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The Exilic Existence in Diaspora Literature: A Reading of The *Crescent* by Diana Abu-Jaber

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Dedication

To my dear father

To my dear Mohammed, no thanks can express the love, esteem, devotion and respect I have always had for you.This work is the fruit of the sacrifices you have made for my education and training.I dedicate this work to you as a token of my deep love. May God, the Almighty, preserve you and grant your health, long life and happiness.

To my dear mother

To my dearest mother, honourable and kind Friha, you are for me the symbol of goodness par excellence, the source of tenderness and the example of devotion that has never ceased to encourage me. Your prayers and blessings have been a great help to me in my studies. No thanks could be eloquent enough to express what you deserve for all the sacrifices you have made since my birth, throughout my childhood and even into adulthood.

To my brother and my sisters

To my brother Oussama, and to my dear Moufida, Selma, Sahla, Rahma, Wiam, and Noor as a token of my attachment, love and affection for you. To my dear nephew Qamar Mekkah, I love you.

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To my dear friends: Aya Fatma Zahra and Ayat Al Rahman Benchallouia

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I dedicate this dissertation to those who have been my guiding stars, unwavering supporters, and endless sources of inspiration throughout my academic journey. To my dearest parents, whose unwavering love, endless support, and countless sacrifices have been the guiding light throughout my academic journey. Your belief in me has fueled my determination, and your encouragement has lifted me in moments of doubt.

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To my cherished best friends I have ever known, Mouna, Djazia ,whose laughter has lightened my darkest days and whose friendship has enriched every moment of my life. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and camaraderie have been the greatest gifts I could ever ask for.

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Abstract

This study aims to dissect the multifaceted themes of diaspora, belonging, Arab-American identity, and food traditions as depicted in Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent*. Through the analysis of postcolonial literature, particularly focusing on the experiences of characters in diasporic settings, this research delves deeply into the intricate processes of adaptation, negotiation of cultural identity, and the pivotal role of culinary traditions in shaping cultural heritage and communal bonds. *Crescent* offers a compelling and nuanced portrayal of the diaspora experience, skillfully set against the rich tapestry of New Orleans, where the protagonist grapples with the complexities of reconciling her Arab-American heritage with the diverse cultural milieu of the city. The novel poignantly elucidates the challenges of maintaining authenticity amidst the pressures of assimilation, while also shedding light on the enduring quest for acceptance and belonging in a society rife with disparities and discrimination. Through an incisive examination of character development and narrative structure, this study endeavors to illuminate the profound and intricate layers of diasporic identity in *Crescent*, thereby making a significant contribution to the broader discourse on postcolonial literature. Additionally, this study sheds light on the exilic existence of the characters, further enriching our understanding of their experiences.

Keywords: Diaspora, Belonging, Cultural heritage, Postcolonial Literature, Cultural identity, Exilic experience.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الشاملة إلى فهم المواضيع المتعددة الأوجه المتعلقة بالشتات، والانتماء، والهوية العربية الأمريكية، والتعددية الثقافية، وتقاليد الطعام كما صورتها رواية هلال لديانا أبو جابر. من خلال تحليل أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على تجارب الشخصيات في بيئات الشتات، يتعمق هذا البحث في العمليات المعقدة للتكيف والتفاوض على الهوية الثقافية والدور المحوري لتقاليد الطهي في تشكيل التراث الثقافي والروابط المجتمعية. تقدم رواية "الهلال" تصويرًا مقنعًا ودقيقًا لتجربة الشتات، حيث تتجلى بمهارة في نسيج نيو أورلينز الغني، حيث تتصارع بطلة الرواية مع تعقيدات التوفيق بين تراثها العربي الأمريكي والوسط الثقافي المتنوع للمدينة. توضّح الرواية بشكل مؤثر تحديات الحفاظ على الأصالة وسط ضغوطات الاندماج، بينما تسلط الضوء أيضًا على السعي الدائم للقبول والانتماء في مجتمع يعج بالتفاوت والتمييز. تسعى هذه الدراسة من خلال الفحص الثاقب لتطور الشخصية والبنية السردية إلى إلقاء الضوء على الطبقات العميقة والمعقدة للهوية الشتاتية في رواية "الهلال"، وبالتالي تقديم مساهمة مهمة في الخطاب الأوسع حول أدب ما بعد الاستعمار. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على الوجود المنفي للشخصيات، مما يثري فهمنا لتجاربهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشتات، الانتماء، الانتماء والتراث الثقافي، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، الهوية الثقافية،تجربة المنفى .

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General Introduction

Background of the study :

Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* delves deeply into the themes of exile and existence within the Arab diaspora, focusing on Sirine, an Arab-American chef residing in Los Angeles. Sirine's journey encapsulates the struggle to harmonize her Arab heritage with her American identity, highlighting the broader themes of cultural heritage, diaspora, and the search for belonging. Through her experiences, the novel explores the complexities of living between two distinct cultural worlds, addressing the challenges of displacement, the longing for connection, and the quest for a sense of home.

Abu-Jaber's depiction in *Crescent* reveals the multifaceted nature of exilic existence, showing how the characters navigate their cultural identities in unfamiliar landscapes. The novel offers a rich portrayal of Arab-American life, examining how individuals like Sirine balance their cultural heritage with the realities of a multicultural society. The narrative underscores the emotional and psychological aspects of exile, presenting it as a profound experience of dislocation affecting both personal and communal identities.

Central to *Crescent* is the theme of cultural identity, which shapes the characters' experiences of displacement and belonging. Abu-Jaber uses motifs of language and food to express the subtleties of exilic existence, with Sirine's culinary expertise symbolizing cultural preservation and adaptation. The novel's sensory descriptions emphasize the role of cultural practices in maintaining a sense of identity and continuity amid the challenges of diaspora.

The narrative also touches on postcolonial themes, exploring the enduring impacts of colonialism on displaced communities and their efforts to reclaim their identities in new, often Western-centric environments. The portrayal of diaspora reflects broader postcolonial discussions on hybridity, liminality, and the negotiation of cultural identities. Characters who navigate multiple cultural worlds find themselves in a state of in-betweenness, fostering both resistance and creativity.

Through detailed characterizations and evocative storytelling, *Crescent* illuminates the experiences of Arab immigrants in America, addressing issues of identity, belonging, and cultural displacement. By emphasizing the resilience and adaptability of diasporic individuals, the novel offers valuable insights into the dynamics of cultural negotiation and the continuous quest for self-discovery. Abu-Jaber's work contributes to a deeper

understanding of the diasporic condition, stressing the importance of empathy, awareness, and support for those navigating the intricate intersections of cultural heritage and diasporic life.

Motivation

Our drive to delve into this research stems from our profound fascination with the motifs prevalent in postcolonial literature and the dynamics of diaspora, coupled with the enriching prospects of studying abroad. We are intrigued by the intricate journeys and hurdles encountered by individuals navigating diasporic landscapes, particularly in terms of adaptation, self-discovery, and the influence of societal conventions. As research collaborators, we share an innate determination to continually excel and challenge ourselves academically. Our synergy fuels our motivation, as we consistently inspire and bolster each other throughout our scholarly endeavors. Moreover, our gratitude extends to our supportive supervisor, whose insightful guidance and vigilant oversight propel our dedication and enthusiasm. Through this exploration, we aim to unravel the myriad challenges faced by immigrants, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of diasporic communities and equipping ourselves with invaluable insights for potential future experiences in similar circumstances.

Problematic

In *Crescent* the protagonist, Sirine, embodies this struggle as she attempts to reconcile her Arab heritage with her American identity. As an Arab-American chef living in an unfamiliar city, Sirine confronts the challenges of straddling two distinct cultural worlds. Her experiences reflect the broader themes of cultural heritage and diaspora, as she grapples with feelings of displacement, longing for connection, and the search for a sense of belonging.

By conducting research on the experiences of individuals like Sirine, we can gain deeper insights into the nuanced dynamics of cultural identity in diasporic settings. This research can shed light on the ways in which individuals negotiate their cultural heritage amidst the complexities of their new environments, offering valuable perspectives for understanding and addressing the challenges faced by diasporic communities. In doing so, we can foster greater empathy, awareness, and support for individuals navigating the intricate intersections of cultural heritage and diasporic life.

Research Questions

At the heart of the novel lies the portrayal of exilic existence, where characters grapple with the rupture of their cultural and geographical ties, a poignant reflection of the Arab Diaspora experience. Through the lens the characters, Abu-Jaber illuminates the sense of displacement, longing, and the perpetual search for a place to call home. In this context we have to formulated a set of questions as follows:

1. How does Diana Abu-Jaber depict the challenges and complexities of exilic existence in *Crescent* within the context of the Arab Diaspora?
2. What role does cultural identity play in the characters' experiences of displacement and belonging in the novel?
3. How does Abu-Jaber use language and food to convey the nuances of exilic existence, particularly in relation to the cultural and geographical landscapes?

Methodology

This is a qualitative research dissertation that analyzes themes present in Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* under the postcolonialism theory. The novel explores complex issues faced by the Arab diaspora in America, including questions of identity, cultural heritage, displacement, the role of women in exile, and nostalgia.

In the novel, Abu-Jaber uses detailed descriptions of the characters, food, family life, and search for a sense of belonging to show how the experience of being an exile is like looking at a reflection. The novel explores the difficulties of adapting to a new culture, as the characters struggle to balance their Arab background with the reality of living in the United States.

From a postcolonial theory perspective, the novel's exploration of diaspora is particularly significant. Postcolonial theory examines the lasting impacts of colonialism and the struggles of marginalized communities to reclaim their identity and agency in the wake of imperial domination. The diasporic experience is closely tied to this postcolonial framework, as displaced populations grapple with the legacies of colonial displacement, forced migration, and the need to reconcile their ancestral roots with the realities of living in a globalized, Western-centric world.

The corpus of the novel, explores the experiences of Arab immigrants in America, grappling with issues of identity, belonging, and cultural displacement.Through the characters and their narratives, Abu-Jaber examines the challenges and tensions of

navigating between two cultures, highlighting the struggle to reconcile heritage with the realities of life in a new land. The novel delves into themes of cultural assimilation, familial ties, and the search for a sense of home amidst the complexities of diasporic existence. This analysis will show how the characteristics like Sirine face a lot of challenges just to prove her identity by working in the restaurant.

Significance of The Study

This novel is important because the writer is shedding light on the experiences of diasporic people who have suffered from exile and are trying to assert their identity within a Western society that is often at odds with their customs and traditions. The narrative explores the complex challenges faced by these displaced individuals as they navigate between their cultural heritage and the dominant norms of their adopted homeland.

The novel's portrayal of the diasporic condition reflects the broader postcolonial discourse on hybridity, liminality, and the negotiation of cultural identities. As diasporic individuals straddle multiple cultural worlds, they often find themselves in a state of in-betweenness, neither fully belonging to their country of origin nor fully accepted by their adopted society. This liminal space becomes a site of resistance, creativity, and the renegotiation of identity, themes that are central to postcolonial studies.

Furthermore, the novel's exploration of the diasporic experience also engages with postcolonial concepts of representation, marginalization, and the power dynamics inherent in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. By giving voice to the stories and perspectives of diasporic individuals, the writer challenges dominant narratives and amplifies the experiences of those who have been historically silenced or misrepresented.

In conclusion, this novel's importance lies in its ability to shed light on the complex realities of diasporic communities, and its resonance with the broader theoretical frameworks of postcolonialism. By engaging with the intersections of exile, identity, and cultural negotiation, the novel offers a nuanced and poignant exploration of the diasporic condition, making it a valuable contribution to the understanding of the postcolonial experience.

Objectives

Firstly, the study will examine how Diana Abu-Jaber depicts the challenges and complexities of exilic existence experienced by the Arab diaspora characters in her novel *Crescent*. This objective aims to explore the representation of the diasporic experience and the various challenges faced by the characters as they navigate their displacement from their homeland. Secondly, the study will analyze the role of cultural identity in shaping the characters; experiences of displacement and belonging within the novel. This objective seeks to understand the significance of cultural identity and how it influences the characters' sense of belonging or lack thereof in their adopted societies. Thirdly, the study will investigate how Abu-Jaber uses language and food as literary devices to convey the nuances of exilic existence, particularly in relation to the cultural and geographical landscapes portrayed in the narrative. This objective focuses on analyzing the author use of literary techniques to capture the complexities of the exilic condition experienced by the characters. As well as the study will contribute to the broader understanding of postcolonial literature, diaspora studies, and the representation of the Arab diasporic experience in contemporary fiction.

The Structure of The Study

This dissertation is divided into two chapters, the first chapter titled "Arab Diaspora Literature and Postcolonialism: an Overview"in the first chapter of the dissertation, it presents an extensive overview of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, providing a comprehensive analysis of its theoretical foundations and fundamental concepts. This chapter offers a detailed examination of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, with a specific focus on Arab diaspora literature through the lens of Diana Abu Jaber's works.

In other hand, the second chapter delves into Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* exploring the intricate themes of exile, identity, and cultural displacement experienced by the characters. Through an analysis of protagonists like Sirine and Hanif, the chapter examines the collision of Arab and American cultures, and the characters' quest for self-discovery amidst the complexities of the diasporic condition. Furthermore, the chapter investigates the significance of food and language as literary devices used by Abu-Jaber to convey the markers of identity, resistance, and the fluidity of belonging within the

context of exile and displacement. By peeling back the layers of the diasporic experience as portrayed in the novel, the researcher aims to uncover the resilience and richness of human experience in the face of cultural upheaval.

CHAPTER-I. An Overview Of Arab Diaspora Literature and Postcolonialism

Introduction:

Chapter One presents an extensive overview of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, providing a comprehensive analysis of its theoretical foundations and fundamental concepts.

Chapter One offers a detailed analysis of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, focusing on Arab diaspora literature through the lens of Diana Abu Jaber's works. It explores the meanings of diaspora, key themes like exile and identity, and the complexities within the Arab diasporic context. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for understanding diaspora within post-colonial literature and examines Abu Jaber's contributions to Arab diaspora literature, providing insights into identity, culture, and belonging.

1.Unpacking the Meaning of Diaspora: Exploring key Definition and Scholarly Perspective:

1.1 Definition of Diaspora

The term diaspora originates from Greek, stemming from the translation of the Hebrew term Galut, with "speiro" (to sow) and the preposition "dia" (over) as its components. In Ancient Greece, it denoted migration and colonization, while in Hebrew, it initially referred to the establishment of Jewish colonies outside Palestine following the Babylonian exile, later adopting a broader meaning of people settled away from their ancestral lands. This represents the narrower concept of Diaspora. According to Robin Cohen, the diaspora concept encompasses dispersal, migration, and transnational movement away from perceived or actual homelands. The idea of diaspora evlved progressively to describe migrant groups maintaining ethnic traditions and a strong collective identity. It's noteworthy that the concept experienced significant expansion only in the 1980s.(Cohen, 2008, p. 11).

