsion" or "compulsive repetition" of traumatic experiences (xiv).

Therefore, the traumatic event appears again in many respects as a waking memory. Those experiencing traumatic neurosis have no control over the experiences of their memories, which occur in the unconscious (dreams) state. Hence, unlike anxiety and fear, the subject cannot address trauma fright. In this case, "the conscious psyche can only access the unresolved memory of the event, presenting itself in the form of a supplementary experience deciphered by default as a series of symptoms" (Lahrech 28). These symptoms have been put in a systemised order by Drs. Ryan, Foderaro, and Bloom and were known as the 9 A's of trauma: Attachment, Affect, Anger, Authority,



Awareness, Addiction, Automatic repetition, Avoidance, and Alienation (Peacock and Lustig 100).

The symptoms will worsen if they associate with certain behaviours, like “addictive behaviour, night disruptions or sleeping deprivation, episodes of dissociative states, and compulsive and repetitive behaviours, all of which will lead to a feeling of isolation and alienation from their surrounding and an unreasonable fear of the future” (Lahrech 28). In his article, “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies” (2004), Geoffrey Hartman clarifies Freudian theorisation of trauma:

The [(post)Freudian] theory holds that the knowledge of trauma, or the knowledge [...] from that source, is composed of two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche. The other is a kind of memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual troping [literally ‘turning,’ but Hartman also means ‘metaphorizing’] of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche. (Hartman 537)

The event cannot be rationalised, evaluated, or accessed by the traumatised person following the traumatic event. Instead, as a supplementary experience often regarded as a set of symptoms, the memory of the event is registered in the psyche. Those symptoms encompass a form of repetition compulsion and other types of behaviours.

### **1.3. Contemporary Trauma Theory**

Over the last twenty years, various fields have developed trauma studies. Contemporary trauma theory started with a growing interest in the Holocaust and its tragic, traumatic effects on the survivors of the concentration camps. After World War

II, especially after the Vietnam War, theorists<sup>3</sup> focused on the soldiers' Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the harmful experience they passed through. Moreover, they paid attention to the memory of a traumatic event that reflects the traumatic person's extent of suffering. They based their analysis on the Freudian trauma theory in one way or another. "In their work, however, repetition compulsions do not reflect wish-fulfillment or repression. Rather, they focus on the violent events overwhelming the victim and creating neurosis, events repeated over and over again in the forms of dissociative problems or personality disorders" (Huong Giang 7).

Theoretical trauma studies became significant with the publication of *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) by Cathy Caruth. Caruth argues that "trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (qtd. in Balaev 1). Based on a psychoanalytic poststructural approach, Caruth showed the complex nature of trauma in which it cannot be simply remembered; thus, it cannot be confessed merely.

Like many other contemporary writers, Caruth was one of those who adopted Freud's ideas. She claimed that trauma theory is fundamental to modern thought about historical trauma and tragic memories. Building on Freud's trauma analysis, she explored death and repression in her analysis of soldiers' war experiences and later nightmares which take them back to moments of fear and surprise as if they are experiencing the trauma again. Freud thinks the leading cause for such a tendency is "a lack of any preparedness for anxiety" (31-32). He adds that soldiers return to that place hoping to avoid the trauma. He states that "awakening is itself the site of trauma" in

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<sup>3</sup> Studies of post-traumatic stress disorder associated with wars have been examined in the works of the following researchers: Dohrenwend, B. P. et al., Marmar, C. R. et al., Kok, B. C., Herrell, R. K., Thomas, J. L. & Hoge, C. W., Hoge, C. W. et al., and Clause S Fischer.

which survivors dream of trauma again. Finally, they awaken into reality to find that they failed to prevent the traumatic event.

Most of Caruth's studies focus on the relationship between trauma, death, and survival. After her observation of a child who lost his friend, she witnessed the use of a "language of parting" in which the child practised certain behaviours that obliged him to move on in his own life and turn away from his dear friend. She points out that being conscious of others' death is an impossible demand for human consciousness. Because of the association of necessity and impossibility to one's death, consciousness must be turned away from death to survival. Like one's response to death, destruction is incomprehensible because most traumatic topics are about survival and a desire for survival. As two concepts in the enigma of trauma, destruction and survival coexist in reality and the mind. Caruth connects destruction and survival to trauma theory by stating that

trauma theory is one of the areas today in which this survival is precisely taking place, not only in the assuredness of its transformation and appropriation by psychiatry but in the creative uncertainties of this theory that remain, for psychiatry and psychoanalysis, in the enigma of trauma as both destruction and survival, an enigma that lies at the very heart of the Freudian insight itself (72).

Furthermore, Caruth related the idea of trauma to the role of an individual's memory, which is responsible for the repetition of traumatic experiences. The traumatic memory will be represented or relived in the form of dreams or nightmares since it is not yet prepared to be expressed. Caruth asserts, "The impact of the traumatic event lies

precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time” (9). The traumatic event will be restored and twisted into the individuals’ past stories. In other words, the past traumatic event jumps accidentally into the present and moves back and forth so that the traumatised individual can not know whether it is reality or fantasy. In their work, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue that:

The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after [...] trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through its completion [...] The survivor [...] is not truly in touch either with the core of his traumatic reality or with the fatedness of its reenactments, and thereby remains entrapped in both (69).

As Felman and Laub observed, the timeless and ubiquitous reality of the traumatic event leads the survivors to haunt the existence of actual life. Thus, the survivors find themselves in a dilemma between two worlds.

In addition, Jenny Edkins addressed an important, controversial, and political issue in his book, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (2003). Edkins examined how people, as collectives, remember traumatic events, such as World War II, Vietnam War, Kosovo, and September 2001, through practices of memory (memorials, remembrance ceremonies, being witness...). Edkins discussed the relationship between violence, trauma, and political community. She adds, “After traumatic events, there is a struggle

over memory. Some forms of remembering can be seen as ways of forgetting: ways of recovering from trauma by putting its lessons to one side, refusing to acknowledge that anything has changed, restoring the pretence” (16).

In dealing with political power, Edkins argues that “the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger” (4). It can be devastating and menacing because their existence relies on personal survival and the continuation of societal order, which gives meaning and dignity to their presence. Moreover, in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996), Antez and Lambek provide a new interest in memory and its relation to identity. They claim that

Memory serves as both a phenomenological ground of identity (as when we know implicitly who we are and the circumstances that have made us so) and the means for explicit identity construction (as when we search our memories in order to understand ourselves or when we offer particular stories about ourselves in order to make a certain kind of impression) (qtd. in Hockey and James 207).

To be precise, memory, as a social practice, is fundamental to discourses about identity, and it is an active process that forms meaningful narratives that reflect self-image. What matters is the way of narrating the past and how the narrators position themselves in the past.

In addition, they explore the link between the politics of memory and traumatic event; they argue that “memories are never simply records of the past, but are interpretive reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural

assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemorations” (qtd. in Crapanzano 149). Stated differently, trauma exists in the past but is explained in the present.

In *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), Dominick LaCapra clarified the reaction of traumatised individuals to a traumatic event. He made a distinction between acting out and working through. In other words, when the traumatised person is “acting out” after the traumatic event, they have not yet reached the point of living the experience and emotions. Instead, they relive the experience through flashbacks, hallucinations, or dreams as an unconscious attempt to face the traumatic event. Caruth claims that this attempt is to “master what was never fully grasped in the first place” (62). LaCapra defines “acting out” as a state “in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes [...] In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene” (21). Acting out may take prominent forms, like lateness, rambling, and withholding. The victims who undergo trauma remember the events through repetitive actions.

As a result of a deficiency in memory and inability to recall or remember information stored in memory, the victim deals with compulsive behaviour to compensate for this. Freud summarises such a state by saying, “[t]he patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he repeats it, without [...] knowing that he is repeating it” (qtd. in Lahrech 34). Historical traumas, like 9/11, excite such behaviour since words are insufficient to narrate such dreadful events. Due to the

harmful nature of memories, the victim resists remembering. The more they fight remembering, the more acting out repeats it compulsively.

Another dichotomy that characterises the acting-out process is the distinction between absence and loss. LaCapra endeavoured to tackle the difference between loss and absence and their effects on causing one's trauma. Both terms mean emptiness, void, or lack of presence. However, it is essential to note that absence entails that the origin of something does not formerly exist. On the contrary, loss suggests the formal existence of an incident. According to LaCapra, Losses may lead to absences, but the opposite does not need to be true. In his essay, "Trauma, Absence, Loss" (1999), LaCapra distinguished between absence and loss. He states that absence is "not an event and does not imply tenses (past, present, or future)" (700). It is mainly the opposite of presence, whereas loss is the opposite of gain.

Following the attacks of 9/11, for example, thousands of people experienced deadly forms of loss. In addition, many innocent people lost their lives, freedom, status, or identity. Hence, the 9/11 survivors experienced psychological trauma, which resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder or mood disorder.

Moreover, such an event left a void filled with fear, unwanted memories, and despair. LaCapra called for the necessity of making the patient aware of the distinction between loss and absence; she mentions that "when absence, approximated to loss, becomes the object of mourning, the mourning may (perhaps must) become impossible and turn continually back into endless melancholy" (68). Explained differently, it is impossible to mourn someone or something that has not already existed.

However, working through the historical trauma is like moving on and living their life. In the working through, following LaCapra, the person attempts to gain critical

distance on a problem to distinguish between past, present, and future. Both notions linked Freud's "melancholia" and "mourning" are mainly psychological reactions to loss. In other words, LaCapra argues that:

In acting out, one relives the past as if one *were* the other, including oneself as another in the past-one is fully possessed by the other or the other's ghost; and in working through, one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility-but that doesn't mean that [he] utterly transcends the past. It means that [he] comes to terms with it in a different way related to what [he] judges to be desirable possibilities that may now be created (148).

La Capra asserted that the process of repetition to remember trauma in working through is significantly different from the compulsive repetition involved in acting out. Even though the two kinds of memories seem different, they are closely related as two stages in a traumatic process.

#### **I.4. Trauma and Literature**

Trauma has been studied in multiple fields, like science, humanities, law, psychology, history, and medicine. Scientists have not reached a consensus concerning the definition of trauma. Roger Luckhurst equates the phenomenon of trauma to a knot because of its relation to interdisciplinary research (1). Different questions have been raised to show the link between trauma and literature. Why does literary trauma writing matter? It is a question that was answered by Vickroy, who claims that "literary and imaginative approaches [to trauma] provide a necessary supplement to historical and psychological studies" (qtd. in Schönfelder 29).



Most studies that provide a better understanding of trauma are mentioned in the literature. Competent professors in comparative literature have theorised trauma in literature, such as Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman. Felman started to work on trauma in 1992 with her book, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, co-authored with the psychoanalyst Dori Laub. In addition, she published another book entitled, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (2002), where she attempted to highlight the connection between psychoanalysis and literature. Although Felman tackled various issues about trauma, she shared with Caruth the belated state of trauma. Elissa Marder, a professor of French and comparative literature at Emory University, regards this context in her essay “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some “Enabling Questions” that:

Although there are considerable differences between the work of Caruth and Felman, both thinkers have radically altered the way we think about the trauma. They have done so by insisting upon [...] finding new ways to acknowledge the impact of events that can only be known belatedly and of listening to the power of experiences that can only be expressed indirectly (1-2).

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth switched to literature and literary interpretations about the occurrence of the traumatic event and belated experience to go deeper in examining the phenomenon of trauma. She argues that literature “enables us to bear witness to events that cannot be completely known and open our ears to experiences that might have otherwise remained unspoken and unheard” (qtd. in Marder). After being opened to different philosophical, psychological,

literary, and film texts, Caruth confirmed that some events cannot be known or understood but can be meaningful in being told and heard by others.

The unintended occurrence of traumatic events in the present is explained by Tasso in his romantic epic, *Gerusalemme Liberata (1581)*, through his character Tancred, who witnesses the intrusion of the past traumatic experience into the present by fate. After killing his beloved, he relived the murder after piercing a tree, a moment where he hears the voice of his beloved after seeing his wound:

After her burial, he makes his way into a strange magic forest which strikes the Crusaders' army with terror. He slashes with his sword at a tall tree; but blood streams from the cut and the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, is heard complaining that he has wounded his beloved once again (Caruth 2).

Sigmund Freud analysed the psychoanalytic notion of transference in which Tancred reanimates his horrible mistake. He regarded this moment as an example of unconscious repetition of trauma. Freud suggested that psychological trauma can be masked but not disappear. In the beginning, Tancred does not recognise the association of his suffering with the death of Clorinda until he departs from the battle and enters the forest. Being in an unfamiliar setting and away from the traumatic place, he remembers the moment of stabbing Clorinda by piercing the tree, which speaks to him in the voice of his vanished love. The voice does not belong to her, but it represents the repetition of trauma experienced in the past by the individual. Caruth's interpretation of Freud's analysis suggested that the speaking wound is not Tancred's trauma but the trauma of another. In this case, Tancred shares the traumatic event with his lost love.

Here, it is essential to say that trauma is the outcome of an encounter between two individuals or more. The trauma of Clorinda has been part of Tancred's trauma. Although it is repressed, it unites the traumatised. The disturbing incident remains outside the daily consciousness, but it reappears in every traumatic repetition. Caruth expressed the link between history and theory regarding trauma; meanwhile, she included literature. She states that

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing, and it is at this specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet (3).

Caruth insisted on the close connection between literature and psychoanalysis. She argued that texts about literature and literary theories speak mainly about the traumatic event and the complexity of knowing (consciousness) and not knowing (unconsciousness) involved in the language of trauma.

Following Cathy Caruth's path in dealing with the notion of "belatedness," Shoshana Felman focused on testimony in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992). As a witness to the traumatic event via speech, testimony has been regarded by Felman and her co-author Laub as a vital response to the traumatic history. Felman defines *testimony* as "the literary -or discursive- mode par excellence of our times, and that our era can precisely be defined as the edge of testimony. "If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle and the Renaissance the sonnet," [...] "our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony" (5-6).

Based on the essays in her book, Felman and Laub claimed that a traumatic past would never end, and it will reach the present in a way that surpasses our conscious understanding. Since we can neither get better from our traumatic past nor can we heal it, control it, or understand it, we “must *listen* to it and *survive* it by listening to its effects as they are transmitted to us through the voices of its witnesses and survivors” (qtd. in Marder). David Richard Carroll is an American author who assumes that “If most survivors are, by their own admission [...] inadequate, incompetent, unworthy narrators, they certainly find no adequate, competent, worthy listeners to hear what they have to say” (Rogers 75). In other words, Felman and Laub endeavoured to face the aftermath of trauma by listening to artists and ordinary people and how they responded to historical traumas, like World War II and the Holocaust, in a *language*. They state that

The major texts, films, and documents [...] were all written and produced after the historical trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of our times [...] not as an event encapsulated in the past, but as a history which is essentially *not over*, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent (whether consciously or not) in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still *evolving* [...] in today’s political, historical, cultural and artistic scene (xiv).

Relying on a deep comprehension gained from writing about literary theory, psychoanalysis, and literature, Felman and Laub wondered why trauma demands testimony and why testimony is the only pivotal and possible reply to trauma. Witnesses narrate their traumatic experiences and the listener, who bears witness to the narration,

comes up with the traumatic experience. More particularly, Felman pointed out that testimonial speech differs from other lessons. She argues that testimony puts the speaker in a difficult situation, and being a witness is one of the personal risks he or she passes through since he or she can only tell the truth. This truth can go beyond personal experience to reach others by revealing it. “The witness,” writes Levinas, “testifies to what has been said *through* him. Because the witness has said ‘here I am’ before the other.” [...] testimony is *addressed* to others, the witness, from within the solitude of his own stance, is the vehicle of an occurrence, a reality, a stance or a dimension *beyond himself*” (qtd. in Caruth 15). Felman gives a complete description of the stance of solitude that the witness is allocated to:

Since the testimony cannot be relayed, repeated, or reported by another without thereby losing its function as a testimony, the burden of the witness—in spite of his or her alignment with other witnesses—is a radically unique, noninterchangeable and solitary burden (3).

The witness’s burden must be irreplaceable. The speaker speaks for themselves, and no one replaces them, and incommensurate with no other witnesses, in which the witness’s vantage point, from which they say, must not be assimilated by others. In this sense, testimony is unchangeable and unique.

#### **I.4.1. Trauma Fiction**

The development of literary trauma theory provides new insights into the importance of literature and trauma. Many fields have analysed trauma in the last twenty years and depicted untellable events. Nowadays, theorists return to literature to formulate the effects and consequences of trauma and understand it culturally. For Felman, trauma can be represented through literary language or through witnessing. However, trauma

makes it impossible to see from within, so a belated figurative and literary representation of traumatic events substitutes referential truth mentioned in traditional historical discourse. Many contemporary writers interested in modern trauma theory attempted to deal with a new literary genre named trauma fiction. Moreover, Anne Whitehead declares that trauma theory and fiction influence each other “in which each speaks to and addresses the other” (4).

Trauma stood out in literary studies in the 1990s, intending to integrate the interest in literary criticism with poststructuralist and Lacanian abstract high theory and ‘the real’ by referring to the social, historical, cultural, ethical, and political meanings of the traumatic event. In the 1970s, poststructuralism entered the socially-oriented Humanities; thus, the real was pushed away to the background. In the moment of leading the Fortunoff Video Archive Project<sup>4</sup> by Hartman and Laub, deconstructionists like Caruth and Felman started their theorisation of trauma in the 1990s.

Moreover, Anna Douglass and Thomas A. Vogler write that trauma “seemingly reconciles the opposition between the poststructuralist emphasis on the text, with the real understood as an effect of representation, and ‘the real’ understood as an event marked by trauma” (4). They add that “the real” has returned to mainstream discourse like the Freudian repressed, this time as the traumatic event” (5). Without literary representation, the real cannot be known. Trauma fiction will facilitate the move toward the real world, and traumatic experience will be regarded as a real problem. Hartman states that:

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<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies works to record, collect, and preserve Holocaust witness testimonies and make these available to educators, researchers, and the general public.

Trauma studies provide a more natural transition to a “real” world often falsely split off from [...] the university, as if the one were activist and engaged and the other self-absorbed and detached. There is an opening that leads from trauma studies to public, especially mental health issues, an opening with ethical, cultural, and religious implications (qtd. in Schönfelder 37).

Literary works of trauma often provide a deep analysis of the traumatic experience. Rather than focusing on the external reality of trauma, trauma fiction deals with historical, social, political, cultural, and ethical functions by explaining the causes and consequences of the phenomenon from a more personalized, integrated, and complete scope than explorations into trauma in other fields may do. Trauma fiction provides readers with a historical and psychological background. In contrast, following Laurie Vickroy, literary and imaginative approaches “bring a kind of sociocultural critical analysis that helps readers formulate how public policy and ideology are lived in private lives” (221-222).

Trauma literature writers have discussed the problem of referentiality in writing trauma. Some theorists, like Kalí Tal, favoured realism in representing trauma rather than symbolic representation; however, others preferred a non-realistic approach to represent trauma. In *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (1996), Kalí Tal used reality in describing traumatic experiences through the records of the survivors since they are the only ones who witnessed the traumatic event. She believes that trauma literary representations are merely “mediated by language and do not have the impact of the traumatic experience” (15). Using realism in narrating trauma can raise a feeling toward the traumatised individual.

On the contrary, many scholars think using an experimental style is the best way to seek the traumatised psyche. They preferred symbolism to represent trauma, which is unsymbolised and unrepresented. Douglas and Vogler doubt the use of realism as the only practical tool for representing trauma; they claim that “the power of successful cultural representation [is not] dependent upon direct personal experience or eyewitness of the events represented” (33). More simply, using a non-realistic mode can render traumatic experiences. Moreover,

Trauma literature is not bound by truth claims and the limitations that necessarily constrict testimonies in real life and is, therefore, free – within the ambit of the limitations posed by traumatic experience itself as a phenomenon – to explore ways in which trauma allows representation, for instance, through symbolic language (Rodi-Risberg 17).

Traumatic events, experiences, and effects can be portrayed and represented symbolically. However, as trauma scholars, Laurie Vickroy and Anne Whitehead agreed on using a “stylistically innovative mode” instead of a realistic approach to representing trauma. In *trauma and survival in contemporary fiction* (2002), Vickroy argues that fictional narratives can depict the traumatic experience through the use of experimental techniques, like symbolisation and figurative language, “where they not only represent trauma as a content or theme but “they also incorporate the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works” (xiv). The writers will describe traumatic aspects with these techniques, such as shattered identities, dissociation, and fragmented memories.



Like Vickroy, Anne Whitehead argues by using a non-realistic mode to describe the trauma. In her book, *Trauma Fiction* (2004), she draws a link between literary trauma and trauma theory by reading some novels written by Pat Barker, Benjamin Wilkomirski, Caryl Phillips, and Toni Morrison, as well as some texts by theorists like trauma theorists Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey Hartman. She emphasises that fiction has recently changed after being encountered with trauma in which trauma can be represented, through literary techniques, by imitating its symptoms and forms. They share the same aspects of referentiality: “Both trauma theory and trauma fiction are committed to exploring new modes of referentiality, which work by means of figuration and indirection.”

In one way or another, trauma fiction often describes the traumatic experience using symbolic techniques. Whitehead asserts that “the realist novel is troubled by coincidences and fantastic elements which lurk just beneath the surface [...] These disruptions of the real signal to the reader that there has been a rupture of the symbolic order.” Thus, “The real can no longer appear directly or be expressed in a conventional realist mode.” “Traumatic realism” is a new term coined by Michael Rothberg to use a new form of reality in describing trauma. This term is used primarily “to describe the range of innovative formal devices which are used in narratives of trauma to try to make us believe the unbelievable” (84).

In the literary trauma narrative, the readers confront the conflicting aspects of traumatic memory. In psychoanalysis, Pierre Janet distinguished between the two in which he claimed that traumatic memory repeats the past exactly as it happened. He referred to memory as a subconscious process where people respond to new challenges with a specific action. They automatically store further information or new memories

without paying conscious attention. However, the traumatic experience may either be remembered in fragments of the event or not. In other words, frightening experiences store memory differently so that it will not be available for retrieval or the act of remembering. Hence, it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness. In this sense, Janet used the term traumatic memory by claiming that it occurs automatically when remembering the actual traumatic event. He adds that it is a “solitary activity” that addresses no one in which the traumatized individual does not respond to anybody. (Van Der Kolk 163)

Unlike traumatic memory, narrative memory is something conscious that recreates that past and allows the remembering of trauma through a series of questions and comments. In addition, narrative memory is a process that refreshes and reframes a past traumatic experience in a meaningful narrative that orders the disruptive and fragmented past traumatic events. All in all, the transition from painful to narrative trauma is an essential process for recovery. Media images, videos and reports are included in literary trauma narratives since media helps spread the attacks’ impact on individuals.

### **I.5. 9/11 Trauma and Media Representation of Trauma**

Media has smoothed the world’s access to depict traumatic and violent events. Allen Meek outlines the effects of the media on individuals’ re-experience of trauma again in his book, *Trauma and Media* (2010). He suggests that “traumatic experiences and events are often complicated by their visual mediation, but traumatic memory and modern visual media have also been theorised as registering, repeating and replaying events in ways that exceed conscious perception and understanding” (7). The most well-known example of the construction of cultural trauma is the visualisation of the attacks of 9/11. “Because images of the 9/11 attacks were viewed “live” by American and

international audiences, there was an immediacy to the events replicated in public discourse about them. The events were *immediately* “traumatic” (172). Photographic representations have changed the movement from “trauma to a post-traumatic space” (179).

9/11 was a media event that links simultaneously between remembering the attacks and coping with them after their happening. Media plays a vital role in interpreting, understanding, and codifying 9/11 as traumatic. The event has been rapidly labelled as a cultural trauma a few minutes and hours later. Rather than reporting the events objectively, the mass media described the event dramatically and rhetorically. The way that made the people look at the event with an emotional and traumatic eye called for a military response.

In addition, the rapidity in revealing facts was one of the issues that attracted people’s attention. Senator Orin Hatch of the Senate Intelligence Committee claimed that Bin Laden was involved in the attacks without proof. Even though few facts proved the implication of Bin Laden in such an event, Bin Laden became the ready-made chief suspect of the 9/11 attack via media mythmaking. Later, the FBA removed his name from the wanted list without evidence.

Following Monahan, a media scholar involved in 9/11 coverage, the media revealed facts that did not match the reality of the events. To stir public opinion and attract their attention, the press interprets and transforms points into a form that meets their needs. Monahan was affected neither psychologically nor physically by the trigger events of 9/11. He made his report about the event two days later to show the contradiction between the streets’ atmosphere and the television narrative.

The manner in which the anchors and reporters on these networks [...] were depicting what was happening in New York City did not seem to mesh with what I had observed [...] I had walked down a great many of Manhattan's streets [...] I had watched as people walked their dogs, strolled around Times Square, stopped for coffee, dined in restaurants, and did other "normal," everyday things. Certainly, this was a more subdued and solemn atmosphere than usual, but it did not seem to me to be the "city in shock" that the national headlines were suggesting (Geraldine Schaap 59).

Monahan was perplexed by the drama created in the media about the event with fantastic rapidity in identification. In doing so, the media aimed at creating an imaginary story based on "a struggle between good and evil" with different characters: 'villains, heroes, and victims' (Geraldine Schaap 59-60). Other roles have been assigned to different characters: villains represent the terrorists; heroes may include the New York Fire Department, the Police Department, and President Bush or the Americans; victims are the ones who died in the event. On NBC, Tom Brokaw reported in melodramatic rhetoric about the event one minute after the collapse of the first tower:

It is hard to overstate the consequences of all this, and this is just the beginning. We'll be living with this story and dealing with the consequences [...] for some time. The United States will change as a result of all of this [...] [T]his is going to change this country profoundly in not just the coming days but the coming months [...] America has changed today. This is a dark day in this country (Geraldine Schaap 60).

Based on this report, Brokaw revealed the event of 9/11 in the form of a story. He started with “the plot-making process” regarding 9/11 as a story and claimed that this event had changed the United States forever. He also put the event in a historical context by asserting the event’s inclusion in historical books. Moreover, 9/11 has been described as traumatising by Stone Phillips, a news anchor of NBC. He depicted planes’ crashes as an “indelible image to be replayed again and again, seared into the American memory.” Here, he meant that the event would be repeated and memorised in the minds of the survivors forever.

In reporting the event of 9/11, the mass media created the binary concept of us vs them between the Americans and the outsiders, especially the Arabs. Negative portrayals and stereotypes, such as terrorists, barbaric, radicals, uncivilized, anti-modern, fundamentalists, and violent, were often associated with Arabs or Muslims regarded as a homogenous group. Regarding terrorism, Arabs have been severely addressed and racially ‘othered’ (Nurullah 1022). Arabs’ misrepresentation has also been reflected in U.S. policy that “either you are with us or against us” (Nurullah 1030).

The news media came to play a crucial role in making the Middle East and Islam meaningful to Americans as a place that breeds terrorism. This genealogy of the emergence of the Arab terrorist threat in the U.S. commercial media reveals that while 9/11 is a new historical moment, it is also part of a long history in which viewers have been primed by the media to equate Arabs and Muslims first with dissoluteness and patriarchy/misogyny and then with terrorism (Alsultany 9).

The stereotypical representation of Arabs and Arab Americans increased in post-9/11 attacks in the media field. Mass media tackled many topics related to the stereotypes of Arabs in a way that distorted the image of Arabs and Muslims. As a

result, the media's "negative frames of Arabs and Muslims [...] help sustain a set of negative perceptions and aggressive attitudes toward these groups in the West" (Elsamni 2). For example, in Hollywood films<sup>5</sup>, Arab characters were often described negatively and associated with violence, brutality, and terrorism. Per Jack Shaheen, filmmakers regarded Arabs as a threat or as other and portrayed them as "religious fanatics, heartless murderers, brutal rapists, and abusers of women, whereas Arab women were showed as humiliated slaves, demonized maidens, and erotic belly dancers in endless Arabian nights" (Elsamni 2). This event opened the way for a new era that made Arabs victims of backlash, and thus it opened doors to their discrimination, psychological pressure, and hate crimes. Bakalian argues that "[a]lthough stereotypes and discriminatory actions were not new to these minorities, the post-9/11 backlash was overwhelming, and relentless" (1).

### **I. 6. 9/11 as a Cultural Trauma**

Many people inside and outside America still remember the events of September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks had a horrible impact on many lives to the point that they can describe the events differently. The different descriptions of the event made no sense since there was no unified voice, and the only thing they share is trauma. Dori Laub defined the attacks as "an event without a voice" by asserting that:

September 11 was an encounter with something that makes no sense, an event that fits in nowhere. It was an experience of collective massive psychic trauma. Nearly six months after the event that shook our world and our assumptions about our lives, there is no coherent

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<sup>5</sup> "Body of lies" (2008), "The Four Horsemen" (2012), "Hurt Locker" (2008), "The Messenger" (2009), "Green Zone" (2010), "Essential Killing" (2010), "The Kingdom" (2007), "World Trade Center" (2006), and "Ground Zero" (2008).

narrative about September 11. This, too, is like massive collective trauma (204).

In literature, different genres with themes about trauma, loss, and tragedy emerged after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Keniston and Quinn claim that “Early works often attempted directly to capture and convey the events of 9/11 and emotional responses to the events; as time has passed, the approach to the attacks has become more nuanced” (qtd. in De Bruijn 57). Nevertheless, most writers shared the point of facing language failure and a sense of absurdity in their writings as a response to the attacks of 9/11.

As already mentioned, Freud connected literature and trauma to explain the traumatic experience because “literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet” (Caruth 3). In other words, literature is an excellent medium to describe a traumatic experience.

Based on Freudian ideas, Caruth argued that trauma happens suddenly and unexpectedly; thus, the survivor will face difficulty understanding it at the right moment. However, they relive the traumatic event through nightmares or repeated actions. The same with the attacks of 9/11 happened suddenly and unexpectedly, and the survivors did not expect to get out of the building. Then, they re-experience the traumatic event through media as one of the essential tools that convey the attacks of 9/11.

Whether experienced on-site, seen on live TV, or heard of after the event, the image of the collapsing towers will forever be connected to the loss of family members or other loved ones. Moreover, the

survivors will be haunted by this image because it is often replayed by the media, making it a collective trauma rather than a personal trauma (De Bruijn 9).

In dealing with 9/11 fiction, there was always a clash between trauma and political discourse. However, the cultural trauma novel combines the two elements to discuss them simultaneously. Jeffrey Alexander defines *cultural trauma* as the following, “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (qtd. in Rahmani and Nojournian 57). In accordance with him, cultural trauma emerges from a cultural crisis, and it should be social and significant in affecting people’s lives and identities. This kind of trauma is not mainly about the pain of a particular group of people concerning a specific event. Still, it rather encompasses “an acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander 10).

One of the recent theories of cultural trauma is examined in the works of sociologist Kai Erikson who studied the relationship between trauma and community. In his book, *Everything in Its Path* (1976), He suggested a preliminary theory named collective trauma. He attempted to analyse the effects of a flood on individuals in Buffalo Creek, a small Appalachian community, in 1972. It was apparent that the trauma symptoms, like anxiety, fear, or apathy, are not only related to individuals; however, it seems that the community is affected by that traumatic event. By the same token, Geraldine Schaap argues that



When the community is profoundly affected, one can speak of a damaged social organism in almost the same way [...] [as] a damaged body [...] The people of the hollow still had memory, kinship, contiguity in common, so there were materials to build with. But for the moment, at least, they were torn loose from their cultural moorings –alone, adrift, floating like particles in a dead electromagnetic field (32).

Erikson noted that the traumatised residents of Buffalo Creek were not present when the crisis happened, and they were far from home and did not witness any aspects of the incident's destruction. The traumatic event of Buffalo Creek became a "telling test case" for collective trauma in which the individuals, who did experience the flood, can also be collectively traumatised by the loss of a sustaining community. In addition, the traumatic event can produce terror and fear in individuals within the same community; thus, it can generate traumatised individuals and the traumatised community. Erikson attempted to distinguish between individual and collective traumas by stating that individual trauma is "generally taken to mean a blow to the tissues of the body –or more frequently now, to the tissues of the mind that results in injury or some other disturbance." However, collective trauma is:

[A] blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people [...] and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with "trauma." But it is a form of shell shock [...], a gradual realization that the

community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared. (Geraldine Schaap 33)

Following Erikson, trauma can be experienced individually and collectively with different outcomes. If trauma is experienced individually or separately, the victim will feel set apart, alone, and isolated from society. At the same time, the collective experience of trauma creates a sense of sharing the same feeling. In this case, trauma does not shatter the community. Still, it makes a community: “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and [...] backgrounds can” (Onwuachi-Willig 338).

In the case of individual trauma, the sense of isolation experienced by individuals becomes for the survivors of collective trauma “a kind of calling, a status, where people are drawn to others similarly marked.” Consequently, they felt a sense of kinship and closeness to people who encountered the same crisis in which “their estrangement becomes the basis for communality” (Onwuachi-Willig 338).

Ultimately, trauma has two paradoxical dimensions: “centripetal” and “centrifugal.” The traumatic event sets traumatised individuals apart from other members who did not experience the same obstacle; however, it brings them together with others who share the same realities. From this perspective, the attacks of 9/11 are regarded as a shared trauma that affects many people simultaneously, whether inside or outside America. Meek states:

After 9/11, the general population of America—not only those who experienced or witnessed the events, not only the family and friends of those who died but anyone who became aware of the events by way of

telephone, television, newspapers or Internet communications—were potentially seen as participating in a traumatic experience (173).

One of the critical questions raised by sociologists is why not all acts of mass violence and disasters are considered trauma? Neil Smelser calls for “agency, groups who assign meaning to the event” (Geraldine Schaap 43). Cultural trauma needs groups of people who have experienced a preceding traumatic event. They can see the current traumatic events through the traumatised lens and code the event “as a communal tragedy, an unforgettable experience, or identity-shifting or shattering event” (Geraldine Schaap 43). Smelser describes cultural trauma as “a complex process of selective remembering and unremembering, social interaction and influence, symbolic contestation, and successful assertions of power” (qtd. in Guler-Biyikli 35).

Like Smelser, Alexander agrees that the traumatic event is not cultural trauma. Still, the community’s understanding and interpretation of the event make it a cultural trauma. The event has a prolonged and widespread effect “and includes intense cultural upheaval, a collective loss of security, damaged and altered identities, a communal sense of fear and terror” (Geraldine Schaap 44). Alexander argues that social groups produce trauma:

For traumas to emerge at the level of collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events are quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It results from this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity. Collective actors “decide” to represent social pain as a fundamental threat to their

sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go (Guler-Biyikli 35).

September 11th is considered a cultural trauma since it has ineffaceable traces on society. Millions of people watched the event and the images of death and destruction in mass media. The depiction of 9/11 in the media was influential in making it an event that should be remembered. A sense of fear and anger rose during and after the event immediately. Groups, like Arabs, were spotted and triggered by negative sentiments since they were accused of being responsible for such an event. New regulations and laws have been changed for the sake of security. Regardless of the brutality, violence, and destruction of the event, Smelser endeavoured to highlight its social, cultural, and political context by stating that:

The events occurred in the context of American society and American culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and that context intimately conditioned the shape of the national reaction. The reactions to similar events in other national contexts would have unfolded differently (qtd. in Guler-Biyikli 36).

Different commemorative responses to the event have arisen. Temporary memorials, also known as spontaneous shrines, grassroots memorials, pictures of dead ones, messages, prayers, slogans, and other symbolic items, like flowers and candles, were included in the monuments to show grief. On that day, America, for the first time, lost four hundred emergency workers. The firefighters and the police were viewed as heroes in the commemorations. Fire stations were turned into memorials and surrounded by flowers, pictures of the missing, messages of support, and prayers. The photographs of Jonathan Hyman display the monument of 9/11 in public and private spaces. The

images reflect the event five years after its happening by showing its impact on some individuals.

“Ground Zero” is a name used in the media for the World Trade Center location after the attacks. It is mainly used to describe the devastation caused by nuclear bombings, and it was referred to as the only suitable identification or analogy for the event of 9/11 and its destructive impact on individuals. In an attempt to explain such blending, David W. Blight says that:

In the wake of 9/11, we searched desperately for analogies, for moments of recognition from our past. Was it a new Pearl Harbor? A Fort Sumter? Was it John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry in its surprise and violent shock? Where could we find markers in our historical memory to help this make sense? Was this 1861, 1914, 1941, 1968? Was this a new battle of Antietam in its scale of American deaths in one day? (Guler-Biyikli 38).

Various analogies have been associated with September 11th, 2001, to describe its impact on individuals. It was called “the day of infamy” based on president FDR’s speech after the attacks. The date was coded as a turning point since its occurrence changed America. Certain declarations were added to the code, like “America lost innocence,” “the world will never be the same again,” and “the day changed our lives forever” (Guler-Biyikli 38). Another example is Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and its use in the memorial ceremonies to expose the resemblance between the military dead and the battlefield and civilian dead and the WTC site. The frequent references to Gettysburg Address to 9/11 mainly show that the dead are considered patriotic sacrifices in America as hallowed ground.

## **Section Two: Theoretical Understandings of Masculinity and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Due to the complicacy of the social world and inequality in power relations between men and women, various theories and discourse approaches, including biological essentialism, socialisation, psychodynamic and hegemonic approaches, analysed masculinity and men's behaviour patterns.

### **I.1. Understanding Masculinity**

Studies on men and masculinities are neither novel nor radical since men have been represented in men's narratives of masculinity in disciplines like history or sociology. These fields focused on male-stream thought. Mary O'Brien writes that "male-stream thought has elaborated the ideological justification of male supremacy" (34). In other words, men were analysed and represented in a way that did not characterize them as the problem. However, various streams of literature, like feminist, pro-feminist, gay, and other postcolonial writings, attempted to represent and theorize men. "These may be directed to men as a social category, men as a gender class, specific groups of men, or collections of individuals who are men" (Hearn 49).

The stimulus for the growing academic interest in men and masculinities has been basically from the Women's Liberation Movement or feminism and Gay Liberation (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985). The liberating language used in the Civil Rights Movement influenced those movements that struggled to give visibility to women and homosexuals. Feminism, as the first social movement, also helped women rethink their femininity and sexual division. In their demands for political and social changes, women challenged patriarchal codes. Their challenge led to the development of critics of gender's hegemonic rules. In 1969, the gay movement intended to question

heterosexual normativity. Gay men and lesbians fought for their freedom to choose their sexual orientation. Alternatively, masculinity, as a concept, has been explored due to the two movements.

Throughout history, scholarly work has referred mainly to a generic 'man' to generalize the experiences of humankind. As a result, women's visibility and experiences have been excluded. It is often claimed that the generic reference of 'man' does not relate to men's experiences as *men* but deals with them as genderless since the word "man" encompasses both sexes. The terms gender and sex were used interchangeably and were understood to be the same. Over the last twenty years, the proliferation of studies about men and masculinity has reflected the growth of feminist analyses of women and gender relations.

The term 'man' is vague since it accepts two interpretations: it can refer specifically to males or generally to human beings. Men have been overgeneralized as human beings rather than males in most cases. In contrast, women are the 'other.' As explained in women's studies, women are written out of history since human experiences and standards are mainly based on males. As a result of feminist criticism towards the male-stream thought, men's studies is in itself the study of masculinity with a task of recalling "the specificities of masculinities as specific and varying social, cultural, and historical formations alongside femininities, rather than as falsely universalized norms" (Horlacher 20). Brod (1987) defines men's studies as:

[...] the study of masculinities and male experiences as specific and varying social- historical-cultural formation. Such studies situate masculinities as objects of study on a par with femininities, instead of elevating them to universal norms (2).

Before tackling the theoretical approaches that studied masculinity, it is necessary to answer questions about its creator and the place from where it came. Masculinity is so complicated to be generated by a single person or group. Since it infuses everything, one cannot determine or set its origins. Men have more interest in the spread of masculinity since they benefit from its advantages. The propagation of masculinity is not only supported by men because even non-men categories like women, feminine gay men, and lesbians helped, as well, in its spread. Even though there are men, who reinforce the norms of masculinity, others criticise them. In addition, some feminine gay men and women are attracted to men, males, and masculinity.

The masculine concept existed even before the 1970s, but it was until the 1970s that its meaning was developed. Many researchers and analysts found difficulty in defining masculinity precisely. The expression “I know it when I see it” or “think of masculinity as a series of “nots” (e.g., not feminine, not “gay,” not interested in interior design, cooking, or clothing) are two expected responses of most people when it comes to defining masculinity. On the other hand, when masculinity is empirically tested, the researcher faces two paradoxical aspects. On the one hand, masculinity is considered possessed by virtue because men are born in male bodies, i.e., something natural. In other words, men can take on anything because they are men.

On the other hand, masculinity is something that men have to work hard to get it. Men “are fighting an endless barrage of internal urges on a moment by- moment basis to suppress the wild man who lives inside them. The solution is purchasing the thing that will express this inner masculinity” (C.J.Pascoe and Bridges 2). In short, the first aspect suggests that men are in control, whereas the second shows that others control men. Segal explains such a point by saying that



The closer we come to uncovering some form of exemplary masculinity, a [...] solid and sure of itself, the clearer it becomes that masculinity is structured through contradiction: the more it asserts itself, the more it calls itself into question (123).

As mentioned above by Segal, masculinity is mainly a socio-cultural construct that is neither natural nor a stable reality.

### **1.2.Hegemonic Masculinity**

The word masculinity has been explored differently from prescriptive to descriptive approaches. Different research and studies tackled masculinity moving from one approach to another, and finally, it shifted to a social constructionist approach. At first, biological and early social approaches used to be prescriptive, whereas the social constructionist approach tended to be descriptive. The biological approach assumes that masculinity is a natural and innate quality in which “men behave the way they do because of testosterone, or big muscles or a male brain” (57). Based on this perspective, masculinity is fixed and static. For years, it has been considered a single identity. Such a view reflects the essentialist view of masculinity which regards the body as a natural machine that generates different gender (males and females) through genetic programming, hormones, and reproductive roles.

However, the social constructionist approach argues that the body is a mere object or a neutral surface onto which social constructions are put. In the presence of societal discourses, the body is shaped, constrained, and invented by society. In other words, the meaning attached to the body will change based on the particular discourse. Gutterman drew attention to the differences of being a boy from one culture to another. Social and cross-cultural research prove that multiple masculinity discourses change following the

context. Connell also stresses that there is no one pattern of masculinity everywhere and adds, “We need to speak of ‘masculinities’ not masculinity. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently” (10). Because of the fluidity of masculinities, certain factors like language, culture, race, gender, historical context, race, and socio-economic status played a significant role in defining masculinity.

Following Connell (1993), masculinities are arranged hierarchically and compete for power and legitimacy. Within this arrangement of masculinity, there are aspects of domination, subordination, and alliance, including or excluding various types of men. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant masculinity at the top of this hierarchy. Antonio Gramsci developed the notion of ‘hegemony’ in his research about class relations. In Gramsci’s theory, hegemony refers to the power of powerful social class exercises over others in consensual and coercive control. It relates to a cultural dynamic in which a dominant group adopts certain aspects of management and leadership in their social life. Establishing such a powerful position does not necessarily depend on an active force because even violence can be regarded as one of its aspects.

Moreover, Connell regards hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). He also argued that masculinity could be classified in a hierarchical order in which some types of masculinity are viewed as superior and dominant. In contrast, others are seen as inferior and subordinate. Nevertheless, the theory of Gramsci recognised that subordination is often met with resistance and that hegemony requires continuous renegotiation and reconstruction to keep social consent. (Jones n.pag)

Connell and Messerschmidt introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity. It appeared as a structuring and structured concept in the 1980s in the Anglophone academia and precisely in the US, UK, Australia, and Nordic countries (Hearn 200). The different forms of masculinity reflect the meaning of a real man and how a man should behave. Their theory shows that the subjugation of women and the subordination of other masculinities are two apparent aspects of hegemonic masculinity. In the former, hegemonic masculinity asserts power over women, but not all men. Those with privileged social, economic, and political position exercise control over women. Internal masculinity imposes power over marginalised, subordinated, and complicit masculinities. For example, hegemonic masculinity oppresses black masculinity or homosexuals. Connell (1995) explained that complicit masculinities stand by hegemonic masculinities to benefit from patriarchal dividends without being affected. This category does not challenge hegemonic masculinity but instead benefits from it.

Moreover, the classification of men paved the way for 'othering.' Those who belong to the hegemonic masculinity type are not the same as those who do not belong to it, such as homosexual men. The aspect of not belonging to hegemonic masculinity puts men under pressure to perform the socially desired forms of masculinity to be viewed as real men and real boys. At an early age, boys appear to be under constant surveillance by their parents for showing any feminine behaviour signs more than young girls.

The masculinities theory proposes that masculinity is not fixed and that a person can enact multiple masculinities open to change because of their fluidity. Fluidity and multiplicity are mainly configurations of social processes that happen through social action and vary from one social setting to another depending on the place and gender

relations (Connell and Messerschmidt 836). Using hegemonic masculinities as a theory helped understand what type of masculinity is considered ideal.

Based on the reality that power is not divided equally among men, Connell classified three types of masculinity in society. Donaldson referred to these forms of masculinity as counter-hegemony. The complicit masculinity agrees with dominant forms and conforms easily to them. However, submissive masculinity can always comply and disagree with dominant and hegemonic forms of masculinity within a particular context. Finally, oppositional or protesting masculinity is often found in a constant struggle or conflict with dominant forms of masculinity. Shefer criticised the classification of men into such exclusive categories. He states that “anyone man may position himself in different masculinities in different relationships and contexts, and masculinity as a social construct is thus always prone to internal contradiction and historical disruption” (Shefer 32).

In addition, other types of masculinity are more marginalised and subordinated. Even though marginalised masculinities, like oppressed religious, ethnic, and male racial groups, are not classified at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy, they do not have the right to share benefits with the dominant forms of masculinity (Paulsen n.pag). However, subordinated masculinities are mentioned, according to Connell, at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy. This subordination mirrors the dominance of heterosexual men over homosexual men and effeminate heterosexual men. According to Rubin (1975), hegemonic masculinity connects gender to sexual reproduction and institutionalizes heterosexuality. More clearly, sexual reproduction is necessary for the survival of the human species, and homosexuality is viewed as unnatural and immasculine.

Moreover, it is considered a challenge to the basic requirements of hegemonic masculinity; thus, this fact led to a comparison between homosexuality and femininity. So, it would be a direct clash with hegemonic masculinity's rules when comparing a man's identity to that of a woman. Gender permits the continuation of the human species. Rich added through his notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' that compulsory heterosexuality contributes to reproducing men's social power over women.

In terms of homosexuality, Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner, and Weinberg (2007) regarded that hostile attitudes of heterosexual men towards homosexual men reflect their need to demonstrate and defend their masculinity. Moreover, their negative attitudes increased towards gay men after being perceived as acting in effeminate ways. Glick et al. (2007) argue that gay men violate the two aspects of gender norms, sexuality and personality, as proved in the stereotype that gay men are effeminate. They claim that "an effeminate gay man (EGM) violates norms of sexuality and personality, whereas a masculine gay man (MGM) violates norms of sexuality, but not of personality" (55). Therefore, it can be argued that heterosexual men attack homosexual men, who act femininely, to defend their masculinity and enhance their heterosexual identity.

According to Social Dominance Theory, certain members of a specific group place a high value on keeping their dominant social position within groups and resist homosexuals through their unfavourable attitudes. Heterosexuals are more likely to disapprove of homosexuality than females because their understanding of gender is more inflexible and threatened than their female counterparts. Consequently, anti-sexist groups and the International Association for the Studies of Men developed to challenge

the dominant masculinities. As much as there are types of hegemonic masculinity in society, other forms of masculinity resist the gender order.

### **I.3. Masculinity's Multidisciplinary Studies**

Intending to analyze masculinity, different fields of study have helped us better understand the construction and meaning of the male gender inspired by various theoretical contributions in other areas, such as biology, psychology, and sociology.

#### **I.3.1. Biological Determinism**

From the 1900s to the 1950s, men's and women's cognitive or temperamental differences have often been linked to their biological sex. Biological sex determines a person's biological identity by showing that one is male or female. Men's behaviours and attitudes were often interpreted as a reaction to having 'raging hormones.' Naturally, testosterone levels are higher in men's circulation than in women's, and testosterone makes them more aggressive and hypersexual. "Testosterone is an androgen that has been implicated in the development and maintenance of masculine characteristics in a variety of species" (Mazur & Booth). It has been proved that masculine behaviour creates spikes in testosterone rather than the other way around. Testosterone was often considered responsible for making men violent and preventing them from falling in love. In short, testosterone is a biological response to aggression and passion.

Biological determinism is profoundly premised on the point that all the differences between men and women are biological. Biological determinism often uses certain generalizations concerning men and women; for example, men are naturally good in maths and technology, and women are inherently suitable for domestic duties. Moir and Jessel have made a study in their book entitled *Brain Sex: The Real Difference between*

*Men & Women* (1991). They revealed the difference between men's and women's behaviour because of their different brains. In the 1990s, magazines and newspapers asserted that men have four billion more brain cells than women (Beagle and Vazsonyi). Men are more intelligent because they have larger brains (Siddiqui). Some scientists, like Broca, welcomed the scientific truth that “[w]omen, like it or not, had smaller brains than men and therefore, could not equal them in intelligence” (Gould 153). Moreover, women have smaller brains and are also assumed to be deficient. Such scientific proof determined men's dominance and women's subordination.

Based on biological fact, sex, as a word, refers to biological associations in the distinction between men and women. Nicholson states, “Because of its implicit claim that differences between women and men are rooted in biology, the concept of sex suggested the immutability of such differences and the hopelessness of change.” Moreover, biological determinists assert that the differences between human beings at birth are the main signs of their definitive and eventual difference in their status, wealth, and power. Another facet of biological determinism is that

Individuals are regarded as ontologically before groups, so [...] inequalities between races, classes, sexes, or nations are claimed to be the direct consequence of intrinsic differences between the individuals who make up the groups. If blacks are less successful than whites, it is not because blacks [...] suffer from racism, but because individual blacks have, in general, less ability than individual whites [...] In this way, social classes become biological entities, groups whose individuals possess different inherent biological properties (Lewontin 153).

Sex relates to a physical differentiation between the biological male and the biological female. When the children are born, they will be categorized as boys or girls based on their sex. Moreover, another difference between men and women based on sex is genital differences. Men and women are born with X and Y chromosomes, hormone production, and muscle mass differences. Generally, women are expected to have higher levels of female hormones or estrogen, whereas men have higher levels of male hormones known as testosterone. In short, biological determinism has taken different forms that originated as a result of the apparent social problems:

1- Most individual differences concerning their capacities and mood are mainly genetic differences. The amount of intelligence between individuals caused by different genes leads to social success.

2- Different races often have different social statuses and behaviours because of genetic differences. For instance, blacks have a lower social class simply because they do not have genes responsible for the cognitive function owned by whites.

3- Biologically, sex refers to physical and physiological differences between males' and females' functions and activities. "Male anatomical and physiological development is claimed to cause greater aggressiveness, analytic ability, synthetic ability, leadership, and rationality in the face of danger or emergency" (Lewontin 83).

4- The difference between classes is credited to having poor genetic attributes, and lower social classes have a lower social status since that aspect is biologically heritable. Poor genetic determinants are often associated with poverty.

5- Generally, male sperm contains two types of chromosomes: X and Y, while female eggs have one variety: XX. However, some individuals are intersex because they are born with two XX chromosomes, one Y or two YY chromosomes, and one X. More



importantly, Deviant and abnormal social behaviour of violent and aggressive men mainly results from an extra Y chromosome. Such extra XYY chromosome makes men violent criminals, and the same chromosome predisposes them to aggression, violence, and impulsiveness.

6- Theories, like sociobiology, assume that certain historically social aspects produce genes. Social elements, such as male dominance, wars, religion, incest, and territoriality, are naturally coded into our genes from the beginning of human evolution. Any attempt to change or remove these features was a failure since it is impossible to change or avoid them.

A hegemonic concept of masculine identity has been shaped based on biological determinism's aspects of difference between men and women. Following the traditional practises of sex differences, scientific doctrine resisted women's emancipation. For instance, women have been excluded from universities because the feminine mind was not ready to deal with the rigours of academic work. It has been estimated that their mental disturbance will negatively affect their duties as good wives and mothers. The biological or natural differences between men and women reinforce the natural order of events. In other words, since biology is innate and unchangeable and gender is biologically persistent, inequality is a determined and inevitable characteristic of human existence.

### **I.3.2. Psychodynamic Theories**

For many years, there was no interest in the origins and development of masculinity. It was assumed to correspond to the nature of the biological sex regardless of historical and cultural variability. However, personality differences between the two sexes paved the way for new intellectual insight, and Freud has been credited for such

understanding. As a result, psychoanalysis personality theory endeavours to explain the origins of gender. The earliest psychoanalytical formulations of gender have been made before proposing a clear distinction between sex and gender. Magnusson and Marecek (2012) argue that “Since the early years of academic psychology researchers have been interested in finding out what (if anything) distinguishes men’s and women’s mental life” (31). Freud’s original concept, Horney and Jones’s early oppositional view, and Stoller’s new theory were three psychoanalytical formulations that attempted to define the origins of gender. The first two regarded sex and gender, though interrelated, as separate entities. However, the formulation of Stoller made use of this distinction.

Freudian’s psychodynamic theory of gender development suggested that gender identity and role started to exist in the third stage of psychosexual development, the phallic stage. In the oral and anal phases, the child does not have a gender identity; however, the child becomes more aware of anatomical sex differences in the phallic stage. The phallic stage occurs between three and six, in which sensitivity becomes more concentrated in the genitals and masturbation. In this stage, boys develop an ‘Oedipus complex’ in which they sexually start to desire their mothers and feel aggressive towards their fathers, who stand in their path to their desires. In other words, they see their fathers as rivals to their mothers’ love.

Meanwhile, the boy realises that his father is more powerful than him, and if his father discovers his desire, he will castrate him (castration anxiety). So, the boy attempts to identify with the father and wants to be like him. Therefore, a boy’s masculine or male gender identity emerges, and his desire for his mother will be for other women. The girl is supposed to develop an ‘Elektra complex’ after realizing she has no penis. It leads her to blame her mother for being castrated. She believes that

without having a penis, she is powerless; thus, she wishes to have one (penis envy). So, she starts to desire her father and feels aggressive towards her mother. Finally, she identifies with her mother and replaces her desire for a penis with a desire to have a baby.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Karen Horney and Ernest Jones proposed new theories about the development of gender identity. They believe that femininity and masculinity predate the phallic stage and result from predisposition. Jones regarded the castration complex of both sexes as fear of devastation of any possibility of sexual pleasure. According to K. Horney, civilisation and social factors play a significant role in developing oedipal complex and gender identity. She assumed that the girl's hatred of her mother, fear of rivalry, and the father's penis and sexual aggression could make her step away from femininity and resort to masculinity and homosexuality. Men, also, are envious of their mothers' capacity to bear children; thus, Horney juxtaposed penis envy to 'uterus envy.'

Robert Stoller opposes Freud's theory, which claims that both sexes are prone to masculinity. Instead, he claims that both sexes are predisposed to femininity, which he calls "proto-femininity." He holds that there is an early stage in the development of gender identity in which the child and the mother have merged gender identities. The girl finds no difficulty developing her gender identity and finding a way towards her femininity; she identifies with someone of the same sex. However, the boy finds it harder to build his identity with an extremely close relationship with his mother and a passive, distant father. He should differentiate himself from his mother to get along with his masculinity. According to Stoller, masculinity is not a primarily natural state, but

rather it is an achievement. He adds that a man must distance himself from women to be not infected with femininity.

### **I.3.3. Social Theories**

Another way of looking at masculinity is through the fluid concept of gender. Gender theorists argued that women's subordination and men's superiority are not based on biology but rather on social and cultural causes. In the last decades, the division between sex and gender has been one of the points of gender theory. In the present day, however, post-structural gender theorists think that sex and body are no more attached to gender. Judith Butler, a post-structural gender theorist, asserts that "the body has significant meaning for identity and for the way that one's gender is expressed or perceived" (qtd. in Veronika Wallroth 88).

Furthermore, Butler is one of the representatives who saw that sex and gender are socially constructed categories and have no relation to biological nature. She adds that sex is not only an analytical category but a standard category since it provides what men and women should be, and it also sets rules to govern their behaviours. Even though the other theorists disapproved of her idea, she concludes that sex is a social category.

In other words, the idea that sex is the result of nature and gender is the result of nurture seemed irrelevant since there is no clear point from where sex leaves off; and gender begins. Sex is a combination of chromosomal, anatomical, and endocrinal aspects that are insufficient for assigning the type of sex. Cultural beliefs, in turn, specify the sex's type; for example, a small boy imitates his father in every male aspect to be a *man* and the same for a girl who simulates her mother to be a *woman*. Thus, classifying someone as a man or a woman is a social determination. In short, our beliefs define our sex.

Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Not surprisingly, social norms for heterosexual coupling and care of any resulting children are closely intertwined with gender. But that is far from the whole story. Gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates physical differences; and carries it into irrelevant domains. There is no biological reason, for example, why women should mince and men should swagger or why women should have red toenails and men should not. But while we think of sex as biological and gender as social, this distinction is not clear-cut (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 10).

Sex assignment is based on cultural or social beliefs rather than biology because of certain facets. There are particular dichotomous prototypes that some babies do not fit in biology. Simply put, some babies are born with ambiguous sexual organs, and they are considered girls or boys to fix the idea that there are only two sexes. There are 1 in 100 babies who are born with an unusual chromosomal structure; for instance, “1 in 1,000 male babies are born with two X chromosomes as well as a Y, hormonal differences such as insensitivity to androgens (1 in 13,000 births), or a range of configurations and combinations of genitals and reproductive organs” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 11). Consequently, the central basis for contemporary studies on masculinity is that masculinity is a social phenomenon.

Moreover, Social constructionists argued that masculinity is a trans-historical and global aspect, unlike biological determinism, which considers masculinity a biologically predetermined phenomenon. For example, Pascoe and Bridges say that “masculine or feminine is not built into our biology, it is constructed in our culture [...] demonstrating

that gender is not naturally occurring opened the door to a consideration of the ways that inequalities between men and women are not natural either” (38).

Social role theory evolved after proving that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon and has helped build the characteristics of both masculinity and femininity. From this theory, the term “sex roles” has been derived and seen as a cultural amelioration of biological sex differences. It has been assumed that social rules and norms attached to a person’s societal position will oblige individuals to conform positively or negatively. Most past and current social role theories assume that sex differences affect social status and behaviour. Laypersons are responsible for all the stereotypes related to sex differences.

Lindegger and Maxwell attempt to prove that masculinity is not a property of individuals but rather a social construction. They state that “masculinity is not a property of men, but a socially constructed phenomenon, an everyday system of beliefs and performances that regulate behaviour between men and women, as well as between men and other men” (25). Moreover, Craig provides another definition of masculinity in which he argues that “masculinity is what a culture expects of its men” (161). Men are often associated with aggressiveness, cruelty, and violence, whereas women are viewed as sensitive, nurturing, and weak. On the one hand, the different social positions specify men to instrumental and assertive roles through which they will have significant positions in social organizations.

On the other hand, women hold an expressive role that assigns them to nurturances, such as child-rearing/feeding and domestic duties. Theorists believe that nature (biological structures and processes) and nurture (socio-cultural influences) are two

aspects that form sex differences. In psychology, Francis Galton contributed most to the debate about nature versus nurture. He states

The phrase “nature and nurture” is a convenient jingle of words, for it separates under two distinct heads the innumerable elements of which personality is composed. Nature is all [...] a man brings with himself into the world; nurture is every influence from without that affects him after his birth. The distinction is clear: the one produces the infant such as it [...] is, including its latent faculties of growth of body and mind; the other affords the environment amid which the growth takes place, by which natural tendencies may be strengthened or thwarted, or wholly new ones implanted (qtd. in Lippa xvii).

Eagly’s social role theory did not focus on biological determinants in forming gender roles. Still, at the same time, it did not neglect their notable role in distinguishing between men and women. For example, women’s gestation and lactation are two aspects that assign women to child care, while the substantial body of men would make them accountable for fighting and hunting. Thus, biological illustration concentrates basically on physical differences rather than psychological ones. On the other hand, the social role theory considers that “differences in the minds of men and women arise primarily from experience and socialization.”

In this theory, Eagly stresses the importance of social roles in determining women’s and men’s behaviours; thus, stereotypes will be selected. In short, “[b]ehavior and gender stereotypes are a function of roles rather than sex chromosomes, hormones, and brain physiology.” A gender stereotype is a generalized preconception about the roles that should be possessed and performed by men and women.

Based on strict/radical constructivism, sex is what the person is born with, while gender is something one learns through gender norms of masculinity and femininity. These rules are open to changes throughout social/cultural conditions and history. In other words, sex is regarded as stable, whereas gender is seen as changeable. Butler attempts to tackle the work of Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, as an example that presents the construction of the biological sex. De Beauvoir claims in her work that the person becomes rather than born as a woman or a man by saying that “One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman” (283) and that “a man never begins by positing himself as an individual of a certain sex: that he is a man is obvious” (5). Similarly, Erving Goffman argues in his book, *Gender Advertisements* (1976) that gender is mainly a “ritual-like display” in which the appearance and behaviour of an individual present “his social identity [...] his mood, intent and expectations, and the state of his relation to them.” He adds that

In every culture, a distinctive range of this indicative behavior and appearance becomes specialized [...] to more routinely and perhaps more effectively perform this informing function, the informing coming to be the controlling role of the performance, although often not avowedly so. One can call these indicative events display [...] If gender be defined as the culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning), then gender display refers to conventionalized portrayals of these correlates (1).

Following Beauvoir and Goffman, Butler adds that since gender is determined by specific laws and rules responsible for its construction, it is, in this case, that culture, rather than biology, becomes a destiny. She argues that the term “woman” could not be



exhaustive because gender is not consistent across different historical contexts, and it is an “ongoing discursive practice” that encourages, on its part, interference and constant reinterpretation. She supports her statement with the one of de Beauvoir by saying that

Beauvoir is clear that one “becomes” a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one. And clearly, the compulsion does not come from “sex.” [...] [N]othing in her account [...] guarantees that the “one” who becomes a woman is necessarily female. If “the body is a situation,” as she claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not always already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a prediscursive anatomical facticity. Indeed, sex, by definition, will be shown to have been gender all along (8).

As mentioned above, Butler resists the idea that gender is something static, and instead, she draws attention to the point that gender is adapting and evolving.

#### **1.4. Trauma and Masculinity in Crisis**

As previously mentioned, gender results from socially constructed concepts like behaviour, attitudes, values, beliefs, and roles assigned for particular sexes to display. The individual adapts these cultural and social norms according to gender to get individual and social recognition. However, theorists like Cohen, Vandello, Bosson, Burnaford and Weaver state that masculinity is in a precarious social status in the precarious manhood theory. It is difficult to get it, and once achieved, it is easy to lose it. Men have to prove their masculinity to other men through public demonstrations since their manhood as real men are confirmed or disconfirmed by others. In case of being threatened, they must restore their manhood and gender status by fighting

aggressively. Moreover, the more their manhood is violated and challenged, the more they will suffer psychologically.

In recent decades, there has been an increasing interest in studying the psychology of men and masculinities within gender studies and men's studies. It benefited from feminist theories about patriarchy and its damaging effects. Such feminist criticism of conventional gender roles was a starting point for the cultural analysis of masculinity and masculine traditions. Moreover, literature and media have produced new portrayals of men and boys. In studying men, the focus has shifted from studying masculinity and male sex roles to examining the men's adoption of different masculinities in different environments. When they violate or fail to fulfil masculinity's gender norms, they may encounter gender role strain (GRS). Joseph Pleck suggested the gender role strain paradigm in his book *The Myth of Masculinity* (1981). He defined the strain as a negative psychological and social effect of violating gender roles.

Concerning Pleck, writers like Farrell, O'Neil, Robertson, and Blazina presented the emotional and physical problems that men face with themselves, other men, women, and work stemming from male gender roles or masculinity ideologies. They revealed that gender role strain happens due to the disconnection between reality and expectations. Thus, males may experience loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, shame, aggressive behaviour, guilt, alcoholism, and resentment. Based on this paradigm, the research examines the impact of gender role conflict on men's psychology, health outcomes, and stress.

In addition, gender role strain highlights that the concepts of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed with a basis on social and psychological experience, and it is society and culture that direct and influence them. In other words, males and

females share the same aspects of humanity, and such sameness is veiled through the enforcement and control of gender roles. Kimmel and Aronson add that “notions of “masculinity” and “femininity” are relational, socially constructed and subject to change” (352).

Peck’s conceptualisation of male gender role strain motivated him to research the three varieties of (GRS): discrepancy strain, dysfunctional strain, and trauma strain. First, gender role discrepancy strain or gender role discrepancy (GRDS or GRD) results from a man’s failure to meet internalized or external masculine expectations. In addition, this variety occurs in case of violating traditional male norms. Peck states that “the resulting disjuncture between these expectations and these males’ characteristics leads to low self-esteem and other negative psychological consequences” (qtd in Levant and Pollack 12).

Second, the dysfunctional or psychological strain is when a male individual successfully maintains the traditional male norms. This kind of man may experience gender role stress in case of facing situations that pose a threat to their masculine identity. Third, trauma strain is applied to a group of men whose experience with gender role strain is viewed as harsh and traumatic. It results from being subjected to traumatic events while attaining masculinity norms. This concept includes marginalised males like Arab Americans, African Americans, war veterans, child abuse or any traumatic event survivors, and gay or bisexual men in heterosexual societies. The novelty of this concept in research makes it less extensive compared to the discrepancy and dysfunctional strains.

The attacks of 9/11 are one of the traumatic events that Arab men have experienced. Since they were blamed for such attacks, they were marginalised and referred to as

killers and terrorists by Americans. Put simply, they have been put in a situation where they might be destroyed and harmed psychologically because of their exposure to hostile social and environmental surroundings. In America, as a white male-dominated society, Arab men, as subordinated ones, were considered a threat to white men's cultural, economic and political superiority. Hence, exposure to negative stereotypes and racial discrimination in different fields has frustrated Arab men in achieving their traditional roles and norms of manhood, including dominance, hegemony, status, power, independence, responsibility, and leadership.

Consequently, they might be trapped in the sentiments of shame, and when these feelings convert to toxic shame, they might experience psychological death. Thus, they might adopt compulsive masculinity alternatives to overcome their incapacity to meet the traditional male role norms. In other words, Arab men attempted to compensate for their less privileged and subordinate social position by challenging hegemonic masculinity and constructing other masculine alternatives, such as risk-taking, alcohol and drugs, and physical violence. Majors and Billson claim that "compulsive masculinity is an alternative to traditional definitions of manhood, compensating for feelings of shame, powerlessness, and frustration" (34).

Besides the exposure to male gender role strain following the trauma of 9/11, Arab men were at risk of having a mental illness. Personally witnessing the destruction of WTC towers and experiencing a life-threatening event, Arab men passed through a wide range of psychological repercussions, the most severe of which was post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to American Psychiatric Association (APA)<sup>6</sup> (1994), PTSD is characterised by distressing dreams, high frequency, amnesia, and intrusive

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<sup>6</sup> APA is an organisation of psychiatrists in the United States responsible for ensuring effective treatment and human care for persons suffering from mental illnesses.

memories of the precipitating trauma. Even though the symptoms of PTSD may vary among individuals, there are three standard features that most individuals experience after any traumatic event.

First, re-experiencing is the most natural symptom of such an anxiety disorder in which survivors relive the trauma. This symptom may take different ways. It occurs in the form of upsetting and intrusive memories of traumatic experiences that come to the survivor's mind without expecting them. Also, the survivor remembers past traumatic memories through traumatic reminders, such as situations, words, or objects that last months and years after experiencing the traumatic event. Arab men may remember the attacks as if they were happening again at the right moment after seeing TV programmes and news reports about the same circumstances or smelling the smoke. Experiencing post-trauma flashbacks and nightmares is another symptom in which the survivor is captured by memories of fragmentary sensory details, images, and other sensations. In reliving the traumatic material, the survivor extensively experiences horror, helplessness, shock, and fear, similar to his feelings when witnessing the traumatic event for the first time.

Second, effortful avoidance and emotional numbing are attempts by trauma victims to avoid remembering the traumatic event. In this case, the individuals with PTSD avoid situations that remind them of the event. Moreover, they refuse to go to places where the traumatic event happened or watch TV programmes about the same event. They even avoid sights, images, smells, and people that remind them of the event. However, the attempts to subdue unwanted thoughts are unhelpful for trauma victims because these suppressed thoughts will return back strongly. Besides avoidance, trauma survivors may find difficulty expressing their emotions and interacting with others. In

other words, they feel emotionally numb; thus, they isolate themselves from people. Nevertheless, others lose interest in future activities or activities they used to enjoy. Such reactions may lead to problems within the family, issues with motivation, depression, and social isolation.

Third, increased arousal is another symptom of PTSD in which the victims may see danger everywhere and become overly alert. In addition, they may face problems with concentration and falling asleep. Finally, anger is another feature that characterises this symptom. The victims feel irritable, easily startled, and prone to angry outbursts with people and even the world. Some show their anger verbally, whereas others resort to physical violence and aggression. Overall, PTSD is not the only psychological reaction to trauma; other problems may affect people's lives. For instance, depression, anxiety, and the use of drugs and alcohol.

### **Conclusion**

In the 1990s, literary scholars attempted to use the framework of trauma theory in literature. It has an empowered language that allows man's inner world to be displayed, like memories, flashbacks, and awful remembrances. Traumatic events, like 9/11, put Arab men in a marginal state in American society. Before examining the Arab men's post-9/11 situation in the American landscape, this chapter explored debates and research on gender and the social construction of masculinities. It showed that there is a hierarchy of masculinities that changed over time. This chapter emphasized more that masculinity is not biologically but rather socially constructed. Moreover, the researcher aimed to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of masculinity and its multiple forms in specific circumstances. The link between the 9/11 trauma and its psychological effects on the masculinity crisis paved the way for Arab American

women writers, in the following chapter, to write about the marginalisation of Arab men in post-9/11 America.

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## **Chapter Two**



## Introduction

The United States has often been regarded as a nation of immigrants. Except for the Native Americans who inhabited the United States for a long time, all Americans mark their origins in different parts of the world. The story of Arab immigration is different from other immigrants' stories. Arabs came to the United States from different places and backgrounds. However, they shared certain traditions and reasons for moving to the United States. Arab men of the first and second waves encountered and still face overt and covert anti-Arab racism; yet, 9/11 triggered the discourse of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Based on that discourse, Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners have been racialised and singled out as the Other.

On the other side of the coin, Arab women were challenging the conceptions of sexism and racism in their patriarchal societies and American society, especially in the aftermath of the traumatic event of 9/11. In the climate of Islamophobia, Americans viewed Arab women as powerless and passive victims of their own culture while regarding their male counterparts as a threat that must be kept at bay. As a consequence, Arab American women's literature, as well as Arab American feminism, moved hand in hand to call for equality. Because of their weak position, Arab women were given a chance by the Americans to make their voices heard.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first one highlights an overview of Arab American men's immigration to the United States to examine their experience of racialisation. The second covers the changing concept of traditional masculinity by Arab American women writers by discussing the construction of Arab masculinities in post-9/11 literature.

## **Section One: Arab American Men before and after 9/11: The Road to a Nightmare**

Negative characterizations have often been associated with Arab men in the United States even before the horrifying attacks of September 11, 2001. However, the traumatic event of 9/11 put a burden on anyone labelled as Arab, Muslim, or Middle Easterner. Besides splitting the world into ‘us’ versus ‘them,’ Arab Americans became more visible, thus, liable to various forms of racialisation. As a result, their sense of identity has been shattered.

### **II.1. The First Wave of Arab Men’s Immigration from 1870 to the WWII**

During the early phase of immigration, the number of Arab American men in the U.S. was not determined because the records could not differentiate between immigrants from the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean. In the 1870s, most immigrants, who entered the U.S., were from the Arab-speaking countries called the Syrian Ottoman regions<sup>7</sup> (Semaan 2). More clearly, not estimating the exact number of Arab Americans in the U.S. was mainly because of the classification system used by immigrant officials at that time. It was based on race, and the Arabs were not classified since, in some cases, they were regarded as blacks and whites in other cases.

At the end of World War I, Turkey, under the Ottoman Empire, controlled Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, much of the Arabian Peninsula, and most of North Africa. Therefore, Arabs, who immigrated to the U.S. before World War I’s end, were classified as Turks and not Arabs. However, by 1899, immigrant officials realized that

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<sup>7</sup> Even though parts of Syria got local autonomy, the whole area remained an integral section of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years. It was divided into territories; each one was under a governor. Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon. The Ottoman Empire conquered Syria in 1516 and maintained power until 1918.

some of these Ottoman subjects were Syrians; thus, they added the classification of Syrians<sup>8</sup> (3).

However, such identification was not nationalist since an independent political Syrian sovereignty was not established yet. The Arab-speaking individuals, who came from this region, were identified by the cultural identity of that region. This identification was accurate in one way or another since it distinguished those Syrian individuals and other Arabs (Turks and Assyrians). Several scholars argued about the life experience and the formation of this group. Some claimed that most first immigrants belonged to the Maronite, Melkite, or Syrian Orthodox sects.

In contrast, Muslims and Druze are the minority who made up less than 10 per cent of the early Arab immigrants (Carlisle 10). Moreover, the motives behind their coming were not obvious. Naff (1993) argued that these first Arab men came from Mount Lebanon and were foremost poor and illiterate farmers and artisans; they were adventurous who left their homelands not for religious or economic reasons but were looking for an adventure and rapid economic earn (5).

Naff concluded that Mount Lebanon witnessed a period of economic and cultural prosperity between 1861 and 1915. As a result, the first immigrants did not leave their countries because of poor conditions. Instead, they were fascinated with American urbanization and industrialization and eager to see them (29). On the other hand, Hitti (1923) and Suleiman (1994, 1999) asserted that the first immigration was an amalgamation of religious and political reasons over economic ones. Hitti says, “[t]he fact that most of the Syrian immigrants are Christians, whereas in Syria most Syrians

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<sup>8</sup> At that time, Greater Syria included present-day Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon.

are Muhammadan, seems to indicate that the religious situation has been a factor in their emigration” (qtd. in Semaan 3-4).

Moreover, the early arrivals regarded themselves as sojourners, “as people who were in, but not part of, American society” (Suleiman 4), since they came with the aim of not staying in America but gaining money as quick as they could and return wealthier to their poor and unstable countries. Therefore, those, who did not return to their homelands, sent money to their families and wrote letters to praise the new continent. The first immigrants were called ‘the pack-peddlers’ because they used an easy way to gain money; thus, they bought lands, married, and created new businesses.

In addition, men of the first generation were later joined by their wives, and immigration was based on the family movement. Naff (1993) claims that “in the U.S., peddlers settled around a supplier, usually from their village in Lebanon. Equipped with two or three suitcases each, they peddled merchandise across towns and cities. These peddlers could be compared to mobile department stores selling clothing, linens, toweling, jewelry, laces, icons, frames, and rosaries” (96).

Peddling encouraged many first-wave Arab men to assimilate into American society, which obliged them to learn English and adopt the American lifestyle. Naff claims that “[t]hey came to America equating success with wealth and found, through peddling, something that for all their labors in the homeland seemed unattainable; they found a feeling of equality and status” (198). Hence, newcomers were encouraged to enter the New World and settle in areas; such as New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, Detroit, and Cleveland. After bringing their families to the States, the early men opened up a new business of owning shops. Men, women, and even children did such a job after finishing their studies. During and after World War I, Latin American trade imported

goods from Europe to the United States; thus, some Arab American men were obliged to export business. In the same line of thought, Naff (1993) states that:

The most fundamental factor in the assimilation of Syrians in America was pack peddling. It was the primary source of the tangible bounty on which their hopes and survival depended [...] The basic virtues of peddling were many. Immigrants could earn immediately; it required no real advanced training, capital or language skills; and it suited their individualistic nature and sense of impermanence. In short, it allowed them to operate on their own terms. Moreover, it spared them the uncertainties of finding work, [...] long job lines, and [...] layoffs (128).

In 1910, peddling began to fade with the flow of new inventions like the car, bus, and subway. The Arab men started to look for other occupations in agriculture, manufacturing, and mining. Moreover, they joined an assembly line or a progressive assembly while running their own business, and their spouses and children were in charge of doing such business. During World War I, Ford Motors Company attracted many workers because of its high pay in which they got five dollars by working eight hours a day. Naff adds that “before 1914 and the Ford Motor Company’s inauguration of the five-dollar-a-day, eight-hours-a-day wage, industrial wages fluctuated from year to year, even from month to month, and varied from skill to skill, industry to industry and city to city” (196). Consequently, by the end of WWI, 100,000 to 300,000 Arab immigrants moved and lived nearby Ford Factory in Dearborn (Rignall n.pag.).

When the Arab communities began to grow, more institutions and buildings were established across the land to reflect their diverse values, traditions, religions, and

culture. Even though the Arab immigrants (Christian Syrians) attended the American churches, they longed to build their churches to have their liturgies in a language they could understand. So, they built Eastern churches to practise their faith and rituals. Naff notes that “[t]he longer a group remained without its own church, the more difficult it was to maintain group cohesion and impose moral standards of its own” (293). For Muslims, their immigration was restricted by the government; Muslims who immigrated to America because of miserable conditions might have pretended to be Christians just to be allowed to immigrate. They attempted to practice their religion secretly in someone’s house, and the first endeavour to build a mosque was in the 1910s; however, it was for dual aims as shops or offices.

Under these conditions, the intellectuals and educated class took the opportunity of being free to attack the tyranny of the clergy in their homelands and America. Carlisle (2011) says that: “[a] small handful of intellectuals arrived in America after the Turkish government began suppressing freedom of the press in the 1880s” (6). In 1892, the Arabic-language press came into existence, and Arab immigrant literature started to show up and spread to most Arab Americans living in that area.

World War I was a watershed for the Arab men in America. The latter cut them off from their homelands and relatives. This aspect increased the Arabs’ sense of isolation and separation, and simultaneously, it created a new sense of solidarity and unity between the Arab immigrants’ different sects and the Americans. After staying away from their original countries for a long time, the pioneer Arab immigrants, often referred to as Syrians, realized they were part of American society. Arab leaders joined the American armed forces and attempted to encourage Arab citizens living in the U.S. to participate in the war to liberate their old countries from Ottoman rule with the help

of the new continent. They arranged campaigns to urge young men to buy American Liberty bonds<sup>9</sup> to participate in the war. Princeton professor Philip Hitti noticed in his 1924 study that 13, 965 Arab Americans joined the American army during World War I (Friar n.pag.).

Passing through the Middle East was dangerous since that area was used for naval battles. In 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement<sup>10</sup> divided Greater Syria into four countries. By 1917, Palestine was regarded as a national home for the Jewish after the declaration of the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour. As a result, several Syrian immigrants arrived in America; thus, the Immigration Law of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act) was enacted. It restricted immigration by setting a quota on the number of immigrants coming from the Eastern hemisphere. Consequently, the Arab men were subject to Americanization, assimilating them into American society.

Because of the Americanization process, many Arab men, who assimilated into American society, attempted to keep their image and preserve their culture and traditions. They endeavoured to tell the Americans about their rich Arab heritage. Politically, they made an effort to allow the government to support some foreign policies favoured by the Arabs, especially the issue of Palestine. During and after WWI, one of the main preoccupations they were concerned with was to help their old countries, especially the Mount Lebanon region, get their liberation from Ottoman rule.

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<sup>9</sup> It is a war bond known as Liberty Loan issued by the U.S. Treasury to help finance the war efforts and the U.S.'s participation in WWI. The U.S. government sold Liberty Bonds after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to rebuild Ground Zero and other damaged places.

<sup>10</sup> It is also known as Asia Minor Agreement (1916). It is a secret agreement between Great Britain and France during World War I with imperial Russia's approval for the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment. Such a treaty led to partitioning Turkish-held Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine into various areas under British and French rule. It has been named after its chief negotiators, Mark Sykes of Britain and Georges Picot of France.

After the war, there were disagreements among the Arabs over issues related to the future of newly liberated countries from Ottoman rule. Suleiman (2000) states that

There was a strong sentiment among the Maronites to support French control over Syria and Lebanon under the League of Nations' Mandate. Others argued for complete independence, viewing France as a new occupying power. On the question of Palestine, there was general agreement in support of the Palestinian-Arab population and for eventual, if not immediate, independence. There was widespread opposition to Zionism as a movement bent on establishing a Jewish state there (5-6).

In the aftermath of the war, the first generation found itself open to the government's efforts to assimilate the newcomers. As a result, they passed through a harmful experience in which they were deprived of the right of naturalization and citizenship by the U.S. and Canadian authorities. They claimed that the Arabs belonged to the Asians; hence, they did not belong to a white race. Suleiman (2000) argues that "[t]his problem of racial identification and citizenship traumatized the Arabic-speaking community" (7). Even though immigrant officials and the press despised the Arab immigrants, they considered them white for nearly the first thirty years from their first immigration to the U.S. However, they were classified as Black rather than White in the following years. So, they started to challenge and struggle over the naturalization status from 1923 to 1924.