The diaspora comprises ethnic minority communities living in host nations while retaining deep emotional, sentimental, and material connections with their native countries (Sheffer, 1986). Over time, the notion has broadened to encompass any population that has migrated from its homeland and established roots in a foreign territory. These communities selectively integrate and blend elements of their cultural heritage and historical identity into their present lives, fostering a sense of continuity with their origins.

Rajendra Chetty and Pier Paolo Piciucco in their work India's Abroad: The Diaspora Writes Back (2004), Rajendra Chetty and Pier Paolo Piciucco delve into the complexities of diasporic displacement and its connection to the homeland. They explore the tension between the host country and the motherland, the pervasive sense of non-belongingness, and the myriad struggles experienced by diasporic communities, encompassing issues of movement, journey, migration, and exile.

According to William Safran (1991), Diaspora refers to the dispersion of a population from their original homeland to various parts of the world, often due to forced migration, economic opportunities, or cultural factors. He argue that the phenomenon of diaspora is not limited to any particular region or time period, as evidenced by the Jewish, African, and Indian diasporas, among others (Safran, 1991). He defines diaspora as the dispersion of a population from their original homeland to various parts of the world.

Roben Cohen argue that diasporic communities often maintain a strong sense of identity and connection to their homeland, while also assimilating aspects of their host culture (Cohen, 1997). Also, he said that diaspora has its roots in ancient Greek, where it originally referred to the scattering of seeds. Over time, it evolved to encompass the scattering of people (Cohen, 2008).

Cohen (2008) describes diaspora as a collective identity formed by a group of people who maintain connections with their homeland while residing in a different location.

Rainer Brubaker (2005) views diaspora as a social phenomenon involving the dispersal of a population, often resulting from factors such as migration, displacement, or exile.

These definitions collectively highlight diaspora as a complex phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions, with communities maintaining ties to their homeland while adapting to their host countries.

1.2. Scholarly Perspectives on Diaspora

Scholarly perspective on diaspora refer to the academic study and analysis of the concept of diaspora, which involves the dispersion of a particular group of people from their original homeland to various locations around the world. Scholars from various

disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, have explored and provided insights into the phenomenon of diaspora.

1.2.1 Anthropological Perspective:

Levy André in his book *Diasporas through Anthropological Lenses: Contexts of Postmodernity* see that Anthropologists study diaspora using a holistic method that integrates various disciplines, including ethnographic observation, historical examination, and theoretical perspectives. By immersing themselves in the lives of diasporic groups through fieldwork, they gain insights into their daily activities and social structures. Additionally, they investigate the historical backdrop of diaspora, delving into aspects like the reasons behind migration and the influence of colonialism and globalization. Anthropologists analyze how these communities manage their identities and belongingness, maintain connections across borders, and navigate power dynamics. They also explore the complex interplay of different identities within diaspora, such as gender, class, and sexuality.

1.2.2 Sociological Persepective:

Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories, and Methods is a seminal work that offers invaluable insights into the sociological study of diaspora. The book delves into the complex interplay of social, cultural, and structural factors that shape diasporic experiences and identities. It provides a comprehensive overview of key concepts, theories, and methodological approaches employed by sociologists in understanding diaspora and transnationalism.

Sociologists explore how diasporas negotiate their identities in relation to both their host societies and their countries of origin, grappling with questions of belongingness, hybridity, and cultural continuity. The book examines the ways in which diasporic communities maintain connections with their homeland while simultaneously engaging with their new social environments, shedding light on the dynamic processes of identity formation and negotiation.

2. Exploring Dominant Themes of Diaspora

2.1 : Exile

Edward Said's book Reflections on Exile declares that exile is never a state of being satisfied, placated, or secure

(2012, p. 186).

Said paints a picture of exile as a deep, unhealing wound. It's a forced separation from one's homeland that leaves an overwhelming sense of sadness. While stories may portray exiles as heroes, these tales are ultimately a way to cope with the harsh reality of a loss of family, tradition, and roots. Said argues that exile has become a defining theme in our modern, often alienated world and that many aspects of Western culture itself were shaped by the experiences of displaced individuals. He emphasizes the sheer scale of exile in today's world, driven by war, imperialism, and mass migration, dispelling any romantic notions and highlighting the harsh realities of this experience.

Edward Said, a prominent Palestinian intellectual, had a personal experience of exile and explored the concept in his writings. While there is no direct quote from Edward Said providing a specific definition of exile, his work offers insights into his understanding of the term.

According to Said, exile is not solely a physical displacement from one's homeland but also a state of mind and a condition of being "out of place" . It involves a sense of estrangement, dislocation, and a loss of belonging. Exile can result from political, social, or cultural factors that force individuals or communities to leave their homeland.

Said's concept of exile goes beyond the literal meaning of banishment "that I had at least entered, if not the final phase of my life, then the period-like Adam and Eve leaving the garden- from which there would be no return to my old life". (Said 1999, 216)

It encompasses a broader understanding of the psychological and emotional impact of displacement. Exile is not limited to spatial disconnection but can also be a metaphorical state of being, where individuals or groups feel detached from their cultural, social, and political roots.

For Said, the experience of exile can be transformative and can shape one's identity and intellectual perspective. Exiles often develop a critical consciousness and a unique perspective on their homeland and the world. They may engage in acts of resistance, cultural production, and intellectual pursuits to reclaim their sense of agency and challenge dominant narratives.

2.2. IdentityQuest

For people living in diaspora, the question of "who am I?" becomes especially complex. Uprooted from their traditional homes, they navigate a blend of their heritage and the new culture they inhabit. This can spark a lifelong search to understand how much of each to embrace, ultimately forging a unique identity that bridges both worlds. According to Brah (1996) The concept of identity, much like culture, is difficult to pin down .We often refer to different identities, acknowledging that our sense of self can vary in different situations and change over time. “We know from our everyday experience that what we call 'me' or 'I' is not the same in every situation; that we are changing from day to day” (p. 20.)

Philosopher Stuart Hall (1990) challenges the traditional view of identity as a fixed state. He argues that identity isn't something pre-determined by culture, but rather an ever-evolving process. Through our experiences and how we interpret them, our sense of self is constantly being shaped and constructed. This view flips the script on cultural identity. Instead of being a fixed, authentic thing passed down from a source of authority, it argues that identity is constantly changing and shaped by how we represent ourselves and the world around us .(p. 222). He writes,

> Far from being grounded in a mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity,identities are the names wegive to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (p. 225)

The above statement challenges the conventional belief that identity is a fixed entity waiting to be discovered in the past, proposing instead that identities are fluid constructs shaped by our interaction with historical narratives. It asserts that identities aren't merely recovered from the past, but are actively formed through our positioning within and responses to those narratives. Rejecting the idea of a static identity awaiting revelation, it underscores the dynamic nature of identity, emphasizing our agency in shaping it through engagement with cultural and historical contexts. In essence, identities are not predetermined but emerge through the intertwining of personal agency and historical narratives, reflecting a complex and ever-evolving process of self-definition.

2.3 Memory and Nostalgia

For people in diaspora, their homeland holds a powerful emotional pull. Memories and traditions function like a bridge, keeping them connected to their origins even after being forced to leave. This intense focus on the past through memory and nostalgia becomes a defining feature of the diaspora experience.

In her book "The Future of Nostalgia " Svetlana Boym argues that nostalgia, the yearning for a lost past, is a powerful force in diaspora. It's more than just personal longing; it's a rebellion against the relentless march of progress and history. Diasporic communities might use nostalgia to transform their past into a comforting myth, resisting the harsh reality of displacement. However, this shared longing can also create divisions, as different experiences of "home" and "belonging" come into conflict. Boym suggests nostalgia creates a complex space where past and present, dream and reality, and home and abroad all intertwine, defying a singular narrative. While once seen as a curable sentiment, nostalgia has become a permanent fixture of the modern world, offering a utopian vision not of the future, but of a reimagined past, free from the constraints of time and space.

In modern world, where minority rights are a major concern, cultural memory plays a critical role in shaping the identities of diaspora communities. Understanding how these memories are formed and influence how diasporic people see themselves is crucial. By reclaiming these memories, diaspora communities can challenge dominant cultures' misrepresentations of the "Other."

For immigrants navigating the disorienting world of postmodernity, memories of home and their potential future become especially important. However, it's important to remember that memories in the diaspora aren't always readily available or fixed. They require effort – research, construction, and re -presentation. As Huyssen (1995) argues, all representation relies on memory, and how we choose to represent our cultural memories is vital in our fight for a voice.

2.4 Home and Belonging

The concept of diaspora is fundamentally tied to the challenges of home and belonging. Uprooted from their ancestral lands, these communities navigate the complex task of finding a place to feel rooted in their new surroundings. This struggle can significantly reshape their cultural identity and influence how they connect to both the homeland they left behind and the new place they call home.

According to Brah (1996), the concept of "home" in the diaspora is multifaceted, it encompasses both a yearning for a mythical, idealized homeland that may never be physically revisited, and the lived experience of a new, specific location with its own sensory details and social interactions. She challenging the idea of "Home" saying :

> Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day…all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (p.192)

The concept of diaspora revolves around the challenges of finding home and belonging. Displaced communities grapple with defining themselves and feeling rooted while navigating displacement and forming attachments to multiple locations. Recognizing the complexities of this "diasporic consciousness" – the constant negotiation and struggle for identity – allows us to better understand the experiences and perspectives of these communities.

The short story Wherever I Am (1994) by Mary Salome discussed the confusion that Arab Americans went through. In the story, the unnamed protagonist felt confused about her identity and about the place which she would be belonging to. Therefore, she decided to go on a four month travel in order to discover her true self. She went to Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. She found out that she could not fit in any of the previously mentioned countries, and concluded that she was never going to fit anywhere no matter how much she tried to fit in. The protagonist said:

For communities where I might feel at home. Identity is a complicated subject and it is always hard for me to say who I am in a few words. I identify myself as a living being, a human being, a woman, a lesbian, a Syrian/Irish-American, and a feminist. My feeling that there is rarely room for me to claim all of who I am increased on this trip. The most noticeable parts of my identity were those which made me different from the people around me and the people usually viewed these differences as negative. (Salome 87)

However, the story depicts the universal experience of many Arab Americans: the constant struggle to belong. The protagonist's journey highlights this by presenting her attempts to fit in, both in Arab communities (where her non-Arab identity and imperfect

language are barriers) and in the United States (likely facing a different form of exclusion). Everywhere she goes, the feeling of "otherness" is inescapable, leaving her with a profound sense of alienation and the question of where, if anywhere, she truly belongs. She kept being told that “you don’t belong, you do not fit, you are not welcome, and you do not exist” (Salome 88)

2. 5 Return

Brubaker (2005) identifies three key features of diaspora communities: they are scattered geographically, maintain a cultural identity distinct from their new home, and hold a strong connection to their homeland.

Modern thought emphasizes connecting to one's cultural and ancestral roots (Malkki, 1995). However, forced or voluntary migration disrupts this idea of rootedness, impacting both those who stay put (who see themselves as rooted) and migrants (who see return as a return to normalcy and identity). Within diasporas, the desire for return is often seen as a straightforward way to complete their migration journey and reclaim their social identity (Black & Koser, 1999; Markowitz & Stefansson, 2004)

Christou (2006) argues that the defining characteristic of a diaspora is the absence of a physical homeland. This homeland, regardless of its tangibility (symbolic connection to ancestry or a concrete location), plays a crucial role in shaping diasporic communities, organized or not. Many diasporic individuals, from those with distant ancestral roots (e.g., Afro-Americans) to those with recent migration experiences, harbor a desire for "return" or a "counter-diasporic" movement back to their homeland. However, this desire often remains unfulfilled, resulting in unrealized aspirations and occasional, temporary visits. Consequently, the concept of return becomes a complex one, oscillating between a cherished dream and a potentially disillusioning experience.

While the notion of "Return" in diaspora might evoke images of happy reunions and a completed migration journey, research by Markowitz and Stefansson (2004) paints a more complex picture. Returning home can be a multifaceted and even unsettling experience. Reintegration can be difficult, filled with unexpected challenges and strained interactions within a homeland that may feel unfamiliar or even hostile. This "return journey" becomes a complex and uncertain path, far from the simple homecoming some might envision.

2.6 Transnationalism

According to Glick-Schiller et al. (2006), born-again incorporation goes hand-in-hand with transnationalism. This means immigrants and their descendants build connections that reach beyond their new homes. They might send money back home (remittances), visit their home countries, participate in global social movements, or simply stay connected through media and culture. These transnational practices allow them to stay rooted in their heritage while also fully engaging in their new societies.

They highlight the importance of looking at specific locations to understand immigrant experiences. Immigrants and their descendants aren't just swept along by global forces; they actively shape the local communities and cultures they become part of. Transnationalism, in this view, is a dynamic process. It involves a constant negotiation and transformation of local cultures and identities, leading to new forms of hybridity (blending cultures) and cosmopolitanism (openness to different cultures).

On the other hand, Bauböck, R. Faist, T. (2010). In their work, Diaspora and Transnation-alism: Concepts, Theories and Methods, have some interesting ideas concerning Diaspora and Transnationalism, as they call them awkward dance partners, in the first chapter of the book Faist argues, striving for exact definitions of terms such as ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnationalism’ may seem a futile exercise. Diaspora, in particular, has become an all-purpose word. It may therefore be more meaningful to look at its uses. As the uses of these terms often overlap and are sometimes even interchangeable, no clear separation is to be expected. (p.14)

Faist compares "diaspora" and "transnationalism," highlighting both their overlap and unique perspectives. While both focus on migrants' cross-border ties to their homeland, destination country, and other migrant communities, "diaspora" emphasizes the relationship between these groups and cultural distinctiveness. In contrast, "transnationalism" digs deeper into how migrants integrate and build practices across borders. This difference might stem from the focus of scholars in different locations: diaspora studies often come from regions receiving migrants, while transnationalism might be more prominent in immigration countries with integration debates. Despite these differences, both approaches acknowledge that social connections don't rely solely on physical closeness and explore the link between integration, cultural identity, and cross-border engagement. However, the exact social mechanisms behind these connections remain a topic of discussion. (p.20)

He contends that 'Transnationalism' surpasses 'diaspora' in breadth for two primary reasons. Firstly, it encompasses a broader spectrum of social constructs, incorporating religious, ethnic, and national communities, along with commercial networks and societal movements. Secondly, whereas diaspora studies emphasize collective identity, transnational perspectives prioritize cross-border mobility. Moreover, a temporal distinction exists, with 'diaspora' frequently addressing multi-generational dynamics and 'transnationalism' centering on contemporary migration patterns (p.21-22).

2.7 Space and Place

In the experience of diaspora, where people navigate multiple cultures and geographical locations, the concept of place takes on a new complexity. It becomes a powerful force that shapes who they are, their sense of belonging, and even their creative expression, as they grapple with the in-between spaces of their identities.