It became clear after World War I that America was their new country, and there was no hope of returning to their homelands. Even though it was difficult for them to accept being temporary outsiders, they decided to change from sojourners to permanent



settlers; thus, new changes appeared in Arabs' thoughts and behaviour. Naff declares that they "could not easily avoid adopting the basics for getting along in America" (10). Regardless of any goals and projects about their old countries, new investments and improvements have enhanced their social life. Suleiman adds that "[i]n the United States, one manifestation was the migration by substantial numbers of the New York Arab community from the run-down and extremely crowded tenements of Manhattan to the nicer environment of South Ferry in Brooklyn and beyond" (8).

Arabic food was a way to show Arab American generosity and hospitality by organizing large feasts and parties. Arab women tried to cook traditional dishes by bringing most of the ingredients from their homelands. In addition, Arab men used their traditional instruments, such as the *oud*, in their formal celebrations (weddings) and informal groupings where "Musicians and singers performed traditional village songs at informal musical gatherings known as *sahras*, accompanied by dancing. Such gatherings would become important fundraising events for religious and social organizations" (Carlisle 8). They neither endeavoured to teach their children the Arabic language nor told them about their Arabic heritage.

Furthermore, American newspapers were published and given to young Arabs or the second generation to read them. Eastern churches started to translate parts of the liturgy and kept some in the English language with the aim of not losing any members; however, many have left the church and joined new ones. Naff (1993) argues that

Meanwhile, their American-raised and American-born children were being raised up without a meaningful grounding in the family's language or ethnic heritage. Consequently, when the parents died, few children retained appreciation for the relics and documents of a poorly

understood past; except for certain sentimental items, most disposed of their parents' cultural legacy (5).

Howbeit Arab men assimilated into American society, they were exposed to different types of racism. Even though a counter-argument stated that the Arabs' long history of civilisation, Christian religion, personal qualifications, and belonging to the Semitic race classify them as purely White, this identification did not grant the Arabs any privileges associated with the whites in America since Whiteness was associated with skin colour and western European ancestry. The incident in Alabama put the Arabs and the blacks in one box. A printed campaign bill circulated throughout the state to show both disqualifications in voting. An official, who was running for office in Birmingham, said, "Negro, The Greek, and Syrian should also be disqualified [from voting]. I DON'T WANT THEIR VOTE. If the white men can't elect me, I don't want the office" (Hitti 89). It was an incident that worsened the situation of the Arabs and associated them with African Americans in terms of prejudice and marginalisation.

## **II.2.The Second Wave: From WWII to the Present**

After World War II, the second wave of Arab men started to land in America. Unlike the previous wave, most of the second wave immigrants were not only Christians, who came from Mount Lebanon, but rather a mixture of educated Muslims and Christian Arabs from all parts of the Arab world, encompassing North Africa; women also joined them. Most newcomers were Palestinian intellectuals who came to America after the partitioning of Israel (1948), seeking freedom of expression. This group was qualified in terms of knowledge and English, which they spoke fluently, and most came as students and attended American universities.

However, they were Muslims and retained their Arab identity, unlike the Christians of the first wave, who lacked the sense of sharing Arab identity because of the hostility between them and the Muslims in their home countries. Sharing an Arab identity meant that the second wave of immigrants came to America with a fixed image of the Arab-Israeli conflict; thus, anything associated with secular Western standards was unacceptable. Under such conditions, unlike in the previous wave, they found difficulties in the assimilation process. Compared to the earlier wave, coming to America was based on different reasons. Suleiman (2000) states that

In addition to economic need and the attraction of a significant industrial society, new immigrants often were driven out of their homes as a result of regional conflicts [...] or civil wars [...] or as a consequence of significant social and political changes in the homeland that made life difficult, especially for the wealthy or the middle class in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and other countries [...] [T]hese political and economic motivations can be added a psychological one (9).

As mentioned earlier, the members of this new wave left their homes with different opinions about themselves and America's policies. The first wave of Arab immigrants came to America to be sojourners for a temporary period to get wealth and enjoy it at home. Besides, they engaged in their affairs by building institutions and societies and never attempted to do actions that irritated the American government and people. However, in American politics, most of them never dared to ask for participation in political issues beyond voting as their only right.

Furthermore, they nevertheless showed pride or appreciation for the Arab man who could be “as a city alderman, political party functionary, or a candidate for local political office” (Suleiman 10). This new group came with preconceived ideas about democracy and the role of citizens. They asked for participation in American politics based on their education and political knowledge. Returning to their motherlands was not their goal. However, instead, they thought of having a prolific life with their families in the United States.

Following the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, it was followed by the 1967 war defeat, as a consequence of the escalation of the 1956 Suez crisis, members of the third generation of early Arab immigrants combined with the new arrivals to work for their ethnic community and Arab peoples in their homes of origin. Suleiman stated that the Arab-Israeli war had the same impact on Arab immigrants as the First World War. Both waves were traumatised by the war; hence, they awakened their Arabic identity instead of Syrian. In addition, Suleiman says, “they were dismayed and extremely disappointed to see how greatly one-sided and pro-Israeli the American communications media were in reporting on the Middle East.” He adds that “[t]he war itself also produced soul-searching on the part of many Arab Americans, old and new, and often reinforced or strengthened their Arab identity” (10).

Due to American hostility toward Arabs, they began to organize themselves and think about two goals. The first was to fight against American discrimination, while the second was to modify and balance American policy toward the Middle East. Then, they established, in late 1967, an association named the Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG), which aimed to “represent diverse elements of the Arab- American community and to advance an Arab rather than regional or country orientation”

(Suleiman 11). An organization that assumed a hyphenated identity by coining the term “Arab-American.”

AAUG was followed in 1972 by another association, the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA), to defend and proceed with Arab American interests. Because of Arabs’ exposure to marginalisation and stereotype, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) was established in 1980 and modelled to Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to protect Arabs and Arab Americans from different types of attacks.

In 1985, the AAI was established to encourage Arabs and Arab Americans to participate in American politics. They also attempted to publish and write books, journals, and poetry to praise their Arab heritage and the Arab community in America. Haddad states, “All Arab-American organizations were formed by a coalition of Christians and Muslims from the Arab states. What held them together was the shared view of American stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims and their shared interpretations of events in the Middle East” (20).

Despite the efforts made by the Arab men to make themselves accepted in American society, the negative stereotypes of the Americans did not cease. The main reason behind such stereotypes was lacking knowledge about the Arabs or reading false reports about them. Moreover, these stereotypes were propaganda organised by the supporters of Israel to prevent the Arabs, especially Palestinians, in America from presenting their case to the American government. Furthermore, the negative stereotypes about the Arabs reached the political sphere; thus, their image was distorted, and the chance of participating in American politics was limited, if not nonexistent. Nevertheless, some Arab Americans, like James Abourezk, Mary Rose Oakar, Nick Rahall II, and Ralph

Nader, were elected to office despite all these stereotypes. Ralph Nader was called by the American officers a “dirty Arab” because of his ethnic background (Semaan 24).

One of the main obstacles that recent immigrants confronted was the issue of identity. Unlike the previous Arab immigrants, the latter focused more on the idea of Americanism in their lives. Suleiman states, “members of the third generation of the early Arab immigrants had started to awaken to their own identity and see that identity as Arab, not ‘Syrian’” (10). Such circumstances evoked questions like: who is an Arab? What is Arabness? And so forth. Some questions did not find common answers, which led to the suppression of common Arab identity in the United States. Hence, Arabs experienced an identity crisis that increased tension between the eagerness to be proud of their Arab heritage and their discrimination and segregation by the host society. The American culture and society refused to be proud of their heritage publicly.

As a result, they were obliged to handle such situations through assimilation/integration or isolation. Those, who wanted assimilation into American society, especially middle-class Arab Americans, attempted to make a cultural connection between the Arabs and Americans by finding out what was wrong with American views toward Arabs and working hard to change them. In most cases, they leaned towards “complaining about American prejudice and discrimination against Arabs and by simultaneously denigrating their people and heritage if only to ingratiate themselves with their readers, their fellow Americans” (Suleiman 12). However, others preferred ethnic alienation<sup>11</sup> as a solution since they thought there was no willingness to change their ethnic origins. Therefore, there was no hope of convincing the host society to accept them.

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<sup>11</sup> It can be defined as an estrangement of ethnic identity strongly associated with cultural values, nationalist ideals, and the capacity to use the native language intellectually.

The situation of Arab women was worse than their counterparts simply because of the fanaticism of their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Suleiman adds that “Arab American women have had more problems than their male counterparts in defining an acceptable or comforting identity” (14). In addition, they found it hard to adapt to American society because of their lack of education; they did not master English and were unfamiliar with American culture and customs. As a result, they became more isolated in the new society. Arab women of the first generation did not need to adjust to American culture since they were guided by the liberal modes they brought from their homelands. However, their adolescent daughters found themselves in a clash between their traditional practices at home and the free-living environment in America.

Among the educated Arab American women, identity was necessary to improve their position in America. They attempted to correct the image the Americans held about their treatment by their husbands in their countries. They sought some rights they were deprived of in their old countries. For instance, they rejected the roles assigned by their males of maintaining and transmitting Arab culture and traditions in America. They resented being seen as the preservers of the family’s honour.

In the 1990s, the Arab men and women of the second wave found out that the earlier struggle of Syrian-Arab communities to be classified as white failed. In reality, they became known as “honorary whites” or “white but not quite” (Suleiman 15). Confronted with this situation, Arabs’ views have been divided into four trends. The Christians, who constitute the majority, were not satisfied. Still, simultaneously, there was inactiveness toward the aspects of discrimination plus being provided with the status of “white but not quite.” The second trend was the Arab American Institute,

which called for a special nomination for the Arab minority in America and all peoples in the Middle East as Hispanics.

Moreover, young and educated Arab American women preferred the appellation “people of color” (15), classifying them among the federally famous minorities in the United States. However, others hated to be classified into one category; they were against such descriptive types based on different backgrounds, cultures, and appearances. “Their sense of identity is multifaceted; they are men or women; Arab, American, Muslim or Christian; white or dark-skinned; and so on” (15).

After being in America for more than a century, Arab Americans reached higher levels in different domains. Economically, they did great and fared better compared to the general population. For example, in education, the 1980 and 1990 U.S. census data displayed that Arab Americans got higher levels of education than Americans. Based on the 1990 census data, “15.2 percent of Arab Americans have “graduate degrees or higher” more than twice the national average of 7.2 percent” (Suleiman 16). The same thing was for household revenue and almost all occupations.

Despite all the achievements done by Arab Americans, the media attempted, from time to another, to distort their image to the American public. Arab personalities, like Michael De Bakey or Ralph Nader, were mentioned without speaking about their ethnic background because most hid their ethnic affiliations out of fear of racism. However, in case of hearing about any terrorist act done by anyone, the media announces the Arab man or woman’s origins without even being sure whether he or she is Arab or Muslim.

### **II.3. The Construction of Arabo-Islamic Masculinity before 9/11**

Before understanding Arab Americans’ identity formation, it is necessary to shed light on the racial identification of Arab Americans in the U.S. before and after the



tragic event of September 11, 2001, and its impact on their lives. Before the attacks of 9/11, Arab men and their Arabo-Islamic masculinity had already been described negatively. The construction of Arabo-Islamic identity started in the years of encounters between the Europeans and the Arabs, wherein the West had fixed notions of the Arab world. Such a stereotypical view, known as Orientalism, appeared due to the systematic Western colonization of the East. It was a strategy the European powers used to know the people they would colonize and control them simultaneously to civilize them.

As conceived by the West, the East is a contradicting image of the West in which the East is often described as backward, uncivilized, irrational, and inferior. In contrast, the West is advanced, civilized, rational, and superior. In other words, everything not wanted in the West about politics, religion, economy, and sexuality is associated with the East. Edward Said states in his famous book, *Orientalism* (1978), that “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (1-2). These stereotypes justified the European colonization and neo-colonization of the East.

In the same line with the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century’s ideas about inferiority and backwardness have been associated with biological concepts of racial inequality. Hence, the Oriental man has been dehumanized, and Arabs in Europe have been regarded as abnormal. Since the nineteenth century, the binary opposition between Western and Eastern identities fixed the characteristics of Arabo-Islamic masculinity, as threatening and submissive, in the West. In fact, European colonization of the East was a gendered process described as a male enterprise to penetrate the colonized lands. Based on Western gender hierarchy, a relationship has been established in the colonial space between the masculine West and the feminized East. R.W. Connell (1998) adds:

Imperialism was, from the start, a gendered process. Its first phase, colonial conquest and settlement, was carried out by gender-segregated forces, and it resulted in massive disruption of indigenous gender orders. In its second phase, the stabilization of colonial societies, new gender divisions of labor were produced in plantation economies and colonial cities, while gender ideologies were linked with racial hierarchies and the cultural defense of empire (8).

The European colonial endeavour created boundaries between the East and the West based on sexualized and hierarchical perspectives. The Western dominant masculine identity was viewed as proper, and the colonized male identity was considered a subaltern that needed to be comprehended. In the same context, the construction of such Arabo-Islamic masculinity has been put in an inferior position to the hegemonic one resulting from internal hegemony. Unlike external hegemony, which refers to men's authority over women, internal hegemony refers to a group of men's dominance over all other men. Vilarrubias states that "the colonizers had to ascertain their militarist masculinity against an inferior Other, [...] to justify their power. Thus, they had to subordinate the colonized masculinity through its emasculation" (40).

In fact, the Arabs threatened European societies due to their characterizations of being raced, sexualized, and having abnormal masculinities. In the West, Arabs have been depicted negatively out of fear of Others' hypermasculinity. Moreover, they were feared for challenging Western hegemonic and militarist masculinity. Hence, Western colonialism and neo-colonialism have been justified with a basis on such stereotypes and gendered hierarchy.

Orientalist stereotypes about Arabs in the West, in general, and in the United States, in particular, developed and reinstated at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After American independence, Orientalist stereotypes of Arab backwardness were inherited from Europe to the United States after the First Barbary War (1801-1805). Sheehi points out that since that war, “Islamophobia has pathologized Muslims and Arabs as a ‘nemesis’ to modern normative behavior.” The battle was fought between the United States and the Ottoman provinces, including Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco.

Like the First Barbary War, the Second Barbary War (1815), or the U.S.- Algerian War were against Muslims or Barbary pirates who attacked European and American ships because of White enslaved people who were profitable cargo. Douglas Little (2008) adds that those Barbary pirates “helped spread these orientalist images to the public at large through captivity narratives such as Caleb Bingham’s *Slaves in Barbary* and plays like Susanna Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers*” (12).

Following the wars, Orientalist stereotypes about Arabs spread in popular literature as one of the aspects that reinforced the development of those stereotypes at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his book, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (2008), he argues that through both barbaric wars, Orientalist stereotypes were reaffirmed, and Arabs were seen as “exotic, fanatical, and congenitally predisposed toward autocracy” (41).

In addition, the Arab-Israeli conflict fueled a myriad of stereotypes about the Middle East. It was a conflict between two terms, ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys,’ where the Israeli represented the good guys, and the Arabs represented the bad guys. Since the stereotypes about Arab males were prevalent in the United States, the U.S. foreign policy was pro-Zionist. When Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, stereotypes

about Arabs were strengthened and reinstated again with a basis on Orientalism. As a result, the image of Jews as victims has been changed to victors and Arabs were viewed as weak, inefficient, and reckless. Saloom notes that

American culture began thinking of Israel as part of “the being” of the U.S. Thus, part of the foreign policy apparatus also became part of the American psyche. It is important to note that biases also existed against Jews at that time. However, Americans viewed Jewish people as Westerners, while they saw Arabs as non-Westerners and inferior. Therefore, when Jews were compared to Arabs, Americans viewed Jews as superior (24-5).

Additionally, the stereotypes about Arabs have been referred to as the leader of the Arab country. For instance, in the 1950s, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt, was described as a communist threat and nicknamed Hitler of the Nile. Also, Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, has been dehumanized and portrayed as a rat. The negative images of Arab leaders represented the whole country. Cohen (1993) regards this practice as “a way of converting the state into a single male actor” (qtd. in Soloom 25). Saddam Hussein is another leader who has been dehumanized in cartoons depicting him praying with a large missile that was about to penetrate him. This imagery is another method in popular culture to feminize the enemy and strip him of his manhood.

Nevertheless, the most prominent feature of Arabs’ stereotypes occurred about oil. In addition, the Americans viewed Arabs as responsible for the oil embargo resulting from the 1973 war. The Americans thought that Arabs were becoming more affluent and using oil as a weapon to attack the U.S. Hence, a wide range of cartoons portrayed

Arabs as “beady-eyed and greedy with long, hooked noses [...] depictions and stereotypes of Arabs shifted from older images of the harem and camels, to the bloodthirsty rich Arab trying to economically strangle the U.S.” (Soloom 25).

In the *Chicago Tribune* (1981), a cartoon depicted an Arab sitting behind a desk and wearing black glasses. In front of him, there is a sign of OPEC and another sign that says “buy American.” Through a window, there are visible oil rigs. Such a stereotype represents Arabs’ use of oil wealth to buy American companies and real estate to damage the American economy. By the same token, Said wrote about the negative depiction of Arab males in popular culture:

In the films and television, the Arab is associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, moneychanger, colorful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema (286-7).

Besides the negative images of Arab males in popular culture, another common stereotype that Arabs are often associated with is ‘terrorist’. This term was used in the 1960s till today concerning Palestinians. They were depicted as *fedayeen* which means “freedom fighters”; however, the word was rarely translated. The failure to translate the term urged the Americans to associate Palestinians with deviance and ambiguity. Furthermore, in terrorist rhetoric, Americans added Islam; thus, Muslims. This highlights the notion that Islamic culture is inferior and backward and that Western civilisation is superior and advanced.

Regardless of the different forms of biases, they have a negative impact on Arabs' lives nowadays. In the second half of the twentieth century, terms such as terrorist and anti-American were reproduced following the Persian Gulf War (1990), where U.S. orientalism played a significant role in shaping American foreign policies. Despite the Arabs' alliance in this war, the notion of anti- Iraqi discourse became anti-Arab discourse.

#### **II.4. The Racialisation of Arab American Men in the United States**

Studies on Arab American ethnicity and racial formation stated that Arab American men were first regarded as non-white, then white but not quite. Finally, they legally consider them white (Vilarrubias 22). However, Arab American men were marginalised and isolated in American society for several reasons. First, the diversity of Arab American community, which was united by the Arabic language, urged the Americans to see Arabs, Muslims, and the Middle East as a homogenous group. Whenever the United States declared war on one of the Arabic countries, Arabs-Muslims-Middle Easterners, as one category, were concerned with that war. Hence, hostility increased toward the Arabs in America.

Second, Arab Americans were considered white, but in reality and in many social fields, they were deprived of some privileges because they were white but not quite. Third, the image of Islam was distorted and was often used as a tool to segregate Arab Americans. Since they belong to the Islamic religion, they are non-white Others. Fourth, the intersection of faith and race made Arab immigrants invisible. Most media portrayals claim that all Arabs are Muslims, and that Islam is uncivilized, cruel, and backward.

As a matter of fact, Arab communities in America are composed of different social structures based on their religion. Through those structures, they can distinguish each other as Muslims or Christians. “In Arab countries, new acquaintances commonly ask one another, ‘Are you Muslim or Christian?’”. However, the U.S. organised differences following racial/ethnic categories. “New acquaintances commonly ask one another, ‘What are you, white, or a person of colour?’” (Naber 53). It is stated that race is an unstable notion that changes according to a historical moment or period and mainly relates to the powers and political struggles. It is a socially determined concept that affects people individually or collectively.

The racial discrimination of Arab American men before and after the traumatic events of 9/11 was like a shift from ambiguity to practical shame and humiliation. Due to the U.S. media’s coverage, Arab American men have been inferior to Americans even before 9/11. However, after the events, their ambiguous racialisation was dissolved. They were also portrayed as terrorists even before the events of 9/11. Most of the media’s portrayals were done with the aim of mythmaking tactics to stereotype the experts of the Middle East, sell political agendas, and distort the image of Arab Americans, the unwelcome others, to the public. For example, Egyptian Arabs have been described as barbaric, evil, and villains in the earliest American productions. Later, in Hollywood movies, Arabs were portrayed as villains lacking honour and morals. *The Hostage Series* (1986-1992) shows Arabs raping and killing young girls and mothers.

Moreover, *Three kings* (1999) shows Arabs’ need for American assistance in which the American government protects Iraqi civilians from their dictator ruler. Arab American men were racialised based on social structures and cultural representation. According to Omi and Winant, “Race is a “crossroads” where social structure and

cultural representation meet” (124). The media’s negative portrayals of Arab American men reflected the cultural representation of Arab Americans. Therefore, their social structure was negatively affected; thus, it paved the way for the Americans, who were proud of their superiority, to intervene in the affairs of the Middle East. In the 1960s, Arab American men were portrayed as terrorists. After 9/11, they became a dangerous threat to American national security.

At the beginning of their arrival, Arab immigrants’ encounter with the Americans was fueled by a sense of hostility; therefore, it was a racialisation process. When they arrived, they were designated by the U.S. government as Syrians in 1899. However, this classification did not prevent them from being protected; rather, they were members of the undesirable group, preventing them from getting American citizenship initially. In the early twentieth century, a new and large flood of Arab-speaking immigrants came to the U.S.; they were met with a growing sense of anxiety coupled with racist stereotypes. As a result, some procedures were taken to restrict the Arabs’ immigration. Besides, all Arabs, mainly Turks, Palestinians, Syrians, were considered Asiatics by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1910 (Naff 253).

In addition, The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization has provided city employees with particular instructions about their refusal to grant citizenship to people who are neither white nor black. Stereotypes like backward, religious, fanatics, villains, and terrorists have been associated with the Arabs, marking them as the Other outside the ideological arena of belonging to the U.S. Edward Said theorized this kind of stereotype in his book, *Orientalism* (1978), where he defines the term as

[...] the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in



addition, [he has] been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabulary available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line (73).

Unlike other groups, the discrimination against Arab American men was closely related to their religion and political affiliation. Even though Arabs and Muslims belong to two different religions, the American government and people recognise them as one group tied to one religion. Arab Americans were categorized based on their religion, the same religion as Muslims; African Americans, Native Americans, and Asians were classified according to their physical appearance. Such racial stereotype often regards Islam as a fanatic, backward, and uncivilized religion. Naber argues that “[a]lthough Arabs belong to a multiplicity of religious affiliations and emigrate from diverse regions, the idea that Arab can be defined as a monolithic category persists in popular North American images (in T.V. shows, films and the news media)” (42).

During their settlement in America, Arab Americans constantly tried to influence the government to define them as whites and gain citizenship. Being recognised by the government meant not being subject to discrimination. In so doing, Arab Americans claimed they belonged to the Semitic branch of Caucasian ancestry to get citizenship. The qualifications to gain citizenship were based on the colour of their skin. Those, who had fair skin or were Christians, gained citizenship, while the black-skinned or Muslims were not qualified. After being legally given white status following the Civil Rights Movement, racism was directed more toward Arab Americans. To avoid such a crucial situation, they identified themselves in the 2000 Census as West Asians or North Africans. However, others preferred the ambiguous racial group to avoid being

classified. Due to their uncertain racial and religious classification, whites saw them as blacks or non-white, while African Americans regarded them as white or foreign.

Arab American men's status moved from invisibility to visibility, especially after 9/11. They faced various types of racialisation encompassing government policies, individuals' violent acts, discrimination, and murder in the name of patriotism. The PATRIOT Act (2001) was one of the policies issued a few months after 9/11 to pick out the Arabs and Muslims who became frightened and anxious about the new law. Others feared arrest because of visa irregularities; thus, they escaped to Canada. As a result, 2,870 Arab immigrants were arrested under the management of the PATRIOT Act and the program of NSEERS (The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System). However, they were not blamed for the attacks of 9/11 (Shora and Wadhia 9).

Moreover, many Muslim Americans have been affected by the policies of this act. It made them believe that they were in danger. So, they demonstrated their loyalty to the American state. Steven Salaita refers to such phenomenon as "imperative patriotism," in which it "relies on a certain ethnic imagery to produce a distinction between "us" and "them," with "us" representing good Americans and "them" representing evildoers" (88).

## **II.5. The Negotiation of Arab American Masculine Identity**

The heterogeneity of Arab American community affected, to a large extent, Arab American immigrants' designation and their identity. Identity is a problematic issue that social scientists found difficulty to define because of its fluidity in globalization. Questions like, who are we? Or who am I?, are complicated, and it is difficult to have a clear answer about them because identity changes based on changing situations. Both collective and subjective identities are readable to change. We need to know social and

historical backgrounds to answer such questions by understanding cultural and institutional contexts. Philip M. Kayal defines identity formation as “not a singular process with a definitive endpoint but an evolving social-psychological experience of self-discovery that changes with events, issues, and sociopolitical circumstances surrounding a person” (90). In the same line of thought, Stuart Hall showed difficulty defining identity because of its instability and alteration according to the circumstances.

He says that

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, rather, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (222).

Like the other diasporas in the United States, Arab American men have struggled to define issues of identity and representation. Much of the argument was based on their class, Arab, American, or in-between. In-betweenness state means that the person belongs to neither one place nor the other, and this state resolves by creating new hybrid identities. Homi K. Bhabha, a professor of English, American literature, and language, coined the term hybridity in his collection of essays, *The Location of Culture* (1994). He claims that there is a space “in-between the designations of identity,” and it is “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (4). Moreover, he regards home as a place of stable identity. In the case of Arab American immigrants, the notion of home is linked positively to the past, which means life before marginalisation.

Indeed, postcolonial literature problematizes the concept of home as stable; thus, Bhabha discusses the instability of home and the past. He introduces the word unhomely to oppose the word homely and states that the world between homely and unhomely is a postcolonial space wherein a person struggles to distinguish between two identities (foreign and familiar). The idea of Bhabha echoes the one of Sigmund Freud, who speaks about the intervention of subconsciousness into consciousness, which creates an uncanny moment. It is the same with the intervention of the world into the home and shaking an identity thought to be stable. Consequently, the ambivalences and hesitations are uncanny moments the immigrants pass through. In uncanny or unhomely moments, the alienated Arab Americans feel nostalgic about their homes.

The theorist and writer Edward Said, who spent most of his life as an immigrant in the U.S. and before as a refugee in various parts of the Arab world, discussed the notion of home. For him, the notion of home stands for the no-home, displacement, and instability. In *Between Worlds, Reflections on Exile, and Other Essays* (1998), Said narrates the painful experience of being in exile or out of place and the sense of home loss. He states, “the Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift [...] between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (173). In this quote, Said summarizes the main aspects of exile, including alienation, immigration, immigrants’ experience, assimilation, nostalgia, and racial and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, he adds that certain cultures and identities arise from a new sense of exile.

Moreover, Michael Foucault set up the concept of heterotopia, i.e. the space of otherness, to introduce a new kind of space. The term appeared first in medicine and

referred to the displacement of an organ from its normal position. Etymologically, heterotopia is linked to another term, which is utopia. It is a place that does not exist in the real world; however, heterotopia is a place that exists as a counter-site. Indeed, the unreal utopia and real heterotopia directly connect to the same social and territorial condition.

Foucault explains the contradiction and duality of heterotopia and utopia through the metaphor of a mirror. The mirror is a metaphor for a utopia that reflects an image that does exist in the real world; it is also a heterotopia because the mirror is a real object that shapes our vision. More importantly, heterotopia is a real space where third space identities will be negotiated. For instance, Arab American identity is a real identity space (heterotopia) inhabited by Arab Americans; however, the stereotypes about Arabs make it contradictory.

The clash between the two situations leads the individual to an ethnic identity conflict. In “mainstream-minority” society, “there is a “melting pot”; here, the view is that of a single dominant or “mainstream” society, on the margins of which are the various “minority” groups” (Kayal 347). As a result of two diverse groups in one society, there is a distinction between two contrasting views.

The first view suggests having one culture, one people, and one nation; however, ethnic groups were supposed to indulge in mainstream society in a way that made them disappear. In this case, ethnic groups will be marginalised. It has been manifested in Americans’ early thoughts, for example, “manifest destiny.” It stated that “the whole continent of North America was destined to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, and professing one general system of religious and political principles” (347). While on the contrary, the second view is based on multiculturalism. There was an

increasing chance for the mainstream and minority groups to live together by maintaining their distinct cultures.

In an attempt to live with each other, the acculturation process occurs within ethnocultural groups and in mainstream American society. Regardless of the denial of some Arab Americans, as an ethnic group, to adopt American culture, others adopted some acculturation strategies to assimilate into American society. According to Berry's acculturation model, Those strategies differ across individuals, groups, and communities; they also vary because of the interaction of the two groups' strategies that are in contact. The first strategy is assimilation, in which individuals or a group of people do not like to maintain their original culture and prefer to adopt the new one.

The second strategy is separation, in which individuals preserve their culture and attempt to avoid contact with others. The separation strategy occurs, especially when the larger society segregates the ethnocultural groups. The third strategy is integration, in which individuals prefer to maintain their traditional culture and contact others. The last strategy is marginalisation, mainly for those who have no interest in maintaining their culture out of being forced to do so or having relations with others because of discrimination/exclusion (Berry 700).

Understanding the acculturation process helps comprehend the nature of the relationship between Arab Americans and the mainstream. Separation, as a strategy, was adopted by the first wave of immigrants, the pack-peddlers, to avoid contact with others. However, their children employed the process of assimilation by rejecting their cultural identity and adopting American culture. The children of the first wave

assimilated into American culture during the anti-alien movement<sup>12</sup> in the U.S. It made it clear that the larger society followed the acculturation strategy of the melting pot. However, there was a difference between Christian and Muslim Arabs regarding assimilation and integration. Both used integration as their acculturation strategy, but it was reported that Christians responded more than Muslims to the assimilation and integration into American culture (Semaan 177).

The second wave of immigrants employed the integration strategy. They maintained their cultural identity, and at the same time, they tried to take part in American society. The success of Arab American communities' integration process depended mainly on adopting the multicultural orientation of the dominant group. Another point is accepting dominant and non-dominant groups to live together as two culturally different peoples in the same place. Berry et al. argue that "[t]his strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g., education, health, labour) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society" (355).

To understand the acculturation process and its effects, a psychological approach studied the relationship between an individual's identity development and biculturalism. Sam and Berry state that "[a]cculturation was originally introduced as a group-level phenomenon; however, early discussions around the concept also recognized it as an individual level phenomenon" (13). Graves (1967), on the other hand, defines *psychological acculturation* as "the changes an individual experiences as a result of

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<sup>12</sup> In the nineteenth century, many ethnic and religious groups immigrated to America. These newcomers were not welcomed and were subject to hostility. Some organizations attempted to secure America from un-American ideologies, and un-American people were viewed as aliens and evil. Therefore, antialien movements appeared before the Civil War and in the last century.

being in contact with other cultures, or participating in the acculturation that one's cultural or ethnic group is undergoing." Berry distinguished between the effects and changes of psychological acculturation on a group-level and individual level. He claims, "At the group level, the changes might be in either the social structure of the group, the economic base or the group's political organization." However, he proclaims, "At the individual level, the kinds of changes taking place might be in identity, values, attitudes and behavior" (14).

As far as the individual level is concerned, Berry (1990) made a parallel between acculturation strategies and bicultural identities. Based on a psychological level, the individual develops psychological characteristics nourished by his or her cultural background; thus, there would be an encounter between cultural and psychological aspects. Acculturative assimilation requires the individual's identification with mainstream society only. Acculturative separation implies that the individual avoids contact with the mainstream culture and identifies only with his ethnic culture. Acculturative marginalisation suggests that the individual denies the larger society's culture and his own ethnic culture. Finally, acculturative integration requires that the individual simultaneously accept both the majority culture and his own culture (qtd. in Kaid 49). Furthermore, Wang argues that

[B]iculturalism had a psychological impact on ethnic individuals. Such influence is dual; it can lead to strength and flexibility, and [...] create difficulties for identity development based on the selected strategy. When biculturation appears in integration, the individual will acquire competency in both cultures and not suffer from psychological pain. More importantly, "these biculturals do not perceive the



mainstream and ethnic cultures as being mutually exclusive, oppositional, or conflicting” (51).

As mentioned above, biculturalism can be negative and positive for ethnic individuals, and being bicultural may lead individuals to identity confusion and psychological conflict. However, an individual can overcome psychological outcomes if he develops a set of six skills: “knowledge of cultural beliefs and values in each culture; positive attitudes toward both cultural groups; bicultural efficacy; communication ability; role repertoire; and a sense of being grounded in both cultures” (Chen and Padilla n.pag.).

Arab Americans, like many other immigrant groups in the U.S., face many obstacles and complexities related to acculturation, especially regarding discrimination and oppression. In events like the Arab-Israeli War, the Gulf War, the invasion of Iraq incited, and the attacks of 9/11, the media portray Arabs negatively and describe them as terrorists and fundamentalists. However, these stereotypes existed even before such political events. The influence of the media on Middle Easterners was dangerously well-established in the psyche of mass audiences. The clash between the East and the West dates back to ancient history. Arab American identity seems shaped by American foreign policies toward the Middle East. As a result, Arab Americans struggled to make sense of their identity. Hosam Aboul-Ela argues that

[T]he physical presence of the Arab body in America creates conflict that the individual can only resolve either by “mentally dividing” or by living in “unresolved sorrow.” The source of this conundrum for Said (as for the vast majority of the Arab community inside the United States) is American foreign policy toward the Middle East (29).

Being subjected to different aspects of discrimination, Arab American organizations struggled against anti-Arab racism. Seeing Arabs as the Other from the American perspective reinforced their ethnic identity and brought most Arab Americans together. Such organizations helped in the construction of Arab American identity. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (2011) claims that “Arab-American identity has been honed and reshaped by the immigrants themselves in response to American attitudes and policies toward them as well as their original homeland” (14).

However, not all Arabs are equally racialised because they have diverse skin colours and religions. Such diversity made it difficult for the American government to classify their ethnic category. Besides, Sawsan Abdulrahim, Sherman A. James, Rouham Yamout, and Wayne Baker state in their article entitled, “Discrimination and Psychological Distress: Does Whiteness Matter for Arab Americans?” (2012) that

[N]ot all Arab Americans report discrimination at the same level. Not all those who experience discrimination are affected by it in the same way. These findings highlight the importance of considering the multiple and sometimes contradictory locations Arab Americans occupy in relationship to the U.S. system of racial stratification (2120).

In constructing their identity, first and second-generation immigrants followed different paths. The first wave of Arab men immigrated to America, holding their traditional notions of Arab masculinity and gender relations. Coming to America as Christians for economic reasons, they worked as sojourners with a plan to temporarily stay in America. Based on this plan, they clung to their old traditions. Nevertheless, the second wave of Arab men brought to America their patriarchal and neopatriarchal

conceptions of masculinity affected by the consequences of the 1967 war. As a result, these Arab men found themselves caught between traditionalism and modernism, and such contradiction enforced their unsettled migration to another space, which is culturally different. After being in contact with another culture, the hybridized masculinities were open to change since they passed through the process of cross-cultural refraction.

So, Arab American masculinity experienced a new space, the third space wherein there was a mixture between Arab ideals, discourses of Arab diaspora, and American principles. Hicham Sharabi (1988) examines the in-betweenness of Arab masculinity that resulted in a neopatriarchy. He defines the concept “neopatriarchy” as the specific form of patriarchy that developed out of the particular context of the Arab world as a consequence of European colonization and later decolonization (15). Interestingly, the main characteristic of neopatriarchy is its place between tradition and modernity. According to Sharabi, “the basis of this new patriarchy is the ambivalence in its mixture of traditional patriarchy and Arab modernity” (Angels Carabi and Josep M. Armengol 207-208). Bhabha sees the third Space as having a ‘colonial or postcolonial provenance’ precisely because hybridity emerges specifically from colonial encounters that have resulted in today’s ‘muticultural’ or diasporic societies” (Peter Childs and Roger Fawler 112).

Arab American men settled their transnational experience by hybridizing their masculinities. Once in the diaspora, Arab men resorted to traditions to make sense of their dislocated identity. However, the American and Western cultures have modified this hybrid masculinity. According to Monterescu, “Arab masculinity is an especially hybrid and contradictory type of masculinity, which returns to traditional patriarchal

values, while [allowing] liberal practices that contradict those morals” (208). He also states that the consequence of such ambivalence in Arab masculinity is ‘situational masculinity.’ He adds that “Arab masculinities, thus, are situated ambiguously between those other two masculinities, and so they inhabit a space of transition” (208). For first-generation men, there were fewer difficulties in resorting to traditionalism. They felt that following traditions was a means to attach to their countries of origin; thus, they took tradition for granted.

Yet, the second generation viewed it as a matter of choice influenced by Euro-American decision-making models. Harpel demonstrates that “The second generation is using the idiom of personal choice and autonomy while simultaneously reproducing the values and traditions of their parents” (57). First and second-generation men reproduced their traditions differently from their countries of origin to return to traditions. In other words, they inhabited the third space. Marta Bosch-Vilarrubias argues that

This Arab neopatriarchal contradictory third space is exacerbated once men move from the Arab world to the diaspora. When men of Arab origin migrate to the United States, they may resort to tradition [to make] sense of their dislocated identity (143).

There was a difference between traditional Arab masculinity and Arab American masculinity. There was a tendency toward logic and reason in the diaspora to maintain male authority; however, tradition still exists. One prominent aspect of traditionalism is having wives, as most Arab American men sought to fulfil their manhoods. Kristine J. Ajrouch argues in “Gender, Race, and Symbolic Boundaries: Contested Spaces of Identity Among Arab American Adolescents” that “[g]endered behaviors are created and reinforced through such interactions, supporting heterosexual masculinity through

the process of managing girls' behavior" (386). Whittaker Wigner Harpel also developed the subject of the family. He explained the clash between modernism and traditionalism that Arab American masculinity experienced in the third space. He claims that

Arab-American masculinity, even though transnational and hybridized, continues to emphasize some of the dominating aspects of masculinity. Arab-Americans, in general, are not enforcing masculinity through punishment, discipline, or abuse, and are generally more accepting of fluid boundaries and relations between the sexes. But these fluid boundaries and more open relationships only extend so far as they are still appealing to traditions and status divisions in order to maintain their status as men (90).

Harpel asserted that Arab American masculinity mediates between modernism and traditionalism within the third space. However, Arab American men still use some forms of hierarchy which elevate men over women.

## **Section Two: Alternative Arab Masculinities in post 9/11 Arab American Literature Written by Arab American Women Writers**

In the aftermath of 9/11, Arab American women writers attempted to counteract stereotypes and develop positive images of Arab male characters that made them more alternative. Arab women writers are the most critical agents in post-9/11 literature in making Arab men move their masculine behaviour toward alternative modes.

### **II.1. An Overview of Arab American Literature**

The history of Arab American literature started with the story of migration, and it has passed through many shifts from the early twentieth century till the present. Many Arab American writers began their career by publishing poetry as a literary mode that expresses their feelings and experiences to their families in their homelands. Early Arab American writers were known as *Mahjar* poets, and their literature was *Mahjar* literature or migration literature, a hybrid of Arabic and English literature. *Mahjar* is derived from the Arabic word *Hijrah* which means migration in English. The Arab *Mahjar* literature was established by Arab writers who emigrated from their Arab countries (Syria and Lebanon) to North and South America in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Such modern Arabic literature reflects the in-between space in which Arab American poets lived. Therefore, their writings tackle the third space, connecting their native homeland to the new land.

It was not easy for *Mahjar* poets to live among people who did not know their language and culture. However, they started to cope with the challenges after a period and began to create their literary societies in North and South America. These academic societies played an essential role in developing Arab *Mahjar* literature in the West. The *Mahjar* poets revolted against classical Arabic styles and attempted to adopt free verses in poetry. In addition, they have adopted western civilisation and literature in their

poetry. However, they preserved Arabic originality in their literature. The first Arabic literary society, “Ar-Rabitat-ul Galamiyya” (The New York Pen League),<sup>13</sup> was established in 1920 in New York by the most famous representative of Mahjar literature, Khalil Gibran. It was the most significant literary society that formed all of the Mahjar writers who were known for their new way of thinking.

Even though most Mahjar poets continued to write in their native language, some preferred to write in English. Khalil Gibran and Ameen Rihani, as two representatives of Mahjar literature, favoured writing not in their classical Arabic language but in a modern simplified one. In doing so, they attempted to clean up the Arabic language from old-fashioned words. Ameen Rihani is “the father of Arab American Literature” and an ambassador who fought for independence in his homeland, Lebanon, against the Ottomans and engaged in his literary life in the United States. This league has been a basis for other Arab American writers to follow in their literary works. Many Arab American issues have been brought to the surface; thus, many readers, inside the Arab scholarly community and outside, were attracted to it.