Brah (2003) defines "diaspora space" as a dynamic zone where diaspora experiences, borders, and displacement come together. This space acts as a crucial point where economic, political, cultural, and even psychological aspects of migration intertwine. It's not just populated by migrants and their families, but also by those considered "native" to that space. Brah uses "England" as an example, where various diaspora communities like African-Caribbean, Irish, and Asian interact with each other and the established concept of "Englishness," ultimately reshaping and redefining what it means to be English.

For children of immigrants face a tough question: where exactly do they belong? They feel connected to both their parents' homeland and the country they grew up in, but neither feels quite like home. Their lives mix cultures and places, some they've only dreamed of. This "in-between" space can be hard, but it also gives them a special way of seeing the world - flexible and full of creative possibilities.

Sigona, Gamlen, Liberatore, and Neveu Kringelbach (2015) argue in their respective book, "Diasporas Reimagined: Spaces, Practices, and Belonging," that being part of a diaspora is not just about a fixed identity or theory. It is an ongoing process of actively shaping who you are. Art, like literature and the visual arts, plays a key role in this. It allows people in diaspora to explore their identities through creative storytelling. This flexibility is perfect for the constantly shifting experiences of diasporic people, where ideas of home, history, and memories are always in flux. Art becomes a way to imagine and connect with their desired sense of belonging, especially when their current reality does not provide it.

2.8 Displacement

Displacement forms a central pillar in diaspora studies. It signifies the forced or voluntary movement of people from their ancestral or cultural homelands. This uprooting can be driven by various factors including war and conflict, political persecution, economic hardship, natural disasters, and colonialism (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2018).

Being displaced can be incredibly difficult, causing a deep sense of loss – not just of your home and familiar surroundings, but also of your identity, community, and sense of belonging (Brah, 2004). Despite the pain, displacement can also spark creativity and resilience. In response to being forced to move, diasporic communities often develop new and innovative ways to express their culture and build social connections (Vertovec, 2007).

3. Arab Diaspora in Focus: Distinctive Characteristics and Complexities:

3.1 Defining Arab Diaspora:

Naser Riad in Hhis book Arab Diaspora: Migration, Identity, and beloning the Arab diaspora refers to the dispersion of Arab people beyond their ancestral homeland due to various factors such as economic opportunities, political instability, and conflicts. It encompasses individuals and communities of Arab descent residing outside the Arab world, spanning regions like North America, Europe, and Australia. The diaspora plays a significant role in cultural exchange, economic globalization, and transnational identity formation (Naser,2018). According to scholar Elie Podeh, the Arab diaspora is characterized by its diverse experiences, including voluntary migration for better opportunities and involuntary displacement due to conflicts and persecution (Podeh, 2010). This dispersion has led to the establishment of vibrant Arab communities worldwide, contributing to the multicultural fabric of their host societies while maintaining ties to their cultural heritage and homeland**.**

Ali Mahdi conceptualizes the Arab diaspora as the dispersion of Arabs outside their homeland due to economic, political, or social factors, leading to the formation of transnational communities with strong ties to their cultural and ethnic heritage. Mahdi's

definition highlights the transnational nature of Arab diasporic communities and their connections to their homeland.

3.2 Polotical Issues and Complexeties:

Edward Said, a prominent Palestinian-American scholar, extensively discussed political issues in the Arab diaspora, particularly through the lens of postcolonial theory. Said highlighted how colonialism has deeply impacted Arab societies and their diaspora, leading to cultural subjugation and political marginalization (Said, 1978). He emphasized the importance of understanding the power dynamics at play in shaping narratives about Arabs and their struggles, both within their homelands and in the diaspora. Said's work sheds light on the complexities of Arab diasporic politics, calling for a critical examination of Western representations and the reclaiming of Arab voices in political discourse.The Arab diaspora's political engagement is deeply influenced by historical legacies of colonialism, cultural conflict, and migration.

3.2.1 Colonialism:

Throughout history, colonialism has shattered regional political, cultural, and economic systems, frequently having a lasting impact on migration patterns. Academics such as Frantz Fanon in "The Wretched of the Earth" and Edward Said in "Orientalism" have written about the effects of colonialism on migration, identity, and power relations. Said's seminal work "Orientalism" delved into how colonialism not only exploited Arab lands but also constructed a discourse that perpetuated Western dominance and Arab subjugation (Said, 1978). He highlighted how colonial powers imposed their cultural norms and ideologies on Arab societies, creating tensions and perpetuating inequalities that continue to shape diasporic experiences. He argues that colonial powers exploited Arab lands, leading to economic and political oppression and fueling resentment and resistance movements (Said, 1978). However, in "The Wretched of the Earth", Frantz Fanon provides a powerful critique of the impacts of colonialism on colonized populations. Fanon examines how the colonial system forcibly displaces and uproots native populations, leading to widespread migration and diaspora.Fanon argues that the colonial project disrupts the colonized people's sense of identity, cultural continuity, and connection to their homeland. The colonial power structures impose a new, foreign identity on the colonized, often denigrating and suppressing their indigenous culture and

traditions. This leads to a crisis of identity, with colonized individuals struggling to reconcile their ancestral heritage with the imposed colonial identity.

Furthermore, Fanon illustrates how colonialism establishes stark power imbalances, with the colonizer wielding political, economic, and social dominance over the colonized. These dynamic forces the colonized to navigate complex negotiations of power, agency, and resistance in their daily lives. Fanon highlights how the colonized must strategize ways to assert their humanity and subvert the oppressive colonial order, often through organized political struggle and revolution.

3.2.2 Cultural Conflict:

Cultural conflict arises from tensions with host societies and clashes with Western norms, while internal Arab conflicts are sometimes perpetuated within diaspora communities (Hall, 1992). According to Hall, cultural conflict is a central experience for many members of the Arab diaspora, stemming from tensions between their ethnic/cultural identity and the norms of their host societies. When Arab migrants settle in Western countries, they often face challenges in reconciling their cultural heritage with the dominant societal values and expectations of the new environment.

Hall argues that this cultural clash is compounded by the fact that the host societies may view Arab customs, traditions, and ways of life through an "orientalist" lens - essentializing, exoticizing or even demonizing aspects of Arab culture that deviate from Western norms. This can lead to discrimination, marginalization and pressure for the diaspora community to assimilate, rather than maintain their distinct cultural identity.

At the same time, Hall notes that internal conflicts within the Arab diaspora can also emerge, as different factions or generations navigate the balance between preserving their cultural roots and adapting to the host society. Older members of the diaspora may cling more strongly to traditional values, while younger generations born or raised in the West may feel greater affinity with Western culture and struggle with their hyphenated Arab-Western identity.

These intergenerational tensions can manifest in clashes over issues like gender roles, religious observance, language use, and social customs. The diaspora community may

become a site for the perpetuation of certain Arab conflicts, power struggles or ideological divides that were present in the homeland.

Hall's work highlights how the Arab diaspora experience is marked by a constant negotiation and renegotiation of cultural identity. The diaspora is neither a simple transplantation of the homeland culture, nor a full assimilation into the host society. Rather, it involves the emergence of new, hybridized forms of identity and belonging that are shaped by the unique challenges of living between two worlds.

Regarding cultural conflict, Said emphasized how Western representations of the Arab world perpetuate stereotypes and distortions, contributing to a clash of cultures and identities (Said, 1978). He argued that colonial powers constructed Orientalist narratives that dehumanized Arabs and justified imperial domination, perpetuating cultural conflicts and reinforcing power imbalances.

Said argued that Western colonial powers systematically produced and disseminated dehumanizing representations of Arabs and the "Orient" more broadly. These Orientalist discourses, according to Said, served to justify and perpetuate imperial domination over Arab and other non-Western societies.

In addition, he demonstrated how colonial authorities and intellectuals crafted essentialized, ahistorical depictions of Arabs as irrational, backward, and inherently inferior to the West. These reductive caricatures stripped Arabs of their diversity, agency and humanity, casting them as the passive "Other" against which a supposedly superior European civilization could define itself.

By constructing Arabs in this Orientalist fashion, Said contended that colonial powers were able to legitimize their political, economic and cultural subjugation of Arab societies. The power imbalances inherent in the colonial relationship were naturalized and obscured behind an array of stereotypes and prejudices.

Crucially, Said argued that the legacy of Orientalism did not end with decolonization. Rather, these dehumanizing narratives have persisted in Western academia, media and policymaking, continuing to shape attitudes towards Arab populations - including those in the diaspora.

Arab diaspora communities, as a result, often find themselves grappling with the lingering effects of Orientalist representations. They must navigate a host society that may view them through the lens of culturally-reductive stereotypes, while simultaneously struggling to assert their full humanity and right to self-determination.

3.2.3 Migration

The Arabs immigration process toward the United States of America had known three main waves. The first wave was between 1885 and 1945. It consisted of Christian minority mainly males who came from Syria and Lebanon (Kabir 13). The second wave was between 1945 and 1967. This wave is characterized by an increase in the number of women and Muslims, as well as the significant political and demographic changes, especially after the negative traces of the World War One and Two, and the decolonization movements that the East witnessed and led to many people to choose immigration as a way of salvation. The third wave started in 1967 until today. This last wave was the greatest in number and diversity due to political and economic situations, people were leaving their homeland due to the political tension in the East area which caused hard living circumstances like the war in Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, and South Lebanon… (Naber, "Ambiguous Insiders" 37-61)

Said acknowledged the complex dynamics of displacement and diaspora experienced by Arabs due to political upheavals, economic disparities, and conflicts in the Middle East (Said, 2000). He discussed how migration disrupts identities and communities, leading to a sense of loss and fragmentation, while also providing opportunities for resistance and solidarity within diaspora communities.

Numerous factors, such as authoritarian regimes, conflict zones, and colonial histories, have an impact on migration trends. All of this provide a foundation for understanding how colonialism, conflict, authoritarianism, and migration patterns are interconnected in shaping global socio-political landscapes. Further, Migration, driven by economic opportunities and instability, presents challenges of integration and identity loss (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

3.2.4 Authoritarianism

In The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century," Samuel Huntington delves into the dynamics of authoritarianism within the context of

democratization movements. He posits that authoritarian governments are characterized by concentrated power, limited political rivalry, and curbs on personal liberties and civil rights, often arising in response to political instability, societal turmoil, or external challenges, with leaders prioritizing stability and control over democratic ideals. Huntington further examines the hurdles faced by authoritarian regimes amid waves of democratization, noting that despite efforts to resist democratic changes, both internal and external pressures for political transformation can eventually prompt regime shifts. His analysis underscores the intricate relationship between authoritarianism and democratization, underscoring the pivotal role played by political structures, social mobilization, and external influences in shaping political evolutions.

4. Post Colonial Theory

Ashcroft et al. (1989) suggest that postcolonial theory arises due to European theoretical inadequacies in addressing the complexities and diverse cultural backgrounds evident in postcolonial literature. Christian (1995) argues that the language utilized in this context obfuscates rather than elucidates the situation of marginalized groups.

Postcolonial theory, originating in the latter part of the 20th century, is an interdisciplinary field developed in response to the enduring influence of colonialism and imperialism on global societies. Its goal is to analyze and dismantle the cultural, social, and political impacts of colonial legacies on postcolonial communities. Ashcroft et al. highlight that the essence of postcolonial theory predates its formal terminology, emerging organically as colonized peoples grappled with and articulated the tensions resulting from colonization and imperial domination.

Postcolonial theory examines literature from previously or currently colonized regions, as well as works from colonizing nations that address colonization or colonized peoples. It scrutinizes how literature from the colonizing culture distorts the experiences and realities of the colonized, perpetuating their perceived inferiority, while also exploring how literature by colonized individuals endeavors to articulate their identity and reclaim their history despite its inherent otherness. Additionally, it investigates how literature from colonizing nations appropriates elements such as language, imagery, traditions, and settings from colonized regions (Al-Saidi, 2014).

Postcolonial theory encompasses a discourse on diverse experiences including migration, slavery, oppression, resistance, representation, cultural differences, race, gender, and geographical context. It also addresses responses to dominant discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, and linguistics, as well as the foundational acts of speaking and writing that shape these experiences. While none of these elements are inherently exclusive to postcolonialism, collectively they constitute the intricate framework of the field. Like any evolving area of study, the term "postcolonial" has acquired multiple connotations and interpretations over time (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995).

Said (1994) asserts that postcolonial theory delves into the interconnections among race, class, and gender within the framework of global power dynamics. Its objective is to uncover and contest the influence of colonialism on Western knowledge construction and to amplify the voices and viewpoints of marginalized or silenced colonized individuals.

Postcolonial theory aims to investigate the points of convergence within the binary distinctions present in imperialist ideologies. These include dichotomies such as civilized versus primitive, human versus bestial, colonizer versus colonized, as well as white versus non-white and enlightener versus enlightened. Additionally, it seeks to analyze and challenge the structural hierarchies inherent in these binary systems, uncovering their inherent inconsistencies. By doing so, it facilitates a deeper and more intricate comprehension of the power dynamics within postcolonial societies.

Edward Said, an influential Palestinian American cultural critic, is renowned as a prominent figure in postcolonial discourse. His work "Orientalism" is regarded as the cornerstone of postcolonial theory. Notable postcolonial scholars like Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Frantz Fanon have also played crucial roles in shaping and advancing the fundamental concepts and viewpoints within the field.

4.1 Post colonial Literature

In the case of the Arab world, this encompasses novels, poetry, and drama that were written both during and after the period of colonial rule or dominance, which formally ended with the dissolution of colonial empires in the mid-20th century.

Another aspect of postcolonial literature involves the appropriation and modification of the colonizers' language. Postcolonial writers often merge English with their native tongues in their literary compositions, as demonstrated in works like Neshani Andreas' "Purple Violet of Oshaantu" and Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" (Ashcroft et al., p. 2). Despite the prevalence of numerous indigenous languages in many colonized regions, writers from postcolonial backgrounds frequently choose to express themselves in the language of their colonizers. However, certain authors, such as Arundhati Roy, deliberately manipulate English to reflect the cadences and structures of indigenous languages. They may even invent new terminology and modes of expression to demonstrate their mastery of a language that was imposed upon them.

The core of a postcolonial narrative often lies in its allegorical significance. Often employed as a critique of colonial power dynamics, postcolonial literature encompasses multiple layers of meaning that are essential to the overall story. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in "Postcolonial Studies: The Key Terms" (Third Edition), allegory is defined as a "symbolic narrative" in which the movements of the narrative symbolically refer to specific actions or situations (p.10). This suggests that nearly every action depicted in a postcolonial work carries an underlying symbolic significance.