Thanks to Arab American journals, Arab American literature has been published worldwide. The Syrian World Journal is one of the essential journals that published various works of various writers, including the most prominent writer, Gibran Khalil Gibran. Such a journal has been characterised by publishing articles that positively discuss Americanness. In other words, the writers of the league explored, at that time, issues about universality. Besides, other journals, like Mizna and Jadid, are still in

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<sup>13</sup> It is a collective of Syrian and Lebanese writers who supported each other and revolutionised Arabic literature. It was organised first by Nassib Arida and Abdul Massih Haddad in 1915. However, it disintegrated after Khalil Gibran’s death and Arida and Haddad’s return to Lebanon in 1932. In 1990, the Memorial Garden of Peoptry was laid out in Washington D.C. by the decree of George Bush to keep the memory of Gebran alive.

circulation today. They published articles that discuss various matters that Arab American literature and culture face.

Arab American literature has passed its path through three stages. Evelyn Shakir, an Arab American writer and critic, states in his article, "Arab American Literature" (1996), that Arab American literature has developed through early, middle, and recent stages. The first stage is entitled "the emergence of an Arab identity". An important work contributing to this stage is *Wrapping the Grape Leaves* (1982) by George Orfalea. It is a collection of poetry that later became an anthology titled, *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry*. It consists of different works of the Pen League writers. Starting from this stage, themes of identity began to appear in the works of Arab Americans. However, they have recently explored themes beyond identity and discussed political and social issues they faced in their lives.

However, the second stage is "Responding to Arab-Israeli Conflict." The well-known poet of that stage was Naomi Shihab-Nye, and she published six books of poetry, a novel for teens, a book of short stories, and an anthology of poetry. The last stage is "Beyond Romanticism", which focuses on issues related to patriarchy in the Arab world. Various works have been produced in this stage that changed the face of Arab American literature: Elmaz Abi Nader's *Children of the Roojme*, Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, and Joseph Geha's *Through and Through*. In this stage, there has been a noticeable increase in women writers.

Arab American women played a vital role in developing Arab American literature. Their voices are as important as their male counterparts; they helped their brothers create literary societies in the host country. Thanks to Arab American feminism, they became more powerful and voiced their concerns in literary works. In the first period of



migration, women found difficulty in making their voices heard because of the social structure at that moment, and most of the immigrants were men. However, their number increased in the second and third phases, and their situation enhanced because of the new stable circumstances. Thus, they took the opportunity to enlist in schools and universities and got high qualifications in various domains.

Women of the second and third generations were educated and genius in literary genres, announcing an era of influential women's writings. There has been a noticeable increase in literary works written by Arab women writers more than men in the last decades. Their writings tackled sensitive and vital themes, like an identity crisis, diaspora, hybridity, the homeland, sexuality, race, and gender. In addition, they further sought to establish new relations with Arab male writers and Western companions. By the same token, Dalal Mustapha Sarnou argues in her article which is entitled, "Rebellion, creativity and maturity in Arab Women Writings" (2012) that

Side by side with their Arab compatriot male writers and their Western counterparts of both genders, the Arab women writers have found a space for their original literary writings and [...] the specificity of their complex identity as [...] Arabs, women and writers (qtd. in Noman & Shailyasthana 494).

In addition, Arab women's sense of identity has been affected by writers from other ethnic groups, like Asians, Africans, and Natives. Their connection to such ethnic groups is based on alienation and marginality. However, they resisted being referred to as any ethnic minority group that undervalued them to an inferior position. In solidarity with Arab Africans' experience, they will get power in their struggle for recognition. In their writings, they addressed topics, including negative western stereotypes of Arabs.

Moreover, Arab American women writers were considered inferior by mainstream feminism. Therefore, they were compelled to establish feminism, tackling ethnic and women's subjects.

## II.2. Feminism and Arab American Women's Literature

Following 9/11, Arab women became more visible than ever before. Americans or the West often regard them as victims of patriarchy and sexism; they were also not mentioned in discourses related to Arabs and Muslims' anti-discrimination in the United States. They attempted to assert themselves in their writings as a reaction to victimisation and invisibility. They were given a voice after 9/11 more than men as sympathy for their victimised position. Elia argues that "In the present climate of virulent Islamophobia, mainstream American culture seems to favour Muslim women who, unlike their brothers, husbands, fathers, or sons, are not seen as a menace to American society, but rather as powerless victims of their own religion" (155).

Unlike the *Mahjar* writers, contemporary Arab American women writers got an opportunity to speak up about their discrimination and marginalisation post 9/11 with the influence of Arab American feminisms on their writings. Zara Huda Faris explains, "Women need feminism because there are women who suffer injustice." Therefore, contemporary Arab American women writers are feminist activists in their struggle to negotiate their hybrid identities.

Moreover, the term 'feminism' has a long history and is often associated with women's problems, injustices, and dreams of achieving equality in patriarchal societies. Zara Huda Faris argues that "women have traditionally been dehumanised by a male-dominated society, which they call the patriarchy; and that it has always been better to be a man" (1). The origins of feminism date back to the late 1880s in France by

Hunburtine Auclert. In her journal, *La Citoyenne*\_as *La Feminitè*, Auclert tackled women's marginalisation by their male counterparts, rights, and emancipation as the French Revolution promised.

In the twentieth century, feminism appeared first in English, in Britain, followed by America in the 1910s, and then in the Arab world in the 1920s. The foremost objective of feminism was women's issues because women were inferior to men based on biological differences; thus, feminists agreed that women's sexuality was the main reason behind their oppression. Being a theory, social movement, or political movement, feminism focused mainly on women's experience of subjugation in their daily lives. Feminists sought equal social, economic, and political rights for women since they were aware of being in a patriarchal society.

Throughout history, feminism has developed through movements in waves known as The Three Feminism Waves. In contrast to the first and second-wave feminisms, the third feminist wave is inclusive and diverse; it also deals with a poststructuralist and postmodern concept of identity, which is the scope of the current research. It appeared from the early 1990s to the present. The term 'third wave feminism' is indebted to Rebecca Walker, who used it for the first time in 1992. She says: "I am not a post-feminist feminist, I am the third wave." The theories and activism of such a wave were arguably the greatest compared to the other waves. Darraj (2003) states that "The third wave is a global wave, but it must sweep through and carry back messages from women all over the world— and those messages should, in their own words, articulate their visions, their concerns, and their histories" (qtd. in Naples 419).

The third wave is composed of a group of Arab women writers, who regarded themselves as heterogeneous, and there was no need to be linked to white women's

feminism of the second wave. In her preface, *To Be Real*, Rebecca Walker says: “We want to be linked with our foremothers and centuries of women’s movement, but we also want to make space for young women to create their own, different brand of revolt, and so we choose the name Third Wave” (qtd. in Van Newkirk 14). The new generation of feminists thought that the best way to make this wave effective was by inventing new methods to ask for women’s rights. They used new methods like T.V., magazines, radio, and the net.

Furthermore, they used appealing and captivating words, such as ‘girl’ instead of ‘woman,’ to attract the new generation. The third wave thought that they were multicultural, transnational, and global. It was inclusion, as well as an assortment, that made them different. Hence, they attempted to distance themselves from using the term ‘feminist.’ In the USA, this new wave is known as ‘girl feminism’; whereas, in Europe, it was called ‘new feminism.’ In, *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism* (2004), Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin claim

The feminism of younger activists goes beyond the rhetoric of inclusion. The most significant lesson that we have learned from the second wave’s faux pas is that a feminist movement cannot succeed if it does not challenge power structures of wealth and race. If the model within which one works centralizes whiteness and/or wealth, the poorest and most victimized women in the world will be overlooked [...] In other words, we see a new movement evolving from one in which there is a dialogue about feminism and race to a feminist movement whose conversation is race, gender, and globalization (qtd. in Van Newkirk 16-17).

Third-wave feminism breaks boundaries, and some call themselves neo-feminists. They think that the word feminist suggests hatred of men. Moreover, they feel that the word is exclusionary and limiting and want to be multi-cultural and global. They see themselves as citizens tackling issues that matter to men and women. Arab American women writers went beyond feminism and made their studies about the Arab and Arab American world more comprehensive and not limited to women's issues. Said otherwise, they address the issues that affect Arabs in the Arab world and the United States to connect Arabs' and Arab Americans' circumstances and concerns. They have been inspired by Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the 'Third Space,' a liminal space that refers to the diversity of identity and intercultural place.

Third-wave women writers attempted to look for common characteristics that all women share based on refusing Western essentialist representation. It is a belief that negates any common traits shared among women that unify them in one group. In philosophy, essentialism suggests that men or women have some essential features that do not accept change, and those properties are constructed either naturally or socially. However, feminists started to oppose social constructivists, claiming they were also essentialists. Social constructivists can be essentialists if they argue that social construction is typical to all women.

In the late 1980s, feminist thinkers opposed the ideas of social constructionists, such as Gilligan and MacKinnon, based on the appeal that "universal claims about women's social position or identity are invariably false. It cannot plausibly be maintained that women's experiences have any common characteristics, or that women share any common location in social and cultural relations, or sense of psychic identity" (6).

So, anti-essentialism, as a different trend, emerged in the 1990s. It denied that all-natural and social properties are common to all women, bodily and socially distinct and separate. However, anti-feminism seemed to undermine feminist politics premised on the argument that if women do not have something in common, they will not fight for their needs and demands. Stone claims, “By denying women any shared features, anti-essentialism seemed to imply that there is nothing in virtue of which women could rightly be identified as forming a distinct social group” (qtd. in Stacy, Gillian Howiea, and Rebecca Munford 91).

Confronted with such problems, anti-anti-essentialists found that some aspects of essentialism are necessary for women’s political activism and social criticism. They reconsidered that strategic essentialism is essential as a political strategy. In other words, strategic essentialism means “the defence of essentialism not as a descriptive claim about social reality, but merely as a political strategy” (9). Anti-anti-essentialists attempted to depend on the belief of having common characteristics among women to “encourage a shared identification among women that enables them to engage in collective action” (9-10). That attempt paved the way for women to be visualised as a group through a genealogy. Many feminist thinkers thought that genealogy “might allow [them] to reinstate, from an anti-essentialist viewpoint, the idea that women are a distinct social group” (Stone 91). The origins of the word ‘genealogy’ were mentioned in Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887). He regards genealogy as

[A] chain of historically overlapping phenomena that opens up a promising way of reconceiving women as a social group without yielding to essentialism. Genealogically, we can understand women as a social group, yet not as united by common characteristics but,

instead, infinitely varying while entangled together historically (qtd. in Stacy, Gillian Howiea, and Rebecca Munford 92).

After creating genealogies, women allied with each other from different places regardless of their potential differences, affiliations, and the concept of transnational feminism extended even beyond the political borders. Furthermore, such a sense of international solidarity among women in different milieus opened doors to establish solidarities toward their male counterparts or the Arab men. After, the term ‘women of colour’ was created as a sociopolitical group to fight for gender equality. Based on the imagined community that women of colour constituted, Mohanty called such alliances “communities of resistance” (206).

Women of colour have been attached through their displaced identities or in-between identities. The United States, as an imperial power, a multicultural nation, and a place of racial formation, eased the process of creating “identities within many connectivities in a transnational world” (Grewal 196). Adopting certain self-identification strategies with a specific ethnic community will also produce diasporic subjects. As a result, having an ethnic and gendered identity, new notions such as ‘mestiza’ or hyphenated identities will be created (200). These diasporic subjects found themselves resisting the nation-state and, at the same time, trying to assimilate into it. Grewal argued that this transnationalism recognised various nationalisms as visible and provided a space for them to regard themselves as displaced. Living between two or more cultures generates a different type of consciousness or ‘a new consciousness’. Gloria Anzaldua clarifies this point by stating.

Mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and show in the flesh and through the images in

her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war (379).

The marginality of women is a sword of two faces in which it provides displaced subjects with a deep understanding of life, and therefore, new alternatives have been created. The notion of ‘nepantla’ was coined by Anzaldua in 2002, meaning in-between space. In her book, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions of Transformation*, Anzaldua says: “I use the word *nepantla* to theorize liminality and to talk about those who facilitate passages between worlds, whom I’ve named *nepantleras*. I associate *nepantla* with states of mind that question old ideas and beliefs, acquire new perspectives, change worldviews, and shift from one world to another” (1).

The experience of *mestizas* or *nepantleras* pushed Arab American women writers or *mahjar* feminists, especially women of colour, to write. Mohanty claims that “Third World women’s writing as a tool for self-preservation and revolution” (51). Writings of third-world women helped in constructing their identity. Mohanty argues that

Feminist analysis has consistently recognized the centrality of rewriting and remembering history. This process is significant not merely as a corrective to the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history but because of the very practice of remembering and rewriting leads to the formation of politicized



consciousness and self-identity. Writing often becomes the context through which new political identities are forged. It becomes a space for struggle and contestation about reality itself [...]. Written texts are also the basis of the exercise of power and domination (78).

In the 1990s, Arab American women's literature developed and strengthened, especially after the Persian Gulf War. It was a war between Iraq and 35 nations led by the United States to free Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. Regardless of the support given by Arab countries (Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and Saudi Arabia), anti-Arab sentiment and discourses were related to anti-Iraqi political discourse. Consequently, the image of Arab culture was distorted, and the reproduction of stereotypes appeared in which Arabs became viewed as terrorists, Muslims, and anti-Americans. As a result, the relationship between Arab Americans and the American mainstream worsened. Therefore, articles written during the Gulf War on Arab minds reinforced the nineteenth-century Orientalist stereotypes about Arabs as obsessive and incapable of rational thought.

Meanwhile, Arab American women writers tried to question the Orientalist stereotypes and focus on the sufferings of both men and women in their struggle with anti-Arab racism in America and imperialist policies' effects on their native homelands. The main issue that arose during and after the war was racism in which Arab American women became invisible, and this phenomenon encouraged them to make their voices heard. The main motive behind such action was the existence of sexism within Arab American communities.

In the aftermath of the war, three Arab American feminist discourses appeared to fight for gender equality. Based on Mervat F. Hatem's article "The Invisible American

Half, Hybridity and Arab American Feminist Consciousness in the 1990s”, Arab American feminists wrote three distinct discourses. The first discourse was mainly about “Arab American nationalist feminism.” They attempted to assimilate into American society as the best solution to fight against Arab sexism. They thought this negative aspect of their culture was similar to American culture, particularly patriarchy and neopatriarchy. This view mirrored American culture through traditional American feminism.

According to Hatem, the second type was “Arab American liberal feminism.” This feminist discourse viewed that Arab women would gain equality through social reform. This type of feminism called for the deconstruction of the concept of race. This discourse was based on claiming that heritage celebrations would be without attention to race. However, the third discourse was Arab American women of colour feminism. This discourse was premised on creating alliances among people of colour. Arab American women are supposed to assert their political power by examining the nature of the interaction between the two cultures. Furthermore, the possibility of creating genealogies among women of colour was introduced in this discourse to extend the scope of the politicization of Arab women’s fight against sexism and racism.

Moreover, feminist organizations of Arab Americans and women of colour were organised to be politically active. “INCITE! Women, Gender Non-Conforming, and Trans people of Color Against Violence” was established in 2000, and it was in 2002 that Arab Americans and women of colour were given a chance to speak about their concerns in their conferences and publications. INCITE had a significant role in establishing organizations, such as AMWAJ (Arab Movement of Women Arising for Justice), created in 2006. This organization held a conference in a workshop about

social justice and the challenges faced by Arab American women of colour in the United States. It had its workshop composed of the following speakers, Leila Abdelrazaq, Dena Al-Adeeb, Nadine Darwish, Farah Erzuouki, Nesreen Hasan, Nadine Naber, and Camille Odeh.

### **II.3. Arab American Women Literature and Resistance in the Wake of 9/11**

In the world of the post-Gulf war, The terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the World Trade Center were a turning point for Arab American women writers. Western media made Arab Americans negatively visible worldwide; thus, Arab American women's writings started to appear within and across cultural boundaries as a reaction to the backlash that followed the traumatic events of 9/11. In other words, the period following 9/11 did not engender the need on the part of Arab Americans to divert terrorism and fanaticism directed toward them; however, it accentuated Arab American writers, poets, and journalists to reveal facts concerning the historical injustice that Arabs in the Middle East were subjected to because of U.S. foreign policy.

The writings of Arab American women writers following the attacks reflect their awareness of the danger of silence and misrepresentation. For example, Nadine Naber claims that "[...] the September 11th attacks were heinous, but the U.S. government should share responsibility for pursuing imperialist policies that helped create the historical conditions within which these attacks were inspired, planned, and carried out" (217). In addition, the aftermath of September 11th expanded opportunities for building coalitions among activists to counter racial injustice and call for immigrants' rights by referring to Bush's administration and the concept of the 'War on Terror,' which aimed at harassing and torturing Arabs and Muslims.

There are a plethora of works written after 9/11 by Arab American women writers. Texts like “We Will Continue Like Twin Towers” by Mohja Kahf; “First Writing Since” by Suheir Hammad; “Where Is Home? Fragmented Lives, Border Crossings, and the Politics of Exile” by Rabab Abdulhadi; the introduction of *19 Varieties of Gazelle* and “Letter from Naomi Shihab Nye, Arab-American Poet: To Any Would-Be Terrorists” by Naomi Shihab Nye; “America” by Dima Hilal, played an essential role in the production of Arab American literature; they convey the authors’ feelings of anxiousness and responsibility of self-definition in 9/11 trauma. Conrey adds that “these works debunk dominant representations of the events of 9/11 as an inexplicable attack on US freedom” (141). The authors expose the ambivalence of Arab Americans’ experience in the United States. Moreover, they attempted to bridge the gap between the Arabs and the Americans.

Following the attacks, white Americans wrote a surge of literary works on Arabs based on what Rothberg calls “a failure of the imagination.” As a reaction, Rothberg supports a “model of critical multiculturalism” that will lead to the production of “a fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship” (qtd. in Altwaiji 172-173). Therefore, Arab American women writers used this strategy in their post-9/11 fiction. Georgiana Banita regards this writing strategy as “moral racialization” after her analysis of the novel *Once in a Promised Land* by Laila Halaby (173).

More clearly, in their writings, Arab American women writers replaced the dominant racial discrimination with a moral narration. Such discourse has been seen in the following lines from an anthology entitled “*E-mails from Scheherazad*,” written by an Arab American poet and novelist, Mohja Kahf. She was angry at Western stereotypes about Arabs and attempted to challenge and subvert them through her

counter-narrative without being afraid to confront post-9/11 American political views.

She writes:

No, I'm not bald under the scarf  
No, I'm not from that country  
Where women can't drive cars  
No, I would not like to detect  
I'm already American  
But thank you for offering  
What else do you need to know  
Relevant to my buying insurance,  
Opening a bank account,  
Reserving a seat on a flight?  
Yes, I speak English  
Yes, I carry explosives  
They're called words  
And if you don't get up  
Off your assumptions  
They're going to blow you away (173).

To resist and counter-narrate Western representations about Arabs, Arab American women writers used diverse techniques and strategies. Like Shehrazadian Narrative, Laila Halaby employs the storytelling technique to translate Arabs' identities in the diaspora and counter-narrate the western preconceptions about the East. Shehrazadian Narrative or Shehrazadian Orality resists the stereotypical images of the East through the tale of the thousand and one nights. Hence, Arab American women writers, like

Halaby and Noble, used these narratives to describe the experience of having hyphenated identities or double consciousness, as introduced by W.E.B. Dubois<sup>14</sup>, among the Arabs in the new homeland. Telling stories, including folk forms, is an essential literary element for its contribution to constructing national culture and identity.

However, many Arab American women writers used magic realism to help their Arab characters overcome homesickness and in-between state in their narratives. Many elements and worlds in magic stories are not found in everyday reality. Magic realism is another aesthetic expression that breaks the barrier between the real and the unreal worlds. In using magic, the writers find an opportunity to analyse and criticise reality.

In addition, the traumatic event of 9/11 raised many questions about the relationship between the American and Arab worlds. Their relationship has been conceived based on the question, “Why do they hate us?” Many white American writers answered this question with an offensive and insulting tone, and their answer goes around the words “us” versus “them.” This question reflects the hatred of Arabs toward Americans and not only toward specific American institutions. Correspondingly, Arab American writers, in general, and Arab American women writers, in particular, showed solidarity with their demonised community, as seen by the Americans. Their task was directed to a community’s concerns more than individual ones. So, 9/11 did not give rise to a new Arab American literature; instead, it helped in the maturation of this community’s literature which was characterised by its complex themes and concerns before 9/11.

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<sup>14</sup> Du Bois introduces the concept of double consciousness in his book, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903 [1961]).

Such complexity has been described differently among Arab women writers whose reactions to American racism differ. For example, Diana Abu Jaber, Laila Halaby, and Mohja Kahf regard that the racial attitude toward the Arab race had its roots in the involvement of America in the Middle East, regardless of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. However, Naomi Shihab Nye sees that terrorism, the leading cause behind the suffering of Arab Americans in the United States, was shaped after 9/11. Nye is one of the writers who see 9/11 as a starting point that increased political racism toward Arab Americans and put their identity under siege. Nevertheless, those different complexities about Arab Americans' concerns in America widened the social and political scope of post-9/11 Arab American literature.

Post-9/11 novels written by Arab American writers represent Arabs as victims of racial profiling, generalisations, and physical assaults. In addition, Arab American characters, viewed as victims, tend to make relations and communal life with other minorities like Iranians, Turks, and Latinos. They aimed to bridge the differences and reduce cultural boundaries to attain mutual understanding and solidarity in the new homeland. Furthermore, the protagonists resort to their religion, food, music, gender, class, and language, which shape their identity. In doing so, they struggle to find a way that helps them to overcome the boundaries created by the Americans.

#### **II.4. The Politics of Writing 9/11: The Representation of Arab Men in Arab American Women's Literature**

Following 9/11, Arab men suffered from visibility and vilification. A few Arab American women tried to reflect that fear in writing about American racial stereotypes toward Arab American men after 9/11 in an attempt to understand their masculine identity crisis. Their experience of racialisation was twofold in which Arab men

suffered from national trauma due to the collapse of the two towers on the one hand. On the other hand, they went through personal trauma after being considered terrorists, inferiors, and fundamentalists after 9/11. In addition, the media was responsible for shaping public opinion towards Arab men specifically, based on the claim that Arab women were victims of Arab men's patriarchy. Therefore, the media discourse pushed the 'us versus them' mentality to distinguish between the West and the East.

By the same token, Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* showed how the Europeans utilised exteriority and representation of the Orient. He affirmed that their depictions of the Orient were not natural and were just a political doctrine to justify their superiority. Said says that "[t]he closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth" (96). Moreover, the West has misrepresented the East and depicted it as its Other. Such misrepresentations have been developed into stereotypes solidified by media technology in postmodern times. In his book, *Covering Islam* (1997), Edward Said mentioned the role of the media in distorting the image of Islam. He argues that

We often find only journalists making extravagant statements, [...] instantly picked up and further dramatized by the media. Looming over their work is the slippery concept, to which they constantly allude, of "*fundamentalism*," a word that has come to be associated almost automatically with Islam.

Since Arab women were not affected as Arab men in the aftermath of the traumatic event of 9/11, they looked for the possibility of healing the Arab men's spiritual wounds. In other words, they were suspicious or defiant of the dominant culture because



they had not been direct victims of colonialism. Instead, they have been immersed in their patriarchal societies. Therefore, their position makes them the best candidate for changing the Arab culture. Even though the negative view of Arab men dates back to the long history of stereotyping starting from the nineteenth century, certain orientalist conceptions have been developed in Europe and extended to the United States. Douglass Little claims, “Said’s orientalism seems subconsciously to have shaped U.S. popular attitudes and foreign policies toward the Middle East” (10). He also confirms the influence of the Orientalism notion on the American view toward the Arabs by arguing that

Grounded in a Social Darwinistic belief in the racial inferiority of Arabs, Kurds, and Turks and sustained by an abiding faith in the superiority of the United States, orientalism American style became a staple of popular culture during the 1920s through such media as B movies, best-selling books, and mass circulation magazines (17).

Throughout history, the criticism of Arab men moved in parallel with their misrepresentation in the American media, especially in feature films and television. By Jack Shaheen, different volumes have been documented to reflect the historical misrepresentation of the Arabs. In his last book, *Guilty: Hollywood’s Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* (2008), he tackled the aspects of defamation and libel of the Americans toward Arab masculinities. Regardless of such a situation, he argued that there was a sense of hope behind it. He states that

When [he] began researching this book, [he] sensed that post-9/11 images of Arabs would be the same as pre-9/11 ones. They’re not. Even though the majority of post-9/11 films do, in fact, vilify a

people, [he was] somewhat encouraged to report that since 9/11, silver screens have displayed, at times, more complex, even handed Arab portraits than [he has] seen in the past (35).

Resisting both sexism and racism has been the focus of Arab American women's literature since 1983. They created new Arab men based on their experience with gender issues and feminist conceptions. In 1983, the Feminist Arab-American Network (FAN) was established to make transnational relations between Arab women in the United States and those in the Arab world. It also aimed to put a light on the Arabs' liability to stereotypes in America. FAN resulted from the refusal of Arab women's call to the National Women's Studies Association to condemn the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (1982), which the United States supported.

As a result, Arab American women felt and recognised the extent of racism embodied in mainstream feminism after being turned down by such a feminist establishment. Thus, they thought about creating separate feminism that tackles ethnic and women's matters. After the Persian Gulf War, in the 1990s, Arab American feminism developed and became well-organised, resulting from the contradiction created by the war and addressed towards the Arab American communities in the United States.

The outcome of such development was establishing an anthology by Joanna Kadi (Joe Kadi) entitled, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (1994). It is a set of essays, fiction, and poetry written by Arab American feminism and Arab American women writers within ethnic-American studies. They attempted to highlight the history, identity, gender, masculinities, and cultural issues. In this book, Arab American women writers analysed and challenged the

inaccurate and distorted views about Arab women, who were regarded as passive victims in their sexist societies.

Furthermore, another aspect of the advancement of Arab American feminism was the establishment of various organizations after 9/11. For example, Arab American feminism continues advancing with organizations such as AMWAJ (Arab Movement of Women Arising for Justice), AROC (Arab Resource and Organizing Center), and SJP (Students for Justice in Palestine). Such organizations aimed at achieving social justice in the United States focused on Arab American women.

Since Arab men were referred to as terrorists following the attacks of 9/11, it was Arab American women who were supposed to represent them in literature. Nada Elia argued that the climate wherein Islamophobia came into existence was considered a chance for Arab women to have a voice and a word. In other words, mainstream American culture supported Arab women to write since they are regarded as harmless and victims in their patriarchal societies, unlike Arab males, who were viewed as a threat to American security. Thus, Arab and Arab American literature written by women is available in the United States more than literature written by Arab men because Arab American women's literature is more attractive to the American readership than the one written by men. Besides favouring Arab women writers over their male compatriots, there was a distinction even among female authors. Those criticising and denouncing Islam are more favoured than those attacking the occupation of their countries by American or Israeli armies.

The literary works of women writers, like Muna Hamzeh's *Refugees in Our Own Land* (2001) and Randa Ghazy's *Dreaming of Palestine* (2002), focused mainly on the occupation of their countries; thus, they were ignored and panned by American

reviewers. However, other disqualified women writers obtained reviews in the American press because of their favourite subject to American readership: Muslim women's oppressive sexuality. Going hand in hand with Arab American feminism, Arab women writers found an urge to write for two goals. The first was to fight sexism, while the second was to resist the American vilification and racism toward their male counterparts. Nada Elia asserts that

The silencing of Arab and Arab American men—through ostracization, intimidation, imprisonment, or deportation—has led to Arab American women becoming more vocal. Suddenly, we are in demand, as our male partners are disappeared. We are asked to speak at political gatherings, at Women's Month events, and in academic settings when "the Middle East" is discussed. Without our men, we have become exotic once again (158).

Moreover, Arab American literature has developed hand in hand with the advancement of Arab American feminism. Arab American women writers played a significant role in pushing Arab American literature forward. Moreover, they endeavoured to provide a new, positive, and unsterotypical representation of Arab men. To deal with transpatriarchies, Arab American women writers deconstructed dominant masculinities, patriarchies, and gender hierarchies. Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble are two Arab American women writers who represented Arab men in a way that counters and challenges the stereotypical American discourses in two selected works, *Once in a Promised Land* and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*. Arab American masculinities, as depicted by Arab American women writers post-9/11, are

inherently ambivalent and situational, placed between modernity and traditionalism due to their inherited neopatriarchy and dislocated nature.

Twenty-first-century depictions of Arab American transnational men reinforce the experience of uprootedness as a justification for male violence. At the same time, they provide images of somewhat caring male parents whose transnational manhoods change as they are unsettled by changing gender relations in the diaspora. However, these transitory third-space manhoods are opening the way to potential alternative Arab American masculinities because of their in-between nature.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to depict Arab men in Arab American women's writings, starting with the theorisation of the vilification of Arab American men in the United States after the tragic event of September 11, 2001. The event was a turning point for Arab men in which Islam and the Arabic identity became responsible for the misery of such minorities in the new land. Islam falsely became the religion of terrorists and Arab radicals who were prevented from the right of U.S. citizenship. A sense of displacement and isolation overcame Arab men who found themselves in an in-between state. In other words, Arab men experienced an identity crisis that resulted in a state of loss and ambiguity. Such a situation urged Arab American women to speak, on behalf of their males, about the racialisation and marginalisation of their male counterparts by the Americans to correct the image of Arab men from one side and get their full rights from the other.



## **Chapter Three**

## Introduction

The event of September 11, 2001, and its repercussion can be seen as global and encompassing; it bound many countries altogether and affected political, cultural, psychological, and economic levels. Indeed, the terrorist attacks have given rise to collective trauma among Americans in general and Arab Americans in particular. Arab countries have been accused of being responsible for such an act; therefore, a Manichean view was established, in which America was considered good and Arab countries as evil. The growing antagonism between American culture and Arab culture complicated the identity of Arab Americans in the United States. As a result, the West has worsened negative images and stereotypes about the Arab world. Such a fact made Arabs more visible to the Western eye.

There has been an increasing fascination with contemporary trauma fiction in literary studies by Arab American women writers in recent decades. In *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), Laila Halaby intensely displays the problems of an identity crisis, loss of homeland and traditions, and prejudices that Arab American immigrants passed through in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In her work, Halaby wants both to counter-narrate the negative stereotypes associated with Arab men and present the Americans as xenophobic characters filled with suspicion and blinded by stereotypes.

The present chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides the reader with Halaby's counter-narrative style to transpose the negative American stereotypes about the Arabs to reveal the reality of American society wherein there is a conspiracy and religious fundamentalism. The second section analyses the novel deeply by focusing on the national trauma of 9/11 and its impact on Arab men's identity crisis because of their ethnic and religious backgrounds.

## **Section One: Arab American Women Literature: Construction of Arab Identity in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land***

In the aftermath of 9/11, the West has spread negative stereotypes and representations of Arabs culture. As a reaction to the portrayal of Arabs and Arab men, mainly in Western popular culture, the subject matter changes to meet anti-Arab racism that worsened after the traumatic attacks of 9/11. Hence, themes of discrimination, racism, and Arabs' displacement prevailed in most of the texts written between 2001 and 2009. Writers of that period felt the need for self-representation of their Arab community to challenge the widespread misrepresentation of Arabs in the United States. Laila Halaby is among the writers who attempt to counter-narrate the Hegemonic narratives by displaying the identity crisis that her Arab characters passed through after the attacks.

### **III.1. Halaby's Cultural and Political Perspective**

Laila Halaby was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to a Jordanian father and an American mother; and raised in Arizona. Halaby's works have reflected the experience of exposure to dual cultures, Palestinian, Jordanian, and white American backgrounds, and the sense of otherness<sup>15</sup>. In her novel, *Once in a Promised Land*<sup>16</sup>, she mirrors the dilemma of the hybrid identity of an Arab American couple in the host land. The novel's title provides an insight into America and how the world sees it. The Promised Land seems to have a religious reference in which God gave it to Abraham and his subordinates as a guaranteed land. The same goes for Arab Americans in the U.S.; they have ventured to the nation and made it their new home, with more equity opportunities and happy life.

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<sup>15</sup> For further reading, read *West of the Jordan* (2003) and *My Name on His Tongue* (2012)

<sup>16</sup> This work is also significant for winning a selection of Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Author. It is also considered by The Washington Post as one of the greatest and best works in 2007



However, the word “Once” in the title subverts the Promised Land’s beautiful image, which shows the vanishment of the American dream, which later turns into a nightmare. Halaby proposes the experience of being once in the American land from the title. Along with the novel, the main character, Jassim, suffers from an identity crisis resulting in unhappy consciousness. In other words, the unhappy consciousness is the outcome of a disagreement between the belief of the self and the repression of reality.

The novel is a cautionary tale that uncovers the shortcomings of the American characters and their stereotypes or stigmatisation towards Arabs and Muslims alike, represented in the image of Jassim and Salwa, the leading Arab characters of the novel. Hence, the image of Arabs has been distorted because of the media’s influence, and Arab Americans have been regarded as culturally other, regardless of their economic status. Fadda-Conrey (1978) argues that; nevertheless, Jassim and Salwa are “equipped with the economic means to fully participate [...] consumer citizenship [...] their “racialized and gendered bodies inevitably flag them as chronic Others” (150). Furthermore, they become open to what Edward Said named as “the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, [and] dehumanizing ideology” (27).

Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land* recounts the story of an Arab American couple in the aftermath of the 9/11 horrifying attacks. The novel’s setting is in Tucson, wherein Halaby herself grew up. It examines the post-9/11 mood of the nation from the perspective of ordinary Arab Americans, who live thousands of miles from the site of the attacks. In this work, Halaby describes the end of the American dream for a Jordanian couple, Jassim and Salwa, whose perfect and utopian American life ended after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In doing so, she tackles social issues and cultural uprooting related to the Arab immigrants after the traumatic event of 9/11. Regina

Rudailité (2012) claims that “[t]heir family relationship and professional careers gradually deteriorate; they experience the American society’s antagonistic point of view; they start questioning the purpose and essence of their life in the United States in the turmoil of the aftermath of 9/11” (169). The repercussions of 9/11 pave the way for dual infidelity between Jassim and Salwa in their attempt to salvage their untenable American lives. In addition, they hide certain personal matters from each other, like her pregnancy and his killing of a boy.

Halaby unveils, in the novel, issues related to identity loss and the traumatic experience of the Arab characters. Ulrike Tancke argues about the inclusion of the notion of trauma in post-9/11 fiction by stating that “the notion of trauma has been embraced as a means of accounting for the complex interaction of individual and collective to 9/11 and has been credited with producing a new subjectivity based on a collapse of history and memory, time and space” (qtd. in Cilano 78). American anti-Arab bigotry is one of the themes that Halaby puts a light on. The main masculine character, Jassim, was investigated by the FBI and finally fired from his job. Nash states that:

[B]oth Jassim and Salwa come under personal scrutiny by citizens galvanized by Bush’s call to act as the eyes and ears of the government – or what Judith Butler would call ‘petty sovereigns’- a responsibility initially reserved for members of bureaucratic institutions but now extended to the entire nation [...] Yet the point Halaby makes is that after September 11, Arab Americans have fallen one step behind other social outsiders, being branded not only as second-rate citizens but also as social hazards- ‘Mahzlims who are just

waiting to attack us' and whose goals must be foiled at any price (246).

In the novel, Halaby depicts the sad picture of being an Arab in post-9/11 America. She does not focus on the event itself and its aftermath, but rather, she explores the racist attitude of Americans towards the Arabs and the experience of discrimination among the Arabs and its influence on their psyche. Moreover, Halaby shows her main characters in a vulnerable situation over their destiny. Even though they had nothing to do with the attacks, they were attacked. In other words, they were once the most invisible members of the U.S.; however, they became open to hypervisibility in the aftermath of 9/11. In one way or another, Halaby seems to blame the U.S. government for its racial attitude towards the Arabs and its influence on the behaviour of the Americans who used to be tolerant and racial accepting individuals. Nevertheless, after the actions of the U.S. government, Americans became suspicious and intolerant of dealing with the Arabs.

### **III.2. The Use of Counter-narrative as a Resistance Strategy**

The negative repercussions of 9/11 on Arabs and Muslims alike led to Islamophobia in the Western world. Nathan Lean states that “the Islamophobia “industry” in the United States is growing and has created and exploited fear as a means to coerce society, resulting in the perpetuation of prejudices and stereotypes that have found a niche in right-wing populism which has percolated into American and European societies” (qtd. in Tottoli 231). Moreover, in post-9/11 America, the fear went beyond the fear of Islam and Muslims; it was inspired by Muslims who became afraid of their government. Because of such events and many other factors, narratives of “us” vs “them” have attempted to represent the terrorist Other.

Therefore, several Arab Anglophone writers, including men and women, attempt to de-orientalise the Arabs and Islam by employing several discursive strategies, including counter-narrative. In a counter-discourse, Laila Halaby highlights the influence of Islamophobia on Arabs and their identity construction in her writings. After the attacks, the production of American fiction on Arabs has increased with a basis on “a failure of imagination”; hence, Rothberg (2009) demands “a model of critical multiculturalism” that creates “a fiction of international relations and extraterritorial citizenship” (qtd. in Keeble 12).

After Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) publication, Halaby recognised the need for writing a counter-discourse. She wrote for the Washington Post about Hamid’s work, “Extreme times call for extreme reactions, powerful writing. Hamid has done something extraordinary with this novel. For those who want a different voice, a different view of the aftermath of 9/11, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is well worth reading” (Halaby n.pag.). She decides to write back; thus, she offers an alternative representation by reversing the American stereotypes and misrepresentations of the Arab world.

In her writings, Halaby gives the marginalised people a voice that criticises the Hegemonic Narrative. “The prefixes “re-” and “counter-” have become most popular to connote the basic assumption that ethnic authors wrote in opposition to existing and lasting stereotypes” (Schmidt 374). After the attacks, she was a victim in which she was warned, in a store, by a woman who heard her speaking to her daughter in Arabic to not speak again in Arabic publicly. In her writing, she recounts the Americans’ paranoia and their conspiratorial society, overwhelmed with religious fanaticism and radicalism. Lisa Suhair Majaj explains that the Western image of Islam is viewed as a ““menace” to

the West and Christianity; it has more recently been caricatured as the epitome of barbarism, repression and irrational political violence” (qtd. in Lloyd 17).

Halaby considers the media the main contributor to the growth of negative images associated with the Middle East or the Arab world. She angrily says, “When you look at the New York Times, you always see photos of Palestinians with guns and Israelis grieving [...] Or there’s a photo of an Arab man with a donkey. It’s so maddening” (Gale n.pag.). Halaby believes that many of the West’s misconceptions and misrepresentations about the Muslim world result from misunderstanding or an unwillingness to understand Islam. Hence, the gulf between the American mainstream and the minorities was widened. She stresses that “There’s such a need for more understanding [...] If you know my world the way I know my world, there’s no way you can think it’s ridiculous” (Gale n.pag.).

Laila Halaby’s works are included within the framework of a cruel war of words. Awan regards that the war on terror “was fought on many fronts, including the ideological war of words and images that rages on the cinema screens across the globe as well as the pages of pop fiction” (qtd. in Bounar 85). After the attacks, issues about multiculturalism, assimilation, and identity negotiation were raged in the West. Hence, identity became one of the prevailing subjects tackled in post-9/11 Arab writings, including Halaby’s works, wherein she regrets the inability of many people to see Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian cultures without preconceived notions. Halaby’s suffering from being regarded as the Other and subjected to stereotypes returned to her childhood. She states that she “was always in this purgatory stage of ‘otherness,’ neither here nor there [...] My name never seemed to get pronounced right. And people would make these really strange comments to me” (Schuman n.pag.).

In addition, Halaby was shocked when a boy asked her about the number of camels that they have and the number of wives that her father has. Based on this background, Halaby attempts to retaliate against Western stereotypes by providing a new image of the Arabs and the Arab world. Edward Said called such a retaliatory act in writing texts a “re-representation.” Furthermore, Valluvan explains Islam’s constant struggle for re-representation by saying that “the production of identities of ethnic difference and the incorporation into normative Western practices of urban life is better seen as constituting [...] the same process” (2). Based on the work of Said, Awan adds that:

The narrative depiction of Islam through terrorism, wars, deaths, *fatwas*, jihads, or bombings sustains a Western sociological imagination of Islam. Still, at the same token, it thrusts the *Ummah*, or the global Muslim community, into a constant struggle to re-represent Islam. On the other hand, for many Muslims, “Islam” stands for a reactive counter-response to this first image of Islam as a threat. Anything said about Islam gets more or less forced into the apologetic form of a statement about Islam’s humanism, its contribution to civilization, development, and moral righteousness (qtd. in Bounar 85).