4 . 2 Diaspora in Post Colonial Literature

In his work "The Location of Culture," Homi K. Bhabha explores the theme of diaspora as a crucial element within postcolonial literature. He contends that diaspora literature serves as a reflection of the experiences of displacement, cultural fusion, and the navigation of multiple cultural identities within the context of colonial and postcolonial narratives (Bhabha, "The Location of Culture"). Bhabha further posits that diaspora literature challenges the fixed and rigid conceptions of cultural identity and belonging imposed by colonial power structures. Instead, it embraces the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural identity, emphasizing the ongoing process of negotiation and transformation inherent in the diasporic experience. Additionally, Bhabha highlights the significance of the "liminal" space engendered by diaspora literature, situated between the established categories of colonial and postcolonial identities. This liminal space serves as a locus of resistance and potentiality, where novel forms of cultural identity can be envisaged and forged (Bhabha, "The Location of Culture").

4 .3 Features of Diasporic Literature:

From the background of literature has spawned two distinct writing styles. Tololyan (1994) discusses these variations, highlighting the dichotomy between emic and etic discourses. Emic diaspora denotes narratives originating from within diasporic communities, centred on their internal discussions and reflections, whereas etic diaspora encompasses scholarly analyses of diasporic phenomena by external observers. Tololyan suggests that the introspective nature of emic diasporic literature manifests in various forms of self-representation, including daily practices, public demonstrations, oral and written archives, and publications in native languages. However, this examination focuses primarily on two writer categories: those who offer critiques or portrayals of their home country and its culture for international audiences, and those who narrate their experiences in new locales to depict personal transformations, confront discrimination, or illustrate their adaptation and progress in their adopted surroundings.

Authors like Emecheta and Adichie adeptly portray their characters' appearance, actions, behaviors, inner emotions, and musings. Hence, it can be argued that the writing style significantly influences the genuineness and attractiveness of a literary piece. Furthermore, the skillful utilization of language in writing serves as a crucial indicator of a writer's literary prowess.

A considerable amount of diasporic literature delves into the relationship individuals maintain with their homeland and their yearning to fit into their new environment, often resulting in a blended existence, as Lau (2000, p.241) elucidates:

> They are individuals who embody multiculturalism as much as they do multilingualism. They do not perceive themselves as completely fitting into either culture and have essentially developed a subculture unique to themselves. They endeavor to extract the best from both realms, yet they grapple with a sense of hybridity and cultural complexity.

Jain (2004) reinforces this concept by characterizing it as a "divided narrative" (p. 76). She delineates the distinction between the past and present within diasporic literature, underscoring that the past encompasses a distinct history, tradition, regional subtleties, colonial remnants, and political dynamics. Conversely, the present is marked by various forms of seclusion, isolation, accomplishments, prosperity, and acknowledgment.

Despite residing in the contemporary era, diasporic individuals concurrently inhabit realms of the past. Additionally, Ramraj (2003, p. 12) presents an intriguing viewpoint on this matter. However in "Diaspora and Multiculturalism," the author delves into the subtleties distinguishing immigrant, exile, and expatriate writings. He posits that writings stemming from exile and expatriation are deeply rooted in the circumstances of one's homeland and the factors perpetuating individual exile or expatriation, rather than focusing solely on the immigrant's interaction with the dominant society. Consequently, diasporic literature often revolves around individuals bound by shared experiences of displacement and dispersal, as well as common origins and cultural legacies. However, due to the distinct political and cultural intricacies of each society, it cultivates diverse cultural and historical identities.

Nostalgia and displacement emerge as prominent themes in diasporic literature. Rushdie (1992, p. 76) notes that exiles, emigrants, and expatriates often grapple with a profound sense of longing and a desire to reclaim their past, even at the risk of undergoing a transformative process akin to becoming pillars of salt. Diasporic literature frequently serves as a response to the myriad challenges posed by lost homelands, addressing issues such as displacement, yearning, racial prejudice, survival, cultural assimilation, and identity exploration. Displacement permeates the collective consciousness of diasporic communities, with various factors contributing to their relocation from their native country to foreign shores. These factors encompass both voluntary and involuntary migrations, with voluntary migrations typically driven by educational or economic pursuits, while involuntary migrations arise from political and national pressures. Additionally, women may experience involuntary displacement due to marital reasons.

When individuals from diasporic communities are uprooted from their ancestral homeland, they commonly experience emotional turmoil and seek solace in a nostalgic past. Nostalgia emerges as a coping mechanism, offering an escape from the harsh realities of their new environment. Nonetheless, diasporic communities often grapple with feelings of isolation and estrangement in their adopted country, hindering their ability to forge meaningful connections within the host society. Despite efforts to assimilate, they frequently encounter prejudice, intensifying their sense of detachment and displacement. These internal battles, such as loneliness and alienation, pose greater challenges for diasporic individuals to surmount compared to external adversities like discrimination and identity crises.

One of the significant challenges faced by the diasporic community, particularly the first generation of immigrants, is cultural change. When attempting to settle in a new environment, they face unique challenges that lead to feelings of nostalgia and a desire to cling to the cultural practices of their ancestral homeland. This desire to preserve their culture can be intensified when the diasporic community faces rejection or discrimination in their new settlement. This rejection can lead to a sense of embarrassment and eventually to a self-definition and behavior based on their culture, which may further exacerbate racial distinctions. As Wieviorka (1999, p.72) points out, these challenges can lead to the internalization of cultural differences and discrimination, ultimately resulting in a self-imposed cultural identity.

The novel we examined in this dissertation is considered a profoundly rich narrative that explores the characteristics of diasporas. It delves into cultural displacement, and the pursuit of identity and belonging. In *Crescent*, Sirine's journey encapsulates a poignant exploration of identity amidst the backdrop of diaspora. As she navigates the complexities of displacement and cultural adaptation, Sirine grapples with a profound quest for self-discovery and belonging. Initially rooted in her ancestral homeland, Sirine undergoes a transformative experience upon immigrating to a new country. Struggling to reconcile her past with her present reality, she finds herself caught between nostalgia for her homeland and the challenges of assimilation into a foreign culture. This dichotomy prompts Sirine to embark on an introspective journey, wherein she seeks to unearth the essence of her identity in the face of profound cultural displacement.

4 .4 Arab diaspora literature:

The concept of Arab diaspora literature refers to the rich body of literary works produced by Arab authors who have been dispersed or displaced from their homelands and now reside in other regions around the world. This distinct literary tradition gives voice to the unique experiences, perspectives, and cultural negotiations of Arab communities living in transnational contexts.

As described by scholar Sabry Hafez, Arab diaspora literature is fundamentally "a literature of displacement, exile, and longing" (Hafez, 2009, p. 10). These authors grapple with the "cultural, social, and political predicaments of an uprooted community" (Hafez, 2009, p. 10), seeking to reclaim marginalized Arab histories, identities, and experiences.

Embedded within this literature are explorations of the complexities surrounding Arab diasporic identity. The works often examine the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion that shape the lived realities of Arab communities navigating between their cultural heritage and the realities of their host countries, as noted by scholar Evelyn Alsultany (Alsultany, 2012, p. 3).

At the core of Arab diaspora literature is a central tension - the struggle to reconcile one's Arab roots with the demands of cultural assimilation in a new environment. The authors utilize their literary platforms to explore the nuances of belonging, the preservation of cultural traditions, and the negotiation of hybrid identities within a transnational context.

4 .5 Exploring Arabe Diaspora Literature Themes

Arabe diaspora literature encompasses the body of work created by writers of Arab descent livinf outside their native contries. This literary genre captures the multifaceted experiences of displacement, cultural engotiation, and identity formation faced by arab immigrations and thir descendants. It provides a rich narrative landscape where themes of nostalgia, loss, adaptation, and reslience are explored through diverse voices and perspectives. Here collective of narratives that describes Arabe diaspora themes:

1/ The short story Wherever I Am (1994) by Mary Salome discussed the confusion that Arab Americans went through. In the story, the unnamed protagonist felt confused about her identity and about the place which she would be belonging to. Therefore, she decided to go on a four-month travel in order to discover her true self. She went to Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. She found out that she could not fit in any of the previously mentioned countries, and concluded that she was never going to fit anywhere no matter how much she tried to fit in. The protagonist said:

For communities where I might feel at home. Identity is a complicated subject and it is always hard for me to say who I am in a few words. I identify myself as a living being, a human being, a woman, a lesbian, a Syrian/Irish-American, and a feminist. My feeling that there is rarely room for me to claim all of who I am increased on this trip. The most noticeable parts of my identity were those which made me different from the people around me and the people usually viewed these differences as negative. (Salome 87)

However, the story depicts the universal experience of many Arab Americans: the constant struggle to belong. The protagonist's journey highlights this by presenting her attempts to fit in, both in Arab communities (where her non-Arab identity and imperfect language are barriers) and in the United States (likely facing a different form of exclusion). Everywhere she goes, the feeling of "otherness" is inescapable, leaving her with a profound sense of alienation and the question of where, if anywhere, she truly belongs. She kept being told that “you don’t belong, you do not fit, you are not welcome, and you do not exist” (Salome 88)

2/ Palestinian American autobiographies explore a complex concept of home, filled with mixed emotions and a constant negotiation between two places. The idea of returning to Palestine "al-Awadh" is both a longed-for dream and a political goal, yet the reality of such journeys is often one of disappointment and exclusion. These memoirs portray characters who are unwelcome in their former homes, highlighting the ongoing Palestinian diaspora. In fact, one of the most recurring scenes in Palestinian writing after 1967 is that of the dispossessed coming back to knock on the doors of their houses, now inhabited by Jewish immigrants. ""No more," a man from Brooklyn says to Shihab. "God gave it to us. It is ours now," before slamming the door in his face (54). Turki, whose beard and long hair cause him to be mistaken for an Israeli, is made to feel like an intruder in the old house by its Eastern European inhabitant, who initially agreed to let him look around, not knowing that he is Palestinian (Turki 1994, 4). As for Said, he decides against knocking on the door once he finds himself in front of the house (Said 1999, xii). Those journeys do not represent the end of the Palestinian diaspora since the returnees are not allowed to stay but instead become occasions to contemplate the loss of home.

3/ While the notion of "Return" in diaspora might evoke images of happy reunions and a completed migration journey, research by Markowitz and Stefansson (2004) paints a more complex picture. Returning home can be a multifaceted and even unsettling experience. Reintegration can be difficult, filled with unexpected challenges and strained interactions within a homeland that may feel unfamiliar or even hostile. This "return journey" becomes a complex and uncertain path, far from the simple homecoming some might envision.

4/ Similarly, Ameen Rihani, often hailed as the "father of Arab American Literature," is celebrated for his novel "The Book of Khalid" (1911), recognized as the first English novel in Arab American literature. The novel narrates the tale of two boys, Khalid and Shakib, who immigrate to the United States from Lebanon during a time when Lebanon was a province of the Ottoman Empire. Their intellectualism and firm convictions lead them into numerous predicaments, both in their homeland and their new setting. The novel serves as a vehicle for reconciling Eastern and Western cultures and values, reflecting the struggles faced by Arabs in both their homeland and adopted country, while expressing admiration for the American way of life and aspiring for Arab countries to follow suit. In the broader context of Arab American literature, writers continually reflect their ties to their countries of origin, depicting the challenges and complexities of navigating dual identities in both Arab and American worlds. Their literary works serve as a mirror reflecting the intricacies of their identity struggles and the cultural bridges they endeavor to construct.

5. Diana Abu Jaber as a Portrait of an Arab Diaspora Writer

5 .1 Abu Jaber’s biography and diasporic experience

Diana Abu Jaber, born in Syracuse, New York, is an acclaimed Arab-American author known for her compelling storytelling and exploration of cultural identity. Raised in Jordan and upstate New York, Abu Jaber's multicultural upbringing greatly influences her writing, infusing her works with themes of belonging, displacement, and the search for identity. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the State University of New York at Oswego and later pursued graduate studies at the University of Windsor and the University of Oregon. Abu Jaber has received numerous awards and accolades for her literary contributions, including the PEN/Hemingway Award for her debut novel "Arabian Jazz" (1993) and the American Book Award for *Crescent*(2003). Her other notable works include "The Language of Baklava" (2005), a memoir intertwining food and family, and "Origin" (2007), a novel exploring themes of love, loss, and the complexities of human relationships. Abu Jaber's writing is celebrated for its lyrical prose, vivid imagery, and nuanced portrayal of Arab-American experiences, making her a prominent voice in contemporary literature. She currently resides in Miami, Florida, where she teaches creative writing at Florida International University.

Diana Abu-Jaber's diasporic experience is deeply woven into her writing and personal identity. As the child of a Jordanian father and an American mother, Abu-Jaber inhabits a liminal space between cultures, a theme that resonates throughout her work. Her novels frequently explore the complexities of diasporic identity, reflecting on issues such as belonging, cultural heritage, and the tensions between assimilation and preservation. Abu-Jaber's own journey as a member of the Arab diaspora in the United States informs her nuanced portrayal of characters navigating similar experiences, making her work a poignant exploration of the diasporic condition.

In an interview with the Los Angeles Review of Books, Abu-Jaber reflected on the challenges of her own diasporic identity, stating:

> I feel like I'm always translating and explaining myself, explaining my culture, explaining my background. There's a constant effort to bridge the divide between my Arab heritage and the American context I live in (Abu-Jaber, 2012).

Abu-Jaber's comments highlight the ongoing process of cultural translation and negotiation that many Arab diasporic individuals face. She expresses the need to constantly mediate between her Arab roots and the American society in which she resides, a common experience among those living in the spaces between cultures.

In another interview with The Guardian, Abu-Jaber elaborated on the duality of her identity, saying:

> I'm always kind of hovering between these two worlds - the Arab world and the American world. I'm not fully at home in either one, but I'm always trying to find a way to be comfortable in both (Abu-Jaber, 2017).

This statement reflects the sense of in-betweenness and the search for a cohesive sense of self that is often characteristic of the diasporic experience. Abu-Jaber's words reveal the challenge of cultivating a stable identity when one's cultural affiliations span multiple, sometimes conflicting, national and ethnic boundaries.

Through her interviews, Abu-Jaber's personal reflections on her diasporic identity and cultural negotiation provide valuable insights into the lived realities of Arab-American writers and the thematic explorations present in their literary works.

5 . 2 Abujaber's literary works

Diana Abu-Jaber is known for her diverse literary works, which often explore themes of identity, family, and cultural heritage. Here are some of her notable novels:

1. "Arabian Jazz" (1993): Abu-Jaber's debut novel follows the coming-of-age story of a young Arab-American woman in upstate New York, navigating the complexities of her cultural identity amidst family and societal pressures.
2. "Crescent" (2003): Set in contemporary Los Angeles, this novel intertwines the lives of several characters from different cultural backgrounds, exploring themes of love, loss, and the search for belonging against the backdrop of post-9/11 America.
3. "Origin" (2007): In this novel, Abu-Jaber blends elements of mystery and family drama as a chef investigates the disappearance of her mother while grappling with her own identity and heritage.
4. "Birds of Paradise" (2011): Set in Miami, Florida, this novel tells the story of a dysfunctional family of Lebanese descent dealing with the aftermath of a tragic event, delving into themes of grief, redemption, and the bonds of family.
5. "Life Without a Recipe: A Memoir of Food and Family" (2016): In this memoir, Abu-Jaber reflects on her life, family, and career through the lens of food, exploring how cooking and eating have shaped her identity and relationships.