In her work, *Once in a Promised Land*, Halaby presents the 9/11 trauma and the construction of stereotypes about Arabs in its aftermath. She starts her novel with metafiction<sup>17</sup> and calls her readers to deactivate the negative stereotypes associated with the Arabs. Instead, she asks them to raise their awareness about Arab Americans and stop constructing orientalist images created by the West. She starts by saying

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<sup>17</sup> It is a literary device where the author or characters acknowledge that they are part of fiction.

Before I tell you this story, I ask that you open the box and place in it any notions and preconceptions, any stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims that you can find in your shirtsleeves and pockets, tucked in your briefcase, forgotten in your cosmetic bag, tidied away behind your ears, rolled up in your underwear, saved on your computer's hard drive. This box awaits terrorists, veils, oil, and camels. There's room for all of your billionaires, bombers, and belly-dancers [...] I can wait until you unpeel them all (VIII).

In this opening, Halaby shows sympathy towards the Arabs and Muslims after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. She claims that the story is about Arabs and Muslims who are victims of the attacks: "Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims" whom the readers are going to know them "only after the World Trade Center buildings have been flattened by planes flown by Arabs, by Muslims [...]" But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything" (VIII). Moreover, she clarifies that terrorists do not belong to the Islamic faith and are not representatives of Arab nations. Halaby is well aware of the deterioration of the Arab ethnicity; thus, she refuses to start her story until the readers erase any preconceptions and biases towards Arabs and Muslims.

Rather than focusing on Arab characters' struggle to define their identity in post-9/11 America, Halaby reverses the stereotypical Western images by describing American society as mysterious and overwhelmed with religious zealotry. Halaby's novel can also reflect Naber's description of Arab Americans' discrimination in America and the state-sponsored violence after 9/11. She claims that the period following the 9/11 attacks brought new and unbearable changes that put Arab

Americans in a position of victimhood to the backlash they never expected. In that sense, Halaby opens her novel by exposing Arab Americans' treatment at the airport and their interrogations, showing the framework of suspension this group passed through. In fact, she was profiled at the airport by the agents who told her to move aside to examine her luggage because of her appearance. Based on such a situation, Halaby indicates the backlash of 9/11 on her as an Arab American.

In her novel, as an Arab American character, Jassim was subject to an investigation by the FBI in the aftermath of 9/11 based on unjustified declarations in his workplace. When his boss, Marcus, knows about the FBI's investigation and the woman who is responsible for such an inquiry, he tells his wife that "Bella's been keeping a notebook on Jassim [...] Because he's an Arab. I found that out after the FBI left" (235). Marcus was surprised by the FBI's investigation, based on statements of a woman "who probably could not find Jordan on a map" (236). However, "Bella's been keeping tabs on Jassim, called the FBI on him at least twice" (236). In such an instance, Halaby wants to reveal the Americans' lack of knowledge about Arabs before 9/11. Consequently, Jassim does not expect such behaviour to happen in a place where he lived for an extended time. He thinks that

[H]is successes would be crossed out by a government censor's permanent marker, that his mission would be absorbed by his nationality, or that Homeland Security would have anything to do with him. Things like this aren't supposed to happen in America. Americans are pure, simple people, their culture governed by a few basic tenets, not complicated conspiracy theories (299).



Jassim ignores the repercussions of 9/11 on him as an Arab. He constantly convinces himself that he is a white American. His high status in American society as a senior manager in a highly valued firm would prevent him from the surrounding hostility and harassment. However, he gradually realises that he is wrong, and his fascination with the host society makes him astonished. Hence, his ethnicity and cultural background become visible; thus, he attempts to reconstruct his perception of belonging. Halaby writes, “for the first time he felt unsettled in his beloved America, vaguely longed for home, where he could nestle in the safe, predictable bosom of other Arabs” (165). Jassim psychologically searches for his identity to find a fantasized satisfaction for himself. Based on Naber’s interpretation of traditionalism as a reaction to moments of displacement in the diaspora, returning to tradition can be an efficient mechanism for Jassim to make sense of his unsettled identity.

Moreover, Halaby suggests the existence of American religious extremism and violence in America through the behaviour of Bella to show that religious extremism does not occur only in the Middle East. She adds that 9/11 happened not only because of religious zealotry but also due to the gap between Eastern and Western cultures and wealth and poverty. Jassim and his wife are presented as wealthy compared to other Americans. However, the event of hitting and killing a boy, Evan, from an impoverished family with his Mercedes hardens the situation for Jassim and urges him to break his social isolation, to which Lahrech and Onwuachi-Willig refer, resulting from their exclusion in American society. He befriends a white working-class woman, Penny, who gives him a chance to know an American world he never knew it existed.

To offer consolation to Evan’s family, Jassim travels to another part of the city that never visited before. Initially, he is shocked by the conditions he faces in the

neighbourhood of Evan. Then, he becomes aware that poverty exists not only in America; it is an invisible crisis that most Americans do not know about. Therefore, he starts to uncover the world he was fascinated with one day:

[U]p and down the streets of Evan's neighborhood and neighborhoods beyond, greedy to see into lives he knew nothing about. Somehow this aspect of American culture had escaped him [...] The more he drove and stared and watched through windows and saw people in their yards and looked at their houses, the more fascinated he became, amazed at the years he had spent without ever really seeing [...] Jassim's eyes, for the first time in his life, singled out pickup trucks and pink faces, shaved heads and snotty-nosed children, food stamps, tattered smiles, ill-fitting false teeth, tobacco-stained fingers, and fourteen-hour-shift bloodshot eyes. His eyes double-clicked on rusted classic cars with engines next to them, cinderblock walls, and forgotten Christmas decorations (274-5).

With its wealth, Jassim never imagined that a country like America would leave such conditions to exist. However, Halaby presents another image of poverty in America when Jassim accompanies Penny shopping in Wal-Mart. Jassim witnesses that Wal-Mart is full of poor people, and among them is a woman from his homeland, Jordan. There, he comes face to face with Jordanian immigrants who do not get the same opportunity for American prosperity as he does. Such contact reminds him of the community and traditions he has distanced himself from for nine years while staying in America.

Indeed, the rejection of his identity as an Arab has led to loss and feeling of having no identity at all. Jassim believes that life in his hometown is easier to control, unlike in America; however, he is wrong since he cannot control his life in America after 9/11. Halaby stresses that America did nothing to ease the plight or predicament of the poor. Hence, she concludes that the West regards Arab or Muslim extremism as the leading cause of 9/11; however, they indirectly result in growing poverty worldwide. Extremism is an aspect of poverty, and its effects are not limited to the Arab world.

However, it seemed later that Penny and Jassim held stereotypical views about the Arabs. During their trip, Jassim's classist outlook echoes Penny's racist behaviour towards Arabs. Nevertheless, they hide their attitudes from each other. Penny expresses her hatred for Arabs speaking with her friend: "Sometimes I don't understand why we don't just bomb those places. You know, blow up Osama and all his buddies and be done with it." However, she omits Jassim. One day, she tells her roommate, Trini, that Jassim is "not some religious freak like them [...] Jassim is a good guy – he's not like them, shouldn't be judged like them. But those people over there, they oppress women and kill each other. They're the ones who should be bombed" (281). She regards that her scientist friend, Jassim, does not belong to that category of terrorists and has nothing to do with the terrorists who deserve to be bombed. Steven Salaita explains this: "Jassim's innate attraction to Penny, then, arises from a certain feeling of alienation that he imagines Penny can satisfy. Penny's attraction to Jassim arises from the same hope, though she indicates that she is interested mainly in the lifestyle that Jassim's income might provide" (91). Jassim's pursuit of the American way of life and the American dream heighten his sense of alienation; thus, he resorts to Penny, whom he views as accepting and trusting.

Halaby also attempts to transpose the image of Islam as the culture of death by presenting troubled American youth who did not give much importance to their lives. She depicts American adolescents buying and selling drugs. Even though Evan is so aware of the danger of drugs, he feels delighted when buying illegal drugs: “His heart pounded more when he left the apartment than it had when he got there. Exhilarating and terrifying all at once to walk out into the possibility of being arrested” (73). Salwa’s American boyfriend, Jake, is also “high on drugs” (319). Halaby endeavours to turn the Americans’ reaction towards Arabic youth culture by associating drugs with the mentality of suicide bombers.

Compared to young American characters, Arab American characters, like Jassim and Salwa, were described as innocent citizens who never thought about taking drugs. After the incident of killing the boy, Jassim was investigated by Officer Barkley about the accident: “Mr. Haddad, have you used any recreational drugs in the past forty-eight hours?” and Jassim replies immediately, “I don’t use recreational drugs” (123). At the novel’s end, Salwa is injured by Jake, who has been arrested after being accused of drug dealing. In a hospital, there were some inquiries about the involvement of Salwa in drugs. Jassim answers after the detective’s statement: “it does seem that drugs were somehow involved.” says the detective. Jassim screams, “My wife isn’t involved in drugs [...] I don’t know what you are implying, but my wife is not involved with drugs or with people like that” (327).

Moreover, Halaby highlights another incident that shows the intentional attack of Evan on Jassim. She asserts that Evan willingly jumps with his skateboard over Jassim’s car: “he then pushed off and jumped, propelling himself straight into the front of Jassim’s car. Jassim swerved left, felt a sickening *thunk*, and watched as the boy

flipped over the hood” (117). After having an investigation with the police, Jassim was discharged. He declares the intention of the boy to throw himself over his car: “the one boy just came out, but he looked at me first, like he planned to do it, or like he thought he would do something else, like jump over the car, only he ended up going right into it” (121). Halaby aims to liken American teenagers’ participation in extreme sports to fanaticism’s fatal outcome, leading to a proliferation of suicide bombers among Middle Eastern youth.

In *Once in a Promised Land*, the counter-narrative strategy deals with the backlash of the 9/11 attacks and their influence on Arabs in America. Because of prejudice and alienation, Jassim and Salwa feel isolated from American society and each other. Outside isolation in workplaces paves the way for inside isolation or a lack of communication between Jassim and Salwa to the point that certain secrets have been accumulated, and no one can tell the other about them. Both of them attempt to soften their isolation by leading parallel lives. On the one hand, Salwa does not dare to tell her husband about her pregnancy since he does not want children yet and her secret relationship with her co-worker, Jake.

On the other hand, Jassim does not inform his wife about the car accident and his relationship with an American waitress, Penny. The lack of communication widens their gap and leads to a tragic outcome. When Salwa decides to return home by the end of the novel, Jassim recognises that the lack of communication is the main factor for their family’s dissolution. She writes that Jassim “had seen in [his wife] a passion and excitement for life that had become dulled almost immediately upon their arrival in the United States. What he wanted in her could not exist in America. Could not exist with him, perhaps” (303).

### III.3. Folklore as a Narrative Technique in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*

The diversity of Arab-speaking countries and their various aspects of culture and heritage paved the way for having rich and diverse folk elements. The variety of dialects and beliefs among Arab countries created a vast fortune of folk heritage, representing a cultural capital that is considered a means for enhancing the prosperity and development of society. However, the history of Arab folk heritage, especially authentic oral forms, has been gradually diminished because of Western colonization by isolating folklore from people and appropriating it in the mainstream in a way that helps their hegemony and dominance over the region. Another reason for the disappearance of folk elements is the tendency of most Arab writers to tackle current issues and forget to mention Arabic folklore. Sayyid Hurreiz explains that Arab laymen and scholars alike “have been so shocked by international events” and “have not found themselves able to speak about Arabic heroism with ease—even if of bygone times” (qtd. in Altweiji 117).

Consequently, the Arab world's privileged class associated themselves with all that is European because they thought sticking to heritage was primitive and backward. The Western culture became superior as a cultural phenomenon that enlightened other nations; it spread among Arab elites. At the same time, ordinary people have been swayed away from the backbone of their territories.

However, Arabic folk heritage regained importance among the immigrants whose primary focus was racism and segregation. McCarus (1994) states that “[I]mmigrants combat identity-related confusion, starting with the perplexing problem of labelling and being labelled and continuing with the process of transformation from an immigrant to an ethnic to a member of an ethnic group” (qtd. in Altweiji 117). The use of

supernatural elements like ghosts, witches, deities, and spirits became common in the daily discussions and narratives of recent Arab immigrant writers, namely in Noble's *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007). Bronner (2002) states that "though far from their native countries, immigrant groups may keep alive mythologies and histories tied to landscapes in the old country, evoking them through architecture, music, dance, ritual, and craft" (qtd. in Altweiji 117). Arab American writers started to deal with cultural heritage in their writings in the form of memories from their homeland and transmitted stories from their grandmothers. Yekenkurul (2011) claims that:

Migrant stories are worth telling and worth hearing. Their narratives create a sense of history, an understanding of the past, and construct a framework within which future generations can orient themselves. Understanding the past helps individuals locate themselves within history and culture, whence they can construct a self-identity narrative that connects the past to the present (qtd. in Altweiji 116).

Arabic folklore is one of Laila Halaby's novel ingredients, where she tackles Arabian fairy tales close to the immigrants' hearts. In an attempt to show the clash that her main character passes through in terms of tradition (Jordan) and modernity (America), Halaby adopts the third-person narrative technique and divides her narration into four parts. Starting with the "Before" section, "Back and Forth" reflects Jassim and Salwa's experience in their host land and homeland. Finally, she ends her novel with the "After" section in the form of a fairy tale about a *ghula* that draws a parallel to Jassim and Salwa's life in America.

The sections "Before" and "After" remind the rhetoric of Arabic folklore and western fairy tales to reveal the conflicts between the East and the West. To recall *The*

*1001 Arabian Nights*, Halaby opts to construct her story based on the “Before” and “After” sections” by starting with a widespread and traditional opening of Arab fairy tales: “Kan ya ma kan fi Kadeem az-zaman,” which is similar to “Once upon a time” of the traditional western fairy tale. She translates it as “They say there was or there wasn’t in olden times” (Halaby VII). This technique reflects Halaby’s pride in her Arabic traditions and culture.

At the same time, she starts her novel with Arabic as a subversive technique to confront or challenge the American language. Moreover, the Arabic opening reflects the image of grandmothers and their didactic stories, which they used to narrate to entertain their grandchildren. As a literary resistance strategy, storytelling is an aspect of holding and grasping one’s identity. Constructing a narrative memory or telling a story is necessary for making sense of one’s identity. Senem Yekenkural (2011) expresses that “[i]dentity is constructed through narrative memory. Remembering the past connects us to history, and that remembering forms a tradition” (qtd. in Altweiji 119). In addition, Bhavnani and Haraway (1994) add that:

We repeatedly rehistoricize ourselves by telling a story; we relocate ourselves in the present historical moment by reconfiguring our identities relationally [...]. Identity [...] is that set of efforts that develop from the collision of histories. It is not an abstraction. It’s an extraordinarily complex kind of sedimentation, and we rehistoricize our identities all of the time through elaborate storytelling practices [...] [T]hose storytelling practices themselves are ways of trying to interrogate, get at, the kinds of encounters, historical movements, the



kinds of key moments of transition for us both individually and collectively (qtd. in Kaid 98).

Throughout the novel, Halaby uses hypertextuality as a form of writing for narrating her story. With the use of hypertextuality, Halaby attempts to combine postcolonial works and postmodern ones. Hypertextuality permits the inclusion of different voices and subjects who share the same ideas in the novel. Halaby includes postcolonial stories through characters like Salwa's grandmother to provide meaning to her postmodern novel. Moreover, she wants to show how past literary works can be helpful in postmodern texts. Such a genre allows the readers to understand the story told, through tales, by the narrators. Gail de Vos explains that "[t]he opening, often consisting of a brief anecdote that makes the story relevant to the audience or an explanation of something within the tale that the listener needs to know in order to appreciate or understand it better, creates the transition from the world of the listener into the world of the story" (n.pag.). By Yekenkurul, such elements of storytelling "function as a didactic lesson in regards to a particular act" (56).

In the novel, Halaby's storytelling technique is like a journey to the past that her Arab American characters make in their quest for identity. Memories can be viewed as a source of relief or as irremediable wounds awakened by a sense of exile, rejection or loss. In addition, telling stories or narrating oral traditions is a reminder of culture and identity, and it is through these stories that Arab American characters realise the real America. A hyperfiction or hypertext, in literature, is derived from an earlier work known as hypo-text. The French theorist, Gérard Genette (1997), defines the concept as:

[...] any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypo-text), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary. So, a hypertext derives from hypo-text(s) through a process [...] calls transformation, in which text B “evokes” text A without necessarily speaking of it or citing it (5).

In fact, Halaby uses hypertextuality in her novel to attract her readers’ attention, show the prettiness of Arabic folk stories, and make them look more realistic. She tackles such a technique under the influence of Leslie Marmorek Silko, known for her use of storytelling in her works, especially in her novel, *Ceremony* (1977). It was an attempt to identify with her culture of origin and present the clash between native and Euro-American stories. Like Silko, Halaby endeavours to promote peace among the conflicting cultures. In addition, they share the same concern in stating that global problems have harmful effects on the world, not just America. In *Once in a Promised Land*, Halaby uses hypertextuality to deliver her story’s message.

Through the narrators and folktales, the reader understands the whole meaning. In doing so, Halaby’s introduction of tales as metaphors in her plot attempts to illustrate the connection between her story’s events and the tales of her original culture. In the novel, she depicts the situation of Arab Americans upon their arrival in America. Then, she highlights the Americans’ negative and hostile attitude towards the Arabs and their marginalisation after the attacks of 9/11. To illustrate more, she blends her narrative with oral stories or Arab folklore to reveal America’s hidden reality and help her Arab American characters escape the present moment and their identity dilemma through memories. As described by Antez and Lambek in their book, *Tense Past: Cultural*

*Essays in Trauma and Memory* (1996), memories of the past have a significant role in forming identity and creating a positive sense and awareness of self.

With Arabic folktales, Laila Halaby efficiently uses Arab mythology as a theme that can be developed independently. It is a story about a *ghula* (an ugly and evil female character in Arabic folklore that parallels a hag in western fairy tales) that stands for America and the promise of the American dream. It was believed that a *ghula* transforms herself into a beautiful woman who lures children to play with her and then eats them after being seized by her. The same for America, it entices immigrants through the American dream with its prosperity, development, and equality and leaves them imprisoned and racialised in the end. Some scholars argue that the word “Ghoul” is derived from the words “ghal” and “ightal,” which mean to kill or to murder. According to Al-Qurtubi, “these creatures are thought to delude travellers in the wilderness by confusing them to such an extent that they lose their sense of direction and are driven to perdition” (Al-Rawi 292).

Halaby starts telling stories of the past when the reader feels the main character’s disappointment and hopelessness living in America. The story is about a woman who hopelessly wants to get pregnant, and luckily for her, a merchant passes through her house selling pregnancy apples. She wonders, “*Could there really be an apple for getting pregnant?*” Finally, she buys one after being convinced by the merchant, who tells her, “If you eat one apple, you will become pregnant.” While doing homework, she puts the apple on the counter; her husband comes tired from his work and eats half of it while leaving the other for her. She eats the remaining half and gives birth to a small boy named Nus Nsays. The story’s very opening begins with the same one used in

Arabic folktales to make it more realistic and, simultaneously, to show the beauty of Arabic folktales.

Nus Nsays (half of a halving) is a small and clever poor man, representing Arab Americans, overcomes the *ghula* with self-control, patience, and tricks. He escapes from the *ghula*'s grip and endeavours to bring her to the villagers. He says: "What would you think if I brought you the ghula? [...] I will bring her. I will catch her for you" (97). Regardless of the ghula's offers of silver, gold, and money to be free, Nus Nsays refuses and instead asks her for peace. The tale of Nus Nsays reveals the boy's matchless and unrivalled power. His courage and wisdom gain the respect of the villagers who despise him at the beginning: "When the villagers saw that Nus Nsays had captured the ghula, they looked at him with surprise. He was standing across from them, and the sun shone on him with his shadow behind him" (98). Halaby tells this story on purpose to show that Arab Americans, unlike Nus Nsays, are unable to live peacefully in post-9/11 America. Nus Nsays does not regard material gains as a source of happiness; thus, he creates his own identity despite his small physical appearance reflecting the past.

However, Jassim and Salwa have been beaten by their antagonist, America. Halaby demonstrates through this story that the American dream is unattainable for Arab Americans. Since there is a clash or inequality between the classes, peace will happen only at the end of fairytales. Salwa wonders about the small body of Nus Nsays and asks her grandmother about it. She replies that his tiny physical appearance is "*To show that [...] small characters can defeat larger evils with determination and clever wit. Every Palestinian has a bit of Nus Nsays within him. Or her*" (original italics 98). Mubarak Altwaiji declares that:

The boy's determination to defeat the *ghula* in *Once in a Promised Land* bridges the boundaries between the immigrants' history and memory. This gap is an obsessing feature of Halaby's novel, where the boundaries between history and memories of immigrants' life in Arabia haunt the protagonists. This determination represents the interaction of the past, and the presence of the immigrants whose memories, fictional or real, of the Palestinian suffering, determine the future of these immigrants who struggle to overcome the rampant racism and discrimination against them in America after 9/11 (118-19).

At the novel's end, Halaby tells another story that blends her novel's plot and characters with Arab folklore rather than just retelling a traditional tale. In this case, the supernatural story is combined with the real tale of Jassim and Salwa. This story also starts with the Arab folkloric opening in the translated Arabic phrase "They say there was or there wasn't in olden times," as an end to the opening tale of the novel (331). The plot is about a farm girl born in a land far from her ancestors, "where fathers—and often mothers too—labored so that their children could change their fates" (331). The *ghula*, as a representation of America, reappears again and starts "pulling the girl away from her familiar world" to eat her (332). The image of holding Salwa with a thread by the *ghula* represents Salwa's attachment to the American dream and consumerism. The invisible threads symbolise the hidden magnetic pull that America practised over Salwa, mainly Arab Americans.

The *ghula*, like America, endeavours to change the girl's thoughts and makes her believe that America is a beautiful place wherein she can find freedom and happiness.

Hence, “the ghula transformed herself into a kindly old woman and turned her slovenly cave into a gleaming villa” (333). Another image that shows the attachment of Salwa to the American dream appears through the character of the ghula:

The hairy hideous ghula saw the beauty in child’s face and grew madly jealous, wanted the baby for her own, but knew she wouldn’t get past security, so she took out her wild ghula threads and began to stitch them under the baby’s skin [...] [w]hen the ghula was done, the baby lay asleep with a thousand and one red threads hanging from her [...] [w]hen the ghula thought the girl would be grown and ripe for eating, she began to reel in the remaining threads, pulling the girl away from her familiar world, gently turning the skein a bit more each day (331-332).

The two characters, Clever Hassan and a nightingale, attempt to save the peasant girl, maiden, from the ghula. It was not expressed in the opening of the story what the characters stood for; however, by the end, it was revealed that Clever Hassan symbolises home, and the nightingale refers to Jassim, who “transformed into an ordinary man” and “lifted up the unconscious and damaged maiden and carried her home across land and sea, hoping that with the proper care she would recover from her wounds” (335).

In an attempt to escape, Salwa is left battered and bloodied. Even though the fictional story suggests what is not found in the real story, this inclusion provides a hint of hope for the protagonists’ lives. Carol Fadda-Conrey states in her article, “Arab American Citizenship in Crisis: Destabilizing Representations of Arabs and Muslims in the US After 9/11,” (2011) that “Although [Salwa’s] actual return to Jordan is alluded to

rather than included in the narrative, this promised final return takes on an ominous form, pointing to her shame and her failure in the Promised Land, which in turn comes to fully exhibit its less-than-promising dimensions” (546-547).

Halaby ends the second tale with the storyteller saying: “Happily ever after” happens only in American fairy tales” (335) to suggest the impossibility of happiness that exists only in American fairy tales. The storyteller adds by saying that “it was and wasn’t” an American fairy tale (335). Who wins at the end? Clever Hassan (home) or the ghula (America)? The question remains unanswered. In combining Arab folklore with her narrative about an Arab American couple living in post-9/11 America, Halaby suggests that Western and Eastern stories can peacefully coexist if kept separate. However, when the two stories were blended, America was viewed as a “hairy hideous ghula” The characters fear falling in its scares (331).

## Section Two: *Once in a Promised Land*: No Longer a Promised Land

In *Once in a Promised Land*, Laila Halaby depicts the end of the American Dream of a couple whose fascination with the idyllic American life ended by showing the multilayered facets of the event and its chain reaction on Arab men. Such a fact complicates negotiating Arab American identity in the United States. Moreover, the novel presents the racialisation of Arab men in the post-9/11 United States and the hidden imprint of feminism.

### III.1. Arab Americans' Cultural Hybridity and Identity Loss in Laila Halaby's Novel

In *Once in a Promised Land*, Halaby presents the trauma of identity loss her protagonists experience because of their hybrid identities. She narrates the tale of the Haddad's life, a second-generation immigrant couple, following 9/11. As mentioned before, most second-wave immigrants were Muslims and from the upper-educated class in their societies. Accordingly, Jassim and Salwa live in a middle-class setting in Tucson, Arizona, wherein the Jordanian Jassim works as a Hydrologist and his Palestinian wife, Salwa, as a banker and a real estate agent during her spare time. Before 9/11, both are competent in their work and are American by citizenship. They care too much about constructing and holding an American identity over their Arabic one, and there is no doubt about being assimilated into American society. However, their American consumerist citizenship wipes out the cultural attachment to their motherland.

Halaby mixes the repercussions of 9/11 on Arabs and their attraction to materialism to show the Arab Americans' loss and imbalance in distinguishing between their native culture and the host land culture. She wants to show that their attachment to the American dream led to their identity destruction and destabilization. In fact, the main



goal behind the presentation of the notion of the American dream is to condemn American materialism, xenophobia toward Arabs following 9/11, and the diversity between the West and the East.

Regardless of the negative aspects associated with the American dream, several immigrants still regard America as a land of dreams, with a basis on the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. The declaration gives all American citizens the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” In other words, all of those hard workers, regardless of their origins, have the chance of being successful. Salwa’s parents are among those who moved to America to make a fortune there. Salwa’s parents are among those who moved to America to make a fortune there. However, they experienced misery in gaining some money, and her father “was working like a dog in a restaurant and dealing with people who resented foreigners who were willing to work harder than they did” (70).

Salwa’s parents’ return to Jordan does not prevent her from dreaming of returning to America and achieving what her parents could not do, and her family was teasing her for being a colonizer. Halaby refers to the consumer American culture as a colonizer. At the university, she once sees a flier on the bulletin board about a lecture with the title “Water is the key to our survival. A lesson in self-sufficiency. Please join us this afternoon at 3 P.M. for a lecture by Dr. Jassim Haddad, hydrologist from America” (238). As a student of banking and economics, the phrase “from America” takes her attention and changes her life. During the lecture, she first views Jassim as “awkward, unsure of himself” (243), then after delivering his speech, she thinks that “the gawky man” who “would embarrass himself had become an orator. His words fell like rocks, sure of themselves and indisputable” (245). She feels “hypnotized” by his speech,

appearance in “his expensive-looking suit and shiny leather shoes” (249-50), and his stories that “she had never heard before” (245). After the lecture, Jassim leaves her “transfixed” (246). When he first meets her and tells her about his intention to marry her, she answers immediately without thinking: “I would like that very much. I would like to go to America too” (68).

The connection of Jassim to America attracts Salwa to the point that she sacrifices her supposed future husband, Hassan, her home, and her family to pursue her American dream. She has been charmed by Jassim’s “obvious wealth” (250) and his job that would satisfy her desire to buy things that “are far too expensive for the likes of Hassan” (241). Salwa is the only child in her family, born in America; her family members have often referred to her as “Made in USA. Miss America” (47). Through Jassim, “who promised her America” (37), she gets an opportunity to return to her place of dreams. Halaby wants to present the American dream through Jassim’s commitment to American consumerist citizenship and his manifestation of American luxury through his wealth. Even though her parents did not yield a profit there, they still believed in the American dream and were delighted to send their daughter to America to get what they could not have. In a statement, her father tells Jassim that he is “pleased that Salwa will return to America, the country of her birth, and be offered what is good” (70).

At the same time, Jassim is attracted to Salwa because of her connection to America. Jassim is a hydrologist and a swimmer whose life circles around “his first love: water” (65). His passion for water dates back to his boyhood in Jordan, wherein his uncle introduced him to the importance of water. His uncle tells him, “Water is what will decide things, not just for us but for every citizen of the world as well” (40). Halaby uses the concept of water as a metaphor that signifies both success and the fragility of

the American dream. Jassim's uncle's fascination with water in his homeland, where he realises his American dream, ends with success.

However, Jassim's fascination with water and America also leads him to exile and identity loss. Initially, he aimed to study Hydrology in America just for a short period "until he could take his bag of learning home and apply it, until home was ready for him" (299). Later on, he decides to stay after acknowledging that "America's ease and comfort was not so much greater than Jordan's" (62). Nevertheless, in the end, he drops his American dream and himself.

Throughout the novel, Halaby portrays Jassim's strong attachment and belonging to America, which is manifested in his belief that Western culture is superior to his Eastern culture. After returning to Jordan, his friend, Nabeel, asks him to stay there to get a highly valued job by the ministry. Meanwhile, he thinks that "America, once tasted, is hard to spit out, with its shiny tools and machinery. Jordan pumps through the blood, but America stays in the mouth. Even with all the American and European support, the ministry was nothing in comparison to Marcus's firm" (64-65). During his visit to propose a marriage for Salwa, he knows about Salwa's American citizenship. Hence, he insists on more on his proposal because "at the very back of Jassim's mind, in only the faintest lettering, was the idea that Salwa's American citizenship would enable them both to stay. Forever, if he chose" (70).

Even though Jassim shows Salwa's father his intention of returning to Jordan, after getting enough experience, he becomes more convinced that with Salwa's citizenship, he can stay in his beloved America as much as he can (165). However, he ignores the risk of identity destabilization. Back in America, both Jassim and Salwa attempt to adapt to the American way of life because they believe that the "ultimate jump into

American life, the one that promises a happy ending for everyone if you just believe it hard enough” (119). Jassim and Salwa have attracted each other by sharing the same dream of going to America and gaining wealth and success.

In the novel, Halaby presents the life of Jassim and Salwa as devoid of any connection to their ethnic background, values, and religion, which are the core of their identity. In their Americanization process, the couple forgets their traditions and religion; in an attempt to be viewed as Americans. Earnest McCarus analyses the experience of the Arab American immigrants in the United States by saying that “[i]n their eagerness to succeed, the immigrant generation neglected to preserve their cultural heritage” (qtd. in Abdelrazek 142). Furthermore, she adds that the immigrants must distort their traditions and values to assimilate. In *Becoming American- The Early Arab American Experience*, Alixa Naff (1993) states that “[f]ull assimilation was not to be achieved as long as there remained a nucleus of native values that resisted assimilation” (10).

Halaby suggests that the couple’s cultural tension or anxiety manifests in their ambivalent attitude toward Western and Eastern cultures. Their behaviour is mainly the result of the Orientalist binary between barbarism and civilisation, as mentioned by Edward Said in his work, *Orientalism* (1978). However, they did not assimilate into American society properly, in that they forgot about their cultural belonging as Arab Americans and abandoned their political awareness as Arabs in exile. With a basis on Berry’s model of acculturation, the couple displays their cultural assimilation through their American practices and habits; nevertheless, their assimilation becomes fragile following the deteriorating attacks of 9/11. Hence, they become torn between two worlds to find a comfortable situation. Halaby criticises this kind of belonging in which

the couple rejects their original culture in exchange for a consumer citizenship grounded on the promise of prosperity and wealth. Despite their efforts to conform and assimilate, 9/11 instigated their exclusion from American society.

Based on Homi K. Bhabha's interpretations of cultural hybridity in his work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), ambivalence has been apparent in the couple's daily practices, like language, religion, social traditions, and food. Halaby tackles the issue of language, which is considered an important marker of identity. The couple masters the Arabic language, but they rarely use it and use English, even in private conversations. While arguing with Salwa, Jassim shifts from Arabic to English and tells her, "*Once upon a time, you thought they were just ignorant and you said they couldn't be blamed for that*" (32). The same for Salwa, Hassan calls her after passing nine years in America, and witnesses Salwa speaking in English instead of Arabic, when she replies and says, "*Hello. Salwa Haddad speaking*" (83). Her accent has no trace of the Arabic language; thus, her identity.

Moreover, the ignorance of her Palestinian origins has been manifested in using her husband's family name instead of hers. However, the couple starts to think about their identity following the attacks of 9/11. Halaby shows their opposing attitude in using the two languages. They use Arabic when they feel sick and nostalgic for their original homes and use English to deal with American problems.

Neither Jassim nor Salwa practices their religion; they are a non-practising Muslim couple who get their material luxuries because of their jobs. In addition, they resort to materialist and secular means to fill their lack of spirituality. Their detachment from their religious affiliation has been substituted by their attachment to the American secular life. At the novel's beginning, Halaby says that "Jassim did not believe in God,

but he did believe in Balance” (3). One day, Jassim asks his father whether he believes in God or not, and his father replies: “I believe in God because I always have believed in God. Because the world is too large and complex to have just happened on its own. Because mankind would not survive without God [...] Because without God there would be no hope” (46). However, Jassim thinks, “*I do not believe in God, and I hope*” (46).

Paradoxically, Jassim does not believe in God, but he hopelessly praises God for hope. He prays to God only in moments of facing any American problems. For instance, after the accident of hitting Evan with his car, he prays to God to be just a nightmare. Halaby stresses that the couple’s great desire to assimilate into American society makes them lose their motherland’s religious language. Brewton Berry notes that assimilation is “*the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture*” (217). Carol Fadda-Conrey (2014) adds that

[I]t becomes apparent that in their pursuit of material comforts, they had slowly relinquished all forms of transnational political engagement, building their image in implicit compliance with the assimilative criteria that guarantee the good Arab-American label. Such criteria mandate that the good Arab-American subject denounce, renounce, or at best neutralize his or her political and/or religious identity, thus conceding to the directive that the only acceptable iterations of Arab culture within the US are those that reify a bland, uncritical type of US multiculturalism (152).

Moreover, Jassim attempts to substitute his lack of spirituality and cover his barbaric self with certain American ceremonial and formal practices. He follows the same

routine that he makes for himself every morning. Jassim wakes up early not to do ablution and prays the dawn prayer as one of Muslims' daily religious practices, "he got up, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and relieved himself, the beginning of a morning ritual as close to prayer as he could allow [...] Jassim did not believe in God, but he did believe in Balance. At five o'clock, with the day still veiled, Jassim found Balance" (Halaby 3). He drives to the swimming pool or the Fitness Bar in the very early morning when there is still peaceful darkness, "a time before emotions were awake, a time for contemplation" (3); he feels that driving, "in a silent nine minutes," (3) is like a secret god: "Driving alone in the dark, alone anywhere, anytime, filled Jassim with peace and pleasure; driving was a secret drug, a secret god" (3).

He follows the same routine for four days every week, "he woke up at this time, usually a minute or two before the alarm, so he could drive to the Fitness Bar, swim, come home, and still be able to spend morning time with his wife, Salwa" (3). Jassim believes swimming helps acquire equilibrium in his day. After so many years of exercising swimming, he realises that his "lung capacity increased as his belief in God dwindled [...] As he thought his body to fight instinct, his mind rejected the notion of God" (46). In a conversation with an FBI agent, he has been asked about whether he prays or not. He replies, "I have not prayed in a mosque since I was a young man" (231).

Being preoccupied with the assimilative leaning, Jassim and Salwa immerse in American consumerism by living a luxurious life based on the American lifestyle. Their eagerness to be regarded as Americans urges the couple to engage in a life which is similar to the American one by having "a giant house filled with desired items, cars too large to fit in their owners' garages, fine designer clothes to decorate the manicured

body and all to cover the shell” (101). Their house seems to share the same gorgeous American style. After entering and inspecting his house, Jassim says, “This is American technology at its finest” (130). Moreover, he owns an expensive and nice-looking car, Mercedes. They do not show any hint or sign about their Arabic background in their American way of life:

That afternoon, driving up recently repaved asphalt to his nestled-in-the hills home, Jassim pulled up his glinty Mercedes next to one of many identical expectant mailboxes, each painted a muted rusty brown [...] Briefcase, burdens and mail in hand, leather shoes crunching over pebbles, he went up one, two, three wide brick steps and through the heavy wood door into an extremely cool house [...] Jassim removed a gleaming glass from a glossy maple cabinet and filled it with the purest spring water money could buy, delivered biweekly up the hills by a gigantic complaining truck he never saw [...] he pulled the trashcan out from under the right side of the sink [...] so that he could reach the recycling basket, into which he deposited a handful of direct mail and ads (22-24).

The adaptation of American eating habits is another aspect that reflects Haddads’ cultural hybridity in their Americanization process. Jassim appears fascinated and accustomed to delivering food and abandoned his hot homemade food cooking tradition. Because of the lavish life in America, food can be prepared in minutes. Jassim “got the pile of menus from a drawer beneath the counter and began picking through. Ethiopian – too far away. Italian – no. Pizza – no. Thai [...] yes, Thai food would be perfect” (131). Food is a crucial part of people’s lives and is more than just a means of



survival. It is a marker of identity; through it, people see themselves and others. In other words, people construct and define their identity through culinary practices.

Nathalie Handal (1997) notes that food is “an identity definer [...] has been one of the most powerful cultural transmitters leading Arab-Americans to their roots, and through food they have preserved their roots” (qtd. in Ghouaiel 282). She adds that “food is [a] leading cultural component” (139); thus, “Arab immigrants consider that if their children and grandchildren eat Arabic food and like it, this confirms that they have embraced their roots and that they belong to that civilization and honor it” (140). Claude Fischler (1988) states that “cooking helps to give food and its eaters a meaning in the world. The order it constructs and applies is inseparable from the order of the world which culture as a whole construct” (n.pag.).

Being detached from culinary habits, Haddads brace the assimilative tendency and weaken the connection to their motherland. However, in moments of homelessness and displacement, the couple eats Arabic food, reminding them of their home, culture and identity. In some instances, Halaby depicts Jassim and his wife trying to refresh their memories about the past and the Arabic food as a reaction to their identity destabilization and failure in the Americanization process.

Even in America, the couple’s relationship with the Arab American communities is limited. Halaby criticises American society for its isolationism and individualism, which made her main character feel displaced following the attacks. She considers that America has seduced Haddads and taken them away from their cultural and religious values with a promise of providing them with wealth and happiness. The only wealth that America can give the Arab immigrants is monetary. She criticises America’s “consumer culture [that] is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity

production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption” (Featherstone 13). Despite being a firm believer in the American dream, Stephen Matterson criticises it by stating that

[T]he material aspect of the dream is a corruption of its social vision [...] it is an illusion through which inequalities are maintained and class realities are concealed [...] it fosters individual achievement at the expense of social progress [...] it supports ruthless plutocracy [...] it equates personal fulfillment with material gain, and [...] it results in a narrowly selfish definition of success (qtd. in Muley 25).

The chance of living in the American Promised Land started to fade away, resulting from the couple’s conflicts and the social clashes that finally broke down their marriage. They become overwhelmed with the feeling that they no longer live in a safe and secure place. Hence, their American dream has been shattered.

### **III.2. Cultural Trauma of the Male Protagonist in Post-9/11 America**

At the novel’s beginning, Laila Halaby presents the collapse of the World Trade Center by Arabs and Muslims and its backlash on Arab American immigrants. She insists that her Arab characters, Jassim and Salwa, have no relation to this traumatic event. This national trauma had a devastating consequence on American society, in general, and an Arab American couple in particular. After 9/11, the couple’s relationship has broken down due to many problems. Jassim and Salwa become more aware of the uselessness of their luxuries to make up for the increasing discrimination and marginalisation of the Arabs experienced after 9/11. Such aspects of alienation allow them to be more conscious of the Arabic identity they attempted to ignore years

before. Based on Haddad's explanation about the Arab Americans' reaction to the hostile and aggressive American attitude following 9/11, Halaby shows her protagonists' attempt to reshape their identity due to Americans' negative behaviour.

The couple, particularly Jassim, early in the novel, does not think about the possible reactions of the Americans towards the Arabs after the traumatic attacks. Immediately after the attacks, the couple receives a call from their families in Jordan to confirm their safety; Jassim does not understand their fears and worries. He sees that "[t]hey were all intelligent human beings, and knew that America was a large country and that New York was on the East Coast, and yet they had called to see if he and Salwa were safe. It was ridiculous, and he had told his father so. 'Baba, we are so far away, there is nothing to worry about'" (21). Moreover, Salwa tells him about her Lebanese friend, Randa, who is worried about her kids and about "the repercussion toward Arabs in this country" (21). Jassim replies: "Why would anyone hurt Randa's kids? People are not so ignorant as to take revenge on a Lebanese family for the act of a few Saudi extremists who destroyed those buildings" (21).