5.3 Crescent's Plot Summary

Crescent by Diana Abu-Jaber is a novel set-in contemporary Los Angeles that follows the intersecting lives of several characters from diverse cultural backgrounds. At the center of the story is Sirine, a chef of Iraqi descent who struggles to balance her love for cooking with her sense of cultural identity. As Sirine navigates her relationships with her family and her American boyfriend, she finds herself torn between embracing her heritage and assimilating into mainstream American culture.

Meanwhile, Han, an Iraqi exile and former mathematician, becomes infatuated with Sirine and attempts to win her affection. However, Han's mysterious past and his involvement with an enigmatic group of Iraqi expatriates add layers of intrigue to the story.

As the narrative unfolds, the lives of Sirine, Han, and other characters intertwine against the backdrop of post-9/11 America, exploring themes of love, loss, identity, and the search for belonging. The novel delves into the complexities of cultural assimilation, the impact of war and displacement on individuals and families, and the enduring power of food and art to connect people across boundaries. Ultimately, *Crescent* is a poignant and thought-provoking exploration of the immigrant experience and the quest for identity in a multicultural society**.**

Conclusion

Chapter One establishes a strong foundation by delving into the complex terrain of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, with a specific focus on Arab diaspora literature as illustrated through Diana Abu Jaber's writings. Through a thorough examination of the theoretical frameworks and fundamental principles, the analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of this diverse literary tradition. By delving into the nuances of diaspora, key themes such as exile and identity are explored, offering deep insights into the multifaceted experiences of the Arab diaspora. Additionally, the chapter adeptly navigates the intricacies inherent in the Arab diasporic context, illuminating the subtle details that shape the literary landscape.

Moreover, this chapter establishes a solid groundwork for comprehending diaspora within the broader framework of post-colonial literature, offering insightful reflections on the intersections of culture, history, and power dynamics. By focusing on Diana Abu Jaber's contributions to Arab diaspora literature, the analysis not only underscores the significance of her works but also provides a nuanced understanding of identity construction, cultural negotiation, and concepts of belonging within the Arab diasporic sphere.

Overall, the meticulous exploration of Postcolonial Diaspora Literature, coupled with a dedicated examination of Abu Jaber's literary corpus, paves the way for a comprehensive and enlightening exploration of the complexities and nuances inherent in Arab diaspora literature.

CHAPTER-II. :

NAVIGATION THE EXILIC EXISTENCE IN THE *CRESCENT*

Introduction

In Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*, the theme of exile resonates deeply, exploring the intricate nuances of identity amidst cultural displacement. In this chapter, we delve into the journey of identity in transit, delving into the experiences of characters like Sirine and Hanif as they navigate the complex terrain of displacement and diaspora. Through their stories, we witness the collision of Arab and American cultures, and the quest for self amid cultural clashes. Additionally, we explore the significance of food and language as markers of identity and resistance. Join us as we embark on this exploration, peeling back the layers of exile to uncover the resilience and richness of human experience.

1. The Exilic Experiences in *Crescent*: Navigating Identity Quests and Struggles:

The exile has a feeling of estrangement and up rootedness. His search for his roots and heritage are his main quests. The exile who find themselves torn between their homeland and the host land have a sense of separation and uprooting. The experience of exile involves up rootedness and transplantation, so the in-between state that the exile suffers makes him swing between the past and the future. (Boehmer, 2005, p. 208)

Sirine, the protagonist of *Crescent* by Diana Abu-Jaber, finds herself in a state of exile due to the tumultuous historical context of her homeland, Iraq. Born into a family of intellectuals and artists, Sirine experiences the upheaval of political turmoil and war, which shapes her understanding of identity and belonging. At the age of eleven, Sirine and her family flee Iraq amidst the chaos of conflict, leaving behind their home and heritage. This forced displacement marks the beginning of Sirine's exilic journey, as she grapples with the loss of her roots and struggles to find a sense of self in a foreign land. The decision to seek refuge in America is driven by a desire for safety and opportunity, yet it also thrusts Sirine into a constant quest for identity. As she navigates the complexities of cultural assimilation and the pressure to conform, Sirine confronts her own ambivalence towards her Iraqi heritage, captured in her reflection: "I couldn't help it if I loved English the way some people loved

music, or if, secretly, I sometimes felt impatient with Arab things." This internal conflict underscores Sirine's exilic condition, as she grapples with the tension between embracing her roots and forging a new identity in a land of strangers.

In *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber presents Sirine as a character deeply rooted in her Iraqi heritage yet grappling with the challenges of adapting to life in post-9/11 America. Sirine's upbringing in Iraq was marked by a rich tapestry of cultural experiences, from the aromatic spices of her grandmother's kitchen to the bustling streets of Baghdad. However, her idyllic childhood was shattered by the turmoil of war and political upheaval, forcing her family into exile. Abu-Jaber vividly portrays Sirine's nostalgia for her homeland, capturing her longing for the sights, sounds, and flavors of Iraq that she left behind.

Despite her physical displacement, Sirine carries her Iraqi heritage with her wherever she goes, finding solace and identity in the culinary traditions passed down through generation. Sirine embodies a constant sense of displacement and yearning for a true home. Her culinary endeavors serve as a poignant expression of her struggle to reclaim her cultural roots, despite feeling alienated by a society that often perceives her cuisine as exotic. Jaber's portrayal of exile encompasses both physical displacement and the internal negotiation for belonging within a foreign cultural milieu.

Through Sirine's journey, Abu-Jaber prompts readers to reflect on the universal aspects of exile and its profound impact on characters identity and belonging.

1.1 The Journeys of Crescent Figures

1.1.1 Sirine 's Experience in Exile

Sirine, the thirty-nine-year-old Iraqi-American chef at Nadia's cafe. The fact that she was born and raised in Los Angeles and has never known any other place as home, complicates her exile experience, yet she still feels that she has not really tasted the flavor of home. As an Arab American, Sirine has to deal with finding herself and her roots. The product of an Arab father and an American mother, with blond hair and green eyes, Sirine looks American rather than Iraqi, and she feels that

she has inherited her father's character. Sirine straddles identities and cultures, because she does not look Iraqi, she wonders if that means that she is not? Would she belong better to the Middle East where flavors, scents, and stories seem to pull her? Or is she too American, as Hanif tells her. Part of this internal conflict stems from the absence of her parents, who died while working with the Red Cross in a war-torn country when she was very young, since they could have provided her with the warmth and assurance needed to develop a solid identity.

Sirine's identity struggle also partially comes from her wish to make sense of this sort of hybrid life, or in-betweeness, the life of an Arab American woman. Sirine lives the life of an independent American woman, and yet she cannot overlook the bond she feels toward her Iraqi heritage. Her father has never been present for her, and so Sirine can only turn to his brother's stories, memories, and photographs to learn about her Iraqi heritage since her father and uncle immigrated to the United States together. Not fully aware of being exiled from any sense of home and integrated identity, Sirine has been satisfied with her existence yet always had a sense of longing for somewhere else. That is because "Sirine's never known "lives who dare to mix while differing" (Lavie and Swedenburg, 16).

Although part of Nadia's café with its Arab atmosphere, she cannot participate in discussions of Middle Eastern affairs because of her lack of knowledge in this sphere and her inability to speak Arabic.

On the other hand, with her American, or more accurately un-Arab, features, Sirine passes as a fully American woman and lives as an American woman. Sirine, however, feels neither completely a part of the American nor of the Arab culture. She is always on the lookout for a different place where she can really feel at home. Sirine ends up living in a third space, made possible by her "ability to live deeply and purely inside her own body, to stop thinking, to work, and to simply exist inside the simplest actions, like chopping an onion or stirring a pot" (19). Neither completely in the Arab world nor fully integrated in the American world, she lives in the border zone between Arab and American identity. Sirine's hyphenated third space, however, does "limit itself to a duality between two cultural heritages. It leads...to the

consciousness of root values" (Lavie and Swedenburg, 17), values that she learns only through Han's stories of exile.

Sirine is attracted to Hanif who, unlike most Arab men at the café, seems to have some sort of internal light that makes him intriguing and, at the same time, a little bit hard for her to look at directly: he's so charming and educated and worldly.

But it's more than that. Most Arab men have always been eminently polite to her, filled with an Old World propriety, so formal, they seem almost not to see her but to see an outline captioned: Woman. Han, she's noticed, looks at her. Even though they barely know each other, she already has the clear, uncanny sense that when he looks, he sees her. (47)

Indeed, Sirine represents more than just a beautiful American-looking woman to Hanif who also sees the Arab side in her identity.

He sees beneath the appearance of this successful and distinguished cook; he sees and identifies with her "unhomely" life and her fragmented identity that hungers not just for a romance but for a strong sense of home and integrated identity. Han is the first one to remind Sirine of her "root values" and to point out to her what it means to have and lose one's roots, family, and home. Hanif explains to Sirine the geography of Iraq by drawing a map with his finger on her body, sensually connecting the body to its roots. He tells her of Iraq's history, its everyday life during the war, and how this war has shifted his sense of home as it strips the identity of home of its meaning of safety and security. Instead, the unsafe and warlike conditions leave him "never feeling entirely safe, always wanting to run away" from his own home" (73). Hanif above all conveys to Sirine what it feels to be an Iraqi living in Iraq: "Iraq is endless. As a child, I thought it held the whole world." He describes to her the beauty of the buildings, but then goes on to say that "it's more than buildings—there is a special quality to the air in Iraq. A feeling" (73). Hanif's words and memories of Iraq pierce deep into Sirine's heart, unraveling a deep sense of guilt for ever forgetting or neglecting her Arab heritage: What Han says reminds her of a sense that she's had- -about both knowing and not-knowing something. She often has the feeling of missing something and not quite understanding what it is that she's missing. At the

same time, she's not sure what Han means about the dangers or why it was so difficult to leave-but she also feels embarrassed to ask him and reveal her ignorance and now she feels ashamed that she's taken so little interest in her father's home country. (62)

Hanif not only connects Sirine to Iraq in a very complicated way, but also he unsettles her satisfied existence and introduces to her the notion of simultaneously having a home and being homeless. The more he tells her of his attachment to his home and his family and of his torment because of the impossibility of ever returning, the more she realizes that she too has always missed having a home. She tells him, "I guess I'm always looking for my home, a little bit. I mean, even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow" (118). The more Sirine immerses herself in Hanif's stories of his home/homeland, the more she feels connected to this forgotten Iraqi part of herself, a feeling that immediately translates into the physical interaction of Sirine's and Hanif"s bodies:"She leans forward into her listening and he leans forward into his telling and once again their knees are touching. She would very much like to take his hand" (73). In addition,"The physical intimacy that develops after Han and Sirine tell each other segments of their stories reflects how they hunger for the other: "The elements inside Han and herself had called to each other, like the way ingredients in a dish speak to each other" *(318)*.

However, they both hunger for more than a romance. As they grow closer to each other, they come to realize how starved they are for the sustenance of a sense of home, which they find in their relationship.

As she unravels Han's history, Sirine's memories and feelings of a tormented childhood, missing home, lost parents, and fragmented sense of self begin to unfold inside her. Every time she listens to his stories of lost home/s and family, "that somehow corresponds to a sensitive and silent element inside herself. She has a moment, like a flash of recognition that flares in her" (188). These moments represent what Homi Bhabha terms "the outsideness of the inside that is too painful to remember" ("The World and the Text," 455). Everything that Han has gone through in his exile experience relates to a memory of loss buried inside Sirine that she has found too painful to remember. The more he tells her of his attachment to his

family and to his homeland, of his terrible and unbearable loss, and of the torment of knowing that he can never return and can never reclaim his home, the more Sirine realizes how much she has missed this sense of home and the ability to belong. Sirine becomes obsessed with Han's stories of lost family, home, and Iraqi history. She "feels the thought of Han as if circulated within her own body as if he were the fundamental element that Aziz spoke of-as purely necessary as air and bread" (154-55). Han's stories of his home invade her everyday life, augmenting her quest for her roots, her history, and her own identity as an Arab American. When he describes to her what it feels like to be an exile, she realizes that she too has lived this experience of exile while always trying to forget it.

1.1.2 Hanif's Experience in Exile

In the case of Hanif, he carries the pain of being an exile and for having to deal with the loss of his home as well as of his identity, culture, and religion. He tries to forget his past when he had to flee from Iraq during the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and, more intimately, he has to deal with the death of his sister and the impossibility of returning to his homeland. For Hanif, the home appears as something lost as he now lives under the condition of exile; it appears to him as a "mythic place and a place of no return" (192)

The loss of home is associated with a sense of helplessness as he cannot go back to Iraq to help his family find his brother or sister since Iraq is under Saddam's regime:

> "I can't go back … To Iraq? No. … Not the way things are now, of course. It's very dangerous _ it was terribly difficult for me to get out of the country in the first place … But even so, it's like there's some part of me that can't quite grasp the thought of never returning. I have to keep reminding myself. It's so hard to imagine. So I just tell myself: not yet" (70).

Hanif is rather mysterious about his past and behaves in a way as if trying to push his traumatic past experiences out of his mind. His images of Iraq are randomly scattered in the past as he is haunted by the experience of having been forced to leave his country as an exile.

Hanif's is an individual one presented through the medium of fiction, but it becomes paradigmatic of other Iraqis and their emigration when Saddam Hussein's dictatorship is brought into the picture. Little by little, the professor reveals to Sirine his past, as the following passage demonstrates:

> "He's my younger brother", Han says slowly. "His name is Arif. I haven't seen him – or my parents, for that matter – in over twenty years.]... [I escaped to England not long after Saddam Hussein came to power]...[He's almost ten years younger – he got the idea that I was some sort of daring revolutionary gone into exile. I wanted him to leave the country when he still had the chance, but he refused to go. He said he had his work," Han says, rolling his eyes. "He was arrested and imprisoned before his thirteenth birthday. That was twenty-one years ago. And I can't return to help him." (Abu-Jaber 119)

His exile circumstances, as well as his speech, are pervaded by a sense of guilt for being responsible for his brother's incarceration following his escape. After addressing Sirine about his position, Hanif proclaims that he has no plans to return to Iraq since "Saddam's notion of kindness was to enable people to repent for fleeing before having them executed" (120). In his case, Finding his brother alive would relieve him of the burden of duty and the sense of loss he felt. As the narrator recounts at the chapter's end :

> Han ticks back his head – the sad, Arab gesture. The one her uncle hastaught her means something like, aren't you listening? His expression seems a sort of surrender: the loss of a thing that he has already lost before. He looks away. (Abu-Jaber 120)

Hanif's life is hampered by two types of recollections: childhood memories and exile memories. On the one hand, there is the personal recollection of his boyhood in Iraq, living with his family and assisting his father in the fields, and on the other, there is the historical memory of his homeland's precarious political position.