Furthermore, Jassim sees no relation between the attacks and the changing behaviour of his secretaries towards him in the meeting after the attack. He wonders, "Why? Surely not because of what happened in New York? He had as little connection to those men as they did, and there was no way he could accept that anyone is able to believe him capable of sharing in their extremist philosophy. No, he was not indulging this notion" (22). He regards the secretaries, who behave strangely, and even the other members see him suspiciously. He even hears comments about possible terrorists who will destroy the water supplies. "Jassim felt a vague prickle as he reviewed his comments at the meeting, as he analyzed the dropped gazes of several of the staff

members, the less than warm reception he has received from the city's engineers, a group who usually welcomed him with doughnuts and laughter" (25-26).

Regardless of what happened in the meeting, Jassim attempts to eliminate the image from his mind in a way that rejects reality. "'Finish,' Jassim said aloud, refusing to entertain paranoid thoughts" (26). He rejects the new reality, believing that the Americans' good intentions, professional success and status will prevent him from this national crisis.

However, shortly after the attacks, Haddads find themselves face to face with racial profiling for the first time. Jassim realises that he is wrong after hearing about the real homicide of "a Sikh gas station attendant in Phoenix [...] *in retaliation*" (21). The interpretations of Connell and Messerschmidt related to hegemonic masculinity and its oppression of marginalized masculinities can also be applied to Halaby's protagonist, Salwa, and her reactions to the Americans' mistreatment. Like Halaby's response, her response to such news has been full of anger, and she regards people as "*stupid and macho*" (21). She voices her fears and tells Jassim: "*Macho*. You know, throwing their weight around if something happens that they don't like [...] I hate to think what sort of retaliation there is going to be on a governmental level for what happened. Jassim, it's not going to be easy, especially for you" (21).

Correspondingly, Halaby wants to show the outcome of internal hegemony in which Arabo-Islamic masculinity was put in an inferior position to western masculinity. Aware of Western masculinity's view of Arab masculinity, Salwa predicts what will happen to Jassim on the personal and governmental levels. She calls Western masculinity a "*macho*," which refers to the hegemonic Western masculinity that claims to be superior to other masculinities. She worries more about Jassim as a Hydrologist

who accesses Arizona water deposits. She also expects the negative consequences of this collective trauma on Arab American men due to their Arabo-Islamic masculinity, which is often associated with the image of the monster-terrorist.

As a consequence, Halaby discusses, in the novel, the shift of collective trauma into individual trauma, with a basis on Mucci, Kai Erikson, and Geraldine Schaap's theories of cultural and individual traumas. Although Jassim does not recognise the present situation, he becomes unsettled and starts posing questions about his uncertain future in America. Under the influence of trauma, Jassim cannot know whether he is in reality or fantasy. 9/11 trauma caused damage to his brain. His brain becomes unable to single out the past from the present. On September 11, 2001, he, as usual, starts his day; his peaceful morning has been disturbed in the swimming pool when images of the fall of the Twin Towers come to his mind: "his brain seized on picture after picture, humans leaping from impossible heights, plumes of smoke filling the air and then charging down the narrow streets. He wondered what it smelled like. Ash? Dust? Burning steel?" (19). However, he feels calm and does not give too much importance to the event in his house and his car; it is in the swimming pool that he re-mentions the images of destruction again:

[I]t was not until he was in the pool and swimming that his mind wrapped around the pictures of those two massive buildings collapsing to the ground so neatly beneath the columns of smoke that he returned to the impossibility of what he had seen. What entered into someone's mind to make him (them!) want to do such a thing? It was incomprehensible. And unnatural—human beings fought to survive, not to die. And had they, those many people who seemed to

join together in crazy suicide, had any idea that they would cause such devastation? That both buildings would collapse? (20).

The succession of tragedies has traumatised Jassim and led to his final downfall. The first instance wherein Jassim faces racial visibility happens when Jassim is in a gym. He meets Jack Franks, who disturbs him by asking about his origins. He tells Jassim about the story of his daughter, who married an Arab man from Jordan. He states, “Hard to say. She converted. She’s an Arab now” (6). Franks’s statement shows Americans’ lack of religious knowledge and misunderstanding about the Arab world through his equation of Arabs with Muslims and the idea of converting to Arabness. Later, it was discovered that Franks called the FBI and reported about Jassim.

Moreover, Halaby shows the western perception of Arab males after 9/11 through her main character, Jassim. The mall incident makes Jassim vis-à-vis racial segregation, which makes him more visible; thus, he becomes traumatised. Waiting outside the mall for his wife, Jassim has been reported, by a security guard, in the mall after being regarded as suspicious. He informs her that he has been followed by “a woman with a walkie-talkie on her shoulder. She thinks she’s Clint Eastwood [...] I am a security threat. Maybe she thinks I’m going to steal all this fashion and climb on that motorcycle, which I am then going to fly off its pedestal and into the mall ” (28-29).

When Salwa insults the woman, she tells her that her job is “to protect the security of this establishment” (29). Salwa angrily headed toward the shop clerks and asked them: “Why did you call that security guard on my husband? [...] Did you think he was going to climb up and steal that motorcycle? Or perhaps run off with some T-shirts?” (29). The girl, called the security guard, asserts, “He was standing here and staring too long. He was just standing and looking at the motorcycle. It was weird.” She adds that “[h]e

just scared me [...] He just stood there and stared for a really long time, like he was high or something. And then I remembered all the stuff that's been going on" (30).

After associating what happened to Jassim, as an Arab man, with the collapse of the Twin Towers, Salwa furiously responds, "You thought he might want to blow up the mall in his Ferragamo shoes" (30). Later, the manager comes and apologizes for what happened; she tells Salwa that her grandmother is Turkish, and she understands the pressure Arabs and Muslims are passing through. Salwa seems nervous about Jassim's appearance of being regarded as a terrorist; she wants to blur Jassim's ethnic background by revealing her husband's high-class position. "So you looked at my husband, a professional man in his forties staring at the motorcycle, and you thought that was suspicious?" Salwa replies (31). Here, Halaby, through the voice of Salwa, criticises the cruel and discriminatory policies of the Patriot Act. She engages her characters in politics; they are victims of the Patriot Act of 2001 racist profile. Their attempt to assimilate into American society prevents them from political engagement.

However, 9/11 racial bigotry makes them politically aware of their surroundings. In fact, the domestic and foreign policies of the Act stimulate American imperialism and pave the way for stereotypes about Arabs to support its neocolonial agendas. As a consequence of what happened, Jassim feels that he lives in a heterotopic space, as mentioned by Foucault, wherein his constructed identity as an Arab American man has been eroded by racial profiling and segregation because of his Arabo-Islamic masculinity. As a reaction to such an event, Jassim becomes completely traumatised because he regards the events as unnatural. In other words, Jassim finds language and representation difficult because of his shock and trauma. Because of his detachment

from his Arab American community, Jassim's reaction to the attacks was similar to millions of Americans. Zoë Wicomb notes that heterotopia is not a concept of being

[T]ied to a space that promotes any promise, any hope, or any primary form of resistance and liberation [...] heterotopias are fundamentally disturbing places [...] [they] draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and inaugurate a difference, and challenge the space in which we may feel at home. These emplacements exist out of step and meddle with our sense of interiority. There is no pure form of heterotopia, but different combinations, each reverberating with all the others [...] but their relationships clash and create further disturbing Spatio-temporal units (qtd. in Miller 49).

Still unaware of his wife's lie about her pregnancy, Jassim becomes more preoccupied with the attacks of 9/11 in the following weeks. He seems unable to understand the repercussions of these traumatic attacks on Arabs and Muslims living in America. In such a moment, Jassim goes through one of the symptoms of PTSD, which is acting out and moves to working through as two responses and processes to deal with the 9/11 trauma. Starting with acting out, he reproduces the event as action without knowing that he is replicating or repeating it. Then, he begins to reconstruct the meaning of trauma's compulsive repetition in the present from elsewhere to challenge it in the future.

Alternatively, working through process enables Jassim to criticise himself and change the compulsive repetition of acting out by disclosing new meanings to trauma. In this sense, Jassim experiences double mourning, a symptom of working through and a reaction to his identity loss. The images of the twin towers' collapse and memories of



his ethnic origin have been recreated in Jassim's mind whenever he goes swimming. "Each day that Jassim had gone swimming since that fateful Tuesday when the planes hit, his mind had not cleared on entering the water but rather captured memories, mostly of home, and rolled them around for the duration of his swim" (62). Salwa's pregnancy and miscarriage have worsened the situation with her husband.

At the beginning of the day, Jassim goes swimming, as usual, to get a balance in his day, but the receptionist informs him that there will be no swimming today because someone had defecated in the pool. So, he returns home to find his wife crying and sobbing. After her confession about pregnancy and miscarriage, Jassim feels unsettled and more preoccupied with her miscarriage than with the towers' collapse. Halaby writes that "[h]er lie, her pregnancy, her miscarriage, had all worked themselves out without his having to say anything, decide anything, so it was not so hard to give himself to her" (104).

America gives Jassim freedom and individualism, preventing him from bothering himself about his wife and child. In other words, "he was so used to this easy American life, where you could kill a child and the whole family didn't come after you with demands for justice, or at least an explanation [...] Where your wife could be pregnant and miscarry and not tell you. Where you could want not to have children" (278). However, he does not utter a word, and instead, he attempts to calm her and delay thinking about it later

He would think about it later, process what it meant that she had gotten pregnant (on purpose or by accident?) and not told him (to protect him or because she was scared he would get mad because she had done it on purpose?), but for now he could console her. He felt

warmth in holding her, in being able to offer her comfort. After all, he was not a man given to irrational loss of control or anger. It was not anger that he felt, either. It was [...] nothing that he felt. That would come, when he had time to think about it more, but for now he would hold his wife, as that seemed the right thing to do (104).

Being disturbed and anxious about Salwa's situation, Jassim accidentally kills the boy. That accident puts him into a chain of unfounded accusations. On the way from the swimming pool, Jassim unconsciously repeats past events through flashbacks in a state that shows his traumatic neurosis, which is referred to by Freud. Otherwise stated, the traumatic event appears again for Jassim in the form of memory. Halaby presents Jassim's psychological trauma by narrating, "*Salwa had a miscarriage. Jassim's conscious and semiconscious thoughts were colliding, creating a heady, almost blinding panic. Deep breath. Hold it. Exhale. One more time. Two breaths*" (117). He kills the boy with his car, Mercedes, which he calls the "murderous vehicle" (149) or "death machine" (153).

After knocking the boy, Jassim becomes the object of suspicion because the accident happens during a deep-rooted distrust of Muslims associated with fanatical terrorists. Halaby reminds the reader of Bush's administration about the "War on Terror," where Arabs and Muslims' segregation and discrimination are legitimate and justifiable. Evelyn Alsultany brings to the fore the process called "momentary diversity," which asks for the reconfiguration of race and racism in the U.S. It is a process that justifies the government's policies towards Arabs and Muslims under the umbrella of the "War on Terror." She argues that:

By momentary diversity, I am referring to a process by which the American citizen came to be ideologically redefined as diverse instead of white and united in the “war on terror,” defined in opposition to Arabs and Islam, signifies as terrorist and anti-American. Thus non-Arab, non-Muslim racialized groups became temporarily incorporated into the notion of American identity, while Arabs and Muslims were racialized as terrorist threats to the nation (207).

The world of the Arab man started to fall starting from this point, which led to an FBI investigation, and finally, he was fired from his job. After reading a license plate on the boy’s skateboard, “Terrorist Hunting License” (76), he becomes more suspicious of the FBI. The accident mirrors the impossibility of Jassim’s belonging to America. Jassim tries to find a place in American life, “the one that promises happy ending for everyone if you just believe it hard enough,” by reassuring the boy’s friend that “‘It’s going to be alright,’ he starts ‘saying words he did not believe’” (119). Being aware of his barren attempt to make himself accepted as an Arab man in America, Jassim feels that the American happy ending is not for him. This tragic event opens doors for Jassim’s marginalisation and discrimination because of his religious and ethnic background. He also refrains from telling his wife about the accident until too late.

Both Jassim and Salwa live in a lie, especially after having affairs out of their wedlock. The lie they have been living reflects the lie of the American dream. After this event, Jassim has not been enthusiastic about going swimming, and it is a fact that symbolises his growing lack of balance. He feels heaviness in his body in the morning, and his hand is the only organ with energy. It has been like “a snake attached to a dead

elephant. He was the dead elephant, a giant pinned to his bed by heavy thoughts” (148).

After waking up, as Halaby portrays:

Jassim crept into consciousness to find reality worse than any dream, [...] The thinnest voice prodded at him, nudged him towards the edge of the bed. *Swimming is what keeps you even, gives you control*, the voice said. *I have no control*, Jassim answered back. *No control. It's gone. My life is no longer in my hands*. This thought overpowered a quieter wish for God, for belief, for an answer, or at the very least Balance. He lay at the edge of the bed, his thought a crowded pile of characters competing for space on the marquee: *Salwa Shops for Pajamas, Jassim's Child, Water, Swimming, Officer Barkley* (original italics 148).

After being aware of the traumatic reality, Jassim experiences a state of hopelessness and despair. According to Freud, Jassim becomes obsessed with the trauma he can not control or get rid of.

### III.3. Jassim's Identity Loss between Here and There

The sequences of tragic events after the attacks have affected the characters' identities, in which they come under scrutiny and vigilance by citizen patriots intending to obtain national security. Unfortunately, Jassim comes under the attention of one of these citizens. Jack Franks is a citizen patriot who willingly wants to help the government's "war on terror" policy. Georgina Banita (2010) argues that these "citizens [are] galvanized by Bush's call to act as the eyes and ears of the government" (246). Jack, a retired marine, who meets Jassim a few times in a gym, shows resentment towards Jordanians because of the story of his daughter. She has been seduced away by

a Jordanian man and finally converted to something un-American. Hence, Jack sees the terrorist attacks as an opportunity to take revenge, and Jassim is his target. He starts secretly watching Jassim, believing he is serving his country by being engaged in an official investigation against him.

With the help of Diane, the gym's clerk, Jack is suspicious of Jassim and believes that Jassim is hiding something important about his identity. He considers Jassim "was not the man he portrayed himself to be, though he was not necessarily sold on his being a terrorist. He had already talked to his FBI friend, Samuel, about him. Twice. Would continue to keep him posted as Samuel had suggested" (173). Salaita argues that "Jack personifies the dangers of patriotism, especially when it becomes synonymous [...] with notions of ethnic superiority. Less obvious, however, is Halaby's comment on the traditional representation of the Arab or Muslim male as a threat to the (white and Christian) American woman" (93). Furthermore, Jack is sure about what he is doing, and there is no need to look beyond his action since he regards it as his responsibility toward his nation. He figures out to himself

*These are some scary times we live in [...] [his] number-one duty is to help protect [his] country. The president had said that [...], it is [their] job to be [...] alert for suspicious behavior, help the police, and be the eyes and ears of the community. Besides, if it turns out to be nothing, then, no harm done to anyone. Dammit, if you're going to live in this country, you're going to have to abide by the rules here (original italics 173).*

In this instance, Halaby attempts to show the racist attitude of Jack toward Jassim, as an Arab man, following the attacks. In one way or another, Halaby criticises the

American government and its policy that encourages the harassment of Arabs. Bella is another character who contacts the FBI about Jassim as part of her duty toward her nation. After the attacks, she gets angry and wants to take revenge. She reports Jassim to the FBI and takes notes about anything Jassim does or says. Jassim knows that “an FBI investigation [is] launched by a receptionist whose main duties were answering the telephone and making photocopies” (272). She even witnessed the changing behaviour of Jassim, especially after the miscarriage of his wife and the accident. Moreover, she portrays Jassim as an enemy who must be driven out of the country, preventing him from accessing the water supply. Anita, a coworker, informs Jassim that

Bella called the FBI on [him] a couple of days after it happened, told them [he was] a rich Arab with access to the city’s water supply and [he] didn’t seem very upset by what had happened. It seemed the FBI was not interested at first. Bella started to keep a notebook on [him]. She wrote down everything [he] said, what [he] wore, how [he] seemed. Then two months or so ago, she said that she thought something was wrong, that [his] behavior changed, seemed bothered and that she was going to call the FBI on [him] again. Report [him] (271-72).

Besides the U.S. government policy, mass media attracted the attention of the Americans, who consequently became suspicious of the behaviour of the Arabs. Referring to Allen Meek’s book, *Trauma and Media* (2010), visual media helps record and remember past traumatic events. In fact, Americans, who did not encounter the terrorist attacks, rely on media sources to get a conceptualized image of what happened. Consequently, fear of terrorism and the association of Arabs with terrorism were two

aspects enforced by the media coverage of the 9/11 trauma. Halaby presents the Americans' suspicion through the conduct of Bella towards Jassim.

After being investigated by two FBI agents about Jassim, a sense of fear overwhelmed Marcus, Jassim's boss. They ask him about Jassim's religious and political tendencies, his reaction to the 9/11 attacks, the war in Afghanistan, and Jordan's leadership. Marcus, who represents a good citizen, shows the good qualities of Jassim and describes him as "reliable and as apolitical and unreligious person" (224). Through Marcus's voice, Halaby wants to show the right image and the good intention of the Arabs and Muslims dwelling in the United States. Regardless of Jassim's identity, Marcus defends him before the FBI and advises him to look for a lawyer because of the gravity of his situation.

Furthermore, he informs Jassim about the speech of Amy Goodman, the host of *Democracy Now!*, in a radio and television news broadcast. She speaks, Marcus says, "about the scores of Arabs and Pakistanis and other Muslims who have been arrested on baseless allegations, who are being held who knows where and are not allowed contact with their families, and how they may be deported because of visa violations" (226). He asserts that she makes him recognise the extent his government will go to fight the Arabs in the name of revenge. Like Jack and Bella, Marcus was overwhelmed with distrust towards Jassim mainly because of his changing behaviour. After being asked by his wife about the possibility that Jassim will do something terrible to the water supply, Marcus replies:

Something had been different in Jassim lately, something Jassim was not talking to him about. It could be anything, he had told himself over and over. It could be medical, or something in his marriage [...]

Not for the first time, his wife had brought to the surface the very thing that was nagging at him, harvested that vague doubt that had been lodged way back in his brain, undercutting the faith he had in others (237).

Marcus was unaware of Jassim's problems, including his wife's miscarriage and the death of Evan. After receiving calls from the company's clients, Marcus cannot stand up to the pressure and fires Jassim. The reality of not being informed about Jassim's troubles and the clients' calls based on Bella's alerts and the FBI investigation has weakened Marcus's stance about Jassim's innocence. One of the clients claims that "Jassim has done great work for [them] in the past, but now [he feels he needs] to scrutinize everything. [he need] to look at motive, at what he is getting from [them]. [He] simply [doesn't] have the time. [he wants] to give [him] this contract, but as long as he is the senior hydrologist, [he] cannot" (269). To save his business and make up for his lost contracts, Marcus tells Jassim about his excuse for firing him from work: "[they]'re going to lose the business if [they] don't make an act of good faith to the people [they] do business with" (297).

Consequently, Jassim's identity and otherness become more visible and noticeable. Jassim desperately replies to the subsequent tragic events after the traumatic attacks of 9/11 as follows:

Jassim had done nothing wrong and this was America and there should have to be proof of negligence [...] for his job to be affected. People, companies, the city, shouldn't be able to pull accounts on the basis of his being an Arab. Yes, finally he saw what had been sitting at the back of his consciousness for some time in a not-so-whispered



voice: *with or against*. But was he not *with*? *I understand American society*, he wanted to scream. *I speak your language. I pay taxes to your government. I play your game. I have a right to be here*. How could this be happening? (234).

Like the second wave of Arab men, Jassim attempts to be a good citizen by assimilating into American society; however, his assimilation process was disrupted by the attacks of 9/11, which forced him to recognise his ethnic identity. Based on Erik Erikson's description of the relationship between trauma and identity crisis, Jassim experiences an identity crisis. He starts questioning his self or identity and his place in the world. Inspired by Foucault's interpretation of heterotopic space, Halaby shows the situation of Jassim's Arab American identity in heterotopia as a contradictory space where Jassim has to make sense of his identity that is not entirely Arab nor fully American. Hence, he lives in a hybrid third or postcolonial space, the same space mentioned by Bhabha.

Due to America's rejection of his ethnic identity, Jassim looks for support through nostalgic longing, where he searches for a missing part in his new space. This condition echoes Said's and Bhabha's descriptions of the sense of being in exile and out of place. He expresses his nostalgia by saying: "Funny how nostalgia breathes heavily under pressure, how longing blossoms under the veil of hatred. Veiled by them. Hated by them. Hated for living. Hated for veiling" (234). Jassim regards Arabs as becoming more open to discrimination and hatred because of the veil of the stereotype that prevents the mainstream from seeing the truth. It is the same veil that Arab men put onto their women in the past. Because of Jassim's physical appearance, he and his wife have been pushed to the margin. Steven Salaita (2011) argues that

This phenomenon, which occupies an important position in *Once in a Promised Land*, reflects what in previous critical work I have referred to as “imperative patriotism,” a type of patriotic outlook in the post-September 11 United States that demands surrender to a particular notion of safety and the national interest [...] Stereotypical imagery of the Middle Eastern male—beard, dark skin, menacing eyes, and so forth—accompanies representations of “them.” Americans such as Jassim, [...] unfortunate enough to resemble that image, automatically become threatening (88).

In this way, Jassim’s sense of identity has been shattered because of his ethnic and religious affiliations, which prove his un-Americanness. Hence, he has been perceived as the Other, the enemy. Since Islam has been viewed as an enemy, any perceived Arab will be discriminated against and racialised. His lack of contact and isolation from the other Arab American communities in the United States exaggerates his discrimination and nostalgia. Jassim’s identity as a man of Arab origin has been unsettled without a community to find refuge and safety. The post-9/11 situation, full of hatred and racism toward Arabs, makes Jassim more aware of the futility of his attempts and efforts to assimilate into American society after destroying his professional career. It is difficult for Jassim to accept the radical change in his life from being a rich and marvellous Hydrologist who works in one of the highly valued firms in the U.S. to an unemployed and discarded citizen who poses a threat to national security. He feels that an Arab has no opportunity to live in America anymore.

Hence, his place in society has swiftly changed from “us” to “them.” Durkheim claims that when society faces a disaster, it adopts a declassification, which “casts certain individuals into a lower state than their previous one” (213). Because of social and cultural rupture in the aftermath of 9/11, America has made Arabs and Muslims visible and put them in the centre of society to be watched and suspected. In such a social shift, Durkheim confirms that all communities’ “advantages of social influence are lost” and “their moral education has to be recommenced.” Halaby states that

In more than a decade of good citizenship, he had never [...] imagined that his success would be crossed out by a government censor’s permanent marker, that his mission would be absorbed by his nationality, or that Homeland Security would have anything to do with him. Things like this aren’t supposed to happen in America (299).

Consequently, Jassim’s American identity created during his stay in America turns out to be artificial and non-existent since it does not reflect a real sense of belonging. Even though America is the same country that provides Jassim with the substantial elements for success, it has contributed to his career and life collapse. Moreover, an FBI investigation has deprived Jassim of his life; therefore, his American Dream. He cannot assess the American dream “to fit into an American tale” (159). So, he looks at the people in the margins he has recently placed. He realises that “it had taken killing a boy for his soul to awaken [...] he saw that the past nine years (and even more than that) had been a sabbatical from real life, a rich man’s escape from the real world” (218).

Such situation echoes the feminist theory of moving from the margin to the centre, whereas Jassim moves from the centre to the margin. Jassim no more finds peace and

balance while swimming in azure water, whose clarity has been tainted by the shadow of a plane flying over him. Hence, he abandons swimming in the mornings, and instead, he starts driving aimlessly in the streets:

It was still dark as he drove down the comforting, looping street and approached the always busy Oracle Road, where he found there was an entire world awake [...] A bus has just deposited its human contents by the side of the road and they drifted north and south, some west into the parking lot of an electronics store [...] Jassim felt as though he were watching a movie. While many times he had driven into the city early, especially years ago, when his work times had not been so regular, he had never noticed these people (151).

After being fully conscious of what is happening around him in real America, Jassim meets Penny. Jassim's attraction to Penny arises from a need to find refuge in someone who does not belong to his world. However, Penny is a strange white American waitress; she listens to him and lessens his sadness and grief after being rejected by his colleagues and pulled away from his wife. "*Heart attack—I'm having a heart attack*. He forced himself to breathe [...] It took a minute, but finally he could feel his heart shifting gears and gliding back to its normal pattern. The nausea passed" (154). She interprets his sorrow as "a panic attack." He asks her about its meaning. She replies that "it's where you have too much crap loaded in your head and sometimes you just get this electric shock that bangs everything together and for a minute you think you're going to die, or puke, or pass out, but then it passes" (154). He finds consolation in a woman who has wished to be younger to join the American army after the attacks. She gets the same feeling whenever she listens to the President on television. She believes

that having such an opportunity will allow her to “show all those terrorists what Americans were made of, how they were continuing the great history of this country, getting out there and saving poor people from the oppression of living in their backward countries” (280).

After being deprived of almost everything that denounces the downfall of Jassim’s American Dream, the novel ends with an ambiguous and open ending for the couple. Even though Jassim and Salwa attempt to fully integrate into American society, they have been rejected and regarded as a threat to national security because of their ethnic and religious background. Halaby notes that “wishes don’t come true for Arabs in America” (184). As a result, both feel homesick as the novel ends with Salwa’s visit to Jake to say goodbye before going home, Jordan. Even though Jake does not like her departure, he beats her.

Here, Halaby shows that Jake, an American man, falls into prejudice and starts acting like Arabs, as portrayed by the West. Thus, Salwa ends the novel by lying in a hospital and Jassim sitting on her side. Although W.E.B. Du Bois speaks about African Americans’ ambivalent space and struggle to negotiate their identity, Jassim passes through the same situation in the U.S. The in-betweenness of Jassim’s identity has been highlighted in his choice of marrying Salwa specifically:

He loved Salwa because in her he saw home, which made her both more precious and a source of resentment. This realization, this seeing, was at once so sad as to twist his stomach and so liberating that he felt he could float in the air. Two entangled kites whose strings had just been snipped, untangled, and now were allowed to float off

on their own current of wind. He had married Salwa because he had wished to protect and nurture her. Because he needed her (325).

Jassim's in-between identity nauseates him and, at the same time, relieves his pain. He realises that he can't neglect his origins in favour of a privileged life. Moreover, he understands well that deep down in his in-between identity is a part that represents and belongs to him, which is his origin. Nevertheless, it has been difficult for Jassim to accept the reality of being rejected by American society; he finally becomes aware of his descent and *Arab American* identity. After recognizing his ethnicity, Jassim holds what is called by Gary C. David a "primordial perspective"(838). Daniel M. Green (2001) states that "The primordial perspective places emphasis on the more natural, material elements of identity, such as place, food, language, kinship, or race" (32).

In doing so, Jassim marks an identity resolution by accepting his *Arab American* identity. With the acceptance of his weakness and his contradicted heterotopic self, Jassim can reestablish his relationship with his wife. Finally, he tells his wife all that is hidden before:

Salwa, I am so sorry it has come to this. For what happened. I feel that I am responsible [...] I've not provided for you what you needed, allowed you to be who you wanted. I should have recognized that you would have been better off staying in Jordan. I was selfish to have brought you here. I realized that today. Salwa, I am so sorry. All of this is my fault for being weak, for not being able to tell you what I've done, first killing the boy. And then, Salwa, I've lost my job. Marcus fired me. The FBI investigation, they've fired me (326-27).

Jassim's acknowledgement of his Arab American identity provides him with a new beginning in his relationship with his wife. He becomes aware of his *mahjar* identity and the importance of his origin in American life. Consequently, he restarts a new and fluid relationship with his wife based on love rather than resentment. The fluidity of Jassim's identity has been reflected in his fascination with water, which helps him understand it within its heterotopic nature. The story ends with a fairytale in the 'After' section to reveal the end of the couple's story. It is a story about a nightingale who transforms into an ordinary man. The man attempts to save the maiden, who is stabbed and disfigured. However, there is a sense of hope that Salwa will be recovered and the couple will live a happy life. Halaby narrates that

This ordinary man was not so handsome—above average, perhaps, but nothing of the prince-hero type—and had only once before found himself folded over a nearly lifeless body. Years of exercise had left him strong and sound in mind and body, so he lifted up the unconscious and damaged maiden and carried her home across land and sea, hoping that with proper care she would recover from her wounds (335).

The novel's ending reveals the couple's failure to achieve their American Dream and find a place in America. From the very start, Jassim and Salwa attempt to assimilate into upper-middle-class America by adopting the American culture of consumerism that detaches them from their Arab homeland. Their economic success provides them with all of the prospects of the American Dream and, meanwhile, it prevents them from thinking about combining Arab and American principles and values. The absence of this in-between space has led to their downfall, especially after the attacks of 9/11, in which

they could not confront the increasing alienation and discrimination. Thus, their American Dream and their life in America have collapsed. The novel ends with a question that has an ambiguous ending for the couple:

*There's no "they lived happily ever after"?*

"Happily ever after" happens only in American fairy tales.

*Wasn't this an American fairy tale?*

It was and it wasn't (335, emphasis in original).

At the novel's end, Halaby presents the couple's failure to negotiate the third space. They started their life in America as successful members who adopted the American consumerist culture. They forget entirely about their Arab identity and find no need to combine their Arab values with American ones. Hence, after the attacks of 9/11, they lived on the margins of the third space and finally fell down. More importantly, Halaby provides her readers with a sense of hope about the future of Arab Americans living in America.

## Conclusion

*Once in a Promised Land* is an American and Arab American tale that narrates the story of an Arab man and his identity crisis in the aftermath of the traumatic attacks of 9/11. Jassim, the male protagonist, seems to be a caring husband whose relationship with his wife has deteriorated after the attacks. Despite doing nothing related to terrorism, he has been open to discriminatory acts. Consequently, he faces a state of anomie<sup>18</sup> because of his Arabo-Islamic masculinity, which becomes more visible after the attacks. Because of his appearance, he experiences alienation and racialisation; therefore, he has been called a monster terrorist. Being rejected from the same country

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<sup>18</sup> It is a social condition of instability or social unrest which results from a breakdown or uprooting of values, norms, and standards.



that welcomed him and provided him with all the prospects of the American Dream, Jassim passes through a heterotopia from which he experiences an identity crisis and eventually a panic attack. His identity crisis paves the path for him to communicate with his wife and solve his in-between *mahjar* identity. Simply put, after experiencing an identity crisis, Jassim becomes more aware of his Arab origins or Arab American identity. Furthermore, Jassim discovers his Arab identity through water; it implies fluidity that Jassim must acknowledge in making sense of his in-between identity.

The novel ends with a hint of hope about the future of Arab Americans when Jassim is intelligible with his complex identity. Overall, Jassim is an Arab character who counteracts the Western stereotypes about Arab men. The novel tackles racism and sexism and asserts that stereotypes about Arabs are mainly a construction. Halaby wants to represent Arab American community after 9/11 by providing Arab men with an active role. The novel calls for a dialogue between men and women in their fight against racism and sexism. In doing so, Arab American feminism will achieve its goals.



## **Chapter Four**

## Introduction

Like Laila Halaby, Frances Khirallah Noble is another Arab American writer who attempted to revolve around Arab American men and their shattered selves in the aftermath of 9/11 because of their ethnicity. 9/11 was a turning point that led to the visibility and the substantial increase in discrimination and racialisation of Arab men in the United States. Indeed, the Arab American man in the novel, *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007), experiences an identity crisis, and his traumatic experience is twofold. On the one hand, he suffers from collective trauma caused by the towers' collapse. On the other hand, he experiences the individual trauma of being regarded as a terrorist. Noble, thus, highlights the racial discrimination of Arab Americans because of being stereotypically perceived as terrorists. In her work, she attempts to present the traumatic experience of her Arab American man in words by underlying his unsettled position after 9/11. She uses her writing to come to terms with the traumatic experiences of the attacks of 9/11 and assert the Arab Americans' disconnection from terrorism.

The chapter is divided into two sections that explore, through the writing of Francis Khirallah Noble, the attacks of 9/11 and their repercussions on Arab American men. The first section examines the racialisation and sexualisation of Arab American men resulting from the traumatic event of 9/11. It also tackles the presence of Khalil Gibran Hourani's dead grandmother in a dream to reveal historical information about his family. It is a fact that makes him more aware of his ethnicity as a Syrian man in post-9/11 America. The second section reveals the main character's subsequent masculine identity crisis and his final awareness of his Arabness.

## Section One: From Generation to Generation: Family Stories and the Act of Storytelling

Stories are as fundamental as food and shelter; they pass on values, lessons, and wisdom for thousands of years. Telling stories about the family's shared past solidifies its sense of community and enriches members' sense of identity and belonging. Grandparents are keepers of family stories and are like a bridge between the past and the future. Stories about family ancestors and history build self-confidence, family pride, ethics, and values. When the family stories are lost, a piece of the family's soul is lost; thus, identity is lost.

### IV.1. Family History and Magic Realism

To reflect the Arab male experience of displacement and immigration in the aftermath of the traumatic attacks of 9/11, Frances Khirallah Noble attempted to analyse the double space her male character lives in. The latter comprises the diasporic space in the present time wherein the protagonist is living, and the other place reflects its shadows on the present. Put differently, Noble examines the journeys back and forth from the protagonists' homes of origin to their host homes in the West. In her novel, *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007), Frances Khirallah Noble shows the image of the ghost of Khalil Gibran Hourani's grandmother many times throughout the novel. The protagonist is an average Syrian man who has been targeted and abused by men who regard him as a terrorist following the attacks of 9/11. The ghost of his dead grandmother, *Situe*, helps him survive by telling him stories about his ancestors. She provides him with historical information about his family to explain some facts to Khalil that life is not easy and that people pass through hard choices in their lives to survive.

From the novel's beginning, Noble presents Khalil's distraction reflecting his PTSD through his sleeping disorder and intrusive thoughts. He appears distracted by a dream about his dead grandmother. When he tells his wife about the dream, she takes him to a doctor, who, on his part, sends him to a psychiatrist. After dreaming of his grandmother, Khalil states, "I can't figure things out anymore. I'm like a fish out of water. I..." (Noble 3). In this context, Noble shows the traumatic experience and painful memories that the protagonist passes through by introducing magic realism as a narrative technique to get what has been lost. It is the opposite of the "once-upon-a-time" storytelling style that Halaby tackles in her novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, wherein she concentrates on fantasy while narrating imaginary events.

However, like Noble, authors speak about the unreal in a natural way that seems real. It is like an opportunity to regard extraordinary things daily to reimagine the world and its reality. Zamora & Faris argue that magical realism is "an aesthetic style or genre of fiction" (qtd. in Al-Jibory 4). Unlike fantasy and science fiction, it is not escapist but focuses on provoking thoughts. The writer presents such phenomena without disturbing the narration, and the reader must have "both realistic and magical perspectives of reality on the same level" (Bowers 4). Lyn Di Iorio Sandín (2013) argues, "If a traumatic event exceeds what can be expressed in a fact-based account, the traumatized individual can trust to dreams and imaginings that help flesh out what memory may resist. Of course, this can be done by telling a realist story as well as a non-realist story" (24-25).

In the novel, the representation of trauma is directly tied to stories that shape the relationship between Khalil and his grandmother. Magical realism paves the way for the truth of the traumatic experiences that need

The ‘magical’ perspective [to] show that there is a point of view different from and oppositional to realism; however, both these perspectives exist in an uneasy relationship and, taken together, often reflect the experience of... those who have had experiences that seem to put them beyond the bounds of ‘normal’ reality (24).

For the statement mentioned above, magical realist writings lend expressions to represent trauma or extreme events. Unlike traditional realism, magic realism attempts to change unspeakable events into speakable tales. As in the case of *Situe*’s ghost, in magical realism, magic is not a matter of casting spells or affecting reality. It is rather magic that transcends the boundaries of a purely realistic setting to be a part of the new setting. Magical realism concentrates on the real world and realistic characters; it also attempts to uncover murky morality by focusing on personal and interpersonal conflicts. In magical realism, “the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence--admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism” (Zamora & Faris 3).

Furthermore, it narrates stories from people who experience a different reality from the receiver. In the case of having a ghost in real magic works, the ghost here is not a fantasy element. Instead, it reflects the reality of the people who believe in or have real experiences of ghosts. Magical realism is defined as

A kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the ‘reliable’ tone of objective realistic report [...] designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth while maintaining a strong

contemporary social relevance [...] The fantastic attributes given to characters in such novels —levitation, flight, telepathy, telekinesis — are among the means that magic realism adopts in order to encompass the often phantasmagorical political realities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Baldick 146).

The common characteristics among the realistic magic novels encompass supernatural, hybridity, ironic distance, authorial reticence, and political criticism. The supernatural is added to the style of the narrator and characters and tricks the readers into believing in the supernatural elements as prosaic reality. Magical realism involves the fusion between real and fantasy. Anaryll Chanady (1985) argues that in magical realism, “the supernatural is not presented as problematic,” but instead “integrated within the norms of perception of the narrator and characters in the fictitious world” (qtd. in Harris 21). The second characteristic that magical realists use is hybridity, in which magical realism occurs in two opposite areas: rural versus urban, western versus indigenous, real versus unreal, and ordinary versus extraordinary. Issues of borders and mixing are often involved in the plots of realistic magic works.

Ironic distance is another feature in realistic magic works. The writer should be at an ironic distance, which means that he/she makes the reader conscious and part of the story, whereas the character appears oblivious. The author ambiguously exposes the story. He gives the readers the impression that the events look like a twist to distance between the story and the unexpected endings that the reader read. Alternatively, magic realism produces an ironic distance between the implied author and the narrator. “While it is true that the narrator is represented as someone who takes the magical events for granted, it is impossible to naively accept the authenticity of the incongruous fictional

world, and the reader reacts to the narrator's "ingenuity" with prudential skepticism" (Bortolussi 362).

Authorial reticence is also one of the prominent features apparent in texts wherein the author does not provide the reader with a clear explanation of the story. He keeps the information and gives a space for the reader to feel the presence of mystery within the events. Chanady defines authorial reticence as the "deliberate withholding of information and explanations about the disconcerting fictitious world" (qtd. in Bortolussi 351). Magical realism involves political criticism in the criticism of society, especially the elite. To oppose and discomfort, the writers use their writings as tools to describe their social and political disagreements about certain societal aspects.

Because Khalil suffers from sexual dysfunction, the psychiatrist thinks that the impotence results in Khalil's distraction. He asks Khalil, "it's impotence which has driven you to such distraction?" Khalil replies, "No, it's Situe, my grandmother" (Noble 2). Noble wants to show that Khalil is so traumatised that he has hallucinations. The appearance of the grandmother's ghost at the very start of the novel highlights the troubles and obstacles that Khalil is about to pass through as a Syrian man in post-9/11 America. She knows what will happen to her grandson in the future because of the terrifying events of 9/11 in America; thus, she appears to him in a dream to teach him and guide him to be firm as an Arab man in the West.

In doing so, she tells him three stories to reveal his ancestors' past actions to give him options to decide and make the right choice that his ancestors did not. The image of the ghost appears multiple times throughout the novel and plays a significant role in reflecting one of the main aspects of magical realism. Lois Parkinson Zamora (1995)



writes in her essay, “Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in the U.S. and Latin American Fiction,” that

Ghosts in their many guises abound in magical realist fiction [...] and they are crucial to any definition of magical realism as a literary mode. Because ghosts make absence present, they foreground magical realism’s most basic concern—the nature and limits of the knowable—and they facilitate magical realism’s critique of modernity (498).

The presence of ghosts in magical realist fiction is oppositional. They attack western modernity’s materialist and scientific assumptions, which regard reality as controllable, knowable, and predictable. They also oppose the psychological presumption about self-established identity; instead, they propose another model of the self, which is collective. Subjectivity is not singular, individual, and existential. Instead, it is several, participatory and mythic. Moreover, they dissent modernity’s assumption about linear history in which they hover free in time, not only here and now but also then and there. Ghosts are like our guides to look beyond the limits of the knowable. (498)

#### **IV.1.1.Khalil’s Psychological Trauma after 9/11**

One of the most well-known facts is that ghost stories directly or indirectly tell us about culture. However, one characteristic that distinguishes these supernatural narratives from the others is that they focus on the mystery, which accepts various kinds. Concerning the role of ghosts in ethnic literature, Kathleen Brogan and Stephen M. Hart argued that they are vehicles for recovering, reimagining the past and resolving the painful and traumatic past. Moreover, trauma is the story of the haunting of irrecoverable loss and grief. Following Avery F. Gordon (1997), both haunting and

trauma are grounded on “what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive” or “what appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present” (42).

However, the past is not as painful as the present in the novel, and the protagonist does not mourn the past. Khalil’s reconstruction of history is a way to understand the place where he is living in. He has no connection to his Syrian past since he was born in California and is a third-generation Syrian American man whose grandparents came to America. Even though he has no memory of a real oasis, he decorates his optometry with palm trees and names it *The Oasis*.

The appearance of the grandmother’s ghost in Khalil’s dream is like a correction of the insularity of his individuality. In a session with the psychiatrist, he speaks about the dream wherein he was sleeping with his wife “when this giant white bird, an eagle with piercing eyes, come down through the ceiling and landed right over [him].” The eagle asks him in Arabic: “Do you want to see Situe again?” (Noble 2). Even though he does not understand the language, he accepts to see her. When the psychiatrist asks him about the nature of using Arabic by the eagle: “This eagle spoke in Arabic?” Did you think that was unusual? Khalil replies: “Not any more unusual than appearing in our bedroom in the first place” (3).

After being flown to heaven, Khalil meets his grandmother “sitting on a stool on a cloud” (3). He hopes that his grandmother will find answers to his questions about life. Before getting the chance to ask his questions, he has been disturbed during his sleep by “a terrible noise” that turns out to be “the gardener starting his blower below [their] bedroom window” (4). Simply put, his magical dream has been cut by reality, as Wendy Faris stated about magical realism. He argues that it is a text with “a preponderance of

realism that includes irreducible elements of significant magic within it” (qtd. in Gómez-Vega 66).

The intrusion of reality within Khalil’s dream causes a sense of dream-reality confusion on the part of Khalil. He sees his grandmother as a real thing in which he becomes unable to determine whether the event or experience occurred during the waking state or whether it was part of a dream. It is a dream reality confusion (DRC), and it is also referred to as Oneirophrenia<sup>19</sup>. According to Caruth, Khalil’s traumatic memory is relived in the form of a dream since it is not ready yet to be revealed. Moreover, under the influence of trauma, Khalil is entrapped between fantasy and reality as long as he becomes unable to differentiate between them. In other words, Khalil finds himself in a predicament between two worlds, as stated by Felman and Laub. In a magical instant, Khalil neither wonders about his grandmother’s appearance nor rejects the interference of reality. Both worlds are viewed as one thing for him; he regards the ghost of his grandmother as a real being.

Indeed, certain magical things happened in Khalil’s dream. In the first aspect, he sees that his hands become small similar to the child’s; his “hands had become small and plump again, and dimpled below the knuckles. Like they were when [he] was a little boy” (Noble 3). Second, Khalil has been asked by the eagle to see his grandmother, and he permits the eagle to allow the ghost to enter his life. The third point is that Khalil understands the Arabic language spoken by the eagle; however, he cannot speak it. In this dream, Khalil returns to his childhood when his *Situe* was still alive and hears a family language he lost. It is an escape from reality as a defensive reaction to avoid the identity malaise provoked by 9/11. These three magical things contradict Khalil’s

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<sup>19</sup> It is a dream-like or hallucinatory state where the person finds difficulty distinguishing between reality and dream. It can be found in other forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer.

current or present status at the novel's beginning. More importantly, this dream shows the missing parts of Khalil's life. In his fifties, it becomes clear that Khalil misses his youth, his grandmother, whom he knew as a child, and his identity as an Arab American.

#### **IV.2. Identity and Story: Creating One's Self in Narrative**

*Situe* blames herself for what happens to Khalil; she regards Khalil's unawareness of his family history and cultural language as a mistake. Even though she confesses to Khalil that she used to be "the sphinx on the porch. The silent woman who sat and smoked. Who did what was necessary to preserve the illusion". He says she was "the center of the family" (Noble 244). Moreover, all that she wants Khalil to know is to be remembered in a specific way as "wise, steady, strong-as opposed to slow, trapped, dull" (244). However, she does not want Khalil to ignore her words, which would help him know his family history and language. According to Kathleen Brogan, ghosts in literature manifest the presence of the absence.

The ghosts in most of the novels that Brogan analysed represent a recollection and reconstruction of memories by individuals who experienced a colonised past. The presence of ghosts marks the fragmentary memory in folktales, myths, and legends; thus, they will be expressed literally. He says that the concept of ghosts "figure prominently wherever people must reconceive a fragmented, partially obliterated history, looking to a newly imagined past to redefine themselves for the future" (qtd. in Swartzfager 86). Most traditional ghost stories tackle the trauma of the past. However, in the current novel, Khalil's trauma exacerbates, especially when he is abducted by the two men who consider him a terrorist. Khalil does not have past memories; thus, he cannot reconstruct the present. Hence, his grandmother attempts to fulfil such a task.

Noble tries to show that storytelling is a way of treating trauma and provides the traumatised individual with a sense of hope, meaning, and belonging. According to Scaer and Freud, Khalil suffers from psychological trauma or PTSD that affects his mind and behaviour. In fact, his grandmother's figure helps him memorize his past; thus, his identity because memory is the ground of identity, as stated by Antez and Lambek.

Seeing the ghost of his grandmother causes problems for Khalil with his wife, Sophie. She refuses to believe that he sees the ghost of his dead grandmother and the eagle that speaks Arabic. After Khalil's admission that he cannot forget about the eagle and his deceased grandmother, she seems careless and un-supportive. Hence, he "approached despair. He felt like a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders. He became out of sorts, moody. He kept to himself. He could barely tolerate being in his own store" (Noble 4). He fell into schizophrenia because the trauma was too intense that his mind and body could not bear it. When he leaves the house for a meeting of the Hashanian Society at church, she tells him, "[t]ry to act normal tonight" (5). Her statement shows her neglect of Khalil's dream and his speech about his flying to heaven and his meeting with his dead grandmother died for an extended period. It seems to her abnormal behaviour for a man aged fifty-three.

Even though his wife gives him a piece of advice to act normally, he has been distracted by the existence of his *Situe* at the Saints Peter and Paul Syrian Orthodox Church. While delivering his report for the Southern California chapter of the Hashanian Mutual Aid Society to the public, he has been suddenly perplexed by a movement in the back of the room. He raises his eyes from the paper before him and sees "in the corner by the window sitting on her stool was *Situe*, smoking one of her

beloved Duke cigarettes” (10). As a reaction, he screams, “Oh, my God, my God. You’re back,” and tells her, “Please, please, don’t leave again until I have a chance to talk to you” (10). Amid the confusion among the twelve members who were listening to him, “Isaac Malouf, who had been a friend of Kali’s father, asked Kali whether something was the matter,” but Kahlil “didn’t respond” (10). So, Malouf asks the others to have a “smoking break and give Kali a chance to collect his thoughts” (10).

Khalil thinks that these men will disbelieve him about the presence of his *Situe*, as does his wife, Sophie. When they leave the meeting room, Khalil seems to suffer from dementia. He approaches his *Situe* and tells her he has “been desperate to talk to [her].” Moreover, he lifts the hand without the cigarette and kisses it gently and humbly. She tells him, “[b]ut you’ll get in trouble if you smoke in here. New rule” (11). He has not been surprised by the presence of his grandmother anymore. She replies to his comment, “[d]on’t worry about the cigarettes, Kali. They’re made in heaven. No ashes, no cough. And only you can see the smoke” (11). After returning home, he tells his wife, regardless of her objections, that his *Situe* comes to be visible and the conversation between them. His first question is about the nature of the universe, but his *Situe* demands him to ask modest questions and asks him to return home and “think more carefully about what [he] wanted to ask” (12).

Throughout the novel, Noble uses grandmother’s stories to show pride in her traditions, help her male character in moments of homelessness and inbetweenness, and criticise reality. Khalil passes through moments of psychological distress, fear, grief, depression, and anxiety, wherein he looks for his grandmother to save him from his suffering. The grandmother’s stories help Khalil learn more about his history and identity. Each story has a meaning that shows him what decision to take in the future.

The first story is about his grandmother's brother Bashara Ibrahim Bashara who steals his parents' fortune to America. His family fell apart after his departure, in which his parents died out of grief, and his lone sister "endured the bitterness of her mother and worked like a slave" (Noble 28). Then, a priest gave her a passage "to New York City, to work for a family from Beirut which had gone a generation before and had great success" (28). However, her brother, Bashara, "became rich. Very rich. As he promised, he sent money back to his village. He paid for electricity. He built a new church. He erected a small medical clinic and paid city doctors to travel there once a month. Because of him, the people of the village had better lives." Khalil exclaims, "*But his fortune was based on a crime!*" (original italics 28). Khalil learns from this story that his family history in America is based on a criminal act.

Khalil is unwilling to listen to his grandmother's stories; therefore, she confirms that bad choices sometimes lead to better fortunes. He feels disgusted with Bashara, who steals his family's money to make his fortune in America, but his grandmother stresses that even evil deeds lead to good ones. She proves to Khalil that "*because of Bashara, [his] grandfather had the means to start the store.*" She adds that it is the same store that "*supported all of [them]*" (original italics 29). Khalil believes that because of Bashara, "*his mother and father died of broken hearts*"; however, his grandmother tells him that "*[t]hey would have died anyway.*" He also mentions that his sister suffered a lot and worked as an enslaved person. Still, his grandmother challenges him by saying she "*would never have gotten to the New World if Bashara hadn't stolen the fortune*" (original italics 28).

Finally, Khalil asks his grandmother, "*Are you saying that nothing is clearly good or clearly bad? That there is no line between good and evil?*" She replies, "*It's more*

*complicated than you think.*” After asking his grandmother about the place of Bashara, she says that he is in heaven, and she “*saw him recently out of the corner of my eye roaming around with some of the others.*” Khalil wonders about her reaction after seeing him; she “*vowed that [she]’d stab him in the heart with [their] father’s dagger if [she] ever saw him again,*” but “*[she] didn’t, of course*” (original italics 29). His *Situe* wants him to be more flexible and forgiving because she knows how much he is about to suffer. She does not want to answer all his questions because she has to “answer a question with a question. And so forth”.

Furthermore, she states, “I’m not supposed to give you concrete information; I’m supposed to guide you gently, let you find your own way, draw your own conclusions, seek your own truth” (57). She wants him to learn that “the world is good, the world is bad, and so forth” (104-105). All in all, this story reveals that people sometimes make hard choices that shift their lives and others’ lives.

The second story went back a thousand years ago and seemed unrelated to Khalil’s family history. Khalil wonders, “with all due respect, dear grandmother, how do you know what happened then?” She replies that it is “primary sources, dear grandson. The horse’s mouth” (44). She starts, “*when our people lived in a small settlement along the edges of the desert, they climbed aboard their camels and rode off in huge numbers to raid the caravans.*” Khalil cuts her speech and says their “people lived in the mountains, not the desert” (original italics 44).

However, she carries on, “*the encounters were bloody; they were murderous*” because “*people cut off each other’s heads. And hands. And certain other parts to make sure that their enemies did not proliferate*” (original italics 44). Khalil interrupts his grandmother and claims that his ancestors “couldn’t have been involved in something



like that” because “they believed in God” (45). She encounters him and insists that most of his ancestors were murderers. If her statement was true, they were responsible for what happened to Haleema. The story was about an attack on Haleema’s caravan, in which she helped a man who had been “*one of the young men who had just murdered her tribe.*” She did kill him, but instead, she saved him.

*Situe* worries that she has a lot to teach her grandson, and she considers him “such a slow learner” (57). He seems inflexible in judging Haleema’s behaviour, which is apparent in his first question after listening to the story, “he helped kill her family and tribe and she helps him?” She answers, “such things do happen” (46). She wants Khalil to learn that people must be kind to each other regardless of the situation. Khalil imagines himself in the place of Haleema and tells his grandmother, “if someone had killed everyone on my caravan, I wouldn’t help them. I’d happily watch them die” (46). He forgets that Haleema helped one of his ancestors, and she did a favour for him. In the beginning, Khalil states that his ancestors believed in God; however, he objects to Haleema’s attitude towards the wounded man. *Situe’s* story challenges Khalil’s statement of believing in God, which turns out to be devoid of meaning until he knows that believing in God requires helping others, even enemies, as did Haleema.

The end of the story is sorrowful since the ancestors of Khalil are stubborn as he is. His ancestors sent a search party to look for the caravan when it did not reach its destination. They found out that she was “*the lone survivor, and praised her extravagantly for her fortitude and toughness. She told them about the attack and the heroic, though futile, defense by her people. She did not tell them about the man*” (original italics 47). She told one of her cousins about her help of the murderer, and one of the elders, who must be wise enough since he knows more and better, called her. He

asked her, “*did you help the man who murdered your family? [...] Did you feed him and nurse him back to health?*”

In the end, *Situe* demands Khalil to guess the end of the story. He does not want to know what happened to her because he does not like her moral behaviour. Instead, he asks, “what does it have to do with me?” his grandmother replies, “You have the same options as everybody else, Kali” (48). Khalil’s grandmother does not give him an answer and does not want to tell him what to do. Instead, she gives him stories to learn from and make the right choice; she is like a guide. She knows Khalil will be kidnapped one day and wants him to choose whether to take revenge on his kidnappers or risk his life to save others’ lives as Haleema did.

After being kidnapped by the man in the brown suit and the fire marshal, his *Situe* keeps an eye on the situation about fifteen miles north of Santa Vista. Uncertain about the future, Khalil expresses his fear about his beloved ones to his grandmother. He says, “I need to get out of here alive and without causing repercussions to those I love.” His grandmother feels happy at his statement, which shows his flexibility. She says, “Finally, intelligent flexibility, a reasonable acknowledgment of the unknown [...] It’s a movement in the right direction” (92). Khalil asks his grandmother to help him get out of trouble using magic, but she replies as usual, “You know the rules,” focusing on using wisdom rather than magic. He asks her about the people who abducted him, and she tells him that “the cast varies, but the script remains the same.” Unable to understand, he wonders about her unclear answer; she replies, “it’s the same everywhere; only the uniforms change.” Khalil claims they were not wearing uniforms; she says: “Exactly.”

When the two men return to investigate Khalil, she departs while leaving her grandson with advice that helps him endure the abuse and hatred of the two men toward him. She tells him, “Now is the time for bravery, dear Kali. And vision. You have the means. You have the ability” (92). Based on these words, “Kali felt the proportion of fear to courage shifting slightly. More courage, less fear. He thought of Situe’s words; her comforting image rested in a corner of his mind” (93). In the moment of being interrogated, he “looked at the faces of the two men and saw the failure of empathy, the corruption of unchecked power” (94).

The third story focuses more on the irrational behaviour of certain people in everyday life. In the last investigation, Khalil gets strength thanks to his grandmother’s wisdom; thus, he fights back. His *Situe* returns to him while in a horrible situation, in which his “nose was caked with dried blood. His face was swollen. His eyes were black.” She expresses her pride in him about his deed by saying, “although [they] are proud of [him]. [They] didn’t know [he] had it in [he]”. Even though he is not feeling good, she narrates the third story, about the two fountains, without mentioning the name of the village and the time of its happening. The story is about the continuous complaining of the women about the far fountain that they became tired of getting water. Then, “*they decided to dig another well in the other half of the village and build another fountain over it*” (original italics 100).

However, things did not work as wished, in which the two fountains separated the village into two parts, and their talk was mainly about fountains. When the situation became unbearable, “the orthodox priest made his semiannual visit” to solve the problem; thus, he tasted both fountains’ water and praised both. Afterwards, “*he blessed*

*the few marriages that had taken place in his absence, christened babies, dissolved curses with holy water, erased bad luck by his presence*” (original italics 102).

When things went well, the village’s silence was disturbed by the coming of the Turks. They came to conscript the young men and take “*them to die or starve or fade away from homesickness.*” Scarred, the priest believes that he has the power of God to confront them. He approached the leader and his soldiers while “*holding a Byzantine cross in front of him as though he were casting out the devil*” (original italics 103). As a result, the priest died, and since “there was no love lost between these groups” (104), the villagers attacked the soldiers, and most of them were killed. After the battle, the villagers believed that “[t]hey’d ignored God’s plan and substituted their own [...] *They built a second fountain when they had a perfectly good one already*” (original italics 104).

The moral of the story stresses the irrational in which the priest, as a good man, dies for no reason, which can be the same for Khalil, who may die during the interrogations. Moreover, *Situe* wants Khalil to know that people’s behaviour does not make sense in certain situations. Overall, because of his *Situe*’s stories, Khalil recognises his family history, thus, his identity and the difficult choices that have been made for survival. She attempts to show him the different decisions his ancestors made since they are part of him. Brian Morton adds that:

The human world is bound together not by protons and electrons, but by stories. Nothing has meaning in itself: all the objects in the world would be shards of bare mute blankness, spinning wildly out of orbit, if we didn’t bind them together with stories (qtd. in Kiser 43).

Storytelling is a significant part of family life, and family stories are like a combination of personal experiences collected into a meaningful whole. Telling stories enriches members' sense of identity and belonging. Rosenbluth (1997) explains that “[j]ust as an amnesiac who has no memory of his past has lost the sense of who he is, so do we need stories from our past to give us a sense of our own identity” (qtd. in Byrne 65). Suppose the individual knows about the values and characteristics of his family stories. In that case, he will be able to construct and sustain himself. Thus, he emphasises his sense of belonging to his group. Stone (1988) argues that “Family stories seem to persist in importance even when people think of themselves individually, without regard to their familial roles. The particular human chain we’re part of is central to our individual identity” (7).

At the novel’s beginning, Khalil experiences a psychological loss and identity crisis since he has no connection with his former self, i.e., his ancestors. According to David Lowenthal (1985), “[t]he sureness of I was is a necessary component of the sureness of I am” (qtd. in Hadis 15). Without being attached to the past, the present and the future will not be enriched; thus, it will be meaningless. Through stories, the individual can identify himself with his past ancestors; thus, his sense of stability will be firm. Lowenthal adds that “[a]bility to recall and identify with our own past gives existence meaning, purpose and value” (15).

Moreover, stories are like schemas or blueprints to learn about previous experiences to have the right choices in the present and the future. These blueprints are like guidelines for people to overcome obstacles in the present and survive in difficult times. Furthermore, stories are not viewed just as guidance but can provide hope. Indeed, they “help us see possibilities, they give us what we need to envision a transformed future”

(16). Khalil's grandmother provides her grandson with wisdom based on the acts of his ancestors to get a lesson from previous experiences of somehow similar situations. The individual's present choices and plans compromise pre-programmed scripts to achieve a specific goal. To obtain the planned goals, the individual must learn about the past. Rosenbluth argues, "Although we make our own choices and choose our own paths, those paths can be illuminated by the wisdom –and sometimes folly- of those who have been in similar situations before" (16). In his work, *Life of Rasselas*, Samuel Johnson says that

To know anything [...] we must know its effects; to see men we must see their works that we may learn what reason has dictated, or passion has incited, and find [...] the most powerful motives of action. To judge rightly of the present, we must oppose it to the past; for all judgment is comparative, and of the future, nothing can be known (16).

Johnson attempted to prove that the present situation is the consequence of the past. Moreover, it is essential to know the sources of the good things we enjoy and the bad things that make people suffer.

### **IV.3. 9/11 Trauma: The Racialisation and Sexualisation of Arab Men in The New Belly Dancer of Galaxy**

The story of Khalil took place after the traumatic event of 9/11, when Arabs were targeted and viewed as terrorists. After the attacks, certain racist acts proliferated, and various hate crimes have multiplied. Moreover, Arabs have been depicted by the Americans as enemies. According to Carol Fadda-Conrey (2011), the repercussions of "the post-9/11 backlash against Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. ultimately erases

internal differences within the Arab American community, depicting all Arabs in the U.S. as the enemy or at least as a potential enemy” (541). Evelyn Alsultany argues that “[i]n just the first weeks and months after 9/11 [...] Dozens of airline passengers perceived to be Arab or Muslim were removed from flights” (4). She adds that most Arab Americans reported hundreds of harassment claims at work, received emails, and their mosques and community places were burned. At the novel’s beginning, Khalil remarks that “in the weeks, months, and years after 9/11, hate crimes, workplace discrimination, bias incidents, and airline discrimination targeting Arab and Muslim Americans increased exponentially” (Noble 161).

Like Jassim in *Once in a Promised Land*, Khalil seems unconcerned with the anti-Arab sentiment after the September 11 attacks. In this case, Khalil’s ignorance and the failure to heed such a historical moment led to his identity crisis and fall. He is not emancipated from history; he finds himself in a situation that urges him to contact people who hate him and consider him guilty of a crime he did not commit. Regardless of his innocence, he is punished because he was simply an Arab, and his Arab ancestry marks him as dangerous following the attacks of September 11.

After being abducted by two captors, Khalil believed he was an American; thus, they would not abuse him. He regards his right not to be subjected to abuse, but the two men view him as an Arab who threatens their country. Georgiana Banita (2010) claims that “after September 11, Arab Americans have fallen one step behind other social outsiders, being branded not only as second-rate citizens but also as social hazards” (246). Based on Said’s *Orientalism*, Arabs were portrayed negatively even before 9/11; however, the old stereotypes were replaced by new ones following the attacks. Consequently, those negative stereotypes were implanted in people’s minds, and it was not easy to eliminate

them. As a Syrian and Arab man, Khalil has been exposed to the hatred of others, to which he desperately expresses that he “will never be able to correct all the false perceptions about [him]” (Noble 147).

Hence, Khalil becomes more aware of his identity, as an Arab man, through his grandmother’s stories about his family history. Said differently, Khalil learns he is an Arab through his grandmother’s stories. The ghost of his *Situe* appears again to give him the knowledge he needs to escape his dilemma.

Khalil’s inability to understand the Arabic language spoken by the eagle proves his identity loss and his lack of knowledge about his ethnic group. Language is, thus, understood as a marker of an inherited ethnic identity. Losing the native ethnic language is common among many minority groups, and choosing a dominant language is an attempt to forget a part of oneself that can be marked by language. In her article, “Language Conflict and Identity: Arabic in the American Diaspora” (2002), Aleya Rouchdy argues that Arabic is an ethnic language that will never die, regardless of the English influence on its practice among some Arab-Americans since it only experiences attrition and can be learned at any time (143). However, Khalil, who belongs to the third generation, did not learn Arabic from his parents. He tells the fire marshal and the man in the brown suit that he “never learned to speak the language” (119).

Steven Salaita (2005) adds that “the Arabic language, for the most part, was not passed down from immigrants to children” (149). Khalil tells his grandmother that his father “wanted to be an American [...] He wanted [them] to speak English. To eat American food” (Noble 89). Put otherwise, Khalil’s father instilled in his children’s minds the idea of assimilation. Worried about her grandson, she confesses that this is the fault of his father by saying that “[h]e can be both Arab and American” (89). Like



other immigrant groups, his father wanted to adopt the American way of life and was classified as white. Cainkar stresses the struggle of Arab Americans to be classified as white:

Starting in the 1970s, Arab Americans across the U.S. began to [...] experience treatment as people of color. With these changes in experience, Arab Americans came to understand their place in the racial hierarchy and racial identity differently, although again with complexities and variations. Arab Americans once fought in an organized manner to be recognized as Whites, as with the 1914 Dow naturalization case (qtd. in Awad and Amer 21).

Most Syrian immigrants, including Khalil's father, assimilated into American society and kept their ethnic differences in their private family lives. Following his father's choice of being an American rather than an Arab comes to an end after September 11, in which his Syrian ethnicity marks him as the Other. In a conversation with his grandmother during his interrogation, he asks her about the reason for being arrested and regarded as a terrorist; she replies, "Nationality, demeanor, activity [...] You're an Arab" (Noble 89). However, Khalil's fragile connection with his ancestors in the Middle East does not prevent the others from seeing him as a dangerous other.

Like Jassim, Khalil is viewed as the Other and different; however, he does not consider himself so. When he is abducted and asked by the fire marshal and the man in the brown suit, he worries about the reason for being there. He believes that they are not different from him; he says while looking at them, "I'm looking at you as fellow humans, as members of my species. Trying to find common ground. Trying to figure out why you're doing this." However, they regard his statement as a threat. He abruptly

replies, “how can you interpret my words that way? I have the right to express my opinions. I’m a citizen. For God’s sake, we’re all citizens” (94). The two men regard Khalil as an enemy whether he commits the crime or not.

According to Graebner (2013), the two American men represent a group who encourage “Americans to turn away from liberal misadventures and an emerging multi-cultural America and to embrace a Republican conservatism that privileged the white male, the cult of the individual, and the militarized nation-state” (521). They disrespect him by calling him wrong or made-up names like “Huron” (Noble 93), “Harary” (106), “Harmouni” (119) until they finally start to call him Kali. They also laugh at him when he claims they have no right to abuse him. They threaten his family when they tell him that “[they] know what Philip is” (123); they attempt to agitate him by telling him his son is gay, but he does not show any reactions, and he says instead, “I don’t care. I never cared” (123). They do not expect his answer and attempt to scare him, indicating that they will hurt his son by saying, “Philip’s motorcycle is vulnerable to blowouts” (123). Here, Noble highlights one of the Western stereotypes associated with Arabs. The two American men think of themselves as heterosexuals and masculine; however, the son of Khalil, who is an Arab, is viewed as homosexual and feminine.

His grandmother informs him that they kidnapped him because he is a terrorist, and they are “keepers of the peace” (95), as they assume. However, he does not believe her because he sees himself as American, not Arab American. His “nationality, demeanor, activity” (89) has been his proof. Like Halaby, Noble presents the negative attitudes of Americans towards Arabs to defend their country in her work. Khalil is not conscious yet that

In the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, members of the Arab American community in the United States were exposed to new scrutiny, suffered new discrimination, and faced new uncertainty over their ability to fully enjoy a safe place within American society (Gómez-Vega 77).

Moreover, Khalil shows no fear; thus, he attacks the man in the brown suit. On the following day of interrogation, the man's "lips were split top to bottom in several places; there were handprints around his neck" (116). However, Khalil knows they will kill him, and he faces their violence with courage and dignity. He "stood his ground. He no longer dreaded what might happen, because it seemed to have happened. He had confronted a real calamity, an unavoidably immediate and personal event, and made it through" (117). In doing so, he defends himself and his son in which he does not stand by their side in their hatred for his son's homosexuality. His fights against the man in the brown suit and the fire marshal show his courage and honour. He tells his true story to the two men without pretending to be a good man to escape his ordeal. He does not deny his ancestry and claims he is Christian instead of Muslim. He reminds them that he is American and was born there. Carol-Fadda Conrey explains in her work, "Arab American Citizenship in Crisis" (2011) that

According to the binary logic shaped by post-9/11's 'citizen patriot' dictum, the good Arabs are those who successfully and consistently distance themselves politically, religiously, and often even physically from the bad Arabs, or those bodies both in the Arab world and in the US purportedly bearing the neo-Orientalist designations of fundamentalism, terrorism, and cultural stagnation (536).

Regardless of the beatings and harassment, Khalil narrates his story while knowing the futility of his efforts. The story starts with delivering Jane Plain's glasses and taking them to her home, wherein he finds a note to tell him that she is in Santa Vista. Afterwards, he asks them, intending to find an answer, in which he claims that he "honestly [doesn't] know how she knew [he] was coming," and one of the men quickly and angrily replies, "Of course not. How would we know?" (110). The immediate answer and being angry at the question prove that the two men have a connection with Jane Plain and are responsible for all that is happening to Khalil.

After attempting to convince them that he is not guilty and committed no crime, they tell him another hidden fact he does not want to reveal. The man in the brown suit exposes his connection to Jane Plain indirectly when he says, "[y]ou expect us to believe that you weren't going down there to get a whiff of Jane again? To inhale those perfumed oils she wears?" and he adds "Citrus and ginger" [...] "She mixes it herself" (109).

The fire marshal, who represents the Americans, expresses his hatred towards the Arabs and their culture when he tells Khalil, "[i]t's sick, I tell you! Sick! Your people, make me sick! *You* make me sick! Sick! Sick! Sick!" (120). Even though Khalil is honest, innocent, and attached to American culture, the man in the brown suit tells him, "All right, you Bedouin sonofabitch, speak English around us. No foreign language clues; no coded messages." Khalil angrily replies, "Have you heard me speak one word of Arabic? [...] except for the word *situe*?" (111). The two men remind Khalil of his Arab origins, language, and culture; however, he resists by saying that he does not "speak Arabic. [They] didn't speak Arabic because [his] father wanted [them] to be 'American' (119).

Moreover, they provide him with certain statements from different people whom he met in his journey about his suspicious behaviour “during the last thirty-six hours.” The fire Marshal reads the list of witnesses from his notebook: “desk clerk at Empire Motor Hotel, a receptionist at Palace of Fine Arts, next-door neighbors at Empire Motor Hotel,” “ticket seller at belly dancing event, who didn’t have much nice to say about you,” “the parking lot attendant, the room service waiter who was in your room twice.” The fire Marshal adds that even Jane Plain declared that “you ‘seduced her.’ That you pursued her. That she could not escape your persistent attention. ‘Stalking,’ she called it” (81-83).

In addition, the Fire Marshal attempts to abuse Khalil’s failed masculinity and accuses him of planning to do a terrorist act based on the misunderstood expression that he heard on the tape, “you’ve gotta take your best shot” (106). He asks him, “[w]as it the frustration of not being able to get it up made you say that” (107). They believe that his failed masculinity is the cause of being an abject terrorist. These American men do not suffice only with emasculating Khalil’s manhood; instead, they attempt to examine his body by inserting some devices into it. The man in the brown suit “shoved the device in Kali’s mouth, chipping one of his front teeth. The man ran the device over the surfaces of Kali’s mouth, under his tongue, the inside and outside of the gums [...] ears and neck, leaving the nose alone” (115). Being kidnapped by anonymous people and being put in unknown and obscure prison reflects the miserable situation of the Arabs in post-9/11 America.

After being physically and emotionally traumatised, Khalil has been sent, by the man in the brown suit and the fire marshal, to the two prisoners, Orville and Shadrack, a swindler and a rapist, to finish the investigation. He wonders, “[t]hrough what cosmic

error had he been put here in this room with these two? Had he violated some fundamental law of nature? Was he trapped in a time warp? Or simply hallucinating?” (127). However, his aching body reminds him of his current situation. They inform him that their imprisonment is his fault because they “were, conducting [their] business at the Empire Motor Hotel [...] and [they] got scooped up in [his] net” (130). They want him to believe that the police officers came to the motel to investigate his disappearance, and when they did not find him, they arrested them instead. Khalil attempts to tell them what he knows, not what they want to hear.

Hence, Khalil becomes more aware that the repercussion of September 11 on him and his decision to chase Jane Plain to Santa Vista put him in trouble. In other words, he knows that “his struggle to see and understand the collision of personal decision with the forces of history had shut him down” (138). He decides to speak because he realises that “this may be his last—and only—opportunity to make a complete record of all the things he wanted to say [...] Because he was probably going to be killed before this was all over” (137).

Orville and Shadrack have not been interested in the details of Khalil’s life, and they want to know more about his “Arab brethren” who “subscribe to the jihad.” After being asked about Jihad by Orville, he says that his “grandparents came here at the end of the nineteenth century.” Kali’s voice gets louder. “My parents were born here. I was born here.” Not satisfied with the answer, Orville claims that Khalil’s story “fails to take into account the specifics of [his] heritage.” Khalil immediately answers, “I don’t divide the world into Arab and non-Arab or Muslim and non-Muslim. I don’t think in those terms.” Orville replies, “Then you’re one of the few these days who doesn’t” (141).

Rather than beating him, Orville and Shadrack try to draw out words from him, and all they get is Khalil's admission that he wanted to live a good life; however, Orville reminds him of his heritage by stating that "you can't live in a vacuum. You can't deny who you are" (141). Khalil asserts, "I was the kid down the street in the family down the street. Or the optician who fixed his next door neighbor's glasses. Nothing unique. Nothing special [...] Do you want me to invent a history that doesn't exist?" (141).

Finally, the two decide that Khalil is a terrorist regardless of his answers and determine to punish him. The attitude of Orville and Shadrack echoes Edward Said's interpretation of the Western perception of Arabs, who are often associated with distorted images, like terrorists, barbaric, and alien Other.

The reader will later reveal that Orville and Shadrack are not only prisoners but also have a relationship with the man in the brown suit and the fire marshal. Orville insists that Khalil must "relate everything in detail. From the beginning. Leaving out nothing. Starting with when Jane Plain brought in her three prescriptions and ordered four pairs of glasses" (133). However, Khalil never mentioned it before to the investigators. Khalil asks him, "How did you know she had three prescriptions? [...] How did you know she ordered four pairs of glasses" and Orville says, "You told us [...] when you were semi-unconscious. You were raving. It was a tragic thing to see" (134). Hence, Khalil realises that they bring him into that room as another plot to reveal what he knows. He "had the impression that Orville and Shadrack already knew the answers to most of their questions about him. That they were waiting for the next act of a play they had already seen" (134). Then, Orville attempts to commiserate with him and says, "terrorists are getting even poorer treatment these days than we are." Khalil repeats, "I'm not a terrorist" (127).

Once again, Khalil runs away to a Laundromat, and his abductors follow him. When they are about to find him, he hides in a dryer, wherein his grandmother comes to him. At this time, his grandmother asks him about a confession during his interrogation with Orville. When Orville interrogates him, Khalil confesses that he had been, one day, picked up at school by his father when he was a child. The next day, his friends asked him whether the man of colour who came to him yesterday was his father or not. Ashamed, Khalil says no. Noble shows Khalil's neglect of his origins at an early age; it is a fact that leads to his identity crisis following 9/11.

As an older man, he feels ashamed after denying his father. His *Situe*, somehow annoyed, asks him, "How could you be ashamed of your own father?" (156). He justifies his deed by saying that he "was only a child"; however, she blames him, "[t]hen you should have been a better child" and "[t]here are things a man doesn't tell his mother" (156). Then, he asks her about any device to escape this trouble. She angrily replies, "Now you ask me for advice? Why not *before* your father exposed himself to humiliation at your hands?" (156). Khalil regrets, "I am sorry a thousand times. A million times. But, please, answer the question. What shall I do now?" (157). She advises him to finish his journey back home and live his future. "And then?" asks Khalil. His *Situe* again answers his question with a question, and Khalil becomes upset with his grandmother and tells her, "I don't want any more of your stories." (157). She does it without being offended.



## **Section Two: Identity Construction of the Arab American Men in the United States after 9/11**

In the post-9/11 era, Arab American women writers offer representations of masculinity in their literary works in a way that counters the hegemonic discourses about Arab masculinities and reconstructs their identity. After the 9/11 attacks, Khalil's view of American life and his identification with American society rapidly unravels as he becomes increasingly marginalised within the post-9/11 milieu. His identity is conflicted between his inclusion into American culture and his racialisation as an outsider.

### **IV.1. Arab American Men's Identity Crisis Post-9/11 in Noble's Novel**

The protagonist, Khalil Gibran Hourani, makes a journey to look for the meaning of good and evil. His name is associated with the Lebanese American poet Khalil Gibran, the author of *The Prophet* (1923). *The Prophet* is considered the most important work by Gibran. It is composed of a mixture between prose and poetry, and each poem provides Gibran's view on some aspects of life or some problems that man might face. In his work, Gibran provided the readers with life lessons through his character, al-Mustafa, who acts as a prophet and teacher. It explores issues that Gibran believed are important in one's culture.

The idea of duality between good and evil is prevalent in his thinking, which appears to overcome barriers between East and West on conflicting cultural and human issues. Khalil's struggle in post-9/11 America because of his Arab American identity urges him to live in a heterotopic world. According to Foucault, heterotopia is a place of difference and often relates to the world of utopia. However, it contrasts it by switching everything around and acting as a mirror. Where utopia provides order, heterotopia creates another

space for chaos. Where utopia assures and soothes, heterotopia disturbs and creates uncertainty about everything. In his book, *The Order of Things* (1966), Foucault states:

Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they can unfold, they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, [...] make it impossible to name this and that, [and] shatter or tangle common names (XVIII).

In an attempt to understand the meaning of life, Khalil starts to speak to the ghost of his grandmother to have a stable identity. His ignorance about the nature of good and evil exacerbates his crisis in the aftermath of the traumatic attacks. His journey towards understanding the Manichean view implemented in the West towards the Arabs, who turn out to be part of “the axis of evil,” has shattered his sense of self. As a result, Khalil experiences anomie in which he lives in a heterotopic world wherein his identity has been challenged by Western perception. This third heterotopic space makes Khalil, a man in his fifties, unable to distinguish between good and evil. He says, “I can’t judge anymore. What’s right? What’s wrong? What isn’t? I face the last third of my life and I don’t know what to do with myself” (Noble 23).

As mentioned earlier, Khalil is a third-wave immigrant who has no connection to his ancestors since he was born in America and did not learn about his Arabic language. Furthermore, he rejects his origins early when his classmates laugh at his father, and the fact leads to his identity crisis, especially in the aftermath of 9/11.

Khalil's identity crisis has been mirrored in his failed masculinity. He suffers from dysfunction, and he cannot please his wife. This failure reflects his identity crisis or the outcome of the feeling of inaptitude because of the abject masculinities directed at Arab men post-9/11. Arab men's masculinity has been affected by the Orientalist stereotypes that conceived their masculinity and manhood as hyper-masculine and emasculated. His identity and masculinity crisis stems from people's depiction of him as a "monster-terrorist." Even though he regards himself as a good man, the Americans see him as evil. Such a fact unsettles his Manichean view in which he divides the world into good and evil. His fragile relationship with his wife and his failed masculinity as an Arab man in the United States reflect people's perception of him.

The attacks of 9/11 altered Khalil's stable identity into a heterotopic one. Khalil becomes visible; thus, he experiences racism and discrimination. Suleiman states that the false images and stereotypes about the Arabs are "the main barriers to understanding social and cultural portraits of Arab Americans" (3). The first instance shows the result of a growing misunderstanding and fear of Islam amongst the American people. Khalil has faced one of the negatively stereotyped images about Arabs. When he goes to the house of Jane Plain to deliver her glasses, he does not find her; instead, he finds her landlord, who has been suspicious of Khalil because of his appearance and the package carried with him. The landlord wonders about Khalil's name; he says, "what the hell kind of name is that?" (16). However, Khalil assumes that the landlord is asking about Jane Plain's name, and he answers, "Good question. One wonders what her parents had in mind" (16). The landlord immediately corrects him, "No, yours."

Khalil's innocence makes him comfortable as an American, that people will not judge him based on ethnicity. He explains to the man that his mother named him "after

[...] most famous poet”, but when the man seems to have no idea about the poet, Khalil explains that the poet was “Kahlil Gibran, the famous Lebanese American poet” (17). In doing so, Khalil admits his Lebanese heritage. That fact makes the landlord aware of the connection between Lebanon and Arabs, considered enemies of the state in news reports. As a reaction, he tells him, “For all, I know you could be a terrorist,” but Khalil replies, “I am not a terrorist. I’m an optician” (17). The landlord regards Khalil as a terrorist because he does not know the history of Syrian immigrants, most of whom were not Arabs. He considers Khalil different and dangerous based on his connection with a Lebanese poet. Philip M. Kayal explains that

nearly ninety per cent of all Arabic-speaking immigrants arriving [in the United States] before 1924 were Syrian Christians from Mount Lebanon who were either Roman Catholics of Eastern rite or Syrian (Eastern) Orthodox. They were not 'Arabs' in the broader sense of the word. Nor were they Turks or Assyrians classified by the Immigration Department. Instead, they were Semitic Christians who were Arab only in culture (409-410).

As mentioned above, Kayal states the classification of Arabs with a basis on their culture, regardless of their diversity. Concerning Suleiman’s and Naber’s ideas about Arabs’ marginalisation due to the United States government’s categorisation, Noble presents in her book the Americans’ ignorance of the Arab culture; they think of Arabs as one ethnic group.

#### **IV.2.A Journey Towards Self Discovery**

Khalil’s naivety and blind trust in Jane mark the beginning of a journey that will teach him a few things about himself. Like Halaby, Noble represents the Arabs’

fascination with the American culture through Khalil's attraction to Jane. Before even knowing her name, he has been drawn to her. In his store, he follows her "in his practiced professional manner-directly behind, just enough distance between them-ready to assist, to accommodate, to guide. Close enough to notice her tantalizing scent," which "seemed to fill up the room. Pungent. Musky. Distracting" (Noble 6). She makes him behave in a way that seems different from his own. First, he does not accept to take the money from her "when she paid with an out-of-town check" (8).

Second, when her glasses become ready, he calls her and leaves several messages to pick them up, but she does not answer. Jane Plain's ignorance of Khalil's calls and messages is a part of her plans to lure him. The need to see her again makes him feel that the weight of the four glasses is so heavy on the counter and that "soon the floor would be at a steep angle and all the cabinets and fixtures and inventory, the velvet stool, and the one potted plant, would slide to one side of the room, pile up, break, spill" (14). The weight of the glasses urges him to move from his comfort area to the outside world, where he will be tested and face the reality that led to his painful fall.