The experience of exile is pervasive; *Crescent* depicts the difficulties and harsh realities that exiles face on their way to escape. Han chooses to leave his homeland escaping persecution and horrifying conditions of Saddam's regime. As a fugitive, he is pushed from his home, and he has not come directly to the United States. He tells Sirine how "it was dangerous for [him] to leave and how "it was dangerous to stay" (*Crescent*.159). It is terribly difficult for him to get out of the country in the first place like many who try to escape. He suffers great turmoil on his route into exile. He says to her: "I had to escape through the desert into Jordan where my family had friends. First in an open Jeep crowded with other refugees, and on horseback with a group of Bedu, and then finally on foot for two days"(160)

1.1.3 Returning Home

Dreams of going back to where you've been before signify a return to your sense of security, emotional state of mind, psychological condition, and other issues you were previously involved with. Loss and stress are regarded as the typical outcomes of displacement. No matter how risky or challenging life has been back home, the overwhelming sense of loss and grief that follows leaving the motherland gives rise to acute nostalgia and a lifelong fixation with going back. It is impossible for the exile to contemplate the new home because he is unable to adjust to it, regardless of the length of time he has spent there.

Hanif, like many exiles in *Crescent*, is driven by the idea of return, which serves as his only motivation to endure his twenty-year exile. He constantly reads the press and follows Iraq news, eagerly anticipating his return.Although Han's dream of returning haunts him, he is fully aware that he can't set foot on Iraq. It is noticeable that images of his suffering in exile dominate most of the scenes that depict his departure from Iraq. Sirine wonders if Han can live forever in the US, Han answers " that'swhat I'm trying to find out"(*Crescent* 60). It is an awkward situation in which Han lives. He longs nostalgically for what is lost and at the same time, he realizes well that he can't return to his homeland. Swinging between two ways of life represents the state of Hanif. As a result, He ends up living in the "state of in betweenness" that is full of awkwardness and disorientation which occurs when the exile does not experience a complete separation from the place he has left behind.

Abu-Jaber shows how adaptation to the new society proves difficulty for Han. The idea of being permanently displaced from his homeland is such a terrifying thought to Han. He behaves in his host society neither as a permanent resident nor as a temporary visitor. Even after spending about twenty years in America, Han can't get accustomed to the idea that the United States would be his permanent home. He is no longer living in his home country for many years but still seems to have hoped to return to his native land if safety permitted to visit his dying mother. This is clear when Sirine is surprised that Han has not furnished his flat. He cannot get accustomed to a permanent life in America. He seems to believe that buying furniture may restrict and tie him permanently to the adopted home. Han says to Sirine when she surprised to see Han's flat without furniture:

> It's not very comfortable, is it? It's just- it hadn't really occurred to me-I mean, that I would need things like chairs and bookcases. I've moved around so much between schools and teaching posts and about a million different apartments. I haven't had much incentive to buy furniture. I suppose in some way I had the sense that I would be like a commitment- to a place, I mean. (*Crescent* 78)

Han finds himself deeply conflicted, unable to release his grip on the past and consumed by an overwhelming sense of homesickness. Driven by a profound longing to see his ailing mother, he reaches a sudden decision to return to Iraq. His anguish and yearning remain unhealed until he can reunite with his homeland. Abu-Jaber portrays Han as having no inclination to assimilate into his adopted home, with the reader sensing his eventual return to Iraq due to his growing nostalgia, which serves as his primary motivation.

1.1.4 Creating a Sense of Home: Food as an Expression of Nostalgia for the Lost Home

The character Sirine does not speak Arabic, her father's native language, and she does not completely accept her father's faith. Her father's legacy includes traditional recipes for Arab cuisine. Her parents were American Red Cross caregivers who were slain in a tribal battle in Africa. “On the day she learned of their deaths, Sirine went

into the kitchen and prepared a whole tray of stuffed grape leaves all by herself," the narrator observes (Abu-Jaber 56.)

As the book says, when Sirine started working at the café, she returned to this memory:

> She looked through her parents' old recipes and began making the favourite – but nearly forgotten – foods of her youth." She felt as if she were transported back to her parents' little kitchen and her first memories" (Abu-Jaber 22)

Cooking Arab food symbolizes not only a link she utilizes to relive emotional memories of her parent's home, but it also aids her in discovering her Iraqi identity. Indeed, as Sirine observes the Arab students closing their eyes while eating, she realizes that her baklava reminds them of home. Cooking this particular food also serves to organize her day for her. "Sirine is uneasy when she begins breakfast without first making baklava; she can't find her place in the world." (Abu-Jaber 66). Spending so much time in the café's kitchen makes her feel as though she's back in her mother's kitchen "In particular, Sirine." They (the Arab exiles and immigrants at Nadia's Café) love her food – the flavours that remind them of home – but they also love to watch Sirine with her skin so pale that it has the bluish cast of skim milk, her wild blond head of hair, her sea-green eyes... she is so kind and gentle-voiced and her food is so good that the students cannot help themselves – they sit at the tables, leaning toward him. (Abu-Jaber 19-20).

The aromas and flavours of her cuisine appear to soothe their sense of loss of their homelands. According to Fadda-Conrey:

> The most significant bridges are Sirine and the Middle Eastern cuisine she prepares. Sirine acts as an important connecting link, linking together the many groups and individuals of *Crescent*'s ethnic borders, from her crucial position in the kitchen, which extends out to the rest of the café(Fadda-Conrey 196).

As previously said, Arab immigrants are trapped in the various cultural webs of a foreign nation and feel the need to rely on little aspects of the old home to keep their ancestors' traditions alive, yet they fall into conflictual identities. Food, in this view, becomes a type of symbol that reflects the characters' internal conflicts. Cooking Arab cuisine contributes to Arab American cultural survival in the United States. It is seen as a link between their history and present, thanks to Sirin's cuisine and encourages them to recall. It bridges the gap between the many identities while also adding structure to the story. Allani in her article mention Diana Abu-Jaber said:

> Eating is one of the things that crystallizes your experiences and the metaphor of food is a way to translate the cultural experiences. Thus the treatment of food in *Crescent* becomes a safe' way for white American readers to listen to dangerous topics like war, Iraq, the Middle East. (Allani 34)

In *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber explores the profound significance of food beyond mere sustenance, delving into its role as a bridge between ancestral roots and contemporary life. Food serves as a conduit for connecting with ancient traditions and customs, embodying the nostalgia for a lost homeland and a longing for the past. Through the characters' eyes, the beauty of shared meals reflects a poignant journey of remembrance and belonging, where each dish evokes a rich tapestry of memories and cultural heritage.

2 The Complexity of Defining the Exilic Identity

In *Crescent* by Diana Abu-Jaber, the theme of the complexity of defining the exilic identity is profoundly explored through the lens of the protagonist, Sirine, and her family's experiences. Abu-Jaber intricately portrays the struggles faced by individuals caught between two cultures, highlighting the challenges of reconciling conflicting identities in the diasporic context. Sirine, torn between her Jordanian heritage and American upbringing, grapples with the notion of exile, feeling displaced and disconnected from both her homeland and adopted country. This sentiment is encapsulated in Sirine's poignant reflection, "I am a stranger in my own skin, neither fully Jordanian nor completely American, suspended in a liminal space

where belonging feels elusive." Abu-Jaber skillfully depicts the internal conflict and existential angst of exile, shedding light on the profound psychological impact of displacement on individuals and their sense of self.the complexities of defining identity in the exilic experience, Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* offers a remarkably nuanced and multi-layered exploration. Rather than presenting a singular, fixed conception of identity for Arab Americans living in diaspora, the book illuminates the inherent fluidity and ambiguity of the exilic condition.

Abu-Jaber's diverse cast of characters grapple with all sorts of competing pulls and tensions in their daily lives. On one hand, they feel the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture of their new homeland. But there's also a deep yearning to maintain connections to their Arab heritage and cultural roots. The novel deftly captures the challenge these characters face in trying to reconcile these dual impulses.

Furthermore, *Crescent* portrays the difficulty of crafting a coherent sense of self when you're existing betwixt and between distinct national, linguistic, and social worlds. The protagonists are in a constant process of renegotiating their self-conceptions in response to their experiences of displacement and cultural hybridity.

2.1 Cultural Clash: Depicting the Clash Between Arab and American Cultures in *Crescent* through Characters' Experiences

In *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber adeptly illustrates the collision of Arab and American cultures via the characters' encounters, notably focusing on the main character, Sirine, as she navigates the complexities of her dual Arab-American identity.

Indeed, the Arab immigrants in the novel feel stress not only from the clash of cultures they confront in America but also from the turbulent conditions of their homelands and their effects on the Arab American political relationship.

In *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber intricately weaves the cultural conflict between Arab and American cultures through the experiences of the characters, notably the protagonist, Sirine. One poignant example is Sirine's struggle with her identity as an

Iraqi-American woman. Abu-Jaber portrays this conflict through Sirine's internal dialogue and interactions with others. For instance, when Sirine's father, Majed, expresses disappointment in her career choice as a chef instead of pursuing a more traditional path, Sirine grapples with the clash between her passion for cooking, influenced by her American upbringing, and her father's expectations rooted in Arab culture. This is exemplified in Sirine's reflection: "I can't decide whether I'm Arab or American…I always feel like I'm on the wrong page." Additionally, Sirine's relationship with her American boyfriend, Han, introduces further tension as they navigate cultural differences and misunderstandings. For example, when Han innocently brings bacon to Sirine's home, it leads to a confrontation highlighting differing cultural norms surrounding food and religious practices. Abu-Jaber deftly showcases the complexities of cultural identity through these nuanced character interactions. As Sirine grapples with the clash between her Arab heritage and American upbringing, readers are invited to contemplate the intricacies of cultural assimilation and the quest for belonging in a multicultural society (Abu-Jaber, Crescent).

Ultimately, *Crescent* by Diana Abu-Jaber skillfully navigates the complex terrain of cultural conflict through the lens of Arab-American identity. By intricately weaving together the experiences of the characters, particularly the protagonist Sirine, Abu-Jaber invites readers to contemplate the profound impact of cultural differences on individual lives and relationships. Through Sirine's journey of self-discovery and negotiation of her dual heritage, Abu-Jaber illuminates the universal human longing for acceptance, understanding, and connection amidst the clash between tradition and modernity, Arab culture and American culture. Ultimately, serves as a poignant reminder of the richness that emerges from embracing diversity and navigating the complexities of cultural hybridity in our increasingly interconnected world.

2.2 Quest for Belonging: Unveiling Home in The Crescent

The house is viewed as a sanctuary, shielding individuals from the harsh elements of nature like winter cold and summer heat. It serves as personal property, offering a private space where individuals can live freely without intrusion from others. This

representation underscores the importance of boundaries and privacy, reflecting a fundamental aspect of the concept of home.(Mallett, 2004, p. 65).

In her novel *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber highlights the importance of home for Arab immigrants living in America. Through the experiences of the characters, the book presents multiple conceptions of home.

First, home is seen as a place of residence, as shown when the character Nathan says, "I went home but I couldn't sleep," referring to the place he lives in America as his home (p. 83). Similarly, when the narrator mentions that Sirine only eats at "home" on Sundays and Mondays when the restaurant is closed, it suggests that she has a private space in America that she considers her home (p. 67).

These examples demonstrate how the protagonists in the novel view their American abodes as their homes, despite being immigrants. The book explores the significance of having a physical place to dwell and the sense of freedom and belonging it provides, even for those who have relocated to a new country.

Diana Abu-Jaber's home is a haven of intimacy, love, and family connection. Also, the notion. For instance, in the conversation between Hanif and Sirin, another value and meaning of this term were provided:

> He (HAN) moves to her side. "Look there." Han points to
>
> the sky. "An Arab crescent."
>
> She (SIRINE) looks at the paper-fine moon. “Why do
>
> you call it that?”
>
> Han: “It reminds me of the moon from back home.47

Diana appears to want to add additional value to this notion, which is the origin or mother nation from whence the Arab immigrants originated, based on this dialogue. It serves as the foundation for determining their identity. not only did Diana highlight these two definitions in the story, but she also highlighted another idea via the characters who demonstrated an attempt to adjust to alienation and a feeling of the

motherland. This feature occurs in Um Nadia's desire to make the coffee shop feel like it's in their Arab nations, complete with Middle Eastern coffee specs when she says:

> Um Nadia waves her hands, palms up before her as if shining a window. “I look and then I look again. I see Arab men come here from far away all the time. They all come to me because we make something like home in this country. It helps. And most of them stay.” She raises her eyebrows. “But lots of them go.”

Diana Abu-Jaber used the term "home" differently in her work *Crescent* because it confronts the challenges of remembering and the scattered Arab identity in American culture.

In the novel, the idea of home goes beyond just the physical dwelling where the characters live. For Arab immigrants in the US, the term "home" also evokes a deeper sense of belonging and nostalgia for their homeland.

When the characters in the book use the word "home," it's not just referring to their house or apartment in America. It also carries the emotional weight of their original homeland - the place they came from before immigrating.

So the concept of home has multiple layers for these Arab characters. It's not just about the house they live in now, but also the deeper connection and feelings they have for the country and culture they left behind. The word "home" encompasses both their current residence as well as their ancestral homeland, reflecting the complex experience of being an immigrant.

2.3 Serine's Reflections: Home and Memory in *Crescent*

Sirine, an Iraqi-American lady, has been an orphan since she was nine years old, according to Abu-Jaber. her parents died while working at Cross Red Nation in Africa. Sirine knows how her identity is split from her origins since she lost her parents at a young age in an unknown country: Iraq, where her parents were born, and Africa, where her parents died. Both Iraq and Africa are countries Sirine has

never been in. Sirine recognizes that she does not belong to any country, even the United States, where she was born, as she says: "I guess I'm always looking for my home" (132).

Sirine's feeling of not belonging is evident that she dont consider of her uncle's house as Home, where she has lived since childhood. The fact that she doesn't regard her uncle's home, where she's been residing since being orphaned, as her own further amplifies her sense of detachment. Home is depicted as a strange and unpredictable environment for Sirine, where she feels out of place and unwelcome. Consequently, she seeks solace in places where she feels accepted, like the Mediterranean restaurant where she works and spends most of her time.