Khalil's great fall has been literal and figurative. He experiences a literal fall when he reaches her apartment. He starts to smell her perfume, and in doing so, "the toe of his left shoe caught in a hole in a stretch of green indoor/outdoor carpeting." In fact, "[i]t was a swift, hard fall. A fall that seemed to incorporate the weight of his entire day, his entire week, his entire month. A fall that conspired with the force of gravity to inflict as much dull, deep pain as possible" (18). However, Khalil does not give up on pursuing Jane regardless of the pain that has a bad connotation; he "dropped neither the eyeglasses nor his flashlight" and "he stayed there on that knee. And willed the tears in his eyes to go back to where they came from" (18).

Finally, Khalil stands and thinks of himself as a knight looking for his maiden. In other words, Noble states that he “recast himself in his own mind as one of the Knights of the Roundtable: injured, but undeterred. Or as Odysseus, overcoming obstacles in pursuit of his quest” (18).

Looking for Jane has led Khalil to his figurative fall. He has been loyal to his wife until searching for Jane. He admits to the men who interrogate him that “until Jane [he] was completely faithful” (140). He never lies to his wife and does not know how to lie. However, it happens in the airport, wherein he starts sweating after his lie. After being married and having children, the relationship between Khalil and his wife has not been as it used to be because “in spite of reasonably good intentions, Kali and Sophie had worn each other down to about the same degree” (32).

Like Jassim and his wife in *Once in a Promised Land*, Khalil and his wife do not enjoy a good relationship since they are engaged in their businesses. His “immersion in unsolvable cosmic problems” prevents him from being able to deal with his wife, whose “focus on inner pains partly induced by her failure to capture her husband’s attention” (32). Being unable to please his wife sexually and sleeping while making love reflect his boredom and not impotence. His figurative fall comes when he lies to his wife at the airport to pursue Jane, which damages the values and morals he lives with throughout his life until meeting Jane.

Finally, he finds the house of Jane Plain and a note fixed on the door to say, “Gone to THE NEW BELLY DANCER OF THE GALAXY CONTEST!!!! In Santa Vista, Palace of Fine Arts in case anybody needs to get in touch with me” (19). Khalil decides to go to Santa Vista under the influence of Plain’s good smell. It is a trip that separates him from what he knows is real. For the first time, he lies to his wife. He informs her

that he is attending an optician conference in Cincinnati instead of Santa Vista. “For Kali did not lie, usually, except for Cincinnati” (175). She feels happy when he tells her about his travel and appraises him, “You haven’t shown an interest in anything for a long time” (35). She insists on accompanying him to the airport, where he is embarrassed; he wants to pretend he has a ticket while speaking to the clerk and security guard. However, he does not have it. In an attempt to hide his lie, he screams at his wife in public:

In a voice so loud that surprised them both. A voice so loud it carried over the immediate commotion of the check-in line to the X-ray machine. Where the security guard took note of the anxious expression on a man’s red and perspiring face, the man’s excessive hold on a briefcase, and the agitation of the woman who accompanied him (37).

Raising his voice to his wife confirms one Western stereotype of Arab men: the mistreatment of women. Women have often been described in the West as weak, docile, and subservient throughout the Arab world. They are also victims of their husband’s violence and abuse. So, raising his voice to his wife in public because of his anger about lying and seeing his grandmother nearby catches the workers’ attention in which they become suspicious of him as a terrorist. The security guard notices “the anxious expression on a man’s red and perspiring face, the man’s excessive hold on a briefcase, and the agitation of the woman who accompanied him” (37). His wife leaves before Kalil has been asked about having a ticket or a boarding card. “Kali was full of joy. And full of guilt that he did not feel guilty” (3). He rents a car and leaves for *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* contest.

However, the car rental trainee has also been suspicious of him. She writes a comment in a report and mails it to the head office, telling him, “Forget to say he says he’s going belly dancing, but he didn’t look like a belly dancer to me” (40). Before sending the report, she registered the essential information about Khalil. His Arab name, the name of his business, his impatience, and his disinterest in money. Not being interested in money alerts her to terrorist funding or oil money, which shows her stereotype about Arabs in the United States after 9/11. Noble explains this point

[H]er duty was clear. Her conclusion, inevitable. He’d convicted himself after all: that name; the name of his business [Oasis]; the way he brushed off every good point she made in her sales pitch; the way he got impatient when she asked him a question; saying he didn’t know where he’d be staying. But the clincher, the most important evidence against him, was the MONEY WAS NO OBJECT. She underlined and capitalized that part of her report and faxed the whole thing to the head office (40).

The title of the contest also reveals the western stereotypes of the Arabs. Belly dancing is a practice of Arab women to exoticize; however, Khalil sees no Arab woman there. Moreover, it can be linked to outer space, which detaches from Arabic origins. Such foreignness reflects Arab Americans’ feeling of identity loss and uprootedness in America after the traumatic attacks of 9/11. The title presents the nature of the relationship between Arab Americans and Americans. It promotes Arab females’ exoticization by showing traditional Arab dance; however, there is no Arab woman there. The word “galaxy” in the title reflects Khalil’s disconnectedness from his origins and Arab American community, which perturbrates him in understanding his identity.



In the contest, Khalil meets Jane Plain and gives her glasses. Then, he has an affair with her as if this has been the plan of Jane Plain all along. An action that allows him to feel close to his origins; yet, she is neither a Middle Easterner nor the Mediterranean. In doing so, Khalil overcomes his erectile dysfunction. As a result, Khalil's masculinity is no more threatened, and he is about to reach his stable identity.

Even though Khalil likes the intimate connection with Jane, he wonders about her life and acceptance to spend the night with him. He asks her, "how would [her life] had unfolded if [he] hadn't come along yesterday? Where would [she have] stayed?" and she does not provide him with an answer, and she replies instead, "Is my Kali jealous" (60). Khalil has been eager to know about Jane's plan of coming to another city far from her home without knowing where to spend the night or even having the money to rent a room. However, he thinks that she does not make plans, making the reader suspect Jane's plan that encompasses luring Khalil to Santa Vista. It can also be possible that Khalil's question about what she would have done without him validates him and shows her appreciation for him.

During their two days, Khalil does not know too much about Jane, and all he knows is that she eats a lot. He notices for the first time in the first stay together that a woman eats so much: "pancakes, bacon, eggs, toast, hashed browns, orange juice, coffee" and "she bit and chewed in ceaseless motion" (61). She used to eat before and after a performance. However, when Khalil offers her a plate of food to eat, she tells him, "not before a performance" (75). As a fact, she refuses to eat from Khalil's plate because it consists of something that will paralyze him. Even though Khalil states that "But the others are eating," she replies, "They have no hope of winning" (75). Moments after,

“the man in the brown suit walked around the buffet tables, loading his plate” (75). However, he has not been seen eating.

Shortly after the beginning of the performance, Khalil “appeared to pass out,” and “the man in the brown suit grabbed Kali’s arm, and the fire marshal moved quickly to assist. Together they pulled Kali out of the row and out of the room to the elevator” (76). It becomes clear that Jane Plain refuses to eat, making Khalil unable to defend himself against those two men. He has been dragged “into a back of their dark sedan” (76). Khalil does not know that this car is the same car that they chase him with after escaping, and it has been the same “brown sedan that had been trailing him since he turned the key in the ignition and left the airport” (42).

After restoring his masculinity, Khalil is arrested by the two men. They ask him many questions about his name, origin, family and work out of suspicion that he is a terrorist. Such behaviour reflects the racism in the Americans’ attitude towards the Arabs. At that moment, concerning Caruth’s description of the complexity between consciousness and unconsciousness in trauma’s language, Noble presents Khalil in a state wherein he wishes to “escape into unconsciousness” in which “he wanted to spring upon them like an animal and tear them apart. He desperately wished that none of this was happening” (106-107).

The two men regard themselves as keepers of peace in which they place themselves in a position of superiority and power over the inferior Kalil. However, they do not identify themselves as police officers or the FBI; they simply captor, interrogate, brutalize, and threaten him that they will “find everything [they] need to send [him] away for a long time” (116). In addition, they do not show any connection to law

enforcement, in which they act as if following someone else's orders to interrogate Khalil.

#### IV.2.1. Food and Belly Dancing as two Markers of Cultural Identity

Following his father's path, Khalil is interested in his ethnicity and private life rather than expressing it overtly. He participates in many family gatherings and is a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He also joins a group that shares their ethnic food to keep the community together because food connects to identity. When he moves to Santa Vista looking for Jane Plain to deliver her glasses, he takes a motel room and looks in the phone book for an Arabic restaurant. "*Dolmas, tabbouleh, hummus, some white Syrian cheese, some white flat-bread-that's the only food he wanted*" (original italics Noble 49). In addition, being in the Palace of Fine Arts for the contest of belly dancing, Khalil feels happy and pleased after finding long tables composed of "traditional Lebanese *mezza: dolmas, tabbouleh, hummus, olives, bread and cheese, and more, spread out below the stage*" (original italics 74).

Knowing the name of the dishes marks Khalil's otherness; thus, it attracts the man in the brown suit, who becomes suspicious of Khalil. He asks him about his coming, "are you here for dancing or the food?" Khalil replies, "Both, I guess", and adds, "*Mezza* first, though." Then, he mentions "Arabic hors d'oeuvres", which is the word that reinforces his difference. As a reaction, the man in the brown suit takes a pen from his breast pocket and notebook and asks Khalil to spell it for him. Even though Khalil does not speak Arabic and is an optometrist, the two men regard him as a terrorist based on his knowledge of the names of the Arabic food. In addition, he memorises his *situe's* food after being asked by Orville about his grandmother. His memories go back to the past in which he remembers her "*kibbe, tabbouleh, cousa* and her version of spaghetti,

and ending with the bread she rolled on her knees on the bare kitchen floor” (original italics 145). Claude Fischler (1988) shows the importance of food in forming one’s identity in his “Food, Self, and Identity”. He says:

Food is central to our sense of identity. The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy, and organisation and, at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed biologically, psychologically and socially by the nutrition they choose to incorporate (n.pag).

Besides being interested in the food of the Middle East, Khalil also gives importance to belly dancing. Belly dance performances represent ethnic, cultural, and even political identities in multicultural America. In the Palace of Fine Arts, Khalil starts looking for Jane Plain; afterwards, he hears voices from a training room of dancing. He pretends to go shopping while looking on the floor to get Jane. It is not strange for him to see belly dancers because he remembers memories of the weddings in his home, wherein “he’d seen belly dancers before, of course. Grow up with them in the background, like the sounds of his parents’ voices. Had one at his wedding reception, in fact” (Noble 53).

When he sees the belly dancers on the floor, he thinks they “didn’t look like the dancers he remembered. These moved in fits and starts and, heavy or thin, looked angled and pointy and sharp” (54). Even though he did not live in Syria, he can differentiate between the American belly dancers and those of his own country. He notices that the teacher is the only one who follows the same way of dancing in his old country, and she is the only Arab among them. He thinks she “was from the old days. She did anything she wanted to up there” (54).

In this case, Khalil's memory helps him construct his cultural identity and understand himself. Namely, his memory of his culture is part of his identity. Radolph Henry Ash claims, "where my thoughts are, there I am, in truth" (qtd. in Mercer, Sabine, and Ursula 237). Moreover, George Herbert Mead comments on the importance of personal memories for identity formation. He claims, "individuals can only observe themselves in retrospective 'memory process[es]'" and "[f]orming their self-images by remembering their past actions and thoughts" (Mead 374–5). In other words, an intrasubjective understanding of oneself can be achieved through memory. Unconsciously, Khalil affirms his Syrian identity by recognising the authentic dance on the stage from the other and his pleasure in seeing Syrian food. Lisa Suhair Majaj (1996) states that "memory plays a familiar role in the assertion of identity by members of ethnic and minority groups" (qtd. in Gómez-Vega 76).

#### **IV.3. Khalil's Self Awareness and Cultural Identity Development**

After his escape, he becomes more aware of his identity crisis. Khalil sees his face for the first time since he has left the Empire Motor Hotel. He could not recognise himself; he thinks that "[i]t was the face of another being. Not his. Not his. He didn't recognise it. He didn't want to touch it," and when he wanted to dry it, "He did the best he could do without looking at it again" (Noble 155). After such an incident, Khalil becomes perplexed about his identity; he becomes more aware of it thanks to the fire marshal and the man in the brown suit. He thinks "that he was not merely an illegal passenger, trespasser, hobo-which could seem bad enough-but an *Arabic* illegal passenger, trespasser, hobo" (243).

His journey home takes him to another series of experiences where he meets people who are not what they claim. He struggles to find the truth and learn from it. He has

already realised that Jane is a fake, and he is afraid that the two captors are independent agents or work with the authorities because “they acted like they expected to be backed up and stood behind” (161). He has been traumatised and lost and wants to feel relieved to tell anyone what happened to him. “[H]e did not want to suffer in vain, in silence, invisibly. He wanted the authorities to find the culprits, throw them in jail, give him a chance to glare at them in a lineup, identify them, see that justice was done” (161) in case of not being the authorities themselves.

During his journey, he encounters other people who also suffer from an identity crisis, and they help him to face himself and his identity. Benny is a truck driver who is a female-to-male transgender. He questions the identitary boundaries of gender and has a relationship with a Mexican man who helps other Mexicans pass the borders and hides them in Benny’s truck. The relationship between Benny and his lover reflects the anti-essentialist view of identity. In contrast to the essentialist notion, which regards that human identity categories are fixed and can exist transhistorically and trans-culturally, anti-essentialism states that human identities lack an essence that would cause all people with the same trait to merge one category with shared interests and experiences.

Benny tells him he is driving on that road by chance because “two cars going northbound on the freeway ran head-on into each other” and caused an accident. The accident causes the detour that brings Benny to this road. Later, it becomes clear that the two cars colliding are Khalil’s “Tyrolean blue rental sedan.” It is the same sedan that the man in the brown suit has driven. As usual, Benny takes a picture of everyone who takes a ride and hangs it on the dashboard. He tells him that this is the cost of the ride. Benny helps many people, including Mexicans, which is apparent in the pictures on the dashboard. When Benny informs Khalil that there are Mexicans in the back of the rig,

Khalil recognises that they are illegal foreigners; thus, he tells Benny, “I think I’d better get out. I have enough troubles as it is” (Noble 166). Benny admits that after the statement of Khalil,

“I can’t pull over on the freeway just to let you out. That’ll bring the highway patrol down on me for sure.”

“True,” Kali agreed reluctantly.

“And you don’t look like an innocent bystander.”

“True again,” Kali said.

“I have a regular stop in a while. You can get out there. Meanwhile, try to relax. Take a nice, hot shower. You could use one” (167).

Although his *Situe* does not appear in the rig, he feels that this is one of the options that she tells him. He wants to inform Benny about his *Situe*, and he has been about to inform him that she is listening to their speech. He speaks to himself, “What good would it have done to tell Benny that they spoke all the time and that she was probably overhearing their entire conversation and that she appeared to have temporarily entered one of Benny’s photographs from which she winked at him during their ride” (170). Khalil has had two options: get off the rig or complete his journey. Finally, he decides to finish his journey. He does not know yet that the Mexicans are in danger, and his decision to stay is mainly because of his fear from his wife that “once he went back he’d have to explain his disappearance, why he looked like he did, and everything else. He’d have to confess his lies and hope for forgiveness” (172).

However, for the first time, he tries to think differently that his choice has been justified because “there was a possibility that he was still in danger and that going home would bring that danger to his wife, family and friends.” Meanwhile, he is afraid “to

endure the torrent of Sophie's emotions" (172). He thinks, "Sophie had long ago concluded that he was careless, foolish, and ineffective" (160). Noble writes that

He was a man who couldn't describe his place in the world. A man soon to be fifty-three who struggled to identify his role in life- such a man didn't deserve to go back to his loved ones, couldn't go back yet, maybe wouldn't go back at all (173).

When the rig stops and Benny goes to the Galaxy Casino, he chooses another option: to go to the back of the rig and see the Mexicans there. A decision that turns out later to be wrong. On the bench, there are a woman and five men sitting. When Khalil reaches them, they show no emotions or reactions. Hence, Khalil apologizes for two things; the first one "for intruding, for alarming [them]," and the second one because he has "nothing to offer [...] nothing to give. Which is not [his] usual way. We Arabs." He states, for the first time, that he is an Arab, and he adds that Arabs "are famous for" their "hospitality" (184). Instead, he offers to comfort them by telling them a story "that didn't sound elevated the way Situe's stories did" (185).

The story is about "*a brother and three sisters [who] traveled across the sea from the old world to the new*" (original italics Noble 185). It reflects Khalil's ancestors' journey from their old countries to the New World, plus the journey of the Mexicans. However, they do not welcome it, especially when Khalil expresses his desire to make it sound heroic. They do believe neither in heroes nor in fairytales, as Mario claims. Mario is a cynic who does not believe in stories. Here, Noble presents Khalil's attempt to construct his identity by telling a story about his family background and culture.

Khalil's *Situe* appears again when Khalil feels lost and needs advice. Khalil does not like Mario from the beginning. "He did not trust him. He was wary of tricks and lies. At



the bottom, he disapproved of infidelity, including his own” (187), after knowing about his story of killing a man and throwing him in a place that could not be found. According to Mario, the woman’s husband ruined his life and obliged his family to spend their money to get his freedom. The only way to pay his family back is by smuggling people into the United States. Khalil realises that something is wrong when he sees him “leaned over the woman, took her arm and pulled her up,” and regardless of Khalil’s question, he “led the woman through the door and into the passage-way. She did not resist; she did not acquiesce” (188).

Khalil does not know that Mario will deliver the Mexicans to slavery, but he prefers to confront him. All that he knows, instinctively, is that Mario is abusing them, and the woman is used for his pleasure. In this sense, Noble attempts to provide her readers with a positive view of her main character and hero, Khalil, who finds the courage to stand up for the rights of others. As a reaction, Khalil jumps out of the rig for help from the guard at the Galaxy Casino. However, the guard mocks him because of his face and body wounds. That is to say, Khalil has been judged by his look. Even though the guard does not regard him as dangerous, he does not take him seriously. As a reaction, Khalil feels desperate and shouts, “No more! No more!” regardless of being heard by others. He declares, “I’ve had enough. Just let me die” (191). To avoid his harsh reality, Khalil

Closed his eyes and buried his face in the crooks of his arms. And there, within seconds, and with no ready explanation, saw his grandmother’s house. And he forgot that he was choking on sand and his own impotence. And he saw the massive, polished mahogany furniture in the dining room; and Situe’s crocheted doilies on the back of the sofa and on the backs of chairs, underneath ashtrays, underneath

lamps, underneath glass vases; and he smelled the food [...] and Situe saying eat eat eat [...] and Jidue by the radio in a white short-sleeved shirt and scratchy wool sweater while he read the Arabic newspaper and nodded stoically over the state of the world [...] the world waited outside unless invited in (191).

Then, he informs Benny after his return about Mario, but Benny is drunk and does not listen. Instead, he attacks Khalil when he reminds him that he was once a woman and that the woman was abused in his truck. Thus, Khalil decides to act alone without resorting to violence. His *Situe* reappears and asks Khalil about his own story when he tells her he must save them. He plans to defeat Mario, but his *Situe* helps him by informing him that “the immigration authorities are at the edge of the parking lot” (196). So, he decides to scare him and, in doing so, he tells him that his life is in danger and he has to flee. Initially, Mario does not believe him, and Khalil tells him that he heard the information from “the best authority” (198). As planned, Mario “jumped from the truck, strode across the parking lot, entered the casino, and effortlessly disappeared into the crowds” (199). As a result, the other Mexicans become free, and Mario loses the money he will get after delivering them to their destination.

Afterwards, Khalil meets another man who makes him conscious of the constructed nature of the self. While admiring the windmills and talking to his grandmother, Khalil has been so involved that he does not notice the presence of a rattlesnake near him. He has been brought into reality when someone tells him “DO...NOT...MOVE” and “an explosion at his left shoulder threw him to the ground, and he lay there, knotted and twisted.” The man shoots the snake and tells him, “we’ll have it for dinner” (214).

Maxmillian thinks Khalil is deaf because he does not know that Khalil is involved in a conversation with his dead grandmother, who disappears when Max appears.

When they get along so well, Khalil decides to tell him a story in which he says he comes “from a long line of storytellers” (229). He narrates the story of his grandfather Mansour, his two younger brothers and younger sister, who decided to live in Syria Town in Boston “with their mother and her new husband, and the four stepbrothers they had never met. Mansour had been his mother’s favorite in the old country. And now he was an orphan.” Max abruptly asks, “Thought his mother was alive,” but Khalil answers in the way that he used to when he was a child, “There is more than one way to be an orphan” (230).

When Max asks about the mother of Mansour, Khalil thinks for the first time about his family history and wonders about giving their backs to her. The family moved to Boston, and the sons worked as peddlers. Even though they got more money from work from which they bought a car, the three boys hated their stepfather for working at a young age. They also blamed their mother for her husband’s behaviour; thus, they left Boston and left her back. Khalil tells Max that the story aims to show “a family legend of Arab success and independence.” When Khalil finishes the story, he realises that he “never asked how [his] grandfather could be an orphan at the same time he had a mother who outlived him” (234). His *Situe*’s stories teach him to question everything, even his family’s stories.

On his part, Maxmillian, with a missed arm, tells Khalil his story about losing his arm in the Vietnam War. It is a story that proved to be false in which he loses his arm in a windmill accident. Max lies to Khalil because he wants to show his heroism, patriotism, and masculinity in losing his arm, which is better than saying he lost it in an

accident. In doing so, Max creates another identity to overcome his emasculation and appear instead as an American hero. Both Benny and Max make Khalil more aware of his identity in which he becomes sure that prejudice is not only for Arab Americans. Moreover, Khalil realises that trauma happens correspondingly with gender, sexual issues, and the failure to assert hegemonic masculinity among the different minorities who share Khalil's aspects of discrimination and segregation. Maloul (2013) explains the point:

Noble attempts to make here is that solidarity among minorities can be key to overcoming the spread of racism, discrimination and othering in 9/11 America [...] Noble illustrates, through the help Kali gets from Benny and Maximilian, the advantages of forging solidarity among marginalised groups and across cultural divides (202).

The solidarity between the minorities to overcome the different kinds of discrimination is one of the equality aims of women of colour feminism. Khalil finds difficulty in understanding Benny's and Max's fluid identities. They help him understand that one's identity is not a single unit but composed of many aspects attached to it. Hence, he attempts to understand the multiple features related to his identity. Therefore, he starts to think about his multi-layered identity, "[w]hen he got home and had time to reflect, he'd have to rethink his mixture: how many parts Arab, how many parts husband; how many parts father; how many parts optician, church member, nonbeliever, neighbor, Chamber of Commerce member, voter (not down party lines, usually). Man?" (234).

Khalil concludes that he is a mixture of many parts; thus, he has many identities. The last question, "Man?" reveals his readiness to look for his manhood. Manhood is one of

the most affected parts of his identity in which he has often been associated with abject masculinity. So, it remains the only part that is still questioned.

At the novel's end, after becoming obsessed with cosmic problems and running away from reality, Khalil finally returns to his home and family, believing that he is dead. He does not enter the house; instead, he stands outside watching Sophie and wonders what to do. Khalil has realised that he has cheated on his wife, but he does not even know how to introduce the subject. He has been thinking back home about what would happen if he returned. He wonders "of what he would say or not say. Whether he should lie or not lie. Whether he should hurt with the truth or protect (himself as well as Sophie) with a lie" (250). Ibis Gómez-Vega states that "the man who faces brutal interrogators without cracking, tricks a coyote into abandoning his human cargo, and faces the solitude of the California canyons, sleeps outside his home because he is afraid to face his wife" (17).

On the following day, Khalil sees from the window that his wife's sisters planned to have "a day trip up the coast" for "Sophie's good"; thus, he has no chance of announcing his return. However, he decides to enter the house because he thinks that "he could be a fugitive in the eyes of the law. They could be watching him as he prepared to walk to the front of his house and step on to his front porch" (252). Rather than opening the door with the house key, he knocked on the door "out of respect for his wife." After seeing Kali, Sophie and her sisters start screaming; thus, the neighbours call "911 upon hearing the screams." Sophie has been speechless, and Kali tells her, "I don't blame you if you're upset, but can I come in? Please?" He adds, "I know my shoes are filthy. I'll take them off. I'll leave them out here on the porch." Without saying a word, Sophie extends her hand to her husband and tells him, "you missed your

funeral” (255). After holding each other’s hands, Kali’s fear of facing his wife has been resolved.

Two weeks before, an accident resulted in four persons’ death; the problem was that there were four corps and three heads. “So, where the hell is it?” one of the experts asks, looking for the fourth head. Different interpretations have arisen among the experts. The first one says, “The force of the impact sent it flying like a batted ball into the back of an open truck, down a well, or into the surrounding countryside.” The second adds that “Somebody stole it.” However, the third one states, “The guy never had a head” (253). Finally, they conclude that the headless body is of Khalil Gibran Hourani with a basis on noticing his wallet at the scene of the accident; thus, “police gave out his name, and it was printed in the newspaper and mispronounced on the radio and the local nightly television news” (253).

After notifying Khalil’s return, the police appear and take him to the station. They want him to answer some questions “About his battered, but healing face and how it got that way. About where he was and what he did and who he did it with” (255). Khalil responds to each question by saying he has no idea or does not remember. Both the police and his family believe him because he passes through a difficult period, and he suffers from a disorder in his mental state since he has been talking to his dead grandmother for a long time.

After the inquiry of the police, Khalil starts a new life with his family. He becomes surprised at the behaviour of his wife, who attempts to be calm, and “there’d been not a word of recrimination or anger. No probing, no cross-examination” (261). She shows no interest in what happened to him. Even after knowing he is dead, she seems not interested in knowing about his wallet’s existence near a car wreck in California when

he was supposed to board a plane for Cincinnati. Instead, she starts to speak about his grandmother and the nature of their conversations; however, she does not believe in her presence while she is dead. She asserts that he finally opened his eyes thanks to his grandmother. His wife attempts to soothe his emotional problems by asking him about his grandmother. She asks him: “What did you tell Situe about me?” (261). Moreover, she asks the police officer:

Did he tell you that a huge white eagle appeared to him in our bedroom and offered to take him to heaven to see her; that he prepared a list of questions about the meaning of life, which he and Situe discussed after sneaking onto the porch of her old house in East Los Angeles; that she appeared to him at a meeting of the Hashanian Mutual Aid Society band he got lost while giving the secretary’s report; that she smokes smokeless cigarettes that no one else can see or smell and that she blows the largest smoke rings he had ever seen? (258).

Upon his arrival, Sophie asks him one question in which she asks, “Was there another woman?” to which Khalil lies and says, “Sophie, I can tell you in all honesty, no,” because as he sat there then, in his current condition, knowing things he now knew, there had been no one else” (265). Khalil attempts to justify his lie by thinking that his feelings towards Jane are false because he does not love her and is in love with his wife. During his journey and after all that had happened, Khalil discovers that he “knew things. And he knew that he knew things. Though exactly what, he couldn’t say. For in its present state, this fledgling knowledge didn’t lend itself to words. But in the initial

days after his return and for some after that, when he awoke in the morning, he felt it coating his skin. His mind. His heart” (263).

The past events have been marked as a lesson for Khalil to understand the different parts of his identity. His situation at home remains the same in which Khalil still feels lonely with or without Sophie, and “not all Kali’s scars faded away. Not all his inner aches disappeared. But what he knew became clearer in a pattern of two steps forward and one step back” (270). Khalil can recognise the contradiction embodied among them in his attempt to divide the different parts of his identity. Khalil becomes conscious that he passed as white and invisible in the past; however, he has been changed into a racialised body and is more visible after 9/11 because of his Arab appearance and name. The outside world does not seem as it was before in which he “saw the familiar objects and events of his everyday life through a different lens [...] His world inside was different, too” (263-264).

Based on the contradiction of his identity, Khalil accepts the ambiguity of good and evil and understands the Manichean view of life. He does not want past events to change his sense of what is right and what is wrong. Khalil has been “a dreamer who strove to see the world clearly. A dreamer who took his best shot, regardless of what he saw. A dreamer who knew there were no guarantees” (270).

Khalil resolves his identity crisis since he accepts his immigrant identity. Khalil proves to be a hero in a violent world. He puts himself at risk of being pursued by his captors, helping the Mexican prisoners, and assisting Max to return to his everyday life by convincing him that losing an arm is an unfortunate accident that does not prevent him from contacting people. Shadi Neimneh says, “heroism is being a sensitive human and a pacifist in a dehumanised, violent age” (80). At the novel’s end, Khalil has a heart



attack and sees his grandmother in Heaven. However, she gives him another chance on earth, finally telling him, “It’s a cruel world, Kali. Enjoy” (173). Such a statement has been a lesson for Khalil about life, which means that life is tough, and one must do his best to get the best of it. Khalil has been left with a puzzle about how he used to see himself in the past and how he sees himself in the present following the attacks.

### **Conclusion**

The traumatic events of 9/11 have been a turning point for changing Arab men’s situation from invisibility to visibility. Thus, they become more open to marginalisation and racialisation than any other group in America. After the Twin Towers’ collapse, they have been blamed for such an event and considered terrorists and perpetrators of the attacks. As a reaction, Arab American women writers, like Francis Khirallah Noble, attempted to counter, in their writings, such a hegemonic representation of Arab men. In *The New Belly dancer of the Galaxy* (2007), Noble presents the protagonist’s identity crisis after the attacks. Following the attacks, Arab men found themselves in an in-between state where they had been assimilated into American society; meanwhile, they were viewed as “other.” Such a situation poses a difficulty for them to understand their ethnic-American identity.

In short, the Arab men have lived in a third space wherein their identity is neither American nor Arab. Throughout the novel, Khalil assimilates into American society and has no connection to his origins and family. He constructs his identity as an upper/middle-class American in American society. However, his stable and assimilated identity has been shattered because of the collapse of the Twin Towers. As a result, his American identity has been under scrutiny because of his Arab appearance. After

passing through a journey of self-discovery, Khalil finds a need to accept his own Arabic identity to solve an identity crisis.

In writing this work, Noble presents the traditional or hegemonic construction of racialised Arab men in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to provide the readers with a new image that de-racialises them. *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* breaks the traditional link between Arab male bodies and terrorism. In addition, the male protagonist is depicted as a man who believes in gender equality; however, he feels isolated because of his identity crisis resulting from his Arab origins. In the end, Noble shows the resolution of Khalil's identity crisis after his reunion with his wife and family to support the Islamicate concept of family and to express love as a stance of women of colour against racism.



## **General Conclusion**

In this thesis, the diasporic experience of Arab Americans in the United States of America has been analysed in four chapters by selecting the novels *Once in a Promised Land* and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* by contemporary writers Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble. This thesis has investigated how the diasporic Arab men in the novel attempt to define who they are by negotiating an Arab American third space in the context of multiethnic America.

The 9/11 trauma is a turning point in rearranging relations between the West and East. Following the traumatic event of 9/11, Arab men found difficulty integrating into American society. The main reason behind such a fact is the clash between the two cultures and two values. Moreover, Arabs have been considered enemies that cannot be dealt with; thus, the emergence of Orientalist stereotypes following the traumatic events of 9/11 has not been a surprise since the advantage of power and knowledge is still in favour of the West. So, just one event like 9/11 reactivates stereotypes and myths about Arabs in general and Arab men in particular. Samuel Huntington predicted in 1993 that the next world war would be cultural and ideological. His prediction problematises the impossibility of a dialogue between the two parts.

Moreover, particular emphasis has been put on theoretical understandings of masculinity. Following the attacks of 9/11, Arab men found themselves entangled by such a ready-made discourse that affected them psychologically. Arab American masculinities have been studied from a poststructuralist perspective in which the construction of masculinity has been deeply analysed for a better understanding of its diverse forms.

The consequences of 9/11, as a national trauma, on Arab Americans have been examined in this thesis with a descriptive analysis of their in-between position based on

their race and origins. September attacks put Arab American men rather than Arab American women in danger of being involved in terrorist attacks. The American government has classified Arab male immigrants as white; however, their experience of discrimination has constructed their identities in which they were viewed as others. The negotiation of Arab American identity has been explored by showing the difficulties Arab American men pass through in constructing a stable Arab American masculine identity. In addition, Arab American feminisms, including post-9/11 Arab American women of colour feminism and their writings between borders, focus in this section. This work has exposed the importance of Arab American feminism, and its contribution to diverting terrorism addressed to Arab men in the aftermath of 9/11.

The analytical parts have mirrored what has been mentioned in the theoretical chapters. In their writings, they present the reaction of some Arab American women writers, like Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble, to re-represent Arab masculinities in a process that ends up the reinforcement of the old stereotypes and misconceptions. Their literary works were published in the post-9/11 era and explicitly tackled traumatic attacks. Both pieces have tried to respond to the resurgence of Orientalist stereotypes and belonged to the stream of bringing forth a counter-discourse. In addition, two women writers, Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble portray their male characters without considering their sexism or violence. Instead, they focus on their journey, which they take to make sense of their in-between identities. In dealing with the consequences of the traumatic event of 9/11 on Arab American men, the issue of sexism is undermined.

Thus, Arab American women of colour feminism point to new models of masculinity that take part in two cultures and denounce the traditional forms of

masculinity. In other words, an ambivalent view of masculinity is presented in the works of these writers in which men are depicted as potentially sexist and, at the same time, as potentially caring and nurturing. Moreover, they are portrayed as victims of racism and can overcome it and make sense of their identities.

Following the Twin Towers' collapse, the writers noted the change in their characters' lives by showing the destruction in their personal/family relationships. The characters' collapse has been symbolically associated with the collapse of the Twin Towers. In the novels, *Once in a Promised Land* and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*, Laila Halaby and Frances Khirallah Noble describe the bleak image of being an Arab in America and the difficulty they face in preserving their identity following the attacks of 9/11. In doing so, both writers tackle the Arab folktales to represent the Arab identity. Moreover, the Arab characters are afraid and scarred from the attacks to counter the prevalent discourse that neglects the fact that Arabs have been victims. After all, the attacks end the Arab characters' American dream. Jassim and Kali sympathise with the victims and wonder how some individuals hurt innocent people with cold blood. Instead of being violent and aggressive, Jassim and Khalil exercise their ethical and moral obligations, which they do not discard even during the tightened climate in the post-9/11 period.

In the novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, Laila Halaby depicts the real life of Arab Americans in general and the protagonist, Jassim, in particular. The 9/11 event directly impacts his social, political, academic, and personal life. Jassim and his wife were socially accepted and admired by the Americans before the attacks; they were happy and prosperous in achieving the American Dream through hard work. However, the collapse of the Twin Towers redefined the meaning of being an Arab in post-9/11

America. As a reaction, political activists and governmental institutions claimed that America no longer welcomes Arab terrorists. Even though Jassim never thought he would be suspicious, he became a victim of political racialisation and discrimination. Jassim's suffering as an American and the pressure put on him as an Arab made him pass through an identity crisis. Simply put, the political events in the novel directly affect the main character's development. It is a situation where they found difficulty accepting their ethnicity and origins, which they forgot about after coming to America. While under FBI investigation, Jassim loses his job and friends, a case in which political forces influence his situation. Ultimately, he is left with the sad spectacle of his bloodied wife.

*Once in a promised Land* is mainly about the limitations of ethnicity. More specifically, it is about the rules for using ethnicity to signal to direct behaviour and organise American society. Halaby tries to prove that September 11 created division and distrust in American culture rather than calling for total unity. Division and mistrust have been presented in Jassim and his wife's relationship. They become disconnected from each other and become disconnected from their society. At the end of the story, there is an ambiguity that reflects a social and political ambiguity in Jassim's situation and difficulties, a problem that a happy ending cannot resolve. In her novel, Halaby presents not only the violence of terrorism but also the violence that occurs because of racism, domestic policy, and assimilation.

*The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* is another work that highlights the effects of 9/11 trauma on Arab American men. Khalil Gibran, the main character, has been a victim of American discrimination, racism, and retention. Like Jassim in *Once in a Promised Land*, Khalil finds difficulty understanding the trauma, leading him to

experience an identity crisis. In the novel, Khalil finds it hard to accept his ethnicity and ends by accepting his Arab origins as the only solution to assert his Arab identity. After pursuing a woman, Jane Plain, who reminds him of his origins, he does so.

During his journey to discover himself, he experiences a space of anomie which makes him unable to differentiate between good and evil. Since he is an Arab, he has been considered part of evil. As a result, he approves of his identity's fluidness and border crossing. In addition, he has learned to support the ambiguity of good and evil. His encounter, on the road, with two fluid characters, who have constructed identities, helps him accept his identity. Khalil is not subject to racialisation and discrimination only, but he also experiences gender and sexual issues. However, Khalil's life has been influenced by the wave of anti-Arab hatred following the attacks; he does not let others' hatred influence his beliefs. He puts himself a risk to help others in their numerous situations. Khalil has been presented as a redeemed American hero who dares to help the abused people and dares to face those who abuse them.

Throughout the novel, Frances Khirallah Noble uses the ghost of Khalil's grandmother to help him survive his traumatic situation rather than haunting him. His grandmother, his *Situe*, witnesses all that happened and decides to help him. To understand the Manichean view imposed in the West, he starts to speak to his dead grandmother to understand the meaning of life. Even though he wants her to help him escape his captors after being mistaken for a terrorist, she tells him three stories about his ancestors. Two of them show that his ancestors made terrible choices in their lives. Her stories provide Khalil with historical information about his origins and family to show him that life is hard and that making good choices to survive is not easy. For his grandmother, survival is mainly about making difficult choices.



Most importantly, she wants him to know that his choices reflect his character. At the novel's beginning, he starts as a Syrian man in America with a limited understanding of his origins. Nevertheless, at the novel's end, he knows the values of his grandmother's stories, and he makes essential and right choices in his life. Moreover, he learns from his *Situe* that stories are crucial; thus, he tells his own stories. Through his grandmother's pieces of advice and remarks about the world's cruelty, Khalil gets the ability to overcome his perplexing situation. In other words, his grandmother's stories give him a better sense of who he is as a Syrian man in America. Ultimately, she advises him to enjoy his life regardless of the difficulties and the ambiguity between good and evil. Consequently, he finds peace with himself and starts a new life with his family.

*Once in a Promised Land* and *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy*, the two male protagonists in both novels experience an identity crisis following the traumatic attacks of 9/11. Even though none relates to terrorism, they pass through discrimination, racialisation, and sexualisation. They go through a learning journey to make sense of their in-between identities and their Arab American selves, negatively portrayed in the media. In the end, both of them accept their in-between identities. Jassim does so through his love of water and the realisation of fluidity. However, Khalil accepts his in-between identity with the help of his dead grandmother, the events, and the people he encounters during his journey.

The relevance of this thesis lies in the lack of academic works that discuss the representation of Arab American men and masculinities in Arab American women's literature after 9/11. Regardless of the references shortage related to this topic, I hope

this work will provide readers with new insights and perspectives, for future research, about post 9/11 Arab American women literature as a recent field in literary studies.

In addition, the present study's limitations suggest further research. In future research, it is essential to expand this study to examine other post-9/11 literary works written by Arab American women writers, such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Randa Jarrar, and Alicia Erian, in which they present issues about men and masculinity following the attacks of 9/11.



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## Appendices

### **Synopsis of *Once in a Promised Land***

*Once in a Promised Land* is a tale of an Arab couple who leave their home country, Jordan, for Arizona, following their dreams of freedom and opportunity. Before the traumatic events of 9/11, they achieve all aspects of the American dream; they live a comfortable life with well-paying jobs, more privacy and space, and expensive cars. However, their American dream life has been taken away from them. They become foreigners and outcasts among the people who look like they do. It starts with the husband, Jassim, and his usual swimming laps at the Fitness Bar. For him, it is a time of meditation before heading off to work in a company responsible for the city's water supply. After the attacks, his work was threatened by an FBI investigation. The crisis of hitting and killing the boy on a skateboard also triggers an FBI investigation. Even though he has nothing to do with it, he has been blamed. Despite all that happened to him, he does not tell his wife about it. Their marriage becomes fragile because of his secrets and his wife's secret about her pregnancy. His feeling of discomfort and disconnection from the American dream force him to yearn for the warmth of his homeland. In the novel's final part, his world has been turned upside down. Loss, pain, and sorrow fill his life and returning home is the only option to heal his wounds.

### **Synopsis of *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy***

The novel's story goes around a mid-aged Syrian American man who struggles in his life to find answers to his various questions about life. The appearance of his dead grandmother in a dream has changed his life completely. She appears and reappears many times throughout the novel to help her grandson take the right decision for survival. He has been subject to suspicion and kidnapped by the government agents who consider him a terrorist. After following Jane Plain to deliver her glasses, he has been abducted by two government agents who investigate and persecute him. After failing to get the needed information, they send him to two prisoners who continue the investigation with him. Finally, Khalil escapes and meets other people on his road. He becomes more confident, courageous, and proud of his ethnicity. Thanks to his grandmother's wisdom and advice in moments of loss and suffering, Khalil recognises his origins, thus, his identity.