Sirine feels at home in the café because she recognizes that she is surrounded by Arabs, which are symbolized by "onions" and "a churning pot" (Abu-Jaber 22). When Han asks Sirine a question, the narrator writes: “What makes a place feel like home for you, then?”, she replies: “Work,” and “Work is home” (ibid 32) Sirine is searching for her own space to comprehend where she belongs, which is why she refers to her work as a home. In the kitchen, she may experiment with numerous recipes and prepare a variety of meals and sweets while developing her sense of self. While living in America, Sirine yearns to establish her own identity. Despite being born there, she does not perceive the United States as her true home, suggesting that she feels her genuine sense of belonging is elsewhere. Additionally, the kitchen serves as a space where Sirine can explore her parents' heritage through their traditional cuisine and customs. Her quest extends beyond finding a comfortable living environment; she also seeks companionship with someone who shares her cultural background, with whom she can create a new sense of home and family.

Serine has no rememebrence of the house or area where her parents used to live. There was no mention of the word "home," as remembered by her, but the notion of this description was linked to her parents. Remembering was a difficult effort for her. The narrator addressed this, saying: she finds that she struggles to remember these things and that certain memories from the early time before her parents’ death—are especially difficult to recollect. (ibid 121)

Sirine found herself engulfed in reflections of the past, pondering her own origins and those of her parents. Even the simplest of dreams stirred a sense of fear within her, as they had the power to reveal her true identity, whether it be American or Arab. According to Hanif, she harbored a fear of dreaming about her parents, sensing an impending revelation lurking within her subconscious.Despite the difficulty, she recalled certain lovely things that she couldn't forget, and she remembered them because of the similarities of the situations she lived in, for example. When Hanif wanted to make her eat from his hand, "She opens her mouth and remembers her father feeding her a bite of bread. " (ibid 71). Or by seeing some old photos: "Sirine looks at the photograph, the dim faces, and she wishes she could remember what her father's voice sounded like. She thinks it might have sounded like her uncle's voice". (ibid 125).

While living in the United States, Sirine endeavors to find her own sense of home and develop her identity. She sees the kitchen not only as a place to pursue a career but also as a space where she can express her affection and fulfill her basic needs for belonging and self-realization.

3 Identity in Transit: Construction of Identity in Exile

For individuals who have spent decades in a new environment, it was expected that their perception and definition of identity would evolve over time. Furthermore, certain environments facilitated this shift towards a more assimilated perspective on identity. Surprisingly, this notion perfectly encapsulates the experiences of the female characters in Diana Abu Jaber's second novel, Crescent (2003).

In *Crescent* the women characters do not fit the usual stereotypes or assumptions made about Muslim or Arab women. They assert complete control over their personal, professional, and sexual lives, challenging prevailing stereotypes within their Arab society. Their journey to discover their authentic selves proves to be a formidable task. Conversely, the male characters face a different set of challenges, being cognizant of their displacement and the resulting identity crisis stemming from their past in their homeland. This exile contributes to their sense of misery and confusion.

The novel *Crescent* focuses on analyzing the female main character Sirine and how her love for the character Hanif affects her. Hanif is also an important and interesting character that deserves attention.

By the end of the book, there is a detailed portrayal of how Sirine's past experiences have led to confusion about her own identity.

In other words, the novel explores Sirine's character in depth, including how her romantic relationship with Hanif influences her. Hanif is also a significant figure that is closely examined. Importantly, the story provides a comprehensive look at how Sirine's background and history have contributed to her feeling uncertain about her own identity.

3.1 Self-Realization Through a Love Story

Sirine was thirty-nine years old and single; she worked as a chef in Um-Nadia café; a popular Middle Eastern restaurant located near the University of California in Los Angeles.

Throughout the novel, Sirine description was given shortly as the following, "…with her skin so pale it has the bluish cast of skim milk, her wild blond head of hair, and her sea-green eyes" (Crescent 16). Generally, this description was so vague to make the readerbuild an image of her. Furthermore, Sirine was born to an Iraqi father and an American mother, her parents worked for the International Red Cross and were absent for much of her childhood. They died while on a mission in Africa when Sirine was nine. After the death of her parents, Sirine was raised by her Uncle (his name was not mentioned in the novel), a university professor and irrepressible storyteller whose tales were interrupted the novel's story.

Sirine did not have any real connection or relationship to her home country of Iraq, even when her uncle was telling her stories about the experiences of Arabic people. Unlike the reader, who can clearly understand the meaning behind the uncle's stories after reading the novel, there are no signs that Sirine herself truly grasped the significance of those stories. Besides, Sirine did not know how to speak Arabic, and

there was no clear statement about whether she was a Muslim or no. Also, her personality was quite isolated as she had no concept of any place outside Los Angeles or any idea of what is happening in the world, her routine life was limited between two places her home and the restaurant, so, her personality was shaped in a defensive way and this according to Freud Sigmund believed to be the quality of an "Armor Character" (27-84), a character that prefer to take the protective and the safe position in a known environment rather than the insecurity and the stimulus of the outside world. What is important here was that Sirine the character was really ragged from her roots, but this state might be remarked as the state before Hanif al-Ayad appearance on the scene. Hanif Al-Ayad, known to his friends as Han, was a new professor in the University of California. He was described throughout the novel as an attractive and intellectual person, who was surrounded and followed by people, especially by two minor characters who were: Nathan an American photographer who was traveling in the middle-eastern area a lot and a big admirer of Han; also there is Rana, an attractive Muslim woman in one of Han's classes and also she was very attracted to him as a man. Precisely; he was described as the perfect person who held the perfect Arabic genes, "the white of his teeth, the silky dram of skin, cocoa-bean brown. He's well built, tall, and strong" (Crescent 19). His personality according to Sigmund psychoanalytical character analysis can be classified as "the Resistant Character"; a character that:

> Expresses itself, not in the content of the material, but in the formal aspects of the general behavior, the manner of talking, of the gait, and facial expression and typical attitudes such as smiling, deriding, haughtiness, over-correctness, the manner of the politeness. (27-84)

All of these qualities above described exactly the character of Han as the novel did:

> Look at him—look at that face. What a face. Like Ulysses, right? Look at that expression. He's an Iraqi classic just like your old uncle. Hanif shakes his head and smiles a big, squared-off smile, teeth bright against his toast-brown skin. (Crescent 23)

The love story between Han and Sirine developed slowly but the obvious thing that was shown throughout the novel was that they fell in love from the first sight but none of them admitted it at first. Before Han, Sirine was dating a lot of men, but none of them was of a serious matter to her; as if she was just playing around:

> She's always had more men in her life than she's known what to do with. Um-Nadia says that attraction Sirine's, special talent—a sort of magnetism deeper in her cells than basic beauty or charm. She's never broken up with anyone, she just loses track of them, adding new men as she goes. Never, not for a single day since her second year in high school, has she been without a boyfriend or admirer of some sort, and she has never really, entirely given herself to any of them. (Crescent 28).

Sirine was a very sociable and friendly person who had many close friends. Some of her closest friends included her employer, the café owner Um-Nadia, as well as Um-Nadia's daughter, Mireilleand many other mainly costumers who really loved her and her cooking. Sirine's contented existence was disrupted when she introduced to Han by her uncle. Sirine encountered Han as a customer in her restaurant as mentioned in the novel, "Hanif has come into the restaurant four times since arriving in town several weeks ago and her uncle keeps introducing him to Sirine, saying their names over and over, "Sirine, Hanif, Hanif, Sirine" (Crescent 15). After a while, they began seeing each other, and their relationship deepened gradually.

Things took an interesting turn when Sirine began to question Han's reasons for leaving Iraq, and his story about his origins. Sirine and Han had a small fight when she lost a scarf he gave her, which once belonged to his mother. When they were back together, he told her his story. As a young man, he befriended and had an affair with an American expatriate in Baghdad who arranged for him to have an overseas education. He explained how he decided not to return to Iraq after Hussein came to power. However, Sirine found evidence that this story may not be true. She found an enigmatic note in Han's apartment, apparently from a loved one. The note informed Han that his mother was ill and wished to see him, and also made a vague reference

to a murder. Later, while attending an exhibition of the photographs Nathan took while in Iraq, Han had a strong reaction to a photo of a young Arab woman.

Sirine's relationship with Han became strained, and she had a brief affair with Aziz a Syrian poet and friend to both Han and Sirine. Wracked by guilt, Sirine attempted to reconnect with Han. However, when she saw Rana wearing the scarf that she lost, Sirine caused a public scene and left in a hurry.

When Rana followed her to discuss the matter, Sirine learned that Han had not been entirely honest about why he left Iraq. When he returned to his family after completing school in Cairo, Han became involved in the resistance movement, protesting the Hussein regime by writing for an underground newspaper. When the secret police arrested his family, Han escaped and fled the country, leaving his parents and siblings behind. Han suggested to Sirine that he was bearing in mind; returning to Iraq to see his mother, regardless of the consequences. When Han finished this confession, the couple spent the night in his apartment. Sirine awoke to a note from Han, telling her that he had left. She learned via her uncle that Han resigned his position at the University, and had left the country toward Iraq.

Sirine was quite understandably upset, but slowly began to adjust to life without her lover. Months go by with only one communication from Han, a letter written in a London airport, explaining his reasons for leaving and indicating that he might never return. Sirine continued to work at the Café and returned to her old routine. However, the novel concluded over a year after Han’s departure. Sirine, at the Café, received a phone call from him.

Through her relationship with Han, Sirine began to explore her Arab-American identity more than she ever known before. Han was represented as a person who stimulated the resting curiosity that Sirine was hiding about her original country, Iraq, which she forgot or intentionally ignored after her parents’ death. As Sirine was getting closer to Han, she came to realize how starved he was for the sustenance of his homeland, he used to repeat:

> “The fact of exile is bigger than everything else in my life. Leaving my country was like—I don’t know—like part of my

> body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part—I'm haunted by myself" (Crescent 106).

Slowly, she was gathering pieces of his tragic history, his escape from Iraq and his family's ghastly fate under Saddam Hussein. Even knowing she could not fill that void, she made an attempt, grasping after pieces of her father's Iraqi past, investigating Islam, "Han answers Sirine's questions about Islam—she's curious, not having been raised with formal religion. He describes what the interior of a mosque looks like, its clean, open prayer hall…" (Crescent 49), and struggling to immerse herself in the political news she was always ignored. This image of how Sirine was trying to sympathy and to encourage Han was a kind of an attempt from Diana Abu Jaber to change the Americans' prejudice toward the Arab as terrorists who only knew the violent ways, "All we see on the TV or movies about Arabs is they're shooting someone, bombing someone, or kidnapping someone" (Crescent 129).

In this novel, Sirine was put as a kind of Americanized character that held this prejudice thought as she never lived in Iraq and was raised her whole life in America. Also, Diana Abu Jaber tried to defend herself as a daughter of immigrant and the other who were just children of an immigrant from the offense of ignorance, carelessness, and unknowing to a lot of things that was related to the Arab world exactly as what was happening to Sirine in the novel:

> "What is that?" she asks [Sirine] tentatively, pointing to the photograph. "What's happening there?" The student half-shrugs, so skinny she can see the knob of his shoulder through his thin shirt. "Just Saddam Hussein. Making an example… "It's possible. Or it might have been something else. He has all kinds of reasons, they come to him or he can make them up at will." He glances at the photograph again and shrugs. "This is nothing special." "Nothing special?" He pushes up his glasses once again, but this time looks at her very carefully and closely. "What do you care?" he says finally. She's taken aback; without thinking, she moves one hand to her chest. "Of course I care. Why do you say that?"

> He reopens the newspaper, folding over the front page so she can't see it. "You're American," he says. (Crescent 114)

Also, and through her love experience with Han, Sirine developed a complicated friendship with a lot of people. Rana, Han's student and a friend of his was one of them.

Though, there was a jealousy of Rana's friendship with Han, Sirine developed a friendship of a kind with Rana in order to explore her own identity. At a meeting of Muslim women at the University of California, Los Angeles, Sirine came to know about Rana's tragic experience as she was a victim of a compulsory marriage when she was too young:

> She shrugs [Rana]. "That doesn't matter. For one thing, I'm married."Sirine drops her hands. "You're married?" "When I was thirteen. My parents arranged it. And my mother's an American. Married me to my rich second cousin Fareed..., Fareed was a total control freak. He had closed-circuit cameras installed in all the rooms, including the bathroom, so he could keep an eye on me even when he was away." "You're kidding." "Oh." She flops one hand at Sirine. "That's just the start. He had locked iron gates around the house and iron bars on the windows—so no one could climb in, he said. But of course, then I couldn't get out. There was even a lock on the telephone. Servants had to bring me my food by sliding the plates under the bars. He didn't trust anyone with a key besides himself." "How absolutely horrible." (Crescent 117-118)

This somehow made Sirine felt sad for her and at the same time pushed her to explore ways to integrate her father's Iraqi heritage with her American identity, and Rana intellectual, political, self-possessed, and devoted Muslim revealed her one way of doing so. Also; and through the meeting, Sirine got the chance to know more political and radical thoughts that some of the audience apprehended about America and the Arab world relationship from the similarities, differences, and problems.

Additionally, Sirine friendship with Nathan, the photographer helped her to realize how bad things were happening in Iraq as she came to know from Nathan about his experience when he lived there, and how he felt so lonely and so strange in that country, it was basically the same as what any immigrant could feel:

> "I used to read about Baghdad in the Arabian Nights," he says [Nathan]. "It was all magic and adventurers. I thought that's what it was like there. And when I got older Baghdad turned into the stuff about war and bombs—the place on the TV set. I never thought about there being any kind of normal life there" … So, she keeps her eyes closed as Nathan talks about Eastern domes beside Western multistory buildings, and ancient ruins and contemporary ruins from the war with Iran and then bombs from America, missile attacks that left huge smoking holes in the earth… (Crescent 207)

Parallel to his story; his friends' Sirine and Han had to live the same things. Han's time abroad changed and challenged his identity as an Iraqi Arab, and Sirine, growing up as the child of an immigrant in a community of immigrants, sometimes, had trouble integrating her Arab and American identities.

To conclude, Sirine and Han's love story authentically captures the immigrant experience in their host country. Sirine embodies the complexity of being a mixed-race immigrant woman in America, somewhat disconnected from events in the Arab world, uncertain about her religious beliefs.Morever exceptions existed like the character of Rana, who was really aware of her Islamic origin as she was partly practicing her religious duties and also her intellectual and political awareness that made her more likely to be one of those who were demanding their rights especially after their bad experiences.

Generally, Diana Abu Jaber succeeded to create a spectacular connection between love and identity; that the reader might not been seen before in any novel he might read.

3.2 Displacement and Diaspora Space in *Crescent*

Displacement is more than just a change of physical location; it's a profound emotional experience that shakes the very foundation of one's sense of home and belonging. It's the feeling of being uprooted from familiar surroundings, severed from cherished connections, and a drift in an unfamiliar world. Displacement breeds a deep yearning for a place to call home, a longing to belong somewhere, yet feeling like a stranger in every space encountered. It's a constant search for that elusive sense of belonging, a quest to reclaim what was lost, even as the landscape shifts beneath one's feet. Displacement leaves an indelible mark on the soul, shaping perceptions, relationships, and the very essence of one's identity. It's a journey of reconciliation between the past and the present, a striving to find solace in the midst of upheaval, and ultimately, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of profound change.

The characters grapple with a profound sense of not belonging, a feeling that they are adrift in a world where they can never truly find their place. As the protagonist, Sirine, wanders through the streets of an unfamiliar city, having recently moved to escape the turmoil of her past, she reflects on her displacement: "I am a stranger here, in this labyrinth of streets that twist and turn like the convolutions of my own mind. There is a heaviness in my chest, a weight of not belonging, of being out of sync with the rhythm of this place." Abu-Jaber's evocative prose captures the essence of displacement, weaving together Sirine's internal struggles with her external realities. Throughout the novel, poignant quotes punctuate the narrative, revealing Sirine's yearning for connection and rootedness: "I feel like I belong nowhere, like a puzzle piece that doesn't fit into any picture." This poignant exploration of displacement invites readers to confront their own feelings of estrangement and search for belonging in an increasingly fragmented world.

Hanif's displacement is characterized by a profound sense of disconnection and longing for belonging. As a character navigating between Arab and American cultures, Hanif experiences a unique form of displacement, caught between the traditions of his heritage and the allure of Western ideals. His struggle to reconcile these conflicting identities manifests in his interactions with others and his internal dialogue.

Hanif's displacement is evident in his search for a place where he can truly feel at home, a search complicated by the cultural barriers he faces. He longs for acceptance and connection, yet feels like an outsider in both worlds. This feeling of not belonging weighs heavily on him, shaping his perceptions and interactions throughout the novel.

Despite his efforts to assimilate into American culture, Hanif finds himself confronting the limitations of cultural assimilation and the complexities of his dual identity. He grapples with feelings of alienation and estrangement, unable to fully embrace either his Arab heritage or his American surroundings.

As Hanif reflects on his sense of displacement, he articulates his struggle with poignant clarity: "I am torn between two worlds, neither of which fully accept me. I am a stranger in my own skin, searching for a place to belong, yet always feeling like an outsider." This quote encapsulates Hanif's profound longing for connection and his ongoing battle with displacement in a world that refuses to see him for who he truly is. Through his character, Abu-Jaber explores themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the human quest for connection amidst displacement.

In conclusion, the broader understanding of displacement as a feeling encompasses profound emotional and psychological effects. Whether forced or voluntary, displacement leads to feelings of loss, disorientation, and uprootedness, impacting individuals' sense of home, cultural identity, and social connections. Coping with displacement requires supportive networks, access to resources, and opportunities for integration., Sirine and Hanif experience resonates with the universal struggles of those confronting displacement, highlighting the importance of empathy, understanding, and support in navigating these complex challenges and rebuilding lives.

4 Language and Food as Identity Markers

4.1 Language as Identity Marker :

In Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent*, the theme of language is intricately woven into the narrative, portraying the protagonist's struggle with cultural identity and

assimilation in America. Through the juxtaposition of Arabic and English, the novel delves into the complexities of communication, reflecting the protagonist's internal conflict and the tension between tradition and modernity. Abu-Jaber adeptly illustrates how language shapes identity and relationships, prompting readers to contemplate its profound impact on our sense of self and belonging.

Diana Abu-Jaber masterfully weaves the theme of language throughout her narrative, elucidating its profound impact on identity and belonging. Through the protagonist, Sirine, who navigates her dual cultural heritage, Abu-Jaber explores the power dynamics inherent in linguistic expression. Sirine's struggle to reconcile her Arab-American identity is epitomized in her relationship with language. As she reflects, "Language is memory, desire, thought, emotion—all that is most individual and personal about humankind. This sentiment echoes the words of writer Toni Morrison, who famously stated, "Language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names." Abu-Jaber skillfully utilizes language as a tool for connection and disconnection, illustrating how it can bridge cultures or erect barriers. Through poignant examples and nuanced character interactions, she showcases the complexities of linguistic identity, inviting readers to ponder their own relationship with language and heritage.

The title is used as a potent symbol of the intersection between language and identity. Throughout the novel, language serves as a crucial marker of individual and cultural identity for the characters. Sirine's bilingualism reflects her dual heritage, allowing her to navigate between her Arab and American identities. Abu-Jaber illustrates how language shapes perceptions of self and others, as seen in Sirine's internal struggles and external interactions. For instance, Sirine's proficiency in Arabic sets her apart within her American community and connects her to her Arab roots. Conversely, her English fluency allows her to assimilate into American society while still grappling with feelings of displacement.

Leila El Maleh's book Arab Voices in Diaspora explores how language functions as a crucial identity marker for Arabs living outside their homelands. The text examines the diverse ways in which Arabs in the diaspora employ language to maintain connections to their cultural heritage, arguing that the linguistic choices

they make serve as powerful expressions of their ethnic affiliations. Whether preserving the use of Arabic, strategically code-switching between Arabic and the dominant language of their new country, or creatively blending linguistic elements, the book posits that language becomes a central tool for Arabs in diaspora to navigate issues of belonging, cultural hybridity, and the preservation of their Arab identities across borders and generations. Through this lens, El Maleh's work highlights how language is intrinsically tied to the personal and collective identities of Arab individuals and communities living outside their homelands.

4.2 Food as Identity Marker

In *Crescent* (2003), food appeared as a way of affirming or creating both personal and cultural identities:

Sirine learned about food from her parents. Always said his wife thought about food like an Arab. Sirine's mother strained the salted yogurt through cheesecloth to make creamy labneh, stirred the onion and lentils together in a heavy iron pan to make mjeddrah, and studded joints of lamb with fat cloves of garlic to make roasted kharuf. Sirine's earliest memory was of sitting on a phone book on a kitchen chair, the sour-tart smell of pickled grape leaves in the air. Her mother spread the leaves flat on the table like little floating hands, placed the spoonful of rice and meat at the center of each one, and Sirine with her tiny fingers rolled the leaves up tighter and neater than anyone else could—tender, garlicky, meaty packages that burst in the mouth. (Crescent 36-37)

Sirine did not speak arabic but by working in Um-Nadia's Café, she discovered a means of reestablishing her connection to her cultural roots. This highlights how Sirine's love for cooking stemmed largely from her memories of her past life with her parents and the joyful moments spent in the kitchen, surrounded by the sights and aromas of Arabic cuisine and the laughter of family gatherings. Sirine found cooking to be her sanctuary, where she could recreate her history when faced with uncertainty, confusion, and identity turmoil. Indeed, food became the language they used to express their anxieties and struggles to set free from such oppressive system in which they were inserted (356-357)

Moreever, Um-Nadia's café and its Arabic American atmosphere from the Arabic customers who speak Arabic mixed with English to discuss their lonely exiled life to the TV broadcasting Arabic and American channel pushed Sirine to think and to ask about her real identity and belonging:

Nadia's Café is like other places—crowded at meals and quiet in between—but somehow there is so usually a lingering conversation, currents of Arabic that ebb around Sirine, fill her head with mellifluous voices. Always there are the same groups of students from the big university up the street, always so lonely, the sadness like blue hollows in their throats, blue motes for their wives and children back home, or for the American women they haven't met. (Crescent 16)

Sirine found that food was the best way to explore and find answers in this confusing yet comforting place. She started making dishes, mostly from her parents' recipes, like Arabic food. This ended up making immigrants feel more comfortable at Um-Nadia café. When they tried Sirine's tasty dishes, like tabbouleh and knaffea, it seemed to bring back memories of their home countries, families, and friends they left behind.

During the American holidays, Sirine's menu showed both her American background and her Arabic roots. Her guests included a mix of friends and family from different backgrounds, and the food they brought showcased the diverse cultural atmosphere:

There are three open bottles of wine, all different colors, and there seem to be fa more plates and silverware than are actually needed. Among the guests' contribtions, there's a bug round fatayer—a lamb pie—that Aziz bought from the green-eyed girl at the Iranian bakery; six sliced cylinders of cranberry sauce from Um-Nadia; whole roasted walnuts in chili sauce from Cristobal; plus, Victor brought three homemade pumpkin pies and a half-gallon of whipping cream. (Crescent 125)

The meal reflected Arab (Um-Nadia sauce), Iranian (lamb pie of the green-eyed girl), and Latin American (chili sauce of Cristobal and Victor homemade pumpkin pies) combination of flavors. It also represented the ways in which American identity

was forged and continually reinvented itself by incorporating and blending new cultural influences from international immigrants. In all, food and the multiple occasions played an impressive role to tremble the hearts and the minds of the characters that in these exact situations of love and joy and as any normal persons, they would certainly remember their family gathering, the nights of celebrating with their loved ones and the smells and tastes of the traditional food they were preparing, especially by their dearest person; their “mothers”.

Further, the food’s existence in the novel was one of the best ways that allowed the characters to question their lives and to explore their true identities. For Sirine, the usage of her mother’s recipes helped her to remind herself of her heritage and belonging. Further, her first meeting with Han was related to food. She was preparing Knaffea in the kitchen when Han entered the café, in that time she felt something different and “think she does look different from the rest of the customers” (Crescent 29) as if she was sensing that things in the future will change dramatically, but regardless of what will happen in the future, the love was for sure filling the air at that moment as Um-Nadia noticed it directly when she saw Sirine making the Knaffea and hinted her by saying, “Ah you’ve made Knaffea today, …, who are in love with, I wonder? Then her dark secret laugh” (Crescent 29).

The quote above highlights how the novel beautifully links food, love, and identity, particularly through dishes like baklava and knaffea. These foods hold significant cultural importance, often being central to events like weddings and celebrations in the Arab world. Therefore, food serves as a powerful symbol of love.

In *Crescent*, a similar situation unfolds when Hanif graciously prepares a dinner for Sirine, despite his professional culinary skills, the meal is a novel experience for her: “No one ever wants to cook for her; the rare home-dinners at friends’ houses are served with anxiety and apologies” (Crescent 47). The professor is eager to cook for her, and interestingly, he consults the well-known and popular book "The Joy of Cooking," mirroring the joy Sirine experiences while cooking at Nadia’s café. This gesture allows Hanif to feel closer to Sirine, while the new environment offers him

the opportunity to momentarily embrace an American identity and forge an identity distinct from the stigmatized Iraqi one.

Finally, the food we consume can solidify our connection to our cultural background in our daily lives, and it can also serve to reaffirm our sense of identity when living in a different culture, particularly for immigrants. Thus, Diana Abu Jaber's novel *Crescent* serves as tangible evidence of what has been researched and examined over the years leading up to its publication: the notion that food can serve as the missing link and bridge between various ethnic groups and their identities. This concept undoubtedly contributed to the novel's widespread popularity and its recognition through numerous awards.

In *Crescent*, food serves as a powerful vehicle through which Sirine's exilic identity is vividly portrayed. As an Iraqi-American chef living in Los Angeles, Sirine grapples with the complexities of belonging and cultural identity. Her culinary creations become a reflection of her internal struggles and the dichotomy between her Iraqi heritage and American upbringing. Abu-Jaber intricately weaves together descriptions of Sirine's culinary masterpieces with poignant memories of her childhood in Baghdad, where food was not only sustenance but also a means of connection and belonging. Through dishes like maqluba and dolmas, Sirine strives to preserve her cultural heritage while simultaneously adapting to her new surroundings. "Food is memory, Sirine. It's history. It's family," Abu-Jaber writes, encapsulating the profound connection Sirine has with her culinary heritage. Additionally, Abu-Jaber writes, "In the kitchen, I am Iraqi. In the kitchen, I am American. In the kitchen, I am myself," highlighting Sirine's struggle to reconcile her dual identities and find a sense of belonging. Another memorable line from the novel is, "Each dish holds a story, a memory, a longing," emphasizing the transformative power of food as a vehicle for expressing longing and nostalgia for Sirine's homeland. However, her journey is not without challenges, as she faces skepticism and prejudice in the predominantly Western culinary world. Critics have praised Abu-Jaber's ability to capture the nuances of diasporic identity through the lens of food, with one reviewer noting, "Abu-Jaber's prose is as rich and flavorful as Sirine's dishes, offering readers a taste of the complex flavors of exile and assimilation." Indeed, Sirine's culinary

creations transcend mere sustenance; they become a metaphor for her journey of self-discovery and reconciliation. As she navigates the kitchen, Sirine not only finds solace in her culinary artistry but also discovers a sense of belonging in the rich tapestry of her cultural heritage.

Attif Louayene's in his article entitled Food is a journey, a map of memories, a passport to the past, examines how food is considred as a sign in Abu Jaber's work, his words echo Sirine's own sentiments, emphasizing the profound connection between food and personal history. Louayene's insight underscores the notion that each dish encapsulates not only flavors but also stories and emotions, serving as a tangible link to one's cultural roots. In the novel, Sirine's culinary journey mirrors this sentiment as she endeavors to preserve and celebrate her Iraqi heritage through her innovative dishes. Through Abu-Jaber's narrative, food emerges not only as a means of sustenance but also as a conduit for cultural preservation and personal expression.

Conclusion

Diana Abu-Jabber's narratives provoke moral reflection and a sense of responsibility. Through her work, various fields have been able to explore themes such as identity, belonging, and love within Arab culture, as well as the significance of memory and nostalgia in connecting immigrants with their homeland. Abu-Jabber employs food as a symbolic link that binds Arabs to their cultural heritage. While the diasporic experience is universal, the novel illustrates its nuanced and individualized nature for each immigrant. While some argue that technological advancements have eased the process of embracing diaspora, the overarching sense of loss is still deeply felt by migrants and exiles alike.

General Conclusion

This research has delved into the multifaceted nature of postcolonial diaspora literature through a comprehensive analysis of Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. It has provided a holistic understanding of post colonialism, diaspora, and related concepts, while also exploring significant themes and attributes portrayed in the novel. The first chapter laid the theoretical foundation by examining postcolonialism and key concepts such as diaspora, identity, exile, and belonging. The second chapter focused on exilic experiences in *Crescent*, addressing themes such as the clash between Arab and American cultures and the symbolism of food and language in identity formation.

Through a comparative analysis of Diana Abu Jaber's works, this research has uncovered the rich tapestry of narratives present in Crescent, including themes of identity formation, post-colonial discourse, and the symbolic use of food and language. While exploring these themes, valuable insights into the complexities of human existence and the struggles faced by individuals navigating cultural, social, and personal landscapes have emerged.

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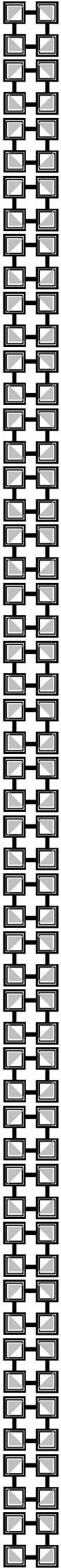

